

# New Mexico

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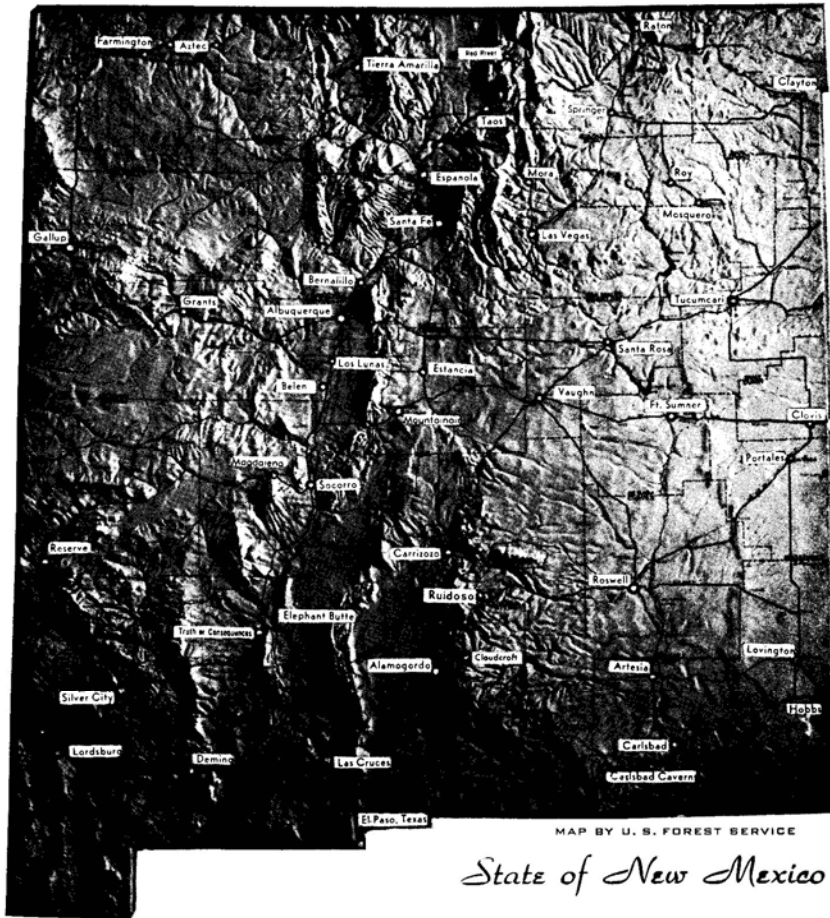
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*State of New Mexico*

## *Among the Authors*

EDITHA WATSON works for the Indian Service at Tuba City, Ariz. She has lectured and written extensively on the Navajos. . . . Reeve Spencer Kelley has been a frequent contributor to the poetry column but switches this month to humor—and fishing. His home is in Albuquerque—at the Ernie Pyle Library where Mrs. Kelley is branch librarian. . . . Betty Wright is a student at Texas Tech and last summer served as counselor at Camp Davis. . . . Bill Reed, librarian at the Museum Library, Santa Fé has

. . . Thomas Edwin Smith, whose articles on prospecting in the Magdalena mountains are now being used in a series in the Magazine, is planning to expand his material into a book. . . . Betty Woods and her husband, Clee Woods, recently spent a few weeks in Hollywood where he served as technical advisor on the script of "Apache Canyon." They are spending the summer at their cabin near Pagosa Springs, Colo. This month's cover is a Flexichrome color reproduction from a black and white print by John Candelario, the well known Santa Fé photographer in I corder.

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*Cabins among the trees at Camp Davis*

# *Campers' Paradise*

*By Betty Wright*

**T**HE STORY TELLER in front of the camp fire paused in his narration and struck an attitude of listening. Then he flashed his light into the trees behind the circle of boys. The youngsters turned their heads and followed the beam of light. Finally it stopped on two brightly gleaming eyes.

