BARRANCA DE COBRE -- 1952

February 6, 1952 (by Dick)

Five us -- Lt. Col. Bill Matthews, Sgt. Johnny Wlodarski, Jim Gifford, Isabelle, and I -- made up the expedition. We went to see Nesbitt, the operator for the Potosi Mining Company, who told us how we could reach Urique River using the mining road. Nesbitt also gave us a letters of introduction to La Junta, Creel, and other villages near the Urique River. We left at noon, after running down Jim. Jim got lost chasing Tarahumara Indians; he's started a large collection of Tarahumara belts.

The Indians are reluctant to sell their belts, mainly because these belts hold up the only articles of clothing they possess. The Tarahumara are a small, interesting people. They are so shy that when we pass them on the road, the women turn their heads away.

The country between Chihuahua City and La Junta is not exceptionally beautiful, but the people and the land are very interesting. The rough roads isolate the area from ordinary tourists. The land is over-grazed, and the livestock is poor. The heaviest beef couldn't possibly weigh over 400 pounds. On some of the roughest stretches of road we saw little boys repairing the roadway with the most rudimentary tools. They always demanded a toll tax of us, which we freely gave.

We passed through a large village that had a number of black and blond-haired people. Some of them had blue eyes. When we inquired about the roads we were surprised to find they didn't understand English. Many years ago Canadian Mennonites settled the valley, and now they have intermarried with the Mexicans. These Mennonites may have black hair and blue eyes, but they are Mennonites from head to toe. Their walk and dress is still distinct Mennonite, but every one speaks Spanish.

You read of the Sierra Mountains as a wild mountain range inhabited by renegade Indians. Most of these reports are absurd. Adventurer's go into the mountains and bring out all kinds of reports.

La Junta is a nice village. Our hotel, or adobe house, is very comfortable. For seven of us our rooms cost $2.50. Food is good but all Mexican. Johnny is already very sick.

We passed many families of Tarahumara Indians on the road. Their corn crop is a failure and they are starving.

Tarahumara Indians migrating to the larger cities for food.

February 7, 1952

We left La Juanta early in the morning. It was very cold, ice on all the streams. The farther we went the rougher the road became. My parlor car hit a rock on one of the high centers and punched a hole through the flywheel housing. The noise was really worse than the damage. We fixed it then drove back to the village. The road was too much for a Pontiac Sedan parlor car! We left it with a white man who was 60 years old and very lonely. He has lived in this area so long that he's almost forgotten how to speak English.

We all piled into Jim's truck, which was already overloaded. Pete and I rode on the tailgate, and within an hour we were completely covered with dust. Fortunately Pete was a very patient young man. He's a social anthropologist. Pete will drive my car back to Tucson.

Bill, the Colonel, is an easy-going fellow. He has paid for all the expenses. More than anything else, Bill wants to have a good time.

Johnny, the Sergeant, is 22 years old and a little green, but he'll do. This is his first real camping trip.

Finding Creel was difficult since there are no road signs pointing the way. We stopped at every village to ask directions. At one village Bill jumped out and spilled out a string of Spanish to a Mexican. The Mexican answered him promptly, saying, "Me no speak English."
So much for our Spanish! Mexicans are nice to us, they have not seen many tourists, if any.
Jim's truck did a good job getting us to Creel. Rocks, high centers, and steep grades would have made it impossible for my passenger car.

This country, or I should say the Sierra Madre Mountains, isn't too impressive. The hills are low even though we crossed the divide at an elevation of 8500 feet. There are large pine trees, and the scenery is much like the Colorado Rockies. A railroad ends at Creel, hauling lumber and ore on the return trip ore to Chiuahuaha City

A Chinaman fed us and gave us rooms. He has three daughters and speaks some English and Spanish. Our bill was $7.

There certainly is no inflation here. The food and rooms are moderately clean, at least they are cleaner than we are.

NOTE! I visited this area in 1987 with my mother. I learned from the locals that the Chinaman was cruelly tortured until he died. The bandits wanted all of his money that was suppose to be hidden in his house. The Chinaman did not have any money for he had previously given all of his land and money to the Catholic Church. He donated the town square. He was very much remembered and revered by the locals.

February 7, 1952 (by Isabelle)

Five excited people lay awake thinking about tomorrow, the day that was to be the beginning of an unknown adventure, the day when five people would venture into the Barranca de Cobre (Canyon of Copper) deep in the Sierra Madre Mountains of northwestern Mexico.

For Lt. Col. Bill Matthews it was a dream of two years, of taking a boat down the Urique River, which cuts through a deep canyon of unknown depth. It will be a first. For James Gifford, an archaeologist, it was an opportunity to study the little-known culture of the Tarahumara Indians. For Sgt. Johnny Wlodarski, it was a exciting adventure to be the first people to traverse the rugged canyon. For Dick, a geologist, it would be just another adventure. For me, a woman who would rather explore and chase down rivers than stay home doing housework, it was a thrill to know I'd be the first white woman to even see the canyon in depth.

We spent our last night of civilization in a hotel in Creel run by the Chinaman. He was short and round as he was high -- a funny little old man, but he had three beautiful daughters. His hotel took us back 40 years. It was lighted by oil lamps and made out of rough boards. Upon retiring we were instructed, should the need arise, to go outside, first turn to the left, right next to the pig pen.

The dinner served by the Chinaman was delicious; steak, fried potatoes, sliced tomatoes, beans, apple pie, and coffee. But oddly enough, Dick and Jim got sick and took walks all night.

February 8, 1952

We got up early, all of us bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, eager to go the final 20 miles to the Urique River. We wanted to see how much water there was, how fast the river was going, and just what we were getting ourselves into. We had so little information about the canyon from the beginning. A few white men have gotten to the canyon and to the river, but no one has ever traversed the entire canyon, a distance of 150 miles.

At 5:00 a.m. we piled into the truck. Carol, Jim's fiancee, and Pete came along from Tucson so they could drive the truck and our car back. It was a three and a half-hour drive from Creel to the river. We started in the dark and drove right into the sunrise. It's magnificent country. Cold too, there was ice on the creeks. I suspect this trip will be different from our lazy days on the Colorado River. But the sun shines here, too, and the country is superb.

In the distance we saw Umira bridge. The Urique River! We craned our necks but could see nothing. The truck rolled to a stop, and we all jumped out and ran to the bridge. Below was a 100-foot deep gorge filled with huge boulders and a clear blue sparkling river that tumbled over the rocks. Beautiful, but here we met with our first disappointment. There was very little water this time of the year, and the flow was slow -- about 80 cubic feet per second. There will be many, many portages.

Dick thought fast and ordered everything unloaded from the truck, unpacked, and spread out on the ground. Then he ruthlessly put aside about half of our equipment to be sent back with the truck. He foresaw great difficulties with the river; that this wasn't to be an ordinary river trip. Our 450-pound, rapid-running neoprene boat wasn't even unloaded. Back went the life-preservers, surplus clothing, and a good part of the food. Jim and I protested vigorously, because we thought the river might become more floatable lower down. Dick was firm -- he didn't give a inch.

Carol and Pete took off shortly. As I watched the truck drive away I had a momentary feeling of panic. There went our last contact with civilization.

A steep and rugged trail lead down to the river. We packed everything down and then made camp. The first thing I did was to dip my hands in the water. What a shock -- it was icy! Oh Boy! We've got troubles.

We're using two seven-man rubber life rafts. The Air Force loaned them to Bill to try out. I suspect the Air Force will never see these boats again. They weigh only 60 pounds each, and are bright yellow, nine feet long, and five feet wide. The boys inflated them and deposited them right on shore.

Here we are at last on the Urique River. Johnny's sitting in a boat, Jim is upstream, I've lost track of Bill, I'm sitting in the other boat, Dick is perched 200 feet up a cliff -- and all of us are busily writing notes. We might be in Mexico, but the scenery is typical of the canyons; deep blue skies, pure white clouds, steep canyon walls, pine trees, and the music of water pouring over the rocks. But there the similarity between the Urique and the Colorado River ends. This water is low, very low. We'll be doing a lot of walking on this trip, and the boats will carry mostly food and equipment.

I stopped writing and looked around, relaxed and happy in the warm sunshine. I saw movement on a path along the canyon wall. Two people walked across it, a man and a woman, Tarahumara Indians. They tried to keep out of sight and watched us through the trees. The woman kept her face averted but was so full of lively curiosity that she would sneak a look every now and then. She wore a full red skirt and a white headband. The man wore a white loincloth wound between his legs. Both were barefoot. They wore beautiful wool belts about five inches wide and two and a half yards long, woven by loom in intricate designs and natural colors. I possess one of these treasures. Jim got it for me in Chihuahua.

We are hoping some of these Indians will come to our camp some day, even though they are so painfully shy. They are fascinating and so little is known about them. Some live in the canyons in caves or rough shelters built of stones. Others live on the mountains and farm. They are incredibly swift runners and have been known to track deer until the animals drop from exhaustion. Then the Indians close in and either throttle the deer or slay them with knives.

Dick came bursting into camp full of excitement and carrying a thigh bone. He'd found a dead man on a ledge high up the cliff in a small cave. The bones were bundled together and loosely covered with leaves. He could find no skull; wild animals might have carried it off since the brain deteriorates slowly.

Everybody is happy and full of great expectations. We have a grand bunch of people, all of us very compatible. This promises to be an interesting and unique expedition.

February 9, 1952

It was a cold, clear night. The trucks crossing the bridge in early evening had a gala time. We would hear a squeal of brakes, then all the Mexicans would climb out to take a better look at us. We all waved back and forth with enthusiasm.

We ate breakfast -- french toast, chocolate milk, and bacon. We were eager to start. Johnny and Bill took the lead while Dick, Jim, and I followed in the other boat. The boats are light and fragile and tip crazily if not treated with respect. The bottom is thin so we put our inflated air mattress in to support our duffel and food.

The canyon is magnificent -- sheer towering walls with trees clinging everywhere, rugged terraced rock climbing straight up, clear, sparkling water. We could see fish swimming in its depths.

We had a splendid run -- for about a hundred yards. Then the river was choked and blocked by monstrous boulders as big as houses. The river broke into rivulets and miniature waterfalls, with water running over, under and between boulders. In some places the boats could get through, in others there was hardly room for a fish to squeeze through. We looked at each other in dismay, but every one was game. I was of little help in lifting or portaging, so I left the boat and went to shore jumping from rock to rock. The boys got out of the boats and lifted, eased, and squeezed the boats over and between the boulders. The water was icy and seemed more than they could bear, but eventually their feet grew numb and eased the pain. At one point the boulders were so big and blocked the river so completely that the boys were forced to go

around on shore carrying the boats and relaying all the cargo. The weight was terrific. We had ten three-gallon cans holding part of our food, such as 50 pounds of flour, 25 pounds of sugar, 15 pounds of canned meat, 10 pounds of rice, 4 pounds of cereal, 25 pounds of potatoes, cans of corn and peas, spaghetti, dried eggs, dried milk, etc. Then we had six duffel bags, sleeping bags, air mattresses, seven cameras, six tarps, paddles, two guns, jackets, and medicine. The boys had to relay all of this over the huge boulders, scrambling over the top and dropping the stuff over the other side. The going was painfully slow and difficult.

I wasn't much help to the boys so I scouted ahead. The walking was up and down over boulders. I began to hate the sight of them. The river never cleared. I was about to turn back, when I heard the familiar growl of fast water in the distance. I ran in my excitement. The growl increased to a roar. The water quickened, and the river disappeared into a chute carved through the rock. I scrambled to the top and my heart missed a beat as I saw the river plunge down into a 28-foot water fall.

We unloaded the boats and carried all the equipment about 100 yards. We called it Red Rock Falls

We had barely finished our portage when the clouds closed in and it started pouring. We scrambled about putting everything under tarps. We were anxious because we were now trapped in the canyon and an extended rain could pin us down in one place for a long time. We made a shelter by standing the boats on end, leaning them side by side against a cliff, and stretching a tarp on top. We huddled underneath, a pretty beat-up bunch; tired, hungry, muscles aching from the unaccustomed labor, disappointed in the river and the fact that we made only about two miles progress today. Our boats showed daylight peeking through. One boat had eight holes in it, but fortunately we had tire patching with us.

Sunday February 10, 1952

It rained on and off all night. Johnny and Bill slept under a tarp, Jim found dubious shelter under an over-hanging boulder, and Dick and I slept under the shelter made by the boats. The boats were still wet in the morning so we took off without patching them.

Bill's tennis shoes are slick and smooth with no traction. While easing the boats over the rocks, his foot slipped, up went his heels, down went Bill up to his neck in the icy water. He emerged dripping and grinning.

Yesterday we saw a Mexican and his son walking two burros along side the river. We exchanged a few words in Spanish while they followed with us apiece. We reached a narrow point between two large boulders where the boys had to squeeze the boats through. The river bottom is very deceptive, ranging from ankle deep to over 20 or 30 feet deep, due to the rocks and boulders. Johnny's boat got hung up on a rock. He tried to rock it off, one foot on a rock and one knee on the boat. Dick came from behind with his boat and gave Johnny's boat a hard shove. Johnny grabbed at the air, arms waving frantically, then toppled in. The Mexicans rocked with laughter and everyone, even Johnny, was convulsed with mirth.

Light rain kept up on and off all day which made us fearful that it might rain in earnest. A hard rain for just a few hours could wash us out of here. There are few escape routes out of the canyon.

The river was the same today, boulders and portages. After a half-mile we came to a terrific obstacle. It was magnificent and spectacular, but no place for a boat or people. The canyon walls dropped down into the river on both sides. The river plunged down over a 25-foot falls into a second pool of water. We immediately named it Plunge Pool Falls.

The boys said they might have to lower me by ropes since the sides seemed so shear. I got so scared at the thought of it that I took off on my own. I eased down over rocks along shore and jumped across places where I couldn't walk until I reached the level of the second pool. There I was stopped by a ten-foot drop of sheer wall. I sat there for half an hour trying to work up enough nerve to drop off the edge onto a patch of ground below. Finally I eased over the edge with my hands braced behind me, then dropped down on all fours. I had cut myself off from returning to the boats, but now no one would have to lower me on ropes. Later, I learned the boys were only joking.

They lowered the boats into the first pool, then lowered all the cargo with ropes into the boats. They rowed across the pool and again lowered the boats and equipment over the second drop. It took about two hours.

Our progress was awfully slow. All we made today was a turn around a goose neck. Rain in the afternoon stopped us around four o'clock. We found a cave and made camp.

I'm writing by firelight. The moon is rising and the canyon walls are flooded with light. The boys are sitting around the fire drinking tea and talking. We're all in gay spirits and eager for the new day to see what's below. We can still walk back, but not out of the canyon. One of these days we will be trapped by waterfalls or sheer walls and there will be only one way out -- down the river. Jim is talking like a black boy and there's much laughter. But the conversation took a serious turn as we discussed something very important -- TIME. Johnny and Bill have to be back March 15 or they will be AWOL. That will jeopardize Bill's career. Johnny is to be discharged in three months after four years' service. Jim will loose this semester's credits if not back by March 10. At the rate we're going, we wonder if we'll get out in time. The original plan was to be in San Blas by March 10 at the latest, where there is a train going out. Maybe helicopters will pull us out of the canyon.

The boys keep teasing me, saying this will probably be my last trip and pinching my arm to see if I'd make good eating.

February 11, 1952 (by Dick)

No rain during the night, but in the morning there was heavy fog. We put eight patches on the boats, and by 10:30 we were off. It was easy going for a half mile. The boats glided across deep pools of green water between almost sheer cliffs. Then we came to a stretch of water where huge boulders had rolled from cliffs into the river. These boulders were large as houses, and it was difficult to even walk through them. We had to portage everything 200 yards around them.

Every one of us threw something away. Jim abandoned his extra sleeping bag, archeology equipment, clothes, and soap. Bill and Johnny both unloaded clothes. I threw away two blankets, my gold pan, and clothes. Isabelle was sitting on top of a huge boulder and protested loudly and vigorously when she saw the blankets go. We piled everything on top of a huge boulder hoping the Indians would find it.

We put our boats in once more and went several hundred yards. Then we again portaged through boulders for 150 yards. We made camp approximately one and one half miles

below the last camp. One mile yesterday and three miles the day before isn't much. We work very hard and our labors seem barely worth the effort. This canyon is so large and difficult to traverse that I can't see any way to get down it with boats. One could walk, but many places require swimming to cross.

The canyon is rather lush with many trees that are typical of the Canadian climate. Although this is winter, there's an abundance of green vegetation. We're dropping down at the rate of 150 feet per mile, and already there are signs of tropical vegetation creeping in. One mile below this camp I found a cave and a new variety of cactus.

Jim named our boat *Poco Loco* -- Little Crazy.

The Tarahumara Indians are following us. We've seen their footprints in the sand when we relay loads. They haven't taken any of our equipment. We've left a small fortune to the Indians behind us. They're only several hundred yards from us, but we never see them. They're also in front of us and above us watching every move we make. We're glad that they're a gentle race of people.

February 12, 1952 (by Isabelle)

The night was bitter cold. We all burrowed deeper and deeper into our sleeping bags until in the morning we looked like big brown balls scattered around camp. Dick and I were reluctant to get up so we waited until we heard the familiar sound of the air-pump as Bill coaxed a fire with it. Then we crawled out. I made breakfast of cream-of-wheat, scrambled eggs with bacon, and tea. Dick made bread in the dutch oven.

Today was one grand portage. We came through a mass of boulders as big as houses scattered and dumped into the riverbed and filling the canyon floor. The river wound in and out, going under the boulders, dropping off into crazy waterfalls, forming deep, silent, gloomy pools, while the waterfalls shouted and screamed. The sun never reaches down into this devil's cellar. We named it Black Gorge.

The boys stuck to the river, relaying the stuff off sheer sides in the water, up over huge boulders, dropping the boat off cliffs into the water below, squeezing down through chutes of water between boulders. At one point they took the boats through a tunnel beneath large boulders

Bill and Isabelle floating through a tunnel of large rocks.

The way is slow and difficult, and we average about two miles a day. Still, our group is gay and eager to see what lies ahead. We are way behind in mileage and are beginning to speculate how we can make it out of the canyon in time. Dick and I have plenty of time, but the rest have to be back by March 15. The Air Force might even send rescue planes if Bill isn't back. Bill has an important job at the Pentagon.

I helped whenever I could with the portaging. When I got in the way, I left and scouted ahead. It was an up-and-down hike over giant boulders. About half a mile from the boys, I came across huge footprints made by shoes. There's nothing more frightening than unknown man-tracks in the middle of the wilderness. Dick hooted and explained that he did a little scouting last night and those HUGE prints were his.

There are Tarahumara Indians around us. We came across their barefoot prints, as small as a child's, many times. It gives me an eerie feeling knowing that we're being continually watched.

Johnny and Bill are swell guys, easy with laughter and eager to help. Johnny is 22 years old with the curliest smile. His eyes crinkle up and his nose wrinkles. He is a natural for Dick to tease. Bill is 42 and looks and acts like the other boys. He is ever so thoughtful and an excellent conversationalist. Jim is the clown.

The canyon is cold at night and cool in the shadows. When the sun shines it is remarkably warm for February. No bugs.

February 13, 1952 (by Dick)

Now we often hear drums -- *tombolos*, a thousand feet above us on a ledge. And we still haven't seen a single Indian. It is kind of like a western movie -- we are surrounded.

Just a half mile today. We portaged most of the way. These boulders are amazing. They form weird passage ways that are dark and narrow with sheer walls rising straight up. You can scramble up to the tops of them, but many times they drop straight down 20 feet into the river and form a dead-end.

Towards evening Johnny, Jim, and I walked down the river for two miles. It was more of the same.

It doesn't look like I'll be able to hold this group together much longer if things don't improve soon. We're getting deeper and deeper into the canyon. We can no longer escape by going back up river, and soon the canyon walls will be so sheer that we may not be able to climb out. There is already talk of abandoning the expedition.

February 14, 1952 (by Dick)

It was so cold, not one of us slept over four hours. It's a damp cold that seems to go right through to the bones. Tonight we will wall the fire with rocks and sleep around it. We'll keep it burning all night.

This morning we once again heard a *tombola* just above us on the cliff. The continuous beating lasted an hour. The beat was quite audible and could have been heard miles away. We don't know what's going on, maybe messages are being relayed to Indians below us. At one time we heard an Indian yell at us or to another Indian. We are continually throwing stuff away that an Indian would prize. A empty tin can would be a real find to one of these people. These Indians may have never seen a white man and they certainly have never seen people with boats. I'm sure glad they are friendly, timid people!

The canyon is now 2500 feet deep and the canyon floor is about 300 feet wide. The canyon walls are becoming more perpendicular every day.

We had good luck portaging through the big boulders and came through about three o'clock

Note three figures on left side of photo.

