

►► All Quiet on the Rapidan ◄◄

By JOHN S. GREGORY

HERBERT HOOVER believes passionately in his unquestioned right to what he calls his "private life." The fact he is thirtieth President of these United States, in his opinion, imposes no constitutional demand upon him to comport himself outside of office hours like a goldfish. He rebels bitterly, and tugs unceasingly, against the yoke of public curiosity which seeks to ferret out exactly what he had for breakfast, whether he has a pet name for Mrs. Hoover, and what he said to his little granddaughter the time she put the finger marks on the wall.

The public and its curiosity along these lines is represented, of course, by the reporters who cover the White House as a regular assignment, and who, amongst them, represent every daily newspaper in the country. And so, on this score, his resentment accrues to these gentlemen of the press.

In this aversion to what he apparently believes to be a group of professional "Peeping Toms," President Hoover stands far from alone in our abbreviated history. Of his more immediate predecessors, for instance, Woodrow Wilson and Warren G. Harding objected strenuously to what they seemed to consider tantamount to boudoir intrusions. Calvin Coolidge was an exception, but he had a set rule never to let anything appearing in print about him ruffle his temper, and publicly it never did.

Wilson railed even against the Secret Service operatives who followed him, disregarding the fact federal law so compelled them and that they would continue to protect his life in the face of any orders he might issue. Harding on more than one occasion undertook to lecture his unofficial bodyguard from the press for following him and reporting unfailingly certain of his more regular recreational activities—which, groundlessly, he appeared to fear would prejudice the more serious-thinking and church-going people against him. Golf and excursions aboard the old presidential yacht *Mayflower* came within the latter category.

President Hoover, however, evolved a system of his own. He sent his outdoor-loving secretary, Lawrence Richey, out into the wilds of the Blue Ridge Mountains with instructions to find a camp site which would be completely inaccessible to any but the particularly chosen few.

Richey scouted the mountain range south of Washington for several weeks

in company with Horace Albright, Superintendent of National Parks, and came back with the answer to the "Chief's" prayer. How complete an answer even Richey probably didn't know. All this happened in the early spring a little over two years ago, just after Mr. Hoover had taken office.

Mr. Hoover dug into his private pocket and purchased 160 acres of land about 500 feet from the top of the peak which towered over the isolated little hamlet of Criglersville, Va., slightly more than 100 miles from Washington. A muddy trail corkscrewed tortuously up the mountainside until it reached 2,500 feet above sea level and the point of Richey's selection—a spot where Laurel and Mill Pond Creeks converge to form the headwaters of the Rapidan River.

Here, indeed, was isolation. The first time the President made a trip to inspect his newly acquired property he and Mrs. Hoover had to ride that last eight miles up the mountain on horseback. The reporters who had followed them to the base by automobile lacked both the horses and the invitation to follow. The mud and the breath-taking climb—to say nothing of the Secret Service—dissuaded those harboring a desire for a "scoop" from following on foot.

THE spot suited Mr. Hoover's purposes perfectly. Brook trout in the stream gave promise of many an entertaining afternoon at his favorite sport. The altitude and encompassing shade trees assured week-end relief from the summer heat. But most of all, that devious trail up the mountainside touched his fancy. This could be made a private thoroughfare, and the endless stream of time-wasting White House callers kept at a comfortable distance, to say nothing of those reporters. Again Mr. Hoover opened his personal purse and purchased the building materials necessary to erect a mountain retreat in keeping with the dignity of his office.

As Commander-in-Chief of the military establishment, he called upon the United States Marines, America's able jacks-of-all-trades, to drive the required nails and do the million other bits of manual labor that go into the building of a de luxe camp. Close behind them, the Army Engineer Corps was pressed into service to make the mountain trail a road over which limousines could climb in comfort. The Bureau of Fisheries stocked the Rapidan headwaters with choice trout so that even the rankest



"When a White House dog bites a Marine, is it news, or isn't it?"

amateur among the presidential guests would be assured of a satisfying catch. The Navy furnished a chef and mess boys. Telephone linesmen strung wire and established a direct line between the Blue Ridge fastness and the White House.

In the spring of 1929 the camp was opened, and President Hoover became a week-end commuter between Washington and the Blue Ridge. From April to October he rarely misses spending Sunday on the Rapidan, leaving the capital either Friday or Saturday and returning usually on Monday morning.

When he first started these excursions to the Rapidan, Mr. Hoover possibly thought the newspaper men were not going to follow him. In fact, he issued orders they were not to do so. The press associations, however, had different views, for there is always that outside chance that some mishap or unusual experience might occur to the Executive while traveling at rather high speed over the open road. He has consistently refused the offer of a motorcycle escort, and there are no distinguishing marks on the little motorcade of cars to warn any approaching tourist to pull out or a driver going in the same direction that he must not pass them.