The two wicked looking eyes reflected the light. The youngsters were in a dither of excitement. The beam of light wavered then lost the eyes. Was it a mountain lion, a bear, or what? The suppressed excitement broke into

sound and everybody talked at once. It was a bear. No, it wasn't. It was a lion. Maybe it was a coyote.

Here was the high point of the mountain packtrip, something to talk about for days — and the story teller didn't have the heart to let on he knew what kind of eyes they were. He knew, because earlier in the day he had "planted" them—two reflector buttons attached to a tree!

This little trick was just something extra for the boys, but it was hardly necessary to make their New Mexico camping trip something special to be remembered for years.

*Main buildings at Camp Davis*



*Two busloads of girls arrive for a month*





The pack-trip camp



The old swimming hole



Campers form a "D"

The boys were part of the group who each summer visit Camp Davis on the Gascon Ranch, in the high country 30 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Boys from eight through 16 and girls from 10 to 17 attend this private camp in June and July, and most of them hate to leave to make room for the family camp in August.

Camp Davis is the result of the enthusiasm of "Mule" Davis, Lubbock, Tex., coach, and "Liz" Davis, his wife, for the outdoors and particularly for the outdoors in New Mexico.

The Davises have been vacationing in New Mexico for 17 years, and they got into the habit of taking their boys—four of them—on camping trips. Soon they began taking other boys with them. When there were more requests than they could handle they decided in 1939 to start a boys' summer camp. They used a temporary location for several years until they established a permanent location in 1944 on part of Gascon Ranch. This is a setting of high mountains, forests and meadows, with the little Gascon river meandering past the camp.

From June on through the summer the camp is a busy place, with approximately a hundred persons being fed daily in the big dining hall. Campers are housed in log cabins that are complete with baths. Ten or eleven campers grouped by ages and size are assigned to each cabin and supervised by a counselor.

Youngsters come from all over, but mostly from Texas. Little Louise Bell, who came from far away Pittsburgh, told her friends she had never been "so far out in the wilds." Almost scared to death at first, Louise quickly adapted herself to the wilds, and before she returned home was voted "best junior camper." A seasoned veteran who has already spent

five seasons at the camp, Ginger Higginbothams, of Dallas, has helped to prove that city kids sometimes make the best campers. She has carried home medals in every sport and has held the honors of best junior camper and later best senior camper.

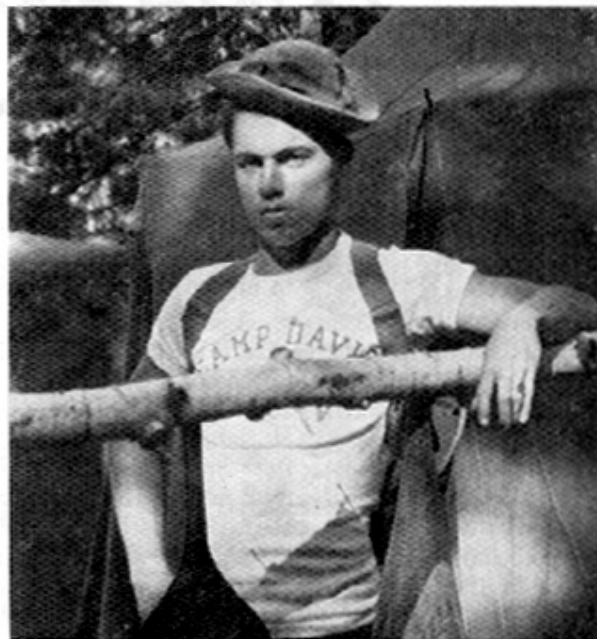
The camp offers the usual organized activities both outdoors and in the big recreation hall, but horseback riding is especially popular. Horses from the adjoining Gellen-thien Ranch are kept in the corral for daily pack trips and rides. Fillee Martinez, the wrangler, guides riders over mountain trails for two to three hours each day. Beautiful mountain country is seen on these trips as the group rides among towering pines, past hidden streams, and across grassy meadows high in the mountains.