There have been several other expeditions in this canyon. Today we came to the quitting point of two men from El Paso. On a rock Paul Reed and Frank Lynch had painted *El Paso City Limits*. This was as far as they got into the canyon, which was farther than anyone else with the exception of us. The newspaper articles quoted them as saying that it was impossible to traverse

this canyon with boats. They had to abandon their boats and all their equipment to escape the canyon. Like us, they were attempting to be the first people through the canyon.

It was an article with pictures printed in Life Magazine that first caught Bill Matthew's attention. Bill then contacted me to organize the trip. I was mildly interested, but now that I have touched the fringes I'm becoming fanatical about this area -- I've got to have it all. Life Magazine had two sentences that caught my attention, *No jman is known ever to have traversed the canyon from end to end. It has never been surveyed by the few adventurers who have gone in or by the Mexican government.* The magazine went on to say that *the canyon might be as deep as 8000 feet deep, deeper than the Grand Canyon.*

February 15, 1952 (by Isabelle)

We beat the cold last night, built a roaring fire and put in a reserve of firewood five feet high. Then the boys took turns feeding the fire during the night. Sleepily, I opened my eyes in the middle of the night. The flames were burning low. Someone got up and put a big log on; the flames leaped up brightly. I closed my eyes, comfortably relaxed, and fell asleep again. For the first time I was able to lie straight instead of curling into a tight ball for warmth.

Rough day of portaging again. It's really rugged. The boys' legs are raw and chapped from the cold water. They now wear jeans instead of shorts. They are wet to the waist all day. Five hours a day portaging the boats and lifting them over rocks and boulders in the cold water is about all they can take. So our traveling time is very short. We get up about 8:00 and make camp about 4:00. We roll in about 8:00.

Before we started this trip, we read accounts of parrots and monkeys down in the canyon. We look sharp but have seen none so far. In fact, the only wild life we've seen are two eagles, canyon wrens, and a cute little bird called a dipper. Every time they chirp, their bodies bob and dip.

We are convinced the only kind of boat to use down here is our seven-man Air Force rubber boat because of the numerous portages. They're light, yet carry enough food and duffel. We put another hole in one of the boats, but tire patching fixed it.

Dick makes bread every day now. Our meals are simple. For breakfast, cream-of-wheat, scrambled dry eggs, tea, and sometimes pancakes. Bread and honey for lunch. At night, soup and goulash mixtures made with rice, potatoes, or spaghetti, canned meats, and various sauces.

Bill had a fungus disease on his hands that he'd acquired in North Africa. It has since healed but left a lot of scar tissue. Portaging and the cold water has cracked the skin on his fingers and it's very painful for him. He offered to do the dishes for me last night, but I wouldn't let him. He is that kind of a wonderful guy. All the men are swell. No griping. But they are discussing the probability of not being able to get out of the canyon in the limited time we have. After eight days on the river we've made ten miles. There are 200 miles in all. We might go just as far as the town of Urique and then walk out.

The canyon is very deep and the sunlight only shines down here about six hours. The walls are becoming more sheer with each passing day. There are many hardwood maples. Jim believes slight earthquakes toppled these gigantic boulders down here. The skyline is ragged with eroded boulders, some tipping crazily. Dick thinks the tremendous amount of water that tears through the canyon during the rainy season is responsible for the gigantic boulders. The high water mark is many feet above the existing water level.

We made camp early in the afternoon. The boys hiked about three miles to look the river over. They came back with discouraging news. The river never clears itself of boulders and the whole darn thing is one portage after another.

February 16, 1952

Today was momentous. We all had a confab and came up with these important facts. There isn't enough time to go down the river. Jim will loose his semester's credits if he isn't back in time. Bill will have the air force down here looking for him, and both he and Johnny would be

AWOL. Johnny has only three months to go for his discharge after four years of service. They don't want to risk walking through and getting stranded in the middle of this Mexican wilderness.
But Dick is another breed of cat and isn't about to give up. He said, "I'm walking through," and looked at me.
"Me too", I answered promptly, for I knew he would go off and leave in a heart beat.
We've concluded now that the only way to traverse this canyon is on foot, and maybe Dick and I can't even do that. We shall see.
We slept in a big cave. Built a monstrous fire and fed it all night. Everyone was warm.

Sunday, February 17, 1952

Sunday always seems a fateful day. We had a whopper of a breakfast of scrambled eggs with chipped beef, bacon, cereal, rice, and tea. Then everyone made up their small packs. Johnny is taking Dick's flute and my camera back. They will walk out the ten miles to the bridge, hitchhike to Creel, and then try to get transportation back to Chihuahua.

Dick and I took our sleeping-bags, his two cameras, and food. We took rice, raisins, dried milk, dried eggs, tea, sugar, dried soup, and three cans of meat. Dick and I had quite a discussion over the air mattresses. I wanted to take both. Dick exploded over such luxury. I insisted, so he gave in providing I'd carry them. After I got my pack on my back, I could barely stagger to my feet, let alone climb up and down over boulders. Exit one air mattress.

Except cameras and two sleeping bags, everything was left behind. All the food -- flour, sugar, crisco, rice, cereal, spaghetti, etc. Air mattresses were left, boats were left, clothes were left, and everything was just piled up for the Indians who were watching every move we made. We were sure our things would be gone within hours, just as soon as they realized we'd abandoned the goods.

We shook hands all around, bid each other good luck, and parted, the boys walking upstream and Dick and I downstream.

Toiling up and down those huge boulders was rugged and slow going. Even though we took just the bare essentials, I swear our packs had rocks in them. I'd carry mine on my back, on my hip, my shoulders. I haven't tried my head yet. We went through all of our things three times

to discard something -- a roll of toilet paper, some soap, even combined our medicine so we could throw some bottles away. We have penicillin, halogen tablets, chloromycin, and pills for malaria.

It was a magnificent day, warm and sunny with sparkling, singing waters and the happy song of the canyon wren. The vegetation down here is fantastic; in fact it's downright crazy. There are northern hardwood maples, northern pines, many varieties of cactus, orchids, and a profusion of colorful wild flowers. There's a purple flower that is lovely. It has a cluster of purple petals with a soft, furry pussy-willow-like center. The pink orchids, ready to burst into bloom, wrap themselves around the branches of trees. They are parasitic.

We camped early, sheltered against a monstrous boulder. After building a roaring fire we dined on rice and raisins. Life certainly is exciting down here. Every day brings something new, and we are always going around that next bend in the river. We're having a great adventure in the unknown.

Dick scouted ahead about a mile and a half and had all kinds of adventures. He saw numerous Indian tracks, but never saw any Indians. We know they are watching us, yet we never see them. Dick heard the steady beat of their drum, then a horn blasted shrilly above his head on the cliff. He nearly jumped out of his shoes, but could see nothing. Dick thinks we'll see some Tarahumara Indians soon.

We plan to walk to the town of Urique. Dick has an Air Force map, but it was made from aerial photos and isn't much good. So Urique might be 30 miles, 60, or maybe 90 miles.
We covered four miles today.

1994 Entry -- By Dick

A few parties have entered this area after we went through. They had no prior knowledge of our visit since they traversed the canyon many years later. Rick Fischer, with a large party, traversed the Barranca de Cobre Canyon and Urique Canyon in 1986. He describes the canyon in one of his writings as thus:

The Barranca de Cobre is made impassable by a huge boulder pile and waterfalls that occur approximately ten miles down stream from the Umira Bridge. This boulder stream field is where the river goes underground for over a mile. Downstream, the river course assumes a nature much like the Sinforosa Canyon. Several other areas have been tried by boat and/or kayak. One is from El Tejaban to the trail down from Divisadero. This stretch is described as unrunable. One party seemed to have better luck in inflatable kayaks from Divisadero trail put in to the village of Urique.

February 18, 1952 (By Isabelle)

What I dreaded finally happened today. We've had to cross and recross the river several times a day where canyon walls plunge straight down into the water making passage impossible on that side. This afternoon we came to a place where both walls dropped straight into the river forming a narrow impassable gorge. What now?

Dick said, "Looks like we'll have to climb that mountain."
I looked up. The cliff rose steeply with a sheer drop hundreds of feet to the river.

"I'll swim first," I retorted.

"Might be a waterfall below," Dick said softly.

I am deadly afraid of heights, and my spirit quelled at the thought of inching our way along that cliff. But I meekly shouldered my pack and started. I didn't look down, just kept my eyes on my feet taking one step at a time. When we were 600 feet above the river our trail narrowed to a ledge one foot wide. The wall dropped straight down below us. I sat while Dick scouted ahead to find a way down to the river. I looked at the sky; I sang songs; I whistled -- anything to keep from looking down.

About an hour later Dick came back muttering, "Damn, we can't get down."

So we turned back and I inched my way down. Dick, the nimble-footed goat,strode down with the 60-pound pack on his shoulders. He kept coming back to lend me a helping hand. I was

practically gibbering with terror and vowed I'd kiss the ground if I ever got down. When I dropped off the last ledge onto firm ground, I grinned for the first time and settled by kissing Dick instead. I gave him a good back-rub for carrying the packs up the cliff and back again.
We are right back where we started. How to get through the gorge? The only solution is to build a raft. Tomorrow.

The day itself was incredibly beautiful. The sun shone brilliantly, yet the air was crisp and sharp like mountain air and autumn combined. Although we carried our packs, we never got over-warm.

One of many, many rafts.

This is big country. Tremendous! At this point we can't even climb out, nor can we go back up the river. To get out of here it's down the river.

We camped in the shelter of a huge boulder. We had supper of soup, scrambled eggs, and tea. I found a package of gum in my sack. Dick stuck his wad on a boulder so he could use it tomorrow, too. We gathered a big pile of logs to keep the fire burning all night. We kept nice and warm.

Distance 3 1/2 miles.

February 19, 1952

This morning Dick built a raft from five logs that he gathered from far and wide. He tied them together with his belt, shoestrings, fishing line, and twine. Then he put the air-mattress on top and balanced all our equipment on them -- a pack, a duffel bag, a shoulder-bag, the camera bag, and our boots. We stripped down to our underwear and packed our clothes in a bag. Then we pushed the raft out into the river and, before we lost our nerve, slipped into the icy water. The shock was momentarily stunning. We had to hang onto the raft lightly so as not to upset it's precarious burden. We kicked hard with our legs and guided the raft across the river.

Dick looked at me and asked, "Think you can make it?"

I nodded as each limb became numb. Suddenly my feet touched bottom and we dragged the raft to shore. What heavenly relief to climb out into the warm sunshine.

Two miles down we came to another point in the river where the walls plunged down into the water. The river was actually dammed by large boulders, forming a lake between the vertical walls. Yes, we had to build another raft. This time it was twice as hard to sink down into that icy river.

There are many canyon wrens in the canyon. Their clear liquid notes suddenly cascade through the silence. Dick and I always stop to listen.

Time after time I give many thanks for the Christmas boots Dick's folks gave me. It is the only footgear for this rugged country. I can jump confidently knowing that my ankle won't turn treacherously snap.

Dick did a little scouting after we made camp. He found a big, square rock weighing about 200 pounds, propped up by a stick with a lot of grass around it. His bump of curiosity made him poke around it, and WHOSSH down smashed the rock. It was an ingenious trap set in a figure of four by a Tarahumara Indian.

Dick gets skinnier every day. When we started this trip he was pleasingly plump. Now it's a losing battle between his pants and gravity. I'm wearing down a little, too. Our legs are badly chapped from the cold water and the tips of my fingers are split open like squeezed grapes. Little flies bite us on the legs causing bumps that itch fiercely. Outside of these discomforts, our health is superb. Lots of sleep, plenty of fresh air, and quantities of milk and eggs keep us in tip-top shape.

Cooking is quite a procedure. Our utensils consist of one pot, two teaspoons, two cups, and a water canteen. Here's how I make scrambled eggs. Mix up dried eggs, milk powder, onion powder, salt and water in the pot. Pour the goop into our two cups. Wash out pot. Fry bacon in pot, add eggs and scramble. Wash cups, then put eggs in cups. Breakfast is ready. For supper, I make soup, we eat soup, wash pot; then make rice and raisins, eat rice and raisins, wash pot; make tea, drink tea, wash pot.

Distance today, three miles.

February 20, 1952

This country is the roughest terrain Dick has ever seen. The rate of progress is brutal. Today we made only 2 1/2 miles. We struck a narrow neck in the river that required two crossings on a raft. Dick scouted around for a Tarahumara trail. He found one on the left side of the river and followed it over the edge of a cliff while I waited below. The trail ended at an Indian's house, a shelter of stones perched high on the canyon wall. Inside, Dick found pottery, woven baskets, a *mano*, a *metate*, and a wooden hoe. Outside was a tiny cornfield. Dick heard someone shout at him, but could see no one. I call this the land of invisible people. We have yet to see an Indian. We know they're around us.

Dick scouted the right side of the river. He found the beginning of a trail marked with a long pole. It climbed up into the sky and over the cliff. I started gamely enough. But about a third of the way up, as the trail got steep and edged near drops of 200 feet straight down, I sat and quietly went into hysterics. Dick patted me on the shoulder and tried to comfort me. I wailed all the louder. Gradually I relaxed, wiped away the tears and started again. We lost the trail on top. I sat on a broad ledge in the warm sunshine while Dick scouted ahead seeking a way back to the river. He came upon the trail again, and it led us safely back to the river. Dick must be half Indian because he is able to track an Indian trail that passed over bare rock. We saw numerous stone traps set by the Indians on the way down.

After we hit the river again we had to cross and recross five times. At one point we waded through water over our waists, and another place I had to drop off an eight-foot boulder while Dick caught me below.

A half-mile down we reached a bend in the river where both walls dropped straight into the water. We couldn't even see around the corner. The river is dammed, forming a large lake between the vertical walls. It means another raft.

We camped in the sandy shelter against the vertical canyon wall. Dick started building the raft tonight, but there is so little suitable wood. It gives me the shakes to think of our icy bath tomorrow. Distance 2 1/2 miles.

February 20, 1952 (by Dick)

Not much for this writing, but Iz made me. We can no longer get out of here safely. Going up river is doubtful because of the large, dammed lakes and river current. Coming down river we jumped off several boulders, and I don't think we can climb back on those boulders from this side. Climbing out is no good because Iz is not a rock climber. It appears that we are 3500 feet below the rim. The only water that seems to be available is from the Urique River, which we are following. There is no water coming out of the side canyons. We have only a one-quart canteen that would last the two of us for only a short time. Even if we did get out on top we would be hard pressed to find water.

If we ever get any rain in here we would surely be trapped. I suspect that this canyon can be a raging torrent -- there are large boulders many feet above the canyon floor with logs lodged in them.

The total section of rock from the rim to the river bottom consists of volcanic tufts. The rock is like coarse sandpaper so our foot wear is taking a beating.

Almost every day we hear the drums beating above us on the cliffs, but still no Indians in sight. We see their foot prints everywhere. The Indians use the river for a short distance then go up the side of the canyon. I have learned how to spot their trails -- they mark the spot where the trail goes up by a long skinny log. I have also become adept at following their trails, which most of the time go to the rim.

We have one map for the entire area which is photogrammetric, made by the USAF. There are no contours and the scale is 1 1/4 inches per 10 miles. The map shows Creel and the village of Urique, which is a long way from here, the Urique River, and a few trails. The map does show a trail from Creel crossing below us, but how many miles from here, I don't know because we don't know where we are. There is supposed to be a small mining village where the trail crosses the Urique River. I think the village is called Barranca de Cobre -- it isn't shown on the map.

We will be out of food in a few days. I was hoping to get food from the Indians, but they are so unapproachable.

We have come maybe 25 miles in 13 days. Not very impressive!
The world is full of dreamers but few people ever manage to pull off their dreams!

February 21, 1952 (by Isabelle)

The river isn't negotiable by boat, and now we are wondering if we can make it on foot. Everyday we make less mileage and meet more and more obstacles. At this rate it will take months. Something has to give, and I'm afraid it will be us. It is a big, relentless, harsh, rugged country and not for the faint-hearted. For the first time in my life I'm facing the absolute unknown and don't know what is around the corner. There are hundreds and thousands of corners we have to go around.

Dick made a drastic decision this morning to climb out and see if we can make mileage on top and then drop down to the river miles ahead. Something has to be done. The danger up there is the lack of water. But we will try anything rather than swim in that icy water again. We filled the water canteen and started climbing. I'm glad I had my hysteria yesterday because today there is no time. A short way up the mountain we found an Indian shelter of rocks and logs. We found baskets and pottery and also a sheep pen. A tree was growing right out of the canyon wall, its roots exposed to the open and clinging tenaciously to every crevice and crack until they could dip into the ground below.

At the risk of sounding sentimental, Dick said something sweet. "You know, I couldn't do this alone. It would be too lonely."

As I grinned at him, he hastily added, "Well, I gotta have someone to cook for me and carry my cameras."

Dick is amazing. He is ever so wilderness-wise. He spots the Indian trails quickly and easily while I blunder off into the brush. He carries all our food, sleeping bags, air mattress, clothes, and 22-pistol in two packs -- one on his back and one in his arms. I carry the cameras and medicine and still can't keep up with him. He has to come back and help me over the steep spots. I slow him down very much.

It was rough going without a trail. The underbrush tore at our clothes. In some places we crawled over loose rocks and rubble starting landslides. In other places the rocks were larger, making the footing more secure. We were panting and sweating from the climb. It took all day to get three-quarters of the way to the top. Our water was gone. Dick left me sitting under a tree while he scouted ahead looking for water. No luck! Had he found water, we would have continued on top looking for a trail. But we couldn't take the chance without water. So we wearily turned around and dropped off the mountain, very unhappy because we now had to build a raft and swim that river of ice.

Dick scouted far and wide to find logs. He built a large raft of seven logs so I could ride on top. I would have never been able to swim so far in the cold water. We braided the line so we'd have more rope. We slid the air mattress under one end of the raft, where I stepped and gingerly kneeled down. Then Dick gave a hard push and sank into the cold water. It was a long stretch, longer than either of us realized, about 200 yards. Dick was blowing hard from the exertion and the cold. I crouched tensely as our craft swayed gently, holding and balancing our duffel and guarding the camera bag. Just when both of us thought we couldn't take anymore, Dick's feet touched ground and he dragged the raft to shore. He was hypothermic and shaking uncontrollably.

He gasped out between chattering teeth, "Iz make a fire, QUICK!"
I scrambled around for matches and wood, and in a short time had a fire blazing. I put on milk to heat. Dick drank the scalding liquid and soon felt human again.

We avoided building another raft by sneaking across on a ledge. We were beat-up and dead-tired so we camped. Dick built a big fire and we slept warm. Distance 1/2 mile.

February 22, 1952

First thing, 75 feet from camp, make another raft. Dick found three flat boards, built a sturdy raft and in a half hour we were across the river. He is getting quite good at raft-building. I sat on top and kept dry.

We resumed our trek across the boulders and crossed and recrossed the stream, sometimes wading, sometimes leaping from rock to rock. Some of the rocks were so far apart that my short legs barely made it, but Dick grabbed me and pulled me up safely.

In the distance we could see a broad trail winding up the mountain on the right side of the river. We knew there was a mine somewhere down here; that trail must mark the place. A mining engineer, Mr. Hewitt in Chihuahua, said the mine was abandoned, and a Mexican caretaker was the only one living there. We climbed a huge boulder for a better view and saw a waterwheel. The whole works was made out of wood and logs and operated by a directed stream of water coming through log-chutes down the mountainside.

Our first sign of civilization! We hungered for the sight of people. We trudged on and saw many adobe dwellings built along the river. At long last we saw people, many people, Mexicans and Tarahumara Indians. They gathered around us, friendly and very much interested in the man who seemed to come from nowhere. In his halting Spanish Dick explained how we came down the river. Dick put sticks together and balanced a stone on them. OH -- they *comprendo*. They were amazed. Then they told us Creel was one day away, up the trail on the right side of the river. On the left side the trail led to Urique, two days' travel, about 65 miles. Creel was about 22 miles. A Tarahumara would carry our pack for 5 pesos a day -- roughly 60 cents. A peso is about 12 cents and 8.5 pesos make a dollar. Which trail did we want to follow? Dick and I grinned at each other. Urique, of course!

The small village can only be reached by a long mule trail that drops of the rim of the canyon

They led us up a trail, then one man quickly built a fire. As soon as it burned to embers, he unrolled a tea towel that held an enamel dish with mashed beans and many tortillas. He put them all on the coals, then gestured to the food and we all ate. It was surprisingly good.

One of the men spied Dick's gun in the pack. They all got so excited that Dick took it out. Each man eagerly examined it. I don't think there's a gun in the village. They shot it but were ever so clumsy with it that I was afraid for their toes and fingers.

The same man, his name is Francisco Ramiscz, took us up a long trail 1000 feet above the river to his home. A little Tarahumara Indian carried one pack, Frank the other. The Indian pranced on ahead like a little brown goat while I followed blowing and gasping for breath. Frank is a young man, small in build, very friendly, and has been ever so good to us. He tried to teach Dick some Spanish while walking up the trail. Dick would repeat the words and eventually end up with such a different pronunciation that Frank would ask him what he was saying.