The White House reporters held conferences on the subject with the White House secretariat and the Secret Service, for the President was holding dearly to his stand for equal rights with any other citizen once the time clock had been punched at the end of a working day. The reasons which impel the press associations — representing amongst them all the daily papers of the country, and thus representing virtually all of the reading public—were

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⇒ Christian Culture, R. F. D. ⇐

THERE are those who say that the small-town traveling Chautauqua will soon be a thing of the past; yet I doubt if it is on its deathbed. No institution which flourished, in its heyday, in ten thousand American communities, and enlisted the hearty devotion of thirty-five million American citizens, is likely to expire overnight. It is alive today, alive as you read this. Its clean brown tents are rising in thousands of small towns from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Hundreds of thousands of season tickets have been sold. Rural America is enjoying its yearly educational and cultural feast.

The brown tent stands in a vacant lot just at the edge of town. A broiling sun beats upon it, and upon rows and rows of parked automobiles in the adjoining lot. The tent is packed. Farm folk, town folk, children and squalling babies. The heat is sweltering. Italian bands playing standard compositions free from the taint of jazz. Groups of players presenting chastely expurgated scenes from Shakespeare, or fumigated Broadway successes. The inspirational lecture, "Glad Thoughts for Glad Folks." A Great Religious Teacher's Message of Hope for All. Predigested education for old and young. Fun, but always *clean fun*. Christian culture, R. F. D.

For my sins, I too have played the brown tents in twenty states, from Michigan to Louisiana and from Washington to California. I, too, have felt my collar melting and flowing stickily toward my shoes, as I stood on the platform and delivered my message. Having spent a number of years on the bench of the juvenile court of a middle western city, and having administered from that exalted seat some measure of justice if not of law, I was invited to expound juvenile delinquencies, and their remedies, to the Chautauqua audiences. My subject the first summer was "Straightening the Bended Shoot"; in the six succeeding seasons of my Chautauqua career it took on other engaging

By ROLAND W. BAGGOTT
with PHILIP McKEE

forms. But my lecture itself varied comparatively little from first to last—a consistency which saved me much labor without doing my listeners any harm, since not many of them could have told what I had talked about, fifteen minutes after I had finished.

Yet I may be wrong about this. Perhaps they denied me their attention deliberately, since I was then some years younger than I am now. In fact, I entertained such a suspicion on one occasion. Two bucolic matrons were discussing our program as I approached the tent.

"This here jedge that's goin' t' speak this afternoon," said one of them, "I seen his pitcher in the window o' the bank, an' he looks t' me too young t' be much fer a jedge."

"Well," replied the other, "maybe he ain't so much fer a lecturer, neither."

The system employed by the Chautauquaters is one compounded of simplicity, effectiveness and the surety of profit so dear to the heart of the promoter. In the old days the country swarmed with the one-ring circus, the dog-and-pony show and the supposedly lascivious street carnival. These amusement enterprises were wont to enter a small town, grease the palm of the sheriff or justice of the peace, and proceed to put on their shows in the hope of harvesting whatever loose money

could be induced to show up at the tent. If weather was bad and trade correspondingly dull, profits shrank or losses mounted.

In the peripatetic Chautauqua, however, there is no such uncertainty. The bureau knows it's going to get every last penny of its money long before the tent is set up or the talent makes its appearance. Months before the Chautauqua season opens, a glib uplift evangelist has paid a visit to the town, has preached powerfully on the text of community advancement and culture for all, has induced the leading storekeeper, the banker and others of the local moneyed *noblesse* to sign a contract which is in effect a cognovit note, has launched the sale of season tickets, and thus has assured the bureau of its full expenses and a reasonable profit in spite of rain, snow, hell or high water.

The contract, let us say, guarantees the bureau the sum of one thousand dollars. All that remains is for the local committee—headed by the parsons, who get their season tickets free—to get out in the intervening months and sell four hundred tickets at two dollars and a half each. If they succeed in this sales campaign, they are in the clear; if not, they dig down into their pockets at the end of the six-day Chautauqua program and make up the difference to the hawk-eyed representative of the bureau.

In my Chautauqua-trouping days, the bureau's full expenses for the six-day carnival of culture amounted to seven or eight hundred dollars for talent, manager, tent crew, advertising and other overhead expenses. It will be seen, therefore, that the thousand-dollar guaranty provided by the local worthies offered little hazard to the bureau, whatever it did to the guarantors. Furthermore, total receipts for the six days often ran to fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars, a very gratifying dish of gravy for the bureau. And there were odds and ends of extra profit, such as the sale of reserved seats at ten cents a performance to customers who had already paid two-fifty



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