Herds of deer and elk are frequently seen on the trips, especially during the boys' camp in June. Sometimes they come upon wild horses that raise their heads for a moment then dart away. And close by is the snow-covered peak of "Old Popo." From the awakening siren in early morning until the final stunt in the Rec hall at night, the days are filled with activities. Even Sunday is busy—with inspection, Sunday school, letter writing, and resting up for another strenuous week.

"Scrub the floor, carry out the wood and ashes, arrange the wild flowers," is heard all over camp on Sunday morning. Like a hundred ants, the campers swarm in and out of the cabins so that when Coach and Liz arrive on their inspection trip they won't find a speck of dust. It's still a mystery to some of the youngsters how Coach can always find a shoe or a bar of candy in a freshly-made bunk. Double Sunday dessert is the reward for the cleanest junior and senior cabin.

(Continued on Page 52)

Harold Wall, of Lubbock, a typical "pack-tipper" in front of his tent



### Campers' Paradise

(Continued from Page 25)

A lot of letter writing is done on Sunday, too, for Coach and Liz have solved the problem of having their young charges keep in touch with families. A letter ready to be mailed home is Sunday's meal ticket!

The biggest thrill of camp and what each camper looks forward to is the pack trips which start after the first two weeks. The camp is a hum of excitement on the day the first group is to go over the mountain. Twelve campers, two counselors, two men and the guide usually make up one trip. After the pack horses are loaded and riders mounted, everyone files down to the gate to watch them ride up the slope, enviously counting the days until they'll be going, too.

It's about 17 miles to the other side of "Old Popo" where camp is made. (This name is just generally accepted for the 12,000-foot snow-covered mountain, as no official name is

listed for it on the maps.) The snow banks are reached about the middle of the day. From this 12,000-foot elevation one can see for miles. Fluffy clouds separate the rider from blue mirrors of lakes and rivers below and tiny dots of towns in the distance. With the wind whipping across the peak's barren rocks and snow, the riders stop and breathlessly take in the vast beauty of sky and distance, stretching endlessly. Before their eyes, rich hues of purple, blue and pink fade into the hazy mist.

Above timber line an abrupt change in scenery takes place, and the top of the mountain is like a flat rolling plain. A gradual drop takes the riders into wooded areas of thick trees and streams. By mid-afternoon the riders arrive at the camp site. Tents, previously pitched, border the roaring Valdez river. Pack horses are unloaded and driven back to camp with the empty saddle horses by the guide and extra riders.

Here the ruggedness of outdoor life is experienced. Meals are cooked on an open fire and campers sleep in sleeping bags inside the

tents. Hiking and fishing are the chief sports. An all-day hike is taken to Pecos Falls, which is a few miles from the camp.

The girls' camp is near the old "Cowboy cabin," which ranchers use when checking cattle grazing on the Valdez. At night the group gathers here to roast marshmallows and listen to Coach weave stories of the untamed country.

After a two- to five-night stay, the campers take reluctant leave as another group arrives from Davis.

Some times the campers really have something to talk about besides "cycs" they saw in the darkness. Once the campers were awakened about 3 a. m. Far in the distance they could hear a roar—whether of animal or what they couldn't tell.

Coach knew what it was, and so did Johnny, his oldest boy. Just that afternoon on the ride to camp they had seen a big 1,600- to 1,800-pound bull in the vicinity. Apparently he was on a middle-of-the-night rampage.

Coach and Johnny sat up and waited with

hated breath. The boys crawled to the bottom of their bags for "safety."

Coach wondered if the monster would side-step the tent or rip it apart. The tent almost quivered with the fiery breath of the bull as it neared. Then the beast charged on past and the roar was finally lost in the night. Fortunately the tent—as Coach discovered when he checked it again at daylight—had been pitched fully 10 feet off the half-hidden trail that the big bull was following.



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