We made it before my legs collapsed. Frank's house is a rough shelter of adobe, logs, and rock. We stepped inside and met his wife and two small children, a boy and a girl. His wife was very pretty with long black hair and pink cheeks. The inside of their house was plain but very clean; hard-packed dirt floor, table and chairs, a cooking place built of rocks and the inevitable *mano* and *metate* where they grind the corn for tortillas. A small fire was built in the middle of the floor and we all sat around it and "talked". Dick did fairly well, but we sure wish we knew more Spanish. A little puppy played around our feet.

We had supper of oatmeal, fried eggs, tortillas, and red hot chili peppers -- small, but oh so potent. Dick tucked in a few of the tortillas and sure did like them. We finished with black Mexican coffee which, unlike our American coffee, was not bitter. We liked it and learned that the Mexicans don't like American coffee.

They offered us their only bed. We protested vigorously, but they insisted. It consisted of four broad boards, made with an axe by Indians, laid side by side and supported at the head and feet. They stood around while Dick and I took off our boots, laid out our air mattress and sleeping

bags, and crawled in. I didn't dare take off my jeans. There were no rooms. Frank and his wife slept on the floor in the kitchen.

We had a hard time sleeping through all kinds of country noises. A puppy yapped incessantly, a cat went purrrr-----ooooooow, a baby wailed intermittently, a pig grunted nearby. In the morning a hundred roosters took turns ushering in the dawn. Whew! Give me the quiet of the city life. The song of our canyon wren was completely drowned out.

Dick and I got up as soon as we heard someone stirring in the kitchen so we wouldn't keep them waiting with breakfast. I could see through a hole in the roof that the sky was cloudy and downcast. Frank greeted us with a big smile, pointed upwards making signs of rain, and said, "Urique, *mañana*."

We all sat around the fire again. Frank's wife leisurely washed up the kids, then she combed her beautiful, long, black hair and carefully braided it. Everyone moved slowly and leisurely. Time seems to mean little here. No one has a watch. Then she started to make the tortillas. I was fascinated by the process and watched her carefully. She took out dried corn that had been soaking in water and crushed it in a meat grinder. Then she ground it down to a paste with a small stone, rubbing the paste in a hollowed out stone resting on a wooden stand. She patted the paste into a ball, then worked it around and around until it was hollow. Wetting her hands occasionally, she slapped the dough between them until it was a flat, round pancake, then baked it on a hot surface using no grease. The tortillas were made of corn and water, nothing else.

All the while she was cooking, people wandered in and out, Mexicans and Indians. Cat, dogs, pigs, and chickens wandered in and out, too. The dogs are frightful to look at. The people never feed them because there isn't enough food anywhere. So the dogs had to shift for themselves. They were half-starved, glassy-eyed creatures moving silently about.

About two hours later breakfast was ready. We ate a hearty soup of potatoes and meat and tortillas.

Then Dick and I made the long trek down to the river to look around. It took us all day for the round trip. We stopped at every house to talk. The people are ever so friendly. They treated us to coffee and laughed merrily at our attempts at Spanish. Dick took many pictures. All the people delighted in having their pictures taken and wanted more than anything for us to send them a copy. We will send the pictures in care of Frank.

Dick examined the mining work done here -- it is all done by hand. The ore is rich in lead, but the labor is so crude that very little material gain is realized. The Mexicans mine lead for a company, but they mine gold for themselves.

Down the trail we saw many drag-stone mills. They are circular basins with a wooden sweep that drags revolving stones inside. Ore is put inside and the stones pulverize them to mud. Mercury is mixed in to amalgamate the free gold. A directed stream of water coming down the mountain operates the sweep.

We saw an Indian going up the path with a heavy bag of lead on his back, supported solely by a leather band that went around his forehead. He wore a beautiful loom-woven girdle typical of the Tarahumara Indians.

"Dick, look at that belt," I exclaimed with excitement. "Let's see if he will sell it."

We were hard put to catch up with him even loaded down with his sack of lead. Dick offered him 15 pesos (about $1.80.) He immediately took it off and laid the treasure in my hands. It was about three yards long, four inches wide, woven in an intricate design in natural wood colors, black and cream-white with a red border. Dick asked if he could take some pictures and the man graciously consented even though he was so shy. Dick tried to lift the sack of lead, and to his astonishment he could barely life it clear of the ground.

We returned to Frank's house and had supper of fried eggs and potatoes and tortillas made of flour and water. Good. Tomorrow we head for Urique. The people here told us there are many boats there. I'm going to be hard put to keep up with our Tarahumara guide.

In the evening Frank's father-in-law brought out a magnificent Tarahumara wool blanket. Dick's eyes shone when he saw it. It was loom-woven of black wool but the colors varied subtly from black to various shades of brown and it had star-like border designs in red, yellow, and orange.

The price was $10. We could have bargained for it, but we felt that they could use the extra few dollars better than we could.

As we sat around the fire, we heard the strains of a flute floating on the evening air, sweet and clear. Frank said it was a Tarahumara flute. He went outside and returned with the flute. It was made of bamboo with five holes burned into it. Dick played it and was fascinated. Nothing was said then. But later on Dick brought his flashlight out and presented it to Frank as a gift. Then Frank solemnly presented Dick with the flute. Everyone was beaming.

We paid Frank 25 pesos (about $3.00) for our food and lodging.

Sunday February 24, 1952

The whole village came out to see us off. Jose, our guide, is part Mexican and part Tarahumara. He is 26 years old and smaller than me. We eyed his size dubiously as he adjusted the straps to our 60-pound pack. He could barely straighten up with the pack and his legs wobbled like wet spaghetti. Dick had quite a load too, a duffel bag, a shoulder pack, camera bag, and his newly acquired blanket which weighed about 10 pounds. I closed up the rear carrying the water canteen.

We took off straight up the mountain following a well-marked trail. About a third of the way up my knees buckled and I started blowing and wheezing for air. We had to make many stops. While resting, I turned around and saw a little white dog was following us.

We walked all day across the Sierra Madres, up steep hills, dipping down into the valleys. Sometimes the trail was broad, other times only a foot-wide ledge on the side of the mountain. It was walk, walk until I thought I'd drop!

The country is big, breath-taking, magnificent. The mountains rise and fall as far as the eye can see, covered by tall virgin pine. In some places the mountains break away into sheer drops of rock carved in fantastic shapes. The air was sharply fragrant with pine. The hot sunlight slanted through the trees. It truly is God's world in all its natural beauty. But everything has to be paid for, and we paid in sheer physical exhaustion before the day was over.

We camped at sundown near a spring. Supped on oatmeal, tea, and hot milk. (We bought the oatmeal at Barranca de Cobre which was the name of the village we had stayed in the last two days.) The night closed in icy cold. We are 7000 feet high. Jose had nothing for warmth, just his jacket, jeans, and sandals. The sandals consist of a flat sole cut out of tire tread and are bound to his feet with leather lacings between the big toe and the next toe and wound around the ankles. Jose laid some flat wood on the ground and prepared for sleep. Dick and I were horrified. After a quick consultation, we offered him our beautiful blanket. He accepted with a big, delighted smile.

It was like sleeping under a wet sheet, it was so cold on our mountain. We had a roaring fire going. I crept closer and closer until I was curled up right next to it nearly burning my hair.

Monday February 25, 1952

We rose at sunup. Breakfast of tea, scrambled dry eggs, and hot milk with sugar. What a day! We started out fresh, full of bounce and energy, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. We walked all morning with a few stops to catch our breath. Never more than five minutes. No lunch! We walked all afternoon with a few stops only. By now Jose had reached his stride and he took off like a madman with Dick and I hard put to keep up with him. He would slow a little on the up-pull, but increase his speed down hill. All I carried was the water canteen. At about five o'clock I was finished. I could barely drag one foot after another. I stumped along woodenly, feeling like a mule. Nothing in the world could make me go faster. We traveled THREE MORE HOURS after that.

In the last few miles we dropped down the mountainside about 2000 feet. Tears of exhaustion were streaming down my face as I stumbled and fell down the rocky trail. We finally made camp by a pretty little stream. As I dragged my shoes off, I counted a blister on every toe. Dick had a hole in his heel from a nail that had poked through his boot. But he is another Tarahumara. Never complains. It was the most severe, exhausting physical exertion I've ever

experienced. We made about 30 miles over rough terrain from sun-up to sun-down with no long breaks. Whew!

Tomorrow we are going to turn Jose loose. He travels just too fast. We will spend a day in camp. I'll wash clothes, Dick will climb out to take pictures. Then on Wednesday we will continue the ten miles into the village of Urique.

We call the little white dog Perro. He is sure frisky now that he has a little food in him. Today our trail crossed flat rock that was almost like pavement. There were tracks crossing it just as if an animal had walked across wet concrete. But this wasn't concrete. It was with a thrill that we realized these were prehistoric tracks made millions of years ago.

We heard the Tarahumara drums, again beating steadily, and also the weird notes of a flute floating up from the valley below. There were many Tarahumara farms and Mexican ranches.

We saw some deer today, small white creatures bounding away over the hill. Three of them. Jose got very excited, put down his pack, and gestured to Dick to get his gun for *carne* -- meat. But the deer disappeared quick as a flash.

Tuesday February 26, 1952

Jose left for Urique early after breakfast. Perro hesitated a moment, looking at us then at Jose. Then he trotted after Jose. Dick and I spent a leisurely day in camp. Dick climbed the mountain again to take pictures. I repaired my shattered morale -- womanlike. I heated some icy water from the stream and washed our clothes. Then I took a bath, washed my hair, put on some lipstick, and felt like a million dollars. Contrasts in the wilderness are so sharp that every little comfort is exquisite pleasure. Just to stand by a fire when it's cold is wonderful. A drink of water after tramping many thirsty miles is perfection.

After all my little chores were finished, I sat down and read my pocket book, "The Killer." Suddenly I heard the bleat of goats. I looked up and saw a little Mexican lad coming down the trail with his herd of goats. He was so startled when he saw me that he half turned to go back. I quickly waved my hand at him and called out "good day" in Spanish. He flashed me a shy smile

and continued past our camp. His goats milled around me, friendly, curious, pretty as a picture. I was afraid they would scatter everything, but they only sniffed it over then trotted on.

The night closed down fiercely cold. We threw the Tarahumara blanket over our sleeping bags and slept as under a quilt of down.

Wednesday February 27, 1952

We got up early, broke camp, and started the last lap to Urique. Jose said it was only a three-hour walk, but it took us all day to drop down from the mountain. We could see the Urique river below us, but there were many, many hills to climb before we could reach it. It looked like a little brown ribbon winding in and out.

Today I had two packs. Dick carried the big one, including the blanket, and almost staggered under the load. He is getting so skinny that he could tote a watermelon in the sag in the seat of his pants. I'm wearing down, too. Dick says he can make out my ankles now.

Finally I got mad seeing him carry that blanket. After a struggle, I got the blanket away from him and we continued.

It was a magnificent day. Lazy, soft clouds drifted across the intense blue sky. Dick took many pictures and we continued leisurely with frequent stops for rest.

Towards late afternoon we finally dropped into the valley and came to the Urique River again. It was entirely clear of boulders and looked the way a river should look. I dipped my hands into the water. It was warm. We realized a tragic fact -- had the rest of our expedition stuck together just another week, the expedition could have been a success. They gave up too soon. Tarahumara Indians at the town of Barranca de Cobre, where we stayed with our Mexican friends, would have taken our duffel and boats across to Urique. Here, the river had enough water to continue down in the rubber boats. The river between Barranca de Cobre and Urique would still be left unexplored, but we could have made the rest of the run below Urique easily. The canyon is what Dick is most interested in, because as far as we know no one has been in there. We are disappointed that we were unable to explore that area. So it is a bitter blow and good lesson to never give up. There is always new hope, and many surprises around the next corner.

The town of Urique was so elusive. We followed the trail until three hours before sundown before we turned the last corner and saw the town below us. Dick and I were ravenous. This is such a hungry country. We absolutely cannot live off the land. There is no game, no fish. So few people. We never seem to fill up on our rations of milk, eggs, rice, and oatmeal.

We cached our duffel near the river then hurried into town. We saw one street about two blocks long with rows of adobe houses. Jose came down the street with a huge grin and outstretched hands. He shook and shook our hands until we finally had to break his grasp. He must have spread the news of the *Americanos*. There's never been a white woman here before. We walked down the street followed by about 30 children and half as many dogs. People stared at us with open, friendly curiosity, calling, “Good day, good day," in Spanish.

Suddenly Dick grasped my arm and said, "Iz -- look!"
I looked in the direction of his pointing finger and saw a brilliant green bird in a tree. There was our parrot! He sure was sassy, ready to snap at our fingers, alternately coy and bold. Now all we have to find are the monkeys.

Jose had everything arranged. He was a little drunk. Poor Jose. Too many pesos we gave him. He is a good man though, and did right by us every time. Jose took us to a sort of restaurant where we finally filled that aching emptiness inside us. The simple meal was delicious. We had beans, (the Mexicans sure know how to cook them deliciously) many, many tortillas, coffee, and goats cheese which tasted wonderful. The cheese is like cottage cheese with lots of salt. The house was ever so clean; the Mexicans in the villages and on the farms are very clean people. Their clothes are old and worn but always neatly patched, and freshly laundered and ironed with the old-fashioned iron heated on the stove. The room opened to a court with potted flowers and vines all over. One plant had beautiful, fragrant, white lilies. All the children had flocked after us. We counted 32 surrounding the large table, chattering gaily and excitedly as they watched us.

The man who owned the house, Erasmo Silva, had taken a correspondence course in English and could speak a few words. We eagerly asked him if we could buy a boat in Urique.

"Boat?" He wrinkled his forehead. "There's no boat in Urique." We were stunned.
"Were there boats on the Fuerte River?" we asked. The Urique empties into the Fuerte River.
"Yes, there were many boats there." Hope again arose within us and we planned to walk down the river until we reached the Fuerte. I asked him if he had a Spanish-American dictionary. He disappeared into a room then returned with a small, pocket-sized dictionary. We were thrilled to see it and bought it from him for a dollar.

After supper Jose insisted we get our duffel and sleep at his friend, Erasmo Silva's house. We were reluctant because we would rather sleep under the stars than be cooped up in a strange house. But when in Rome do as the Romans do. We couldn't refuse. Our bedroom was a bare, clean room with an honest-to-goodness bed (the mattress curved like a saucer,) a wooden bench, and a wooden table.

The woman proudly brought us two fresh, clean sheets, a basin and pitcher of water, a towel, and a bar of Camay soap still in its bright wrapper. We spread the sheets out, put the Tarahumara blanket on top, washed, and were off to bed.

I almost dropped off to sleep when someone rattled the door and said, "Jose. Let me in."
Dick opened the door and Jose stumbled in, drunk as a lord and smelling of rubbing alcohol. He laid down on the narrow bench and in a few minutes his snores rose and fell. We were just about ready to move out, when Dick shrugged his shoulders and said, "He's harmless. Let's get some sleep."

We even had an oil lamp which we kept burning. A half hour later Jose got up and stumbled noisily outdoors. Dick locked the door and it remained quiet. What a fantastic night!

Thursday February 28, 1952

In the morning we went to the store to buy our supplies. The store sold the barest essentials such as coffee, sugar, flour, salt, rice, oatmeal, shoes, straw hats. We bought sugar, rice, oatmeal, and a sort of a cookie I swear are dog biscuits, but they tasted good. The storekeeper wrapped everything into cones of rolled-up paper. It cost about $3.00.

Jose drank steadily throughout the day. He never got obnoxious, just became a nuisance, following us around and making vigorous sign-language with his hands. He was a gentle little man and never forgot his quaint manners. He was one of the rare men, in fact the only one, who could speak both Spanish and Tarahumara.

The day was cloudy. It rained a little in the morning, but Dick went ahead and took pictures. The people are childishly pleased to have their pictures taken. All Dick had to do was point his camera, and children would flock into the picture. One picture had about 12 children in it.

We had breakfast, king style. First oatmeal, then fried eggs, many tortillas, goat's milk, goat's cheese, beans, and coffee. The noon meal was excellent, too, and Dick actually got filled up on fried rice, a hearty cup of potatoes and meat, tortillas, beans, goat's cheese, and an exquisite tea made from the leaves of a native tree. It tasted like cinnamon with a subtle fragrance of blossoms.

We asked the woman to make us 20 tortillas to take with us. For the tortillas, a round of goat's cheese, six hearty meals and a night's lodging, we paid 33 pesos, or 32 x 12 = $3.96. Roughly $4.00. Imagine trying to get its equivalent in the states!

We gathered our duffel to leave. Jose hung close, confident of going as our guide and cargo-bearer. Dick said in Spanish, "No, Jose, you are drunk." Jose denied it vigorously, lurched unsteadily, fell heavily on the floor, and passed out cold.

Perro finally figured out who had been feeding him and followed us out of the village. We went only a short distance. So we made camp by the river, built a fire, supped on rice, tortillas and cheese, tea and dog biscuits. Dick was starting to look like a shaggy dog so I gave him a haircut, slightly ragged, but still an improvement.

We came upon a cactus around Urique similar to the saguaro in Arizona. We saw many orange trees in blossom. They fill the air with a delightfully sweet fragrance.

We will keep near the river, which widens considerably when it meets the Fuerte. Maybe we can get a boat. It is with regret that we sit here realizing our expedition would have been intact if only the others would have taken a chance and stayed a little longer.

Friday February 29, 1952

Today, February 29, was spent in the Sierra Madre (Mother Mountains) in the wilderness of Mexico. I wonder where Dick and I will be four years from now on another February 29.
Last night was delightfully warm. We are out of the freezing temperatures of the mountains. For the first time in three weeks I could sleep without going to bed fully clothed.

We discarded the air mattress as extra weight. It had a couple leaks in it and had to be blown up two and three times a night. Our meals are simple. Oatmeal for breakfast, tortillas, cheese and tea at noon, rice and milk for supper.

We walked leisurely all day along a trail following the river. The trail crossed and recrossed the river many times. We didn't even bother to remove our boots or hike up our jeans, just waded right through. It rained on and off all day.

At noon we unrolled our tortillas and cheese, made some tea, then prepared to enjoy our Mexican food. Out of nowhere materialized an old man and a little boy. Dick and I grinned at each other, shrugged our shoulders, and graciously offered a share of our food. They accepted, darn it. The man talked rapidly in Spanish with sweeping, eloquent gestures. We listened enthralled with an occasional "*Si, si*" and nodding our heads wisely although we didn't understand a word he said.

The people here don't grasp our hands in the hearty grip of the *Americanos*, but extend their arms so that hands briefly press each other. Everyone we meet shakes hands with us and partakes of our food.

The trail passed many houses, all with thatched roofs of palm leaves, herds of goats, and many chickens. The people ran out of their houses, curious as the dickens, and waved at us calling, "*Buenos dias, buenos dias*."

We camped under the shelter of two overhanging boulders forming a crude cave. A man came along with a catfish on a stick just around tea time. He obligingly accepted a cup. Dick gave him some hooks and fishing line. He gave us the catfish. We ate it, too, frying it in bacon

fat. Dick gave him two pesos and he said he'd bring us a basketful of tortillas in the morning -- *tempora* -- early.

Afterwards, Dick and I sat quietly by the fire, each lost in thought, when Dick looked across the river and said, "Oh, oh, look. There's Jose." Sure enough. Jose couldn't cross the river fast enough, wearing a great big, although slightly sheepish grin. Jose and Perro! Seems as if we are stuck with them. He can carry the pack until we get to the Fuerte where we hope we can buy a boat. If so, we will go to San Blas where a train goes out. Right now we are in a completely roadless area. There are no highways across the Sierra Madre Mountains.

Saturday March 1, 1952

Early! Jeepers! It was still dark when our fisherman came with the tortillas. Shortly afterwards a woman came with more tortillas. It rained tortillas. We could buy only half of hers because we didn't have any more single pesos. These people are so poor that they don't even have a single pesos to give in change. They all stayed for breakfast. We only had two cups. Jose had a cup, the fisherman had a cup, the woman ate out of the baking powder can, Dick ate out of the pot, and I passed on the oatmeal.

I studied the fisherman and the woman as they ate. The people here are very handsome in feature and form. Everyone is lean, wiry, upright. The modeling of the face is fine and regular, firm of lip, straight nose. They are proud people, friendly and honest. None of the women wear jeans. All are dressed in clean dresses, cotton stockings, and shoes. Their hair is long. The men wear jeans and tire-tread sandals and the tall-crowned straw hat. They are very picturesque. They are hard-working farmers and have crops growing all over. Their yards are neatly swept. It is a revelation to Dick and me to see how they live simply, cleanly, and industriously. We have a lot of respect and admiration for them.

It rained all morning, steady and hard. We kept to our shelter, Dick reading, Jose dozing by the fire, Perro sleeping, and I writing. We *Americanos*! We are spoiled with our big houses, our automobiles, our tiled bathrooms, electric stoves, elaborate plumbing. Each of us is a millionaire compared to these simple people who live off the land. Each to their own. It is good to see how other people live. It is good to do without so the senses don't get dulled, jaded, bored. Now we will return with new perceptions of how much we have, new appreciation of our many aspects of living.

It never stopped raining; it poured sullenly straight down. We sat in our cave all day reading and eating tortillas. Gradually the rock of our cave grew saturated and the rain curved around, running in rivers into our cave. We got damp, and the ground all got wet except for a patch in the dead center of the shelter. We stayed in camp the entire day.

In the afternoon we heard a terrific rumble. A landslide of rocks crashed down the mountain into the river. There were about five more landslides. The night was miserable. It rained on and off all night. We all got a little wet. Even in Mexico March comes in like an angry lion.

Sunday March 2, 1952

Our fisherman came again with more tortillas. It had finally stopped raining. The clouds reluctantly began to break up and lovely patches of blue sky peeped through. A rainbow arched across the sky. In front of our eyes the river rose five feet up the banks and turned into a raging torrent of muddy water. Dick and I looked and fairly drooled. If we only had the rubber boats what sport it would be. We could clip down that river at 15 miles an hour. The water increased from 1000 feet per second to 10000 feet per second. But -- no boat! So packs were shouldered and we took off.

The walking was difficult. We could no longer consistently follow the trail which crossed and recrossed the river. Dick tried it at one point where the water looked deceptively easy. The current tore at his feet and pulled him in up to his neck. He had to struggle to regain shore again. So we cut across boulders and once had to climb a mountain to get past a point where the cliff dropped into the river. The water was muddy brown, the current swift with many rapids and undercurrents.

We stopped at a house and bought some cheese, tortillas, and a delicious, dried meat. The meat had been well salted. It's speared on a stick and cooked over the fire. The people told us it has been ten years since an American and his wife had passed through there. One of the men had worked in California 20 years and could speak a little English. Tomorrow he was going to Chihuahua, which was only four days' travel -- two days on mule, one day by truck, and one day by train. Even though we seemed isolated, actually we were never more than a week's distance from some point of transportation to back home.

It seems a pity that the rest gave up so easily after only eight days on the river, scared out because they thought they couldn't get out in time. They had five weeks. We knew in the beginning this expedition would be tough and rugged with many obstacles. If otherwise, there would have been hundreds of people before us who'd gone down the river. It was the challenge of the unknown that attracted all of us, but the others didn't stick with it long enough to find out what was around the corner. Dick and I took a chance setting out on foot with limited food supply. We knew nothing about the canyon or what would happen, but Dick has faith in his ability, and I have faith in Dick. Even if we had limited time, Dick wouldn't turn back for anything. He never gives up.

The people told us the river wiped out the trail farther down, and it would be best to go over the mountains to reach the Fuerte River. So tomorrow over the mountains we go. Yipes! We camped in a draw next to a creek. It was cold, but a fire kept us warm.

Monday March 3, 1952

Dick turned over in his sleeping bag and there sat a Tarahumara boy just in time for breakfast. Seems like we're feeding everyone lately. Scared Dick half to death to see the boy sitting there silently watching him.

We passed the house of a Tarahumara family. Dick took about 20 pictures of them at all angles and gave them five pesos (before he took the pictures.) They are so painfully shy. The children had only brief shirts on and were very appealing peering at us shyly while hiding behind their parents. Their home was a palm-covered shelter clinging to the hillside. They had about 20 goats. I didn't want to embarrass them by staring so I sat down and sewed patches on the knee of my jeans

Looks like Dick is going to make a mountain climber out of me yet, darn it. It is such terrific work dog-trotting over these mountains up and down for 15 miles a day. I'm no longer afraid of high places and steep drops. I walk along the trail with high disdain for the danger spots. I've learned to watch just where my feet go using every little crack or ledge as a step and not worrying about what's below me. Most of the trail isn't dangerous, but winds over gradual rise of hills.

We have to pack in everything we eat. We never saw such a hungry dog as Perro. He is eating us out. We met a Tarahumara and asked him if he wanted a dog. He eagerly accepted, tied a rope around Perro's neck, and led him off. Exit Perro. Later, to our horror, Jose told us that they planned to eat the dog.

We missed the trail in the afternoon and had to slide down a mountain to get back on. It was quite an experience to try to cut down without a trail. The branches and thorns tore at our clothing, scratching our arms and legs. I lost my balance a couple of times and bounced down on the seat of my pants, grabbing frantically for branches to stop my undignified descent.

We stopped at a village. Jose put one over on us and asked the woman to make us supper. So we dined on fried eggs, goats cheese, tortillas, and coffee. We are crazy about those tortillas. The same people had a store so we bought some sugar and coffee. The woman roasted the green coffee beans and ground them down the same way they grind the corn. The coffee is exceptionally good.

The people seem to take life easy. Wherever we stop, the men gather around and talk and talk. The children peer at us shyly and never let off staring. Everyone seems to have chickens and goats so they have milk and eggs.

We climbed one mountain today, then it was a steady drop down. There is no level walking. We pull up or put on the brakes coming down. From the top of our mountain we saw the Urique join the Fuerte. It was a magnificent view sweeping down and out for miles. We will reach the Fuerte River tomorrow.

Tuesday March 4, 1952

We turned Jose loose this morning. Actually we no longer needed a guide after we left Urique, but we didn't have the heart to say no after he had tracked us down. Dick paid him 20 pesos and gave him a knife, his jacket, and his boots. Dick then wore his tennis shoes.

We came to the river in early morning. The Fuerte is wide with a strong current. Oh, for a boat. We followed the trail along the river. At one point the trail climbed to a cat-walk on the edge of a 100-foot bluff dropping sheer to the river. I didn't like it one bit. Three weeks ago I would have gone into hysterics, but it's astonishing how one can become accustomed to anything

We camped along the river and looked longingly at that current zipping by. What we wouldn't give for a boat right now. The natives now tell us we can buy a boat at San Francisco, but they told us we could at Urique, too. Anyway, we are hoping. It's about 80 miles to the town of El Fuerte where there are roads and trucks. Hope we don't have to walk all the way.

Wednesday March 5, 1952

Nothing eventful. Saw a deer and about five rabbits. Also saw a mean old black bull standing right in the middle of the trail. I scooted ahead while Dick hissed at the bull making it snort and stamp its feet so he could take pictures. Had the bull taken after Dick, he'd be in San Francisco and I'd be up a tree.

We were walking the trail when I saw water pouring out of a hole in a rock and cascading down in a stream to the river. We've seen many springs, but this one was STEAMING -- hot steaming water laden with sulfur. I wanted to take a bath in it right away, but I couldn't even put my finger in, it was so hot.

Our rice and oatmeal are gone, so now we stop at the various houses scattered far and wide along the trail to buy goat's cheese and tortillas. We get about 20 for 2 pesos (24 cents) and about two pounds of cheese for 3 pesos (36 cents) which is pretty cheap eating. We also have some Mexican coffee that's awfully good.

Our legs are all chewed up by little flies. Their bites leave bumps like mosquito bites, but they itch for week and leave raw sores that never seem to heal. They are annoying. But there are no other insects, no mosquitoes.

The vegetation is mostly mesquite and a saguaro type of cactus. All the farm people have colorful, bright flowers growing in vases of pottery, which they keep carefully watered. We crossed the river today at a point shown to us by a man. It was waist-deep and the current pulled. We didn't even bother to remove our jeans or shoes, the sun was so hot. We followed a good trail up and down over hills following the river. My boots are almost kaput, the soles nearly worn out. Dick is wearing his tennis shoes, and I'm afraid I will soon have to do the same.

Golly, I hope we can get a boat. This is a fast-traveling river.

Thursday March 6, 1952

Up early. Dick bought five pesos worth of tortillas. We got about 50. The houses are so scattered -- we passed only two yesterday. In the yard of one was a bed made of a framework of wood and latticed with leather bands of goat-skin to form the spring -- pretty neat. We also saw a beautiful Tarahumara brown blanket banded on each end with a border of orange and yellow. How we wanted it, but it was impossible to carry anything more.

We followed the trail down the river on the left side. Soon we came to a cable with a hand-operated car on it. The cable swung about 100 feet above the river and was anchored high up on the hillside. A little boy stood underneath. We asked him if this was the point to cross.
"*Si, si, Señor*."

Then we asked him how far away San Francisco was and he answered, "Much kilometer."

So we crossed on the cable. It was terrific. Just a wooden box with a hand bar above our heads on the cable that braked and pulled the car across. We dropped down to the middle of the cable swinging high above the river. Then Dick had to pull 350 pounds up the cable by hand. He had to stop after every four pulls. I don't know how he did it. The box groaned and squeaked under the load. I was afraid to breathe. We made it to the other side, and ground never felt so good.

San Francisco was just around the corner, and we were on the wrong side of the river. The map showed a thriving metropolis and a dam. The dam was there, but there was just a ghost town of three houses across the river. We had to retrace our steps and cross the cable again. Tears of dismay fell down my face at the thought of it. But we made it across safely, Dick again having to pull all that weight.

On the other side we met a man who gauged the river and made weather observations. He said, "No boats." We were stunned and couldn't speak for a moment. We have been following a will-o-wisp. Everyone told us, 'much boats in Urique,' 'much boats in San Francisco.' Shucks, I don't think these people ever saw a boat in their lives. The man said we should go to Choix where there are truck roads to El Fuerte, then to San Blas where there is a train. So we have to forgo our hope of finding a boat and going down that fast-moving river.

Choix lies on a plateau inland about 30 miles across the mountains from San Francisco -- on the map, that is. Oh boy, here we go crossing mountains again. My boots are shot. Dick punched holes in the soles and leather so he could tie them together. My socks show through now. We've walked over 250 miles already across the Sierra Madres

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The man said Choix was one day away and that there was no water on the trail. He gave us a milk-bottle full of water which we carried with our own canteen. We decided to camp in the afternoon and travel at night to escape the intense heat of the day. We stopped beside a creek to wait for evening. I walked upstream, stripped, and took a bath. I heard a whistle above me. I glanced up and then frantically reached for my clothes. A Mexican boy was coming down the trail with his goats. He glanced my way briefly, then studied the landscape with intent concentration.

We ate a big meal of tortillas and cheese, discarded one pot and took off at about 7:00 p.m. We were in luck. The moon was brilliant and lit up the trail. Everything seemed so weird at night. The trail shone brightly. It was hard to judge depth, and sometimes the trail would come up and hit us and then drop us into a hole so suddenly that our back teeth rattled. We passed one house in the night, sneaking past so as not to wake the dogs. We thought we were safely past when they suddenly set up a clamor loud enough to wake the dead. I thought they were going to chew us up and grabbed a stout stick as we hurried down the trail.

All kinds of night noises emerged from the shadows, the sleepy chirping of a bird, the wail of a coyote, the sudden startled flight of a burro as it crashed through the bushes. We pushed until about 1:00 a.m., then unrolled our sleeping bags and dropped off to sleep immediately.

Friday March 7, 1952

Dick is amazing. He has never been in this country before, yet he unerringly followed the trail in the dark. He is able to follow a trail with his feet. There were many confusing side trails, too -- goat trails and trails leading to houses.

There is water all over the place; we crossed three different streams. The friendly people in this country have given us a wealth of misinformation. So we threw away our bottle of water after dragging it over the mountain all night.

We passed more farmhouses while we trotted up and down these hills. I never saw such a country for up and down traveling. We stopped at one place, and the woman was ever so friendly and sweet. Her house and courtyard were immaculate. The people here are generous with smiles and courtesy. She offered us coffee and tortillas, but we declined. She gave us some fresh limes, and I gave her many safety pins and both of us were most pleased. Her house was a

picture of cleanliness and neatness, the roof beautifully thatched with palm leaves. She pointed to Dick and asked if he were my *papa*. He indignantly said he was my *esposo*, and we all exploded with laughter. She was the prettiest woman.

It's amazing how the body has so much potential power and energy. Since Dick and I have started climbing these mountains our muscles have developed and strengthened until we can walk all day without fatigue. My leg muscles are so strong that they never get tired now, and my lungs don't feel as if they're going to burst wide open the way they did in the beginning. We Americans are sure weak in the legs with our autos and paved sidewalks.

We crossed a water-shed divide today. It was the funniest sensation to see the water run in one direction, cross the divide, and see it run the other way. Dick noticed it immediately.
We walked all day. Choix is the most elusive place. Towards evening a man said we would get there *mañana*. We stopped at a spring near a farmhouse. Dick asked the woman for some food. She absolutely refused to sell him anything. Dick went all the way down the list -- tortillas, cheese, eggs, even a chicken. She shook her head angrily and said, "I don't have to make tortillas, no, no."

So we set up camp and faced the sad prospect of a supper of coffee and no breakfast. All of a sudden Dick exclaimed, "Iz, look!"

I saw a procession coming down the hill, a little girl in the lead with a plate of tortillas, followed by the woman with a huge piece of cheese (about 2 pounds,) and in the rear a little boy carrying a pitcher of goat's milk. The woman over-whelmed us with her smiles and graciousness. She was dressed in black with a black veil covering her head, and we deduced she was a widow-woman. She had five children.

It was dark when we finished our supper and we turned in right away. We had traveled the night before, all day today from sunup to sundown, and still no Choix. One day's travel and no water! Ha! Our feet ached so that it was hard to fall asleep.

Saturday March 8, 1952

We broke camp early. Our benefactor brought more milk and tortillas for breakfast and invited us to her house. Dick paid her generously and gave her a knife, our pots, cups and silver, sugar and his red kerchief. She disappeared into the house and returned with her gift to us -- a big white egg. We wrapped it carefully in a handkerchief and put it in Dick's camera bag. They were so awfully poor that it hurt to realize how much we have and how little other people have. They make every shred of cloth and every crumb count.

We dropped down from the hills, and wonder of wonders, our trail broadened out into a road which actually had tire tracks on it. But Choix remained invisible, ever far away over the horizon. We walked and walked and walked in the hot sunlight. The trail was dusty; the sun blazed unmercifully on our uncovered heads. It was monotonous walking on level ground with no shade. We were thirsty, tired, and footsore. Where was that darn Choix. Dick mused "Iz, do you think they sell beer in Choix? Do you think it will be ice-cold?"

"Dream on, honey," I said. "There's no ice in this furnace, that's for sure."

Late in the afternoon Dick squinted at the distant hills and said, "Look!" There were many buildings, then we saw a wonderful sight -- a truck, on wheels, with a motor. Choix! We walked down the main street. It's a big town with stores all over the place. The sidewalk was lined with vendors selling sweet rolls, tacos, peanuts, hot tamales, and tortillas. We peeped in an open doorway.

I grasped Dick's arm, "Dick, does that look like a refrigerator unit?" It did and it was. Eagerly we went inside and ordered beer and pop. The girl brought it frosty cold. We were in seventh heaven. Nothing, absolutely nothing, ever tasted so good! We enjoyed ourselves hugely walking around staring at the natives while the natives stared at us.

Another sight brightened our eyes -- a stand piled high with big globes of golden oranges. Dick asked the man how much, then turned to me and translated that he wouldn't sell us less than 25.

A man stepped outside from the store behind us and said in perfect English, "Can I help you?"

We could have embraced him. He explained to us that the oranges each cost 25 centavos or 3 cents. He was the owner of the store, a handsome man, well-dressed in American clothes, soft-spoken, a gentleman. He invited us to his home and plied Dick with beer. His wife made Mexican sandwiches -- *tacos*, a delicious concoction of a huge, crisp cracker-like potato chip with chopped lettuce, slices of tomato, beans and meat mixture, grated cheese, and chili sauce layered on top. He kept giving Dick beer saying that each bottle was the *ultimo* -- the last. Dick never had so much beer in his life.

That evening the man, his name was Felix, took us all around town and the surrounding countryside in his truck. He bought Dick a bottle of beer every time we passed the tavern. Dick protested that he couldn't drink any more, but each bottle was the *ultimo*. Dick cautiously emptied three bottles out the car window as we were riding.

We stayed at a clean little hotel for 60 cents. Tomorrow morning at 8:00 we leave for El Fuerte and San Blas by bus. The buses are something to see. They're like a pickup with a roof and wooden benches extending its width. The rest is wide open. We'll travel 60 miles and it should take about three hours.

Two couples with two cars from Colorado were camping on the river, Felix told us. We drove to the river, but were disappointed to learn that they had left that day.

Sunday March 9, 1952

What a ride -- it was like a glorified roller-coaster. We were bounced up, down, and sideways, and jostled like mad as the bus tore across the bumpy, hilly road. Dick and I couldn't stop laughing. Everybody laughed merrily. These are a happy people. We left at 8:00 and arrived in San Blas about noon.

We sure proved something. There was plenty of time for the expedition. We originally planned to be here March 10. Dick and I, even walking across the Sierra Madres, got here a day earlier. We'll take the train out at 11:00 tonight and arrive in Guaymas 9:30 tomorrow. We sure move fast now.

San Blas is a noisy honkey-tonk. People lounge in the streets. Juke boxes blare Cuban rhythms from taverns. Many policemen walk sternly up and down with guns strapped to their belts. Trucks and cars race up and down the streets. There are many little outdoor restaurants with oil-cloth covered tables tended by women heating tortillas, stew, and beans over charcoal, and washing dishes in pails of water. We sat down at one. The stew was surprisingly delicious -- Dick had three helpings. We wandered the streets to kill time and got a hotel room to leave our duffel in. It cost five pesos, or 60 cents.

We slept in the evening and got up at 10:30 all excited over catching our train. We hitched down to the station and tried to buy our tickets. The man at the window looked at us blankly and said, "No train tonight. Train tomorrow at 8:00, morning."

Dick and I almost dropped at the thought of spending the night in San Blas. But there was nothing we could do. We felt so helpless and frustrated. Back to the hotel.

Monday March 10, 1952

We had no watches, so I got up as soon as I saw it was light and hurried down to the station a block away to learn the time, 6:45. We dressed and went hopefully to buy our tickets.

The ticket man looked at us briefly. "No train -- comes in at 11:30."

We were stunned. Then we became fiercely angry. We felt we were being pushed around, never getting the right information and began to wonder if there was a train in this country.

We sat dejectedly on the high curbing in front of the station watching the little town of San Blas wake up for the new day. Women came into town carrying straw baskets spilling over with bright-colored flowers. Men stood around idly or clustered in the saloons playing pool. People opened their stands, selling everything -- candied fruits, cookies, cakes, candies, tortillas, hot tamales, oranges, grapefruit, bananas. The old women with their oilcloth covered tables and cook pots over charcoal, lined the streets. Little shoeshine boys looked at Dick's tennis shoes and passed on. Dogs were all over and underfoot nosing around for something to eat. One had a fit, and in a flash a whole pack fell to fighting and snarling. Flies swarmed lazily. Grim-faced

policeman with guns wandered around (the town had ten.) We never saw such a sink-hole, yet, we were fascinated. It was a new experience in living. So many people see this side of Mexican squalor and poverty in other towns. No tourists come as far as San Blas.

We saw the beautiful, the magnificent, the simple dignity of life up in the hills. There the people were tall, had beautiful bodies, were proud, clean, industrious. We saw a profusion of wild exotic birds and vegetation. One large bird was brilliantly blue with long sweeping tail feathers and a crest. Another was a small, vivid, flaming scarlet bird with black wings, also crested. We saw many humming birds, some large, others tiny jeweled creatures. We saw one bird we hated on sight. There were many of them in the local areas -- turkey buzzards, scavengers -- big, black, ugly, somber, silent, malignant birds perched on top of towering cactus plants. Dick wanted to shoot every one of them with his 22, but feared startling the populace since we only saw two guns in that entire country.

Above Choix we saw an exotic combination of trees -- tall, proud pines fraternizing with graceful palms. There were many varieties of cactus -- huge sentinels, some as big as trees, others spread out like gigantic pin cushions that could spear a man to death should he fall into it from the above hillside. Lovely flowers brilliantly colored the hills. The people cultivate a tree that is smothered with red blossoms. The hill people plant all kinds of blooms in pottery and keep them carefully watered making their yards little oases of color. Above all stood the magnificent Sierra Madres.

The people in San Blas stared and stared at us. White people rarely came here. Yet they were friendly and stopped to talk to us, ever so curious about our duffel and packs, our wilderness clothes, our sunburned noses. Each and all persisted and got our stories from us in imperfect Spanish.

At 11:00 we again hopefully approached the ticket window. We had already learned in painful steps that tickets are sold only a half hour before train time.

The man looked up placidly and said in Spanish "No train. Be in at 2:00 o'clock."
Dick and I were momentarily struck dumb with shock. We had already sat around for 24 hours waiting and waiting. We fairly sputtered with helpless indignation, anger, and frustration. Back to the curb again.

Then -- one man emerged from the crowds to save our tottering sanity. A good-looking, well-dressed man approached us and addressed us in English. How wonderful it sounded! We unburdened all our troubles to him while he listened carefully and sympathetically. He explained everything in an instant saying the train was late -- 20 hours late -- and would be in for sure at 2:00. He worked for Wells Fargo and knew. He took us under his wing, treated us to beer and talked and talked to us and we to him in English. It was wonderful!

That's the magic of living outdoors under difficult conditions. There are so many surprises, so many pleasures, luxuries, contrasts. One develops an acute appreciation of the smallest comforts and fills with the joy of living from the slightest provocation. A beautiful sunset holds us silent. A little burro bouncing after his mother makes us grin. A deer bursting out of the bushes stops us dead in our tracks. People stopping abruptly to stare at us makes us giggle. We felt so important in the hills. We were somebody different, unusual, unique. The children couldn't take their eyes off of us and grinned so shyly and sweetly each time we caught their eyes.

At last the train staggered in. Dick and I thought we were through with surprises. We thought everything would be simple now and that civilization would take over. We would board a modern train and relax, coasting easily in Guaymas, 250 miles north. But Mexico wasn't done with us yet. She had a few more surprises up her sleeve -- more for us to vividly remember her by. More adventures in living. But we were equal to her, young, healthy, incredibly strong after climbing her rugged mountains. We managed to bounce back with agility each time she tried us out, and I think she didn't find us lacking.

But -- back to that monster panting into the station.

Our startled eyes first saw the box cars jammed with people. That was third class. Then came the passenger cars. Hundreds of people hung out of the windows laughing, shouting, waving their arms to attract the attention of the food peddlers. They were everywhere selling pop, goats milk, beer, coffee, all kinds of food, sweets, blankets, baskets, etc. It was an unforgettable

sight. We hesitated a long moment before we could gather courage to be engulfed in that hot, packed, smelly train. We gingerly got on and walked through one jammed car after another. No seats anywhere. Just when we despaired of ever sitting down the conductor came by, looking for all the world like any American conductor with the stern abrupt exterior and heart of gold. He found us seats together.

After an hour we pulled out. The train poked along slowly, making frequent stops. By late afternoon we were ravenous, and at the next stop we forgot our dignity and hung out the windows just like everybody else, flagging down vendors until we were laden with food.

In spite of the crowded conditions, the dirt, noise, and heat, Dick and I enjoyed ourselves immensely. The Mexican people are gay, spilling over into laughter easily. They are so friendly. They talked to us and were highly interested. One young woman came over and gave us some hot tamales and pop. No one wore that strained, bored look you see on American faces in trains, streetcars, and buses.

One old lady had no ticket so she went down the aisle and everyone gave her a coin until eventually she had the price of a ticket.

We were on that train 15 hours. We dozed on and off. It got awfully cold so we threw our faithful Tarahumara blanket over us. At 4:00 a.m. the conductor told us we had to change trains to continue the five miles into Guaymas. We were beyond the point of being surprised, and prepared for anything. So we got off in the dark but were very pessimistic about that other train which was supposed to come at 5:00. We sat around a fire with five Mexicans until 5:30. The train never came so we hitched a ride into town.

Our train fare cost $5.00.

Tuesday March 11, 1952

The sun was just coming up as we entered town. Its beautiful, golden fingers stretched across the blue waters of the harbor. There were boats everywhere. Houses perched on hills surrounding the water. We liked Guaymas at first sight. It was different.

We got a room at the Rubi Hotel for only $3.00. We had a lovely room with a bath and two double beds. We stripped and, luxury of luxuries, enjoyed a hot leisurely bath. It was sheer heaven. We tumbled into bed and slept.

We arose completely refreshed and strolled through town where we found a quaint little Mexican restaurant. For 3 pesos or 35 cents each we had a fish dinner -- all we could eat. A boiled, juicy, big fish steak, sliced tomatoes and lettuce salad, rolls, beans, and coffee. Dick and I gorged. We ate as if we were starved. In the evening we had a fried oyster dinner at the hotel for a dollar apiece. But it couldn't compete with our Mexican restaurant.

As we walked along the boardwalk the Mexican boys delighted us. They loved to show off their knowledge of English and as they passed by they would call out, "Hello, how are you? Good night. Do you want to go fishing?"

We'd grin back and forth at each other, and everybody felt happy.

The pesos exchange sure fooled us. Everything in Mexico seemed so cheap and actually it was cheap. Good hotel rooms cost only $3.00, food $1.00 a meal at the expensive places, 35 cents at the Mexican places, only 60 cents a room up in the hills. Dick's haircut in San Blas cost only 25 cents. In the hills 60 cents bought us enough tortillas and goats cheese for two days. But there was a catch. Everything was so cheap, and our money seemed to be so many, many pesos that we spent it like mad. To our great surprise we didn't even have bus fare after our food sprees in Guaymas, and Dick had to wire home for money.

Tuesday March 12, 1952

Our money came and we took the 10:30 bus. The day was bright and sunny. We felt a little blue knowing we were leaving the land of sunshine and speeding back to snow and winter, but we felt good, too. We'd found a great challenge in the magnificent Sierra Madres and had successfully met that challenge.

We reached Nogales in 7 1/2 hours, a 265 mile drive. Dick phoned Jim in Tucson and he drove the 65 miles down and brought us back to America -- two jean-clad, sunburned, weary, but happy Americans.

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BARRANCA de COBRE Part II -- 1952

Monday March 31, 1952 (by Isabelle)

We left Mexico March 12 and here we are back again to finish what we started.

Did you ever play follow the leader? As a youngster did you ever follow some skinny, freckle-faced, dare-devil over fences, across creeks, in and out of empty lots, over rock piles, all the while feeling wondrously brave and adventurous? I was planning on doing something like that, only the back-yard was the fabulous Barranca de Cobre tucked away in the remote wilderness of the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico, and the leader was my husband, a broad-shouldered, long-limbed, six-foot specimen of healthy, young American manhood.

We had tried to penetrate the canyon before but failed due to a wealth of misinformation and improper equipment. We made all our mistakes on the first exploration trip, learned much, now we are preparing to tackle that elusive canyon again. Here are our plans: We'll start at the village of Barranca de Cobre on the Urique River and continue 100 miles down the river to the town of Urique. There we'll hike back over the mountains to Creel.

On our first try we by-passed the canyon between the villages Barranca de Cobre and Urique and we hiked over the mountains between the two . This time we're going down the river. We'll hire Indians, about three, at Creel to carry our food and cargo. We have a little two-man rubber boat that weighs about 15 pounds. We'll walk through the canyon, and the boat will carry us across the river where the canyon is impassable. This is our plan, but anything can happen in that deep dark canyon to alter it.

We arrived in Chihuahua early morning welcomed by balmy sunny weather, and drove straight to the Hilton Hotel where we got a lovely room.

The first thing we did was drive up and down the streets looking for Tarahumara Indians so we could buy their art craft of belts, baskets, hand-made violins, and blankets. At first we didn't see any. Then all of a sudden we saw one woman walking down the street, three walking up the street on the other side, and a couple disappearing around the corner. We were so startled that we didn't know whom to approach. We finally went around the corner and approached the couple. He had a violin, which he eagerly sold to Dick for 30 pesos. (A peso is roughly worth 12 cents and 8.6 pesos equal approximately a dollar.) Then we asked him how much he wanted for his belt. He was so reluctant that Dick offered him ten. When he took it off, we saw it was old and worn and that's why he didn't think it was worth selling. But Dick paid him anyway.

We watched the three youngsters, a teenage boy and two teenage girls. They went from door to door with their little pails and people gave them food. We were so disappointed to see that, because up in the hills the Tarahumaras are a proud, shy people. The girls were like children all over the world, giggly, happy-go-lucky, feet dancing and skipping, scorning to walk. They were dressed in typical Indian fashion. The boy wore his cloth headband, loin cloth, short poncho bib thrown over his blouse, everything white, and went barefoot. The girls wore many full-gathered skirts, blouses with full-gathered sleeves, a bib thrown over it, head-bands, and were also barefoot. The girls looked big because of the multitudinous skirts, but actually were so tiny with fragile ankles, small dainty hands and feet.

We saw more Indians, more than we expected, but many did not have belts. Dick remembered that the Indians had camped along a dry riverbed so we scouted around until we found their camps. There we saw numerous Indians. We had many gifts that we gave them in exchange for taking pictures of them. Some were a little shy, but all were friendly and could

speak more Spanish than we could. We had jeans, T-shirts, material, kerchiefs, dresses, candy, shirts, and caps. All had been used but were in good shape.

We conversed with one family. The woman was making a basket out of palm reeds. Her baby played quietly at her feet, and her husband was resting. She had a beautiful belt of rare design around her waist. Dick offered her 20 pesos for it, but she shook her head. No money could buy it. We weren't about to give up. We laid down gift upon gift on the ground; an axe, overalls, denim jacket, kerchief, material, an old tire (the Indians make sandals out of tire tread), a T-shirt, a sweater. Her husband talked to her gently and persuasively, both of them smiling, she persistently shaking her head. We were finally discouraged when suddenly she unwound the belt and laid it in Dick's hands. No matter the race, color, or creed, a woman always surprises a man with her quick change of mind.

We saw many belts, but most of their owners were reluctant to sell them. We were mostly interested in obtaining different designs. We bought ten with five different designs at an average of 20 pesos each. We also bought Tarahumara baskets, which were made for selling. Those averaged from one to ten pesos each according to weave and size.

While we were walking around, we saw a Spanish woman holding a paper bag and giving bread rolls to the Indians. We exchanged greetings and were delighted to find that she spoke English. She told us that it had not rained much in the last three years. The crops had been so bad that the Indians were forced to come to town with their children to seek food, and many of them were starving. The town people gave them food as often as possible. We felt very bad to learn this, although we were relieved to understand why we saw them going from door to door for food. The Indians in Chihuahua are the same proud hill people.

Tuesday April 1, 1952

After an exchange of April Fool jokes, Dick and I bought 100 rolls of bread (penny a piece) and went to our village. We strolled from family to family, finding them scattered in camps along the rocky river bed, and we passed out rolls, took many pictures, and learned more Spanish and a little Tarahumara. We sure do like these people with their colorful dress and modest ways.

We will stay at the Hilton tonight then take the 7:15 a.m. train to Creel tomorrow, a 17-hour ride of 200 miles. Travel is slow in the backwoods country. We're storing our car in the hotel garage. The weather is wonderful but it will get hotter and hotter as we approach the canyon.

The desk clerk sure tossed us a verbal bombshell. With the infinite patience and skill of the interested Mexican, he got our story from us in complete detail. Then he told us a party out of El Paso was due tonight. They, too, were going to Creel and into the Barranca de Cobre -- a big party. We were very eager to meet them and learn the purpose and extent of their expedition. At 8:00 p.m. we checked with the desk and learned they had arrived. We called them on the desk phone then met them at their rooms.

There were six of them -- two men and four women. There was such a flurry of introductions and excited questions flying that it was all confusion. They had a dinner date at 9:00 with the red carpet unfurled, so we had little time to talk, much to our disappointment.

One man was Earle Stanley Gardner, the well-known writer of the Perry Mason mystery novels from California. Another man was Henry Steeger, owner of the Popular Publications Co., which includes Argosy and other magazines from New York. He knew all about our first Mexican

holiday, was interested in our story or notes with pictures for Argosy. So it might be published. We certainly will give it a try. He said Marion Hargrave who wrote "See here, Private Hargrave" is on their staff and would do the re-writing job on our notes.

They plan to leave for Creel in jeep and pickups either Thursday or Friday. We said we would wait in Creel until Saturday for them so we could have more time to talk together.

Wednesday April 2, 1952

At 6:00 a.m. our telephone rang to wake us up. We made arrangements for the hotel garage to store our car for $10 a month, then took the taxi to the train. It was on time and much different than our cattle train out of San Blas. The ride to Creel was uneventful on our little ole chug-chug train. Left 7:15 and arrived 10:00 p.m. We read our pocket books all the way, White Witch Doctor, and The Naked and the Dead.

We got a room at our Chinaman's hotel. There we met three Americans, Joe Clark, Jack Wash, and I didn't catch the name of the third man, all from Albuquerque, New Mexico. They were meeting an American, Mr. Tenny, who owns a lead mine producing 50% ore near Creel. We learned that the Potosi Mining Co. is operated by the American Smelting & Refining Co.

Thursday April 3, 1952

We are back again in the town of oil lamps and quaint little houses -- outside, turn to your left. There's electricity here, but evidently Joe, our Chinaman, doesn't believe in it. Our room is plain, but clean -- ironstead bed, wooden floor, table and chair, whitewashed walls, pot-bellied stove, wash basin and pitcher. Two Tarahumara blankets covered the bed. One made my eyes gleam -- dark subtle shades of brown with orange and red striped borders (the dyes are made from rock and plants,) heavy, with a magnificent weave. It was a treasure. They are rare in the states.

We had breakfast of fried eggs, bacon, the inevitable beans, fried potatoes, bread, and coffee. Then we looked up Father Manuel Martinez, a Mexican Catholic priest. Only he was different from any priest I've ever known, earthy, warm, and humorous with a mischievous, sparkling twinkle in his eyes. We talked for about two hours. He spoke English very well and gave us a wealth of information on the Tarahumara Indians.

He described their feast days when they used to sacrifice a cow to the sun. Their priest would catch the first flow of blood in his cupped hands, offer it to the sun, taste it, and throw it away saying, "It has no substance," meaning the sun had received it. He would do this four times. Then the Indians boiled the meat all night. The following morning the priest took a piece of meat, offered it to the sun, tasted it, threw it away and said, "It has no substance," again repeating this ceremony four times. Then everyone would eat the meat and food with great appetite.

The Indian drums are of goatskin stretched across a circular wooden frame. The Indians call each other by beating the drums. Next week is Holy Week and the Indians will gather in Creel. We are so disappointed that we will miss it. They also have races, and Father said one Indian ran 275 miles in 48 hours.

Then, at last, we did what we were dying to do ever since we hit Creel -- go to the stores to look for Tarahumara blankets. We found about ten out of which we bought three. They are beautiful pieces of art. We bought a white one with red, brown, and orange stars and border costing 80 pesos, and two dark brown ones with white, brown and orange stars and border, costing 66 pesos and 90 pesos. Price is based on weight. The big ones all weigh about nine pounds.

Then we found a fourth one. There's a story. Joe walked in as we were buying our blankets. He's a shrewd little old man (his age is estimated to be around 80 although he looks 60.) He asked how much we paid for the blankets.

I said, "You have a beautiful blanket. I'll give you 90 pesos for it."

Joe shook his head vigorously and said, "No, I won't sell my blanket. But, maybe for 126 pesos--- "

Everyone laughed and I shook my head saying, "One hundred pesos."

Joe said no and left. I despaired of getting that wondrous blanket, but I wasn't going to let him bluff me. When we returned to the hotel we met Joe.

"The blanket is yours for 100 pesos," he said.

Friday April 4, 1952

This morning Father Martinez, Dick, and I stood on Main Street while the priest interviewed Indians to work for us. He finally selected three on the basis of strength, trustfulness, and ability to speak Spanish in addition to Tarahumara. Father questioned them as to their likes for trail food. Milk and cereal drew negative shaking of heads. Dried meat, beans and tortillas brought forth hearty approval so our food list reads: Dried meat, beans, flour for tortillas, sugar, coffee, and salt. Dick and I had brought powdered milk, cereal, and rice from the states. I bet they'll eat that, too. Our Indians are young, lean and wiry. Bonito Juarez speaks very little Spanish (about as much as we do.) His name means Beautiful Juarez. Chico and Patricio both can speak Spanish. I hope we'll all be happy together for the next 30 days.

There was a political speech in the afternoon in the square. Election for president, a six-year term, is approaching. All the men gathered in front of the band stand, all politely held their hats in their hands and listened carefully, applauding after each speech.

We waited all day for Mr. Gardner's party to arrive, and they finally came in the evening; Mr. and Mrs. Henry Steeger, Mr. Gardner, his two secretaries, Jean Bethell and Lilie MacLean (an English girl here two years from England,) Sam Hicks, Mr. Gardner's ranch foreman, and Anita Haskell Jones, a famous sportswoman who has won numerous trophies in swimming, skiing, and sword fishing. Jose F. Gandara, Mexican representative of the Pemex Travel Agency in El Paso, was leading the group. They will go to the river with mules at various points such as the town of Barranca de Cobre and Divisadero. Mrs. Shirley Steeger is a botanist and will make studies of the plants, and everybody will take pictures and movies.

The Steegers invited us to dinner and guess where we ate -- at our friend Joe's. They are sleeping at another hotel. We talked and talked and talked. The Steegers are wonderful people, outdoor adventurers, simple, friendly, and unaffected.

We'll buy our supplies tomorrow and at last head for the Barranca de Cobre.

Saturday April 5, 1952

We got up early. I took my morning walk and met a horse standing across the path. I edged around him slowly then hurried as he followed me, quickly slamming the door to the little house. Moments later I peered out almost bumping his inquisitive nose. He finally left and I returned to our room and washed up in the tin basin.

We had breakfast with Anita Jones and Earl Gardner. Then we went to the store to buy our groceries. Our three Indians were already waiting for us, only Luis had replaced Chico. It seems as if Chico wasn't very trustworthy. Both Luis and Patricio wore conventional jeans, shirt, and straw hat. But Bonito was very colorful in Tarahumara dress of a red, full-sleeved blouse, a loin cloth, and another clothe that draped in the back in a neat triangle. His straight Dutch bob was bound neatly with a bright red kerchief folded into a band around his forehead. He was a little older than the other two. We bought flour, sugar, rice, dried jerked meat, coffee, beans, cheese, and salt. The storekeeper brought out some hard chunks resembling sawed off ice-cream cones that look like rock. It was a special candy that the Indians relished. We sacked that up too, then bought cigarettes and bandannas for our new friends.

The quantity of food was tremendous; 22 pounds of flour, 22 pounds of sugar, 10 pounds of rice, 22 pounds of beans, 7 pounds cheese, 13 pounds of dried meat. I waited in suspense, impatient to see how much our 120 pounds of food totaled. The storekeeper added it up and it amounted to the amazing sum of $17.00 for food enough to feed five people for two weeks. It's fantastic!

We took an exchange of pictures with Mr. Steeger, then showed Patricio how to operate our camera so he could take pictures of Dick and me together. He held the camera with calm dignity, listened carefully to instructions in Spanish from Gonzolas Muisquiz, then squinted through the viewer and squeezed the shutter steadily -- a perfect picture.

Gonzolas Muisquiz is a short, rotund, jolly man who offered to show us the trademark on our Indian blankets. He examined them closely, pushing the weave apart. Dick and I watched so closely that our three heads nearly touched. Suddenly Mr. Muisquiz deftly grabbed something, pinched his fingers together, and tossed it over his shoulders. Everyone laughed at our bewildered expressions.

We learned today that he is a rich man owning many lumber companies and approximately 750,000 acres in the region around and beyond Creel. It seems that the more people have, the more genuine and natural they are.

Mr. Gonzales, the storekeeper, piled our duffel in the back of his pickup, the Indians jumped in, Dick and I climbed into the front, and we took off to Baseborachic about 30 miles away. The road was narrow, winding down into the canyon. Tall pines and terraced rock cliffs soared above. We stopped near a Tarahumara house, piled out, shouldered the packs, and took off. I cast a lingering look over my shoulder at our last touch with civilization as we followed a narrow winding trail along a noisy little creek. By tactic consent Bonito took the lead, his strong brown legs flashing purposefully down the trail.

There seems to be a conspiracy in the heavens to always rain on the outdoor adventurer on his first day on the trail. This part of Mexico has been experiencing a serious drought, the crops are doing poorly. We had even met the government man who was distributing trainloads of corn to alleviate drought conditions. Regardless, we saw the clouds draw closer and closer in a tight huddle, heard their whispering and giggling increase to ominous muttering which cracked harshly into thunder. We hastened to the shelter of a cave and made camp. The rain minced in, poured lightly for five minutes, then retreated. The clouds departed, satisfied.

We all sat around self-consciously looking at each other. Then at an unspoken signal the Indians scattered. Dick laughingly remarked that they were probably going back to Creel, but they returned with quantities of wood. I prepared a supper of cheese, rice with milk, and coffee. Bonito made a special Tarahumara dish for himself mixing pinole, which is ground roasted corn

with water, and drinking it. We tasted it. I didn't like it. He didn't like our powdered milk so we were even.

After supper our Indians kept looking up the cliff across the creek. Suddenly they took off and climbed up to a cave. We finally realized they'd spotted the quarters of more Tarahumaras. But the cave was empty at present.

Bonito piled the wood higher, and we sat around the fire as the evening advanced and darkened. The last rays hit the highest pinnacles on the cliffs turning them golden against the dark clouds. We saw an Indian coming up the trail below us. I gasped with delight as I saw the primitive thing he carried. A drum, a wondrous drum of the same kind that haunted Dick and me when we were going down the canyon alone and heard its steady beat but could never see anyone. It had a round wooden frame about five inches wide and two feet in diameter, and stretched across it was goat skin laced tightly back and forth across the wood frame. The surface was red with white petals radiating from the center to the edge of the drum. A string with five beads strung on it stretched across the drum and was attached to a peg, which tightened or loosened the string. We were fascinated with it, and Dick experimentally struck it with the skin-padded drumstick. It pealed out strongly with a strange metallic tone. Then we grasped the significance of the beads. When the drum was struck the beads vibrated rapidly against the taut goat-skin adding a wild, primitive sound to the drum's boom. Our trail friend accepted some candy and cigarettes, chatted awhile, then took off in the darkness beating steadily on his drum. It pulsated with the magic that all drums possess, until it faded away to an echo.

Patricio assembled flour, water, salt, and sugar and made a stiff dough by sprinkling a little water in at a time. Then he kneaded and kneaded it, slowly and tirelessly, never stopping. I watched him. Back home under pressure of time and urgent obligations, I'd have squirmed with impatience at his deliberateness. But out here there is no time, everything slows down, you relax and become philosophical. Patricio then broke off small pieces of dough and kneaded them into flat pancakes. He cooked them over the coals in an ungreased fry-pan. Before he was half done, Dick and I unrolled our sleeping bags and sacked out. I blinked at the stars, but the old gentleman took off over the hills.

April 6

The hill Indians are so very shy. We examined their fishing pole. It was a bamboo reed with a circle of thorns on one end to spear the fish. They had blocked off a part of the creek to trap the fish. The fish that he speared were not much bigger than minnows.

We stopped at noon and lunched on dried meat spiked on sharpened sticks and cooked over the fire. The meat was heavily salted and browned up crisp and juicy. We ate Patricio's tortillas. They were tough, hard, chewy, and delicious.

From our conversation last night involving single words, gesturing, and pointing, we learned that Patricio is 19, Luis 28, and Bonito 60. We were amazed at Bonito's age and can barely believe it. He looks in his thirties, one of those ageless people. He is a true Indian in dress, habits, and speech. He speaks very little Spanish and wears the loincloth, headband, and full-sleeved blouse of the Tarahumara. He has a quiet smile hard that's to catch unless something really funny has happened. He maintains a calm dignity and steps ever so lightly with his heavy pack.

Patricio has a quick smile, wide and sweet, and eyes that twinkle with the excitement and fun of youth. He is a good-looking youngster, his face usually lit up with laughter and lively curiosity. In repose his face is hauntingly sad.

Luis is the unknown factor, so quiet and shy that I can rarely catch his eye, but a hard and willing worker. Both he and Bonito are slight in build while Patricio is quite husky and tall for a Tarahumara.

We like our friends. They are doing a difficult job carrying 50-pound packs through the canyon with no trails for five pesos a day (approximately 60 cents.) We feel guilty about that even though we are paying them more than the daily wage of two or three pesos a day. We give them all they can eat to try to make up for it. We figure it will cost us about $100 for food for our three Indians and us for a period of four weeks.

Our friends moved slowly the first few days, stopping often to rest and smoke cigarettes. But today they took off like greased lightning, going up and down those boulders without stopping. Even without a pack I was soon left behind.

Thursday April 10, 1952

Shortly after lunch events happened as Dick predicted. We hit the Urique River at the spot Dick said we would, the place we were two days below after our original party split up. The Urique was chuck full of monstrous boulders with the river going under, over, and between them. The walking became more difficult and we had to cross the river many times, jumping over rocks and climbing boulders. We were just a little worried about our friends liking this sort of thing. They all started out wearing tire-tread sandals, but now they carried them while climbing boulders. It made me wince to see them scramble with bare feet and heavy packs.

All this was familiar to us. We had traveled down this portion of the river to the village of Barranca de Cobre where we left the river to cross the mountains to Urique. The portion of the river between Barranca de Cobre to Urique village will be new and is the part of the canyon we want to explore. We'll be the first white people to traverse that dark, deep canyon between the two remote villages with a boat, a distance of about 100 miles.

There are impassable parts of the canyon above Barranca de Cobre where we had to build rafts on our first trip. This time we are prepared with our two-man rubber boat.

In a short time after we hit the Urique River we came to our first impassable gorge. The canyon walls dove deep into the river making it impossible to pass on either side. Without a boat we would have had to climb out of the canyon and go past the gorge on top, providing we could climb out. Dick unpacked the bright yellow boat and blew it up. Bonito's eyes nearly bugged out as he watched in amazement. Dick tied the rope to the boat, and then stepped in it gingerly while it tilted and bobbed like a cork. I played out the rope while he paddled with his hands guiding the boat to a point about 150 feet below. There he tied the other end of the rope and pulled the boat back hand-over-hand on the rope. The boat was so tiny. Dick filled it entirely when he sat down with his legs outstretched in front of him. He took the four duffel packs over one by one. Then I

sat on his lap, my legs outstretched over his, and down we floated. Our Indians eyed the boat dubiously and were not too happy over the prospect of their first boat ride, but they got in without a murmur. We were happily surprised and ever so relieved because the Indians don't like the river and even hate to get their feet wet.

We had some tricky places to cross on the cliffs above the river. I got hung up at one spot. I clung to every crack and crevice, afraid to let go to move to the next narrow foothold. The river yawned below me, black and deep. Dick shouted encouragements until I finally dropped off safely to the beach on the other side. The river is very deceptive, some places are only ankle-deep, then off the sides of the huge boulders the river runs black and ominous about 20 feet deep. The water is cool, not icy cold as it was on our first trip.

We made camp just before sundown. Bonito made the fire, and the others scattered for logs while I prepared our supper of goat's cheese, rice and milk, and coffee.

Before each meal Bonito takes out his little sack of pinole, mixes it with water, and drinks it. He certainly is nice. Patricio and Louis spill over into laughter easily, and even Bonito will let loose a broad grin occasionally. They are good friends, work well together, smoke their cigarettes, and chat contentedly before the fire while Patricio makes the tortillas.

Everything seems to be going smoothly, yet Dick and I have a slight uneasiness about our guides and wonder whether they might leave us. Traveling along the river under such difficulties, following no trail, progressing slowly with heavy packs, may seem senseless and silly to them. The language barrier makes it almost impossible to explain to them that it is a great challenge for us to explore a region where white man has not poked around much yet.

Our first crossing with the boat makes walking back impossible, but there is still the village.

Monday April 7, 1952

I swear those Indians of ours never sleep. We could hear them talking and laughing all hours of the night and blowing the air hose from the boat at each other and giggling. They were up when I blinked my eyes and saw daylight. The cook pot that I scrubbed clean last night was fire-smoked and looked used. I peered inside and saw a full pot of beans with large chunks of meat, which Patricio had let, cook all night. It was delicious. We are on Mexican fare of beans and tortillas, and it is a fare that sticks to the ribs while on the trail.

The going is rugged. The canyon gets deeper and narrower and the river is choked with the boulders. Progress is slow and when I get discouraged climbing over one boulder after another, I think of our Indians' bare feet. Although it's difficult travel, the beauty of the canyon makes it worth while. It's a primitive beauty, untouched and natural with a wealth of trees, flowers, and birds. There's an exotic combination of pine, maple, cactus, and orchids. The canyon wren has the sweetest song there is, especially when its clear notes cascade down through the stillness of the morning, just upon awakening. And always there's the sound of restless, rushing water pouring over rocks and forming waterfalls.

We came to an impassable place where Dick had to inflate the boat. Dick sat in the bottom of the boat and paddled backwards with his arms. The other side was deep mud and Dick tried to toss the duffel pack up on the shore, but it rolled down the bank into the water. Dick leaped out to catch it and sank up to his hips in mud. We gasped while watching him from the other side of the river. He has a disconcerting habit of whistling when things go wrong -- he dragged the pack out of the water, whistling all the while, climbed in the boat, and relayed everything and everybody over. It's old stuff to our guides now.

Bonito is the most amazing individual I have ever met. To watch him is to realize that one need not get old. He's as agile, supple, and active as a young man. In fact, Luis and Patricio are hard put to keep up with him and lack his grace and poetry of motion. I sure do like them. Luis wears a ragged jacket and a worn pair of jeans. Patricio wears two pairs of pants, one over the other, while Bonito has only his loin cloth and faded red blouse. Yet they are a happy, light-hearted trio and laugh so easily over little things. I took close-up portraits of all three today. They

were so self-conscious in front of the camera and had sober faces. I pulled a long face, too, and evoked delighted grins from Patricio and Luis, but Bonito wasn't about to smile. The other two teased him and rocked with laughter until a reluctant grin spread over Bonito's face making it even more beautiful.

At about noon we came to a deep, dark gorge, impassable on either side. The Tarahumaras mark their trails with poles slanted against the beginning and end of the trail. We found the familiar marker and followed a narrow cat-walk, a foot wide, up along the cliff. We climbed until we were about 600 feet above the river where brush grew along the trail making it less frightening. After half an hour we dropped off to a point half a mile farther down river. We missed two potential boat crossings. The last time I crossed this trail, I was almost gibbering with terror at its height and narrowness, and at one point sat down and cried from sheer helplessness. This time it seemed like walking on a broad sidewalk back home.

While we lunched on dried meat, tortillas, and coffee, a large rock crashed down just five feet away from Bonito. He jumped and moved promptly into a cave. The others laughed, but followed him shortly. Later on we saw Bonito staring up at the cliffs at a round object as big as a football with a hole in the center. It nestled close to the cliff wall about 100 feet from the ground. He gathered some stones and started to throw them, missing the object only by inches. It was sheer poetry in motion to watch him. He swung his arm behind him, bent backwards, and came straight up almost from the ground sailing the rock with terrific power and speed. But the object was in a deep curve of the cliff about ten feet back. Failing to hit it he walked down the river apiece then started climbing up the cliff. Dick followed close behind. Both men are superb climbers, and it was hard to decide who was better, 25-year-old Dick or 60-year-old Bonito. When they got near Dick saw it was a beehive. Bonito was after the honey. They kept pegging rocks at the hive and bees swarmed all over. Strangely enough they didn't attack. But there was no honey.

Dick was clearly the leader now, having traversed this part of the canyon before. We came upon some boot marks in the mud along the river. It puzzled us, but suddenly with a thrill we realized they were our own from our trip in February.

We had to make another crossing by boat. Dick paddled all the packs across, then each of us, in about eight trips.

Farther down we came to a slow, sullen stretch of water that backed up between a narrow gorge and slowly disappeared around the corner. There were no boulders. It meant a long boat ride. So we camped in the same spot as on our first trip when, rather than build another raft, we tried to climb out without success.

Bonito had gathered more green plants during the day. The plant sprayed out from a long, narrow, white root. He gathered them in his lap, lifted a big bunch with one hand then struck them down into his lap with the other hand. I couldn't figure out the reason for this curious preparation. Then he cooked the roots in water with lots of salt. They were good, with a sharp pungent taste a little like white radishes.

We discovered tiny cactus about an inch high growing all around our camp. Looking closely we found many scattered in a small area. I drew a picture of one. Patricio was fascinated and watched every pencil line closely.

Tiny black flies are numerous in the canyon during the day but don't bother us at night. They are vicious little devils and hover around chewing on our arms and legs. We don't feel the bite, but later on bumps appear like mosquito bites which itch fiercely. The more you scratch, the bigger they get, the bigger they get, the more they itch. They remain for weeks. Six-Twelve would help but we have mosquito netting instead, only there aren't any mosquitoes. We also have quinine for the same non-existent mosquitoes, yet it's a good precaution because malaria will end an expedition abruptly for the unfortunate individual who becomes ill. We have another good medicine, chloromycin tablets, which is good for virus infections or severe cramps from bad water.

Dick and I carry very few clothes, only the jeans we have on, a tee shirt and sweat shirt apiece, shorts, and a change of wool socks. We wear stout hiking boots, which probably will be in shreds like our last pairs after a month of walking over these boulders.

Tuesday, April 8, 1952

The nights are quite warm and comfortable this time of year. Both Bonito and Patricio have beautiful, loom-woven Tarahumara blankets, but we were dismayed to learn that Luis had none. We had stripped down to such bare essentials that we didn't have even a spare shirt to loan him. It doesn't seem to disturb him though. He just curls in front of the fire and sleeps.

Patricio had boiled water and gotten the tortillas and beans ready for breakfast. All I had to do was add the ground coffee.

We had to cross by boat for the canyon was full of water between the canyon walls because of a rock dam down below. Dick figured that by taking each man with his pack, he would only have to make four trips. It was a long boat ride, about 400 yards between a dark, deep narrow gorge. The black water mirrored green reflections in its depths, very still and quiet. The sheer walls dropped straight into the water on both sides, leaving only a patch of blue sky above. Our friends never protest, yet they sit straight and tense in the boat, only too glad to alight from our frail craft. It took Dick four hours to ferry everyone across. The two-man boat is really a one man boat. Dick lays on his back in the boat and we set on top of him. His arms hang over the side so he can paddle.

Since there was another crossing shortly below, I carried the boat. It was light but clumsy, bobbing up and down on my back and pulling away with the wind. We never stay consistently on one side of the river, but are forced to cross and recross on the boulders, which conveniently choke the river. When not convenient, out comes the boat. At one place two boulders were about five feet apart with a drop of ten feet to whitewater that boiled and pouring over rocks. Dick leaped across easily. The others stopped and refused to move. I didn't like it either, but I knew there was nothing else to do. I braced myself for the leap, hesitated, and was lost.

Dick shouted, "Jump, Iz, don't wait to get up nerve, because it never comes. Just jump!"

I leaped before I could think and scrambled up safely on the other side. I guess I played a dirty trick on the others. By a man's code they could do nothing else but leap, too. We continued down the river, made another crossing by boat, and made a short sneak across a rocky cliff to evade another boat crossing.

About noon we heard a tremendous roar -- dynamite. We were approaching the town of Barranca de Cobre where lead is mined. Around a bend in the river we saw a rare sight, a dragstone mill, or *Tuana*, for extracting gold from ore. It consisted of circular basins with a wooden sweep that drag revolving stones inside. Ore is put inside and the stones pulverize them to mud. Mercury is mixed in to amalgamate the free gold. The sweep is made to revolve by a directed stream of water coming down the mountain.

We met some Mexicans who said that Americans would be in Barranca de Cobre tomorrow from Creel, they were traveling with a large party mounted on mules. Thinking they might be the Gardner party, we camped a short distance down the river below the village to wait until Wednesday. Three Mexican men followed us to camp and chatted a while. Dick inflated the boat to show them how we progress through the canyon. Their reaction was terrific, and they weren't satisfied until Dick demonstrated and launched the boat. Then each in turn got in the boat. I don't think any of them had even seen a boat much less knew how to swim. They waved their arms and made wild passes at the water twirling the boat around and about, laughing hilariously all the while.

As we sat around the campfire at night -- the quiet and serenity set me to dreaming -- and I stared into the fire, lost in thought. I wondered what adventure, in excitement, discoveries, unforeseen danger and obstacles we would find below as we followed this river that forever disappears around another corner.

Suddenly Luis jumped and began poking with a stick at a small, dark object scuttling through the small stones. He made a direct hit and it curled up and lay quiet. Dick lifted it with a stick and examined it in the firelight. It was an ugly, black scorpion with a vicious tail that ended in a curved, needle-sharp stinger. Bravo Luis! But later when a little frog hopped into camp, all the Indians jumped back giving it plenty of room. I scooped it up and set it near the water.

The evening ritual of making tortillas and beans followed. The Indians took turns making the tortillas, while we all sorted and cleaned the beans. In careless American fashion I scattered a few. Later I saw Bonito carefully pick each one up, wash them and add them to the pot. It hurts to see how little these Indians have; even we middle-income live in such splendor that we are millionaires in their eyes.

Dick and I found a broad, gleaming-white sandbar about 100 yards from camp, where we unrolled our sleeping bags. Our friends stay up so late and have so gala a time that we usually seek a quieter place. We'd both fallen asleep when I woke abruptly to the sound that turns blood to ice when one is in a deep, rocky canyon: the night was hideous with the roar, thunder, and crash of rocks. A rock slide! I slid out of my sleeping bag like a greased banana and bolted blindly for the nearest boulder, half-mad with terror. I crouched behind my dubious shelter, my hands futilely trying to protect my head, my eyes squeezed shut as I heard the murderous crash of hurtling rocks. Abruptly, everything was still.

Dick shouted from somewhere, "Iz, are you all right?"

I crawled out. The air was dense and white with clouds of dust and powdered rock. Still shaky, we gathered up our clothes and sleeping bags and ran back to camp. The Indians were badly shaken, too, although in no danger.

The next morning we returned to our sandbar and inspected the rockslide. One rock had hurtled over our heads and lay nestled in the sand ten feet beyond our sleeping bags. Another, refrigerator size, rested three feet above where our heads had been. Each rock was large enough to have pounded us into the ground. Rocks were scattered all over the beach. Boulders lay in the river and on the opposite side. A fig tree had been torn out at the roots. The rocks and boulders from the slide were recognizable by their dead-white, shattered surfaces.

Wednesday April 9, 1952

We spent a leisurely day in camp. Because the village was so close we were afraid to drink from the river. Fortunately, there was a spring nearby. We went to the store and bought flour, cigarettes for our friends, candy, and on a sudden impulse, soap for them. The soap was a happy thought. It's hard to realize there are people so poor that they have no money to buy food, who want to work but there is no work, to whom soap is a luxury. After I passed the soap around, three Indians disappeared in the direction of the river. Three Indians reappeared hours later, their shirts slightly damp but gleaming clean, hair washed, too.

All afternoon in the hot sunshine Patricio kept his blanket draped around him. Dick noticed a tear on the knee of his trousers and asked if I would mend it. Patricio disappeared behind a rock and emerged with pants in hand but still in his blanket. I found two big tears in the seat of his pants: no wonder he wore the blanket. Bonito shyly approached and "asked" me to fix his blouse badly slit in the seams of the shoulder, sleeve, and cuff. So I mended that and Luis' jacket as well.

Our Spanish got us in trouble again. After waiting all day, we learned that the Americans had come and gone already, two days ago. We broke camp immediately, glad to leave because the canyon around Barranca de Cobre was dry and ugly with little vegetation. No trees so everyone made themselves walking-canes out of bamboo; Bonito spent much time carving the root into a fancy handle. The more I watch him, the more my amazement increases at his youthfulness in body and vigor. Their canes are great aids in crossing the river and also helping each other climb those huge boulders.

Today we passed through a wicked place. The river was choked and lined on both sides by gigantic boulders, forcing us to go around them over them, and in some places, under them. Our legs ached before the day was done. The boulders made everything weird, forming deep dark caves, towering high above our heads, some forming gentle easy slopes that fooled us into climbing them, then abruptly dropping straight down 30 feet or more on the other side. At times I was lost in a maze of dark, narrow passages between the boulders. I didn't like it at all and was glad to finally emerge into sunshine.

At day's end we found a clear spring, which formed a series of little pools on the left side of the river. We have seen many such springs, but this was the first to be hot! Dick got out a bar of soap, and had himself a grand time taking a hot bath, singing lustily all the while. We set up camp on the opposite side of the river. The Indians around these parts use this spring.

Tonight Bonito told us that further down the canyon we wouldn’t be able to return to Creel for additional food supplies. Here would be the last easy place to climb out. We are almost out of beans and flour. So tomorrow the four of them will leave for Creel, and I'll remain in camp. It might take them four to six days.

There were a lot of places that were straight up a rock wall. We could not get Isabelle out of the canyon.

Friday April 11, 1952

The Tarahumaras' world moves slowly. Our high-pressured, split-timing way of living would be incomprehensible to them. I made breakfast early, thinking they could get a good start on the trail, but they ate leisurely. And afterwards, Patricio started to whittle a flute out of a bamboo reed. He blew a few experimental notes: the sound was infinitely sweet. I thought, now they will go. Then Luis unpacked the pots, then the flour. Oh no! Yes, he started to make tortillas, which took hours. When he finished, it was time to eat lunch. Again they ate leisurely. Finally, at noon they shouldered their packs and took off for Creel.

It seems strange to be alone in this deep canyon. But I have my hot-water swimming pool, some books to read and exploring to do, so I'll keep busy. Nights will be a little lonely though, with no company except the sound of the river.

Saturday April 12, 1952

A night along in the wilderness is a unique experience -- calm and peaceful or strange and shivery, (depending on the way a person reacts to it.) It was a little bit of both for me. I read until it was too dark to see, then pushed the sand around so it was fairly level, unrolled my sleeping bag, and crawled in. I could see no stars at first, but as the dark deepened, suddenly they were, there bright pinpoints of light against the night sky. A series of little waterfalls cascaded over rocks as the river swept by my camp, making a continuous sound of rushing water. It blotted out other sounds in such a way that my ears strained to hear noises that I wasn't sure were real or of my imagination. Sometimes I thought I heard whistling, or the distant, muted rumbling of a rockslide. But the chirping of night birds was real and comforting. The rocks and cliffs assumed weird shapes and I had to really hold down my imagination. I dozed a bit. Out in the wilderness one eye and one ear are always alert. When I looked around again, the cliffs along the lower end of the river were lit up in brilliant contrast to the surrounding darkness. The next time I awoke, the moon had cleared the canyon and flooded it with bright light. Everything looked just the way it should. I relaxed completely and finally slept.

I had a delightful morning splashing around in my hot water pool, laying in the sunshine and watching the swallows dip and soar tirelessly above the river. There's an abundance of birds in the canyon: a brilliant red-crested bird, sparkling green hummingbirds, canyon wrens whose song is pure delight, hawks that soar gracefully far above the canyon; and a little, shy yellow bird. But we never see any mammals. We did see the remains of what looked like a fox, its teeth parted in a ferocious grin, tufts of brown fur scattered all over.

I read a good part of the day. There are no mosquitoes but the little black flies were vicious, darting in for a bite whenever they could. They seem to thrive in the hot sunshine. Any slight movement makes them jittery so when we walk on the trail they don't bother us much. But they close in as soon as we sit still. Fortunately, they disappear at night. Any insect repellent would discourage them.

Tonight was easier sleeping. I made up my mind that a boulder was a boulder, a shadow just a shadow, that no strange noises hid behind the sound of the water and actually I was safer out here than in an unpredictable city. It worked -- almost!

Sunday April 13, 1952

This is the strangest place I have ever been on Easter: deep in the wilderness of the Barranca de Cobre in Mexico. If I had one wish granted to me now, it would be to hear the Russian Easter Overture. In this grand setting it would be exquisite.

I saw another kind of hummingbird today; tiny, brown, cream-breasted with a brilliant orange bill. It stuttered as it hovered above slim, yellow, bell-shaped blossoms, then flew away at incredible speed. There are all kinds of flowers, trees, bushes, cactus, and shrubs in the canyon. Bonito had cracked open some big pods off a tree, which Dick thought were kapak. They were filled with a fluffy, white, cotton-like substance and many seeds, which we ate. They tasted like unroasted Spanish peanuts.

I took a hike down river to see what was around the corner. When I got there I found the river turned another corner with middling-sized boulders and no need of a boat crossing. Satisfied, I returned to camp, sat in the shade of a huge boulder and read.

Adventure streamed past my door all day on the other side of the river. First I saw two shadows slipping through the boulders. They were so perfectly camouflaged that I had to blink a couple of times before I made out that they were two burros, a black mare and a black colt. They looked at me curiously, then came to the edge of the water to drink. Suddenly, I heard a clatter of rocks high above on the cliff. Down trotted a grey mare burro with a little black colt at her heels. They didn't stop until they were within 12 feet of the first pair. They stared at each other, then nonchalantly began grazing together.

A little while later I saw a herd of goats: black ones, white ones, spotted ones, little ones, big ones, come bouncing around the corner. They flocked around the water's edge to drink. Where there are goats, there are people in this country, so I remained hidden in my shelter under a big boulder, watching for the goat herder. So many, many times on our first trip we were

watched by the Tarahumaras in the upper canyon. We knew afterwards they were following us, because when our party walked out they found footprints around every one of our camps and everything we had left behind had been carried off. Soon I saw a figure dressed entirely in white. White ankle-length skirt, white blouse, and white kerchief hiding her face. She emerged around the corner and walked along the edge of the river. She was like a ghost in the hot sunshine, but what an agile ghost. She leaped after the goats, brown bare feet flashing as nimbly as the goats themselves. She threw stones at the straying ones and shouted something unintelligible in a high, clear voice. I knew I shouldn't reveal myself, because the hill-women are painfully shy and will avert their faces if you come upon them in their homes. I waited until she had rounded up her goats. Two days' isolation had made me lonely as the dickens, so in spite of my good intentions, I crossed the river hoping to approach her. She sat on a rock, sewing, and a bundle of clothes lying open beside her.

I called out, "*Buenos dias*" as I came within 50 feet of her, a big smile spread across my face. My smile slipped as I saw her pick up a wicked, shining knife fully 12 inches long. But -- what relief -- she put the knife into her bundle, hastily tied it up and took off rapidly after her goats, which had started to climb up the cliff. I watched sadly as she followed them, climbing with no difficulty up the steep, rocky sides. They all disappeared slowly over the hill.

I love the wilderness, the outdoors, the fresh unspoiled beauty of a wild, rugged country like the Barranca de Cobre. But beauty shared is twice as beautiful. So I'm anxiously waiting for Dick to get back. Two days gone; might be four more days before they return.

With the sun slipping behind the cliff I built a smoke fire to drive off the *moscas* (flies.) I had just started to read when a belligerent voice shouted, "Hey there, why haven't you gathered any wood? Where's our supper? Lazy good-for-nothing woman! All you do is read."

I jumped a foot, looked up and saw Dick standing there, thin, gaunt, a week's beard and a happy grin on his face. What time they made! They left the canyon Friday at noon and arrived Creel, 35 miles away, on Saturday morning. They departed Creel Sunday and arrived back at camp 7 in the evening.

Here's Dick's story.

Friday April 11 (by Dick)

The four of us started the long climb to Creel, leaving Isabelle to fight it out with the flies. The climbing was very hard; like all Tarahumara trails in the canyon it was mostly vertical cliffs. It would have been impossible for Isabelle to climb out. At the 4,000-foot level we found a Tarahumara cave with a small spring running through it. The family didn't live in, Bonito said they would return to the cave in June. Inside were clay pots wooden hoes and a crude wooden plow. Under one shelf was a large goat pen where the Indians collect manure for the fields on the rim. Manure is an Indian's wealth, for without it the land is worthless. If a family has many goats, sheep, and cattle, he's considered wealthy because of the animal's manure.

We passed several large deadfall traps made of large flat rocks and others made of logs. The Tarahumaras said that the traps were made to catch coyotes. Often we saw deer and wild turkeys but very wild.

We climbed another 2,500 feet and were out of the canyon. The climb out took us four hours. This is the area where the depth of the canyon has been estimated to be 8,000 feet deep. It is not that deep.

Bonito was clearly the leader. He seemed to know where every cave, trail, and spring were located. The Indians sensed the urgency -- they knew we had to travel quickly, get food at Creel, and return to the 6,500 feet deep canyon to rescue Isabelle. Her food supply would be gone in a few days and I felt guilty about leaving her in such a vast wilderness. She does not excel at climbing rock faces. I would have been hard pressed to find the village of Creel had I been traveling without the Indians for companions. Hour after hour we moved silently, always at a relentless pace.

On the plateau there were many Indian dwellings. Some were made of rocks, others of logs and rough-hewed boards. It was Good Friday and the whole country was ringing with music. Every Tarahumara we saw was either playing a flute or beating a *tombola*. Very impressive. Patricio told me that after Easter the flute and *tombolas* are put away and aren't played again until December.

Before sundown we came to the Indian village of Tararecua, where a number of stone huts were scattered about the plowed fields. On one side of the clearing was a large stone church. The Tarahumaras had just finished a fiesta in honor of Good Friday, their last until the crops are harvested. Their ritual is half Catholic and half Tarahumara. The church fiestas are more than just religious ceremonies, they are social gatherings allowing the Indians to become better acquainted with other members of their pueblo. There is much feasting and drinking and the unmarried men look for wives.

At the church entrance I found four lances, each one about six feet long. They were tipped with a 12-inch blades of, very sharp steel. Luis said they were used for deer. I have seen Tarahumaras with bows and arrows but never spears, I didn't know they existed.

The Tarahumaras are an unusually reticent people, because of their traumatic contact with the outside world. First, in 1607, came the missionaries, bringing smallpox. Typical of the conversion endeavor was Father Joseph Neumann, who arrived in 1681 and spent 50 years among the Tarahumara without coming close to understanding them. "These Indians are by nature and disposition a sly and crafty folk," Neumann wrote in a memoir. "They are accomplished hypocrites, and as a rule, the ones who seem most virtuous should be considered the most wicked."

Latinos, first missionaries, and later miners, soldiers, and government officials have constantly bombarded the Tarahumaras. It is remarkable that they have not become more Mexicanized.

When we left the pueblo the three Indians started dog trotting very slowly. We ran until several hours after dark through large pine trees. Eventually we lost our way in very dark forest so we made camp.

It was a miserable camp the wind blew and it started to snow. It was too cold for the Indians to sleep so they huddled around the fire like black crows wrapped in their blankets. I crawled in my bag, and towards morning I moved closer to the fire but was blocked by the three Indians huddled around it. Ice formed, and two inches of snow covered the ground. Twenty miles away in the canyon Isabelle probably slept outside her sleeping bag, awakened in the morning by tropical birds. The snow soon disappeared once the sun appeared.

In Creel I bought 25 pounds of dried meat, 30 pounds of flour, 20 pounds of beans, and 20 pounds of brown sugar candy. Divided between the four of us, we were able to travel very fast.

Sunday April 13, 1952

We left Creel at eleven o'clock on Easter Sunday. Thirty-five miles from camp, I had little hope of reaching the river the same day. The Indians, being Tarahumaras, started their slow dog trot that never seemed to end. Hour after hour we ran, stopping a few times for several minutes to rest. Running with a full pack isn't easy -- for Indians or a white man. There were times when I thought I might have to stop them, but I had been walking for months in the Sierra Madre Mountains, and like the Tarahumaras I had done a lot of running.

The Indian's secret to fast cross-country travel is short cuts. Very seldom does an Indian follow a well-established trail. When an Indian stops to rest it is only long enough to catch his breath. Ernest Thompson Seton one of my favorite authors during my childhood, he was a man who had been in the far north and also in this region. He reported seeing a Tarahumara postman in 1924 who routinely covered 70 miles a day, seven days a week, bearing a heavy mailbag. I am perhaps out of my element.

We by-passed the pueblo of Tararecua, and just before sundown we reached the canyon rim where Bonito met an old friend going to Creel to sell a blanket. They talked for a half hour, giving me time to rest and observe the scenery. Everywhere I looked there were trails coming out of the Barranca. It's a wild region, but even so trails lead everywhere. Across the canyon we could see the village of Pamachic, located on a high plateau. There the Indians are pagans. Some day I must go there.

Descending to the Urique River was almost as hard as climbing out. Many times we walked on narrow ledges, and in places the rock was grooved for footholds very similar to the Navajo footholds in the American Southwest. We frequently met Indian women herding goats. They were even shyer than the deer we have seen. If at all possible, they would run and hide from us, leaving their goats to wander. If we surprised one, she'd turn her head and refuse to look at us

The flat plateau between the rim of the canyon and Creel

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When we reached camp, the three Indians sat down on the rocks and that's where they stayed until they had slept for ten hours. I had enough energy to bathe in the hot springs, but it took me more than ten hours to recover.

Monday April 14, 1952 (by Isabelle)

Everyone was so bushed last night that they collapsed and went to bed without making tortillas or beans. We spent the morning in camp. Bonito made tortillas while Pat and Luis washed up in the hot water spring.

Washing is such a pleasure out here after a hot, dusty, sweaty day. The river is pleasantly cool, just right for a quick plunge into the deep, lake-like areas between boulders.

Today was the first day we didn't have to use the boat. This part of the river was particularly spectacular, forming all kinds of waterfalls. At one place the river plunged down with such force on the rocks below that the water curled back in a tremendous spray, then cascaded down. We came to the confluence of the Rio Tararecua and the Urique, marking the Big Bend on the map. The Tararecua canyon is as deep and narrower than the canyon cut by the Urique River It was a lovely place.

Our Indians said there are many parrots and many Tarahumaras living in this Tararecua Barranca.

The walking is much easier. The boulders are of middling size, and the canyon isn't as deep, dark, or narrow as it was above the town of Barranca de Cobre. However, the walls on alternate sides of the river rise up sheer and straight. We're now in the area called Divisadero, which means the Big View. The Divisadero is a location on the rim that intrepid tourists occasionally visit to view the Barranca de Cobre.

We saw a tiny grass snake today, the first we've seen in this canyon. The birds and lizards rattle around in the dry leaves, sometimes making sudden noises and movements that are startling.

Tuesday April 15, 1952 (by Dick)

As usual the flies are devils in the morning. There are many around Bonito's bare legs. He searched constantly for a special medicinal weed to rub on his legs. This weed is as effective as 6-12 mosquito dope. At about ten o'clock a wind comes up and the flies don't bother us for the rest of the day.

Below Rio Tararecua the canyon walls of the Urique open up. Cattle and horses are able to reach the river in several places

The Spaniards have been in this area because there are several prospect tunnels. I found several veins of silver. I suspect that the Spaniards have been interested in the mineral potential for hundreds of years.

The canyon is not dangerous as we were led to believe by others. There are no Apaches Mexican bandits, or jaguars. During the rainy season (summer months) the canyon would be impassable because of rocks falling and the great volume of water plunging through such a narrow passage. We have witnessed what a small rainfall does; all the water from the plateau pours into the canyon unimpeded. One could be trapped within several hours, unable to move downstream or upstream and faced with rapidly rising water.

Wednesday April 16, 1952 (by Isabelle)

Here, sleeping at night is pleasant. No mosquitoes, no insects to bother us, all kinds of interesting night noise: singing of crickets, serenade of frogs, the muted hum of the river. I awoke every once in a while and glanced to where the campfire was glowing. I saw Bonito get up and add more water to the beans. He'd stand silhouetted against the fire, lost in thought. I wonder what he was thinking. Their future is so uncertain; dressed in rags, not enough to eat, no work, no crops because of the drought. Yet they are cheerful, laugh easily, and don't complain. When we were eating beans, Patricio sadly said they ate very little beans because they were so expensive (about 9 cents a pound.) Our friends can eat hearty for a little while anyway. We make huge quantities of food yet they always scrape the bottom of the pot.

When I say "trail" it is just a figure of speech because there is no trail along the river. We make our own. Shortly after breaking camp we had to cross the river. The boulders aren't so big now and the distance between rocks is greater. The water rushes between them, fast and foaming, into little waterfalls. We all scattered, each vainly seeking an easy way across. Bonito half-leaped and half-waded across. Pat and Luis finally made it. I followed closely behind Dick,

knowing he would give me the extra help my short legs needed by using his walking stick to pull me on the leaps. But we got stranded in the middle and had to take our shoes off and climb into the water. The submerged rocks were large and slippery, and the water was deep between them. We got wet to the waist as we gingerly felt our way through, careful not to get our ankles lodged between two rocks

Note Benito carries his sandals to leap from rock to rock.

On the other side we had to once again crawl over twenty-foot diameter boulders. When we'd climbed over the last one, the trail jogged along the river edge, level and easy. Ahead loomed a formidable cliff that dropped sheer and slick into the water. There were no rocks in the river to cross to the other side. We swarmed all over the foot of the cliff. It was impassable! So out came the boat and one by one Dick took us and our cargo across.

The trail then went straight through a dense clump of bamboo. Here the ground was soggy and wet from a spring. We could see a big waterfall dropping over a cliff about 200 feet from the river. Down the river blazed a spot of brilliant gold. When we got there, we found trees loaded with lovely yellow clusters of blossoms, shaped like irises and sweetly fragrant. A blue

heron froze motionless on a rock, then flapped its wings and rose heavily into the air. The canyon wrens sang sweetly and happily.

The trail led us to another sheer cliff. This time we were able to sneak across, slowly edging our way about ten feet above the water, carefully feeling for every little crack to step on and cling to. I always hate these crossings. About halfway across, I got stuck. I couldn't retreat and I was afraid to go forward and hugged the wall with an affection I didn't feel.

Dick shouted, "Make believe it's a boulevard. All that can happen to you is a dunking."

I started to move again, inching my way. At last I dropped off safely on the other side, feeling sassy and a little bit proud.

We can do one of three things when we come to a sheer cliff: sneak around near the water's edge, climb a cat-walk high on top, or use the boat. All three invariably happen each day.

We saw many Tarahumara houses and gardens and herds of goats near the river, but if a woman were tending them she would hide. We stopped to look over a goat corral and were much chagrined when we met the unsmiling eyes of an Indian on the other side. He quickly turned his head and wouldn't talk with us. It's amazing how shy they are, avoiding us and not even greeting our friends.

It was a beautiful day. Lazy, soft, white clouds toned down the usual brilliant sunshine and a swishing, refreshing wind kept us cool and comfortable.

We stopped for our usual lunch of coffee, tortillas, and dried meat cooked over embers. Three Tarahumaras were coming upstream, obviously bound somewhere. They stopped, startled to see us, and stood motionless for a long time before they gathered the nerve to approach us. Then they greeted us, stretching out their hands to touch fingers with all of us. This is their customary greeting. Dick jokingly remarked that you can't get a hold of them even in a hand shake. Before they could dart away, Dick invited them to lunch. They hesitated while we anxiously waited, then surprisingly sat down and accepted our food. The flour that Dick bought in Creel is loaded with boll weevils and the number increases daily. I try to pick them out but it is hopeless. They quickly quite squirming when we place the tortillas on the hot coals. It doesn’t bother Dick or the Indians.

The canyon walls gradually dropped lower and lower until the country open up. Our trail became easier and continued on a level stretch. Then towards late afternoon we plunged into a deep canyon again, with gigantic boulders, 20-30 foot diameter. It was a wicked stretch of up and down climbing. The sky was dark and threatening so we camped in a cave. No rain, but all night we heard rocks drop. It was a frightening sound, and we were thankful for our shelter

The canyon gets very tight can through a rock between the walls

Thursday April 17, 1952

What a day! Our canyon ran took us through an obstacle course. We repeatedly crossed and recrossed the river. We couldn't leap from rock to rock, so we had to remove our boots about 18 times today, get into the water, and carefully feel our way across between the rocks. It was exquisite torture to gingerly step on the sharp rocks, slip and catch a sharp corner on the instep while the water crept higher and higher until our jeans were wet to the waist.

Bonito, in his loin cloth, had very little trouble. He took a firm hold on his bamboo cane and seemed to stride easily across in comparison to our slow and painful progress. This is a good time of year to traverse the river. If the water were higher and the current swifter and stronger we could never have crossed with heavy packs. We would have been obliged to stay on one side because the little boat is useless in fast water filled with rocks. Then we'd be forced to climb out, if possible, to get around these places. During the rainy season the river would be impassable.

We made two boat crossings and a little teaser across only six feet of water. We shuttled the boat back and forth, each shooting it back to the next person. When it came to Bonito's turn, his face was a study in doubt and determination. He got in gamely enough, but as Pat tried to push him across with a stick, Bonito grasped the end of it and wouldn't let go. We all shouted with laughter as Bonito tried to get across, an uncertain grin on his face. He was actually frightened of the water and the boat, an experience completely unique to him. When he finally managed to reach the other side, he gladly sprang out

A se**ction of the canyon that is very narrow**

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In late afternoon the canyon became deeper, darker, and incredibly narrow, more so than we have seen it. The walls seemed to grow together as we looked down the river. It was a spooky place with the wind wailing like a malignant spirit resentful of our intrusion. You could throw a rock from one wall to the other. We had to go through it in the boat, and the many trips back and forth slowed us down, making us spend more time there than any of us wanted to. The sky was dark and threatening. The last thing we wanted was rain to catch us in this devil's cellar with its feeling of menace. But we got through without mishap. The canyon widened a little below letting in some light. We camped shortly after.

The Indians admire and like Dick. He's a good mountain climber, has a pair of long, strong legs, and is afraid of no obstacle. He usually takes the initiative in climbing over high, narrow, difficult places and ferrying everyone across in the rubber boat. He's one of those rare people who show an utter disregard for personal comfort and, more often than not, his jeans, sweat-shirt, or boots are wet because he can't be bothered about rolling up the sleeves while rowing the boat or hoisting up trouser legs to wade across the river. He endears himself to the men by always trying to learn their language, and they love his clowning antics and fearlessness on the trail. Each evening Bonito carefully brings a cup of water, usually while Dick is reading, and gravely presents it to him. Then Bonito's face lights up with rare beauty as Dick thanks him in Tarahumara. It's a little ceremony I never tire of watching.

Friday April 18, 1952

The canyon has remained deep and narrow. Today we had to make four boat crossings and have made very little progress. We could have never made it through this canyon without the boat. We crossed and recrossed the river so often that we didn't bother to remove our boots any more. Just wade and cross. There is driftwood 30 to 40 feet above exi9sting water level, very scary when you consider water has flowed through this canyon at tremendous volume.

At one boat crossing we hit a little riffle just as Dick was attempting to land the boat and let me out. But that little riffle was a major rapid to our slap-happy, little cockle-shell boat, which bounced merrily on the rushing water. Patricio grabbed it as we swept by and snubbed the boat. The river promptly poured in. We remained afloat, but the seat of our pants got wet, also our duffel, sleeping bags and camera's light meter, which promptly failed. One of my boots floated out, but Bonito grabbed it on the way down. I'd rather lose all my clothes than be forced to go barefoot across this rugged terrain.

At one crossing the water was waist deep so I waited until the rest had crossed and disappeared around the corner. I slipped out of my jeans, held them high and waded through, fashionably clad in white nylon briefs. In the middle of the river, I stopped dead as I saw everyone resting on a big boulder with a sweeping view upriver. There's nothing I could do but proceed stoically across with a studied ignorance of my undoubtedly amused audience.

We had to dodge many falling rocks because of the light rain.

Intermittent rain has been threatening us for three days, so we seek caves and camp early. But the rain never breaks. We passed the Guadalupe River today and figure we are about 15 miles from Urique.

Shortly before we camped, two birds flew out of a tree and soared above our heads, flying strongly with raucous cries. Our startled eyes caught the flash of brilliant green. Parrots! We were thrilled with our first sight of them.

Saturday April 19, 1952

Our last day in the canyon was memorable. The rain finally came as we ate our breakfast, dry and warm in our cave. A false sunshine encouraged us to break camp and take off.

The clouds closed in again as we were making a boat crossing. The dreaded "plop, plop" of falling rocks began. Any of them could do a neat job of killing a man or woman. We huddled in a cave until the rain abated a little, then took off across a cliff that had just enough slant for us to attempt to sneak by. The cliff was slick and smooth and slippery as ice from the rain. We

passed carefully about ten feet above the water, bracing our feet against every little crack and clinging to tufts of grass and sparse bushes. I was clinging to a branch when it broke and my feet slipped. I wailed in anguish and felt myself slowly and inevitably sliding toward the river. Suddenly a dark angel thrust his walking stick in front of me. I grabbed it. Luis gave me the second's respite I needed to regain my balance. I was saved a nasty dunking. Farther down we all had to go into the water waist deep and walk out on a convenient rocky shelf, beyond which the water dropped to more than ten or twenty feet deep.

A rubber boat is a must to traverse this wily and unpredictable canyon. In some places it is so narrow, deep, and impassable that you would have to climb plumb out of the canyon to get around. Our boat saved days of climbing and traveling.

The next few hours were tricky ones spent climbing huge boulders and again crossing the river. The rocks and boulders were slick and dangerous. Our pants clung to us, wet and clammy, and felt like tight girdles that had slipped down around our knees. Our feet played all kinds of tricks, making us dance heel to toe trying to keep our balance. Both Luis' feet flipped up and out from under him. He came down hard on the seat of his pants.

We proceeded slowly and cautiously. The rain eased and the clouds became thinner and thinner until they were like a gossamer veil. Bits of blue sky peeked through. Suddenly our canyon was flooded with light and the sun shone brightly and warmly. Behind us lay the deep, narrow canyon. Ahead of us the cliffs flattened out to gentle rolling hills. The huge boulders were gone.

The area is highly mineralized. I found large veins of silver and lead but no gold. Benito was always presenting me with rocks to look at.

We followed a well-worn path into Urique. We saw many parrots, but they were annoyingly wild. They'd perch in the topmost branches of the trees and fly away squawking loudly as soon as we came near. I always thought of parrots as being tame and lazy. But these were large, strong, splendid birds entirely unapproachable with beautiful green, blue, and yellow plumage.

We camped near the small village of Urique and went to town to buy our supplies. Urique is a quaint old town consisting of one street with crumbling adobe houses on each side. The people were friendly and everyone greeted us saying, "*Buenos dias*."

We bought enough flour, sugar, and oatmeal to augment our supply for the next four days -- the time we figured it would take us to cross the mountains to Creel.

Urique was the end of our canyon trip. We had successfully navigated the Urique River from the headwaters to Urique Village. Tomorrow we go back over the mountains to Creel, a distance of about 80 miles, which should take about four days

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April 19, 1952 (By Dick)

There was enough rain here and up country to flood the Urique River. Once again we were lucky to get out of the narrow canyon.

On February 28th of this year we left the village of Urique and walked down river. We graciously said goodbye to all the inhabitants of the village, and now we return almost two months later with three Tarahumara Indians from up river. I had great difficulty trying to explain to the locals exactly what we were doing in this country.

From here all we have to do is climb out of this canyon and walk back on the old railroad grade to Creel. The trip is finished, but I'm not sure I want to leave. There are many more canyons to the south.

The village of Urique and the mule trail leading out.

Sunday April 20, 1952 (by Isabelle)

The Sierra Madre Mountains --Mother Mountains -- are beautiful, magnificent, proud, and remote. We left the river and followed the mule trail. It started gentle and easy, gradually climbing over one foothill onto another. It was pleasant not to have to wade the river and be wet to the waist while struggling over boulders. The trail went straight up in short switchbacks. It was comparable to climbing out of the Grand Canyon on the Bright Angel Trail.

My legs began to ache, my lungs felt as if they'd burst, I had to breathe through my nose or I'd burn up with thirst. Each time we stopped to rest I flung myself flat on my back so none of my muscles need support me. Halfway up I cursed that mountain, hated its very existence. I was wet with sweat, and then a strong wind whipped around and I felt like I was drenched with ice-water. But slowly, step by step, we gained the top then had to put on the brakes as the trail dropped steeply on the other side. Each step rattled my brain. The refrain from 'On The Train' jogged maddeningly through my head. By early afternoon I was done for, and we camped at the first waterhole we came to. I curled up in my sleeping bag and fell asleep.

It's amazing the difference in temperature. It was so warm in the canyon that we slept outside our sleeping bags in the early evening. But our first night in the mountains we had to keep a fire going all night to keep warm.

Monday April 21, 1952

Today the trail was as delightful and pleasant as it was cruel yesterday. The climb was gentle. At some places we sneaked through a saddle between two mountains. Other places the trail followed a shelf along the side of a mountain. Sometimes it went straight up, but in short spurts.

It was a beautiful day with clear, blue skies and big, fleecy, white clouds that have never seen the smoke and grime of the city. The air was cool and sharply fragrant with pine. Proud stands of pine trees rose as far as we could see. The wind sang lustily high in the tree tops. One thing about these mountains -- the more you climb, the farther you go, the stronger you get each day. You can fairly feel the strength flow through your muscles and you feel young, strong, and keenly alive, be it 60-year-old Bonito or 19-year-old Patricio. Bonito skips, nimble as a goat, across these mountains. Our Indians pull slowly and steadily on the uphill, then dog trot downhill, eating up the miles.

Dick and I are playing a little game. We make huge quantities of food in our gallon and two-quart pots. In the morning the gallon pot is plumb full of beans and meat that have cooked all night over a slow fire. That, plus quantities of tortillas and numerous cups of coffee is our breakfast. At noon we have tortillas, dried meat browned until bubbly and juicy over the fire, and coffee. Supper consists of cereal with milk and coffee. No matter how much food we prepare, the Indians always scrape the pots clean, as if storing up for the lean days ahead. This morning after two cups of coffee, four huge tortillas, three cups of beans and meat, our friends were full up and passed up the remaining beans. Dick grinned impishly at them and exclaimed in amazement making everyone laugh.

We passed many Tarahumara farms today and saw the farmers plowing their fields with wooden plows drawn by teams of cows. We touched hands in greeting with everyone as we passed through.

The terrain of the trail changed constantly. Unlike our time on the river we now followed a well-marked, worn trail. Sometimes it passed over springy pine needles. Sometimes it was like a paved side-walk over wind-swept rock. In other places it was worn deep and narrow through rock from the hooves of the thousands of patient pack mules and burros that have trotted between Creel and Urique.

Tuesday April 22, 1952

Third day on the trail. We feed these people too much. It's all I can do to keep up with them. Ever walk behind an Indian? They are absolutely tireless. They lean forward slightly, arms dangling, and take short, quick steps like a dog-trot. They pull slowly and steadily up a hill then almost run down it. By the time I reached the top my lungs were ready to bust, my legs ached, and it took everything I had to quicken my steps down hill. Dick kept up with them admirably.

We saw a coyote ahead of us trotting on the trail. He looked like a small, harmless dog until his upper lip drew back trembling with snarls. We sometimes see deer and wild turkeys

We don't lack for water. There are creeks and springs aplenty with cold water.

We hit the abandoned roadbeds of the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railroad today. Trucks traversed them and we are hoping for a ride -- maybe. But our Indians won't stay on the road and constantly take shortcuts

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In the afternoon we came to the Divisadero, that magnificent view overlooking the Barranca de Cobre. One minute we were on the trail, the next minute we were on the brink of the canyon where it drops thousands of feet. A breathless view of canyon after canyon spread out below and ahead of us. The clouds moved over the canyons, and their shadows made the rock come alive and mellow with soft colors. We sat on the edge of the cliff for a long time absorbing all that grandeur. I forgot my aching muscles and trail-fatigue, lost in the beauty of the canyons, which so few people have seen.

Actually the Barranca de Cobre is a gigantic chasm in the Sierra Madre range and is only one of a series of canyons such as the Barranca de Urique, Barranca de Tararecua, Barranca del Arroyo Cusarare. The Divisadero is above the Barranca de Urique, slightly below the junction of the Rio Urique and Rio Tararecua. The Urique river flows from left to right through more miles of giant barrancas on its way to the junction with the Rio Fuerte and finally the Pacific.

We passed many graves on the trail, some piled ten feet high with gravel and rocks. Each was topped by a wooden cross.

Our last night on the trail was memorable. It's cold in the mountains. Fortunately, Luis now has an army blanket of ours which Dick gave him when they walked back to Creel for supplies. I also have a bottle of 612, which the Gardner party gave to Dick on the same trip to Creel. Dick hunted some big logs, banked them in with stones, and we slept on each side of the blazing fire. Suddenly I felt the splatter of rain. We had no shelter whatsoever, so we huddled inside our sleeping bags hoping it would be brief. It lasted just long enough to wet our bags through. We dried them in front of the fire and went back to sleep, glad that the stars were shining again. A couple hours later a little cloud stole overhead and unloaded its cargo of rain on top of us. Dick made a few uncomplimentary comments as we again dried our bags. Stars were blinking complacently, so we sacked in our damp bags. Then a third little cloud, not to be outdone, poured water all over us. By dawn we were exhausted and ready for a night's sleep indoors.

It's amusing on the trail how one of our group will fade from the ranks and then fall back in again some minutes later. Bonito very politely turns his back and steps behind the nearest tree, but it invariably hides only half of him. He is a grand person. Rare with his smiles and laughs, but each one is to be treasured when earned. He has a low, dry chuckle that surprises when something amuses him. He's very kind and thoughtful and watches carefully to see where he can help any of us. The first night I was ill on the trail he brought me a cup of water and insisted that I eat. His eyes are grave and steady and have a surprising little twinkle in them. He hasn't given in to modern trail clothes of jeans and shirt, but wears the traditional Tarahumara dress.

Wednesday April 23, 1952

We were only too glad to get up after our rainy night and eager to see if we would reach Creel today. We looked at the map and figured we had about 20 miles to go. If a truck picked us up we would be in Creel in an hour or two. If not, we would have to walk most of the day.

Our Indians fell into their mile-eating trot. My feet were already sore from the previous three days, and I trailed about 50 feet to the rear. We seldom walked on the road, instead taking short-cuts on burro trails. Then our tireless Indians took short-cuts from the burro trails and followed faint trails straight up and down over hills. Dick called them "*camino de chiva*," road of the goat. We walked all morning. No Creel! We walked all afternoon. No Creel! At last, at about five o'clock, we looked down from a high hill and saw houses in the valley below. Creel! We dropped down to the road and limped into town, five weary, footsore people.

There, Dick paid our friends and we divided up the remaining food (just a few pounds of beans) and let each man keep his pack. Luis kept his blanket, Bonito got all the cooking utensils, and Luis the 100 feet of rope. We shook hands all around, everyone a little sad because we had become good friends, and our trail days together were over. They departed immediately to join their families about five miles from town. Both Luis and Bonito were married.

Thursday April 24, 1952

We stayed at the hotel overnight, then took the train to La Junta where we transferred to a bus for Chihuahua.

We had a little adventure on the train, a fitting finale to our Mexican adventure. Within 50 feet of the station in La Junta our train gave a terrific lurch, flinging the man talking to us on the floor while the cuspidors tipped over and rolled down the aisle.

The train fell off the track.

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In 1987 my aging mother, at 80-years plus, wanted to see for herself the canyon that her son and daughter-in-law had walked through. We took the now famous Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad from the city of Chihuahua to Los Mochis, which is on the Gulf of California. The 420-mile-long line took almost a century to build, including time out for the Mexican Revolution, before it was finally finished in 1961. There are 86 tunnels and 39 bridges between Chihuahua City and Los Mochis. The railroad was originally The Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railroad. At one time the plan was to start the railroad at Kansas City and go to a seaport in Mexico which would have been a shorter haul to the Orient. Construction in the Sierra Madre Mountains actually began in 1885. Pancho Villa was a sub-contractor and even Ulysses S. Grant became involved in the line somehow.

Our tour allowed us to stop one night in Creel. I checked with the locals of the people that we once knew there. The Chinaman had been murdered. Bandits cruelly tortured him because he would not reveal where his money was hidden. He had no money because he gave it all to the Catholic Church. Father Martinez, who had given us so much help, had passed away. Mr. Muisquiz, the storekeeper who helped us with transportation and food, is living in Chihuahua City, now a very rich man.

The storekeeper viewed my colored photographs and he told me that Bonito was dead for many years but his family still lived in the Barranca. He related to me. "Bonito was not 60 years old perhaps 45 years old. A Tarahumara Indian 60 years of age is very old and would be unable to make such a strenuous trip as yours". I showed more of my color photographs to the storekeeper and he informed me that he had never heard of our trip down the Barranca de Cobre Canyon. He told me of several later parties that went through the canyon, all of whom claimed first descent. He was very amused to hear our story. He opened up his credit book and showed me that Bonito's off spring were indeed flourishing; however they were in debt about $20. The debt I paid for the family and left a photograph of Benito. For years I harbored a guilt: we paid each of the three Indians 60 cents a day for risking their life.

At a bookstore in Creel I discovered several guidebooks of the region, which credited other people as being first, down the canyon. These expeditions occurred many years after we went through. Being first was never my bag!

My mother and I continued by train to the rim of Mexico's Copper Canyon. The train stopped at Divisadero. All the tourists jumped out of the train and ran to the breathtaking view. To me it was disappointing. There was just Isabelle, Luis, Patricio, Bonito, and me when we first looked down into this 6,500-foot gorge at this very same spot. We were alone, and there was special meaning because we had spent months getting through the chasm that we were looking into. The tourists buy a few Tarahumara trinkets, snap hundreds of pictures, and climb back on the train. The Tarahumara culture as we once knew it had disappeared. And they drive pickup trucks, ware new jeans instead of the traditional loin cloth and now many carry an obnoxious, suitcase-size ghetto blaster slung over a shoulder. No longer do you hear the clear notes of the bamboo flutes or the resonate boom, boom of the tombolas. They were once very poor; now they have gained material possessions obviously not derived from a corn patch and a herd of goats.

In 1952 I promised myself that I would go to the ancient Tarahumara Village of Pamachic. Pamachic is on the other side of the canyon on a plateau, 6,500 feet above the Urique River. I took my mother to Los Mochis and turned her lose with the rest of the tour group. I never was into tours. I went back by train to the Divisadero.

Down the canyon I went. At first I traveled well-used trails, then I branched off onto little-used Indian trails. Some places the trail went across bedrock and over talus slopes. I quickly reached the Urique River.

I passed Indian farms going down, but it wasn't the same. There were the traditional cornfields and goats near their dwellings; however there always seemed to be a "ghetto blaster" invading the silence that I once knew. The little streams were clogged with plastic, tin cans and paper debris, making the water too dirty to drink. I passed several surly Indians dressed in Mexican clothing armed with large-caliber pistols.

I camped on the Urique River before making the steep climb up to Pamachic. It was a pathetic camp, because of the many memories, now gone. It once was a magic place. I followed an obscure trail upward, hoping it would end up in Pamachic. I climbed 3,000 feet up cliffs and ledges, before stopping to boil water for drinking. Two Tarahumara Indians wandered into camp, both armed with pistols. I tried many Tarahumara words that I had learned from my Indian friends. They paid no attention to my feeble attempt to be friendly, and spoke not one word to me. They saw my camera laying on a rock. One of the Indians picked up a big rock and repeatedly smashed it down on my camera until it was flat. I had to stay cool. They had guns, I didn't. They then proceeded to dump everything out of my pack on the ground. They discovered a brown envelope with pictures that I had taken in 1952 of our Indian friends and the canyon country. These pictures created a rather soothing atmosphere, which I welcomed. They took none of my belongings and left.

The locals warned me not to go into the canyons without a locale guide because drugs were grown on many small hillside plots for consumption in the USA. It was obvious that I had to retreat out of the canyons as quickly as possible. At night I hid in caves. I had no problems until my last night in the canyon. The sun was setting leaving long dark shadows as I steadily climbed to the rim. An Indian stood above me and one below me. They were motionless sentinels, watching every move I made. It was getting dark and I had to hide. Many ledges on a cliff became my hiding place, a place where the sentinels could not view me. Six more Indians appeared on the skyline just above me. The very audible radio that they were carrying blasting the silence. They camped and built a huge fire several hundred yards below me. Their camp was the same place that I had camped at on my way down into the canyon. They were intoxicated on either drugs or alcohol and the Indians randomly fired their weapons and did much hollering. I watched them in the dark for an hour when two Indians with flashlights picked up my trail and carefully followed it in the dark. The situation perplexed me for they were following my old trail made going down into the canyon. It was evident that they had much ammunition and automatic pistols. I crawled back into my cave and went to sleep for I could not escape until first morning light. I was awaken by a bright orange glow that lit the surrounding area. Two Indians dressed in traditional loin cloths followed my trail that I had left coming up the canyon walls. They were excellent trackers for they managed to follow my trail across bare rock with primitive corn husk torches. The situation was tense for I only had a walking stick for protection. The two Indians passed within 30 feet of my hiding place. They were confused for I left many different trails watching the Indians camped below me. At first light I escaped to the rim.

I have never made it to the top of Mt. McKinley or to Pamachic. I now know that I will never get to either. I now know that I can do anything I want to, however I can't do everything I want to. That is a limit when you are dealing with space and time.

I don't know how to deal with the drug culture! Drugs have destroyed this beautiful canyon and the Tarahumara culture or perhaps I should phrase it differently; the American insatiable appetite for drugs has destroyed the canyon and the culture. I was very disheartened to leave this part of the world (a world that I don't understand) forever. It seems there is no winning; only degrees of losing.

A 1995 article in Outside magazine partially described the plight of the Tarahumara Indians dwelling in the remote canyons of the Sierra Madre Mountains: "All across the Sierra Mountains, agents of the drug cartels have systematically coerced Tarahumara Indians into cultivating marijuana and the opium poppy, from which heroin is made. Those who cooperate are sometimes paid in alcohol or corn. Those who refuse to plant the illicit crops, have been intimidated or forced off their land, their food and livestock stolen, their extended families subjected to harassment, rape and torture. Over the past year, according to CASMAG, an average of four Indians per week have been murdered." The article continues to tell of the plight of the Tarahumaras: "But the same labyrinth wilderness that turned the Tarahumara into indefatigable runners has also proved to be ideal for growing illicit plants. It is nearly impossible to police, and the hot, sunny canyons can produce crops year-around. Intensive drug cultivation began in the mid-1960s when the newly completed Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad finally opened up the Sierra and the counter revolution in the states created a new market for mind-altering plants. But during the past decade the narcotraficantes have gradually taken over. -----Twelve and 15-year old Tarahumara kids, whose role models had now become the traficantes, were snorting cocaine, smoking marijuana even shooting heroin."

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My friend Roman Dial was never satisfied that we received no recognition for being the first people through the Barranca de Cobre. There were magazine articles written by several people who claimed first descent. They had the super-egos to push their claims, I didn't. The only evidence we had of our descent was written in *The El Paso Times* dated April 27, 1952. The short article was entitled "Pair From Colorado Walks Entire Length Of Barranca." Armed with this newspaper article, Roman went to bat for us. Roman did succeed in getting the recognition, and discovered that we had done it before these young "upstarts" were born.

For some reason the older you get; the less important it becomes to be first; but it is most important not to be last. Being first to reach a elusive conquest means to some triumphing over a physical obstacle to reach a goal before others get there. Their motivation is the recognition that humankind remembers only the first who succeed. Who was the second man to reach the North Pole, the South Pole or climb Everest? Who was the second to follow Lindbergh across the Atlantic or to swim the English Channel both ways after Florence Chadwick?