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Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation - Grace Nicholson: Inventories and Clippings, 1928-1968

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PAGE 4 FUN PACKET This page is dedicated to the World's Greatest Optimist—the Desert Prospector

Harry Oliver's DESERT RAT SCRAP BOOK

HOW TO BE A DESERT RAT AND LIKE IT

As told by LIMINATIN' LEM the desert efficiency expert

[[image]]

LEM MOST LOST HIS FACE A'TRYING' TO KEEP HIS NOSE ON THE GRINDSTONE AND HIS CHIN UP AT THE SAME TIME.

LIMINATIN LEM, the fellow who does without, was a telling me what become of his relatives. His Aunt Sarah dislocated her neck while gazing at that lofty Yosemite Falls. A grasshopper dived into the open mouth of his Uncle Tobe when he was telling a lie, he never got to finish. And his paw a comin' home with a load of dynamite in his old flivver, got stuck in the mud and decided to put one stick of dynamite under the wheel and blow her out, forgetting to take the case of the durn stuff out of the back seat. They picked him up a mile away still hangin' to the steering wheel, which was a stickin' in a gopher hole.

...

...Sez worst part of doing nothing is—you can never take any time off.

Lem is sure thinkin' way ahead of most folks.

...

There are two days about which no one should ever worry—yesterday and tomorrow—he says.

...

LIMINATIN' LEM — Desert Efficiency Expert Says — "The easiest way to be rich is to cut down on your desires."

...

Rest in the desert does not seem to fatigue one as it does elsewhere. Says Lem.

...

If a fellow works hard and saves his money by the time he is 50 he can afford a nervous breakdown.

...

Never put off a hard job till tomorrow. Put it off for good.

LEM'S FAME FOR NOTHIN'

By HARRY OLIVER

Thirteen years ao, Lem stops at the store an' asks me if this is Nowhere, California, I says no, but allowin' me a circle of a hundred feet the rest for miles in every direction, is just nowhere in particular.

"That's better yet," says he, "I'll stay." I though him strange then, but I know him now. He's a sort of desert efficiency expert; goes around figurin' on what he can do without.

Seems the first thing he eliminated was his background, his family had wore themselves out carryin' around a lot of choice junk they brought out from Arkansas by ox-carts in the forties' an what they had picked up since. He was born in to that mess of stuff and hated it, so soon as it become his he unloaded it as quick as he could Then the elimination idea got hold of him and he couldn't stop. He makes a clean sweep of the relations, shakes off the wife, gets rid of the mother-in-law, unloads the house and lot, discards the auto, ousts the cat, discontinues the insurance and his mailin' address, drops religion, clears the deck of his



friends, and bails out his business.

Every since his pickin' Borego as a place to live he's made progress on this doin' without idea, he says you can't wash a lot of dishes if you only got one plate, one cup and no saucer. Lem don't do a thing much but do with-out, says 99 per cent of our trouble could be done away with if we wouldn't accumulate. Everybody likes Liminatin' Lem and his preachin' but it weren't till a big song writer fellow comes all the way out here from New York that we knew how powerful his preachin' was. He'd heard about Lem an' tells me one day that Lem's been livin' the life and lyrics of a song he wants to write.

Now, lots of people have had songs writ about 'em 'cause they did somethin'—stood on a burnin'

Then Lem gets to provin' to this fella' and tryin' to convert him into believin' that it ain't worth while writin' a song and that he just came out here to this valley of escape to get away from things.

Well any way the song-writer sits down to the old piano complainin' about how it sounds, puts down a few dots in what Lem says is perfect music (just lines, empty lines). He don't get nowhere 'cause deep down he wants to live like Lem, an' hopes if he talks long enough to Lem he'll get nerve enough to chuck the whole struggle back east.

The hot weather, Lem's slow movin', sleepy way of sayin' there ain't no use doin' nothin', and a sage julep or two all helped to sell this fella on doin' nothin', till he could do it almost as good as Lem. So there weren't nothin' done about the new song.

Lots of folks can do nothin' in fast short spurts, but nobody's been able to compete with Lem for very long.

This song-writin' fella' doin' well, a'stretchin' his legs just as far as Lem's an' had gotten to the point where he could look at the critters in the pasture across the way without countin' 'em. He was makin' progress.

Haywire Johnny stops it all one day by runnin' in an' handing him a city telegram.

Lem just looks up slow an' says, "don't open it—it's only trouble."

But he does, an' it was.

The people that prints his music wants to know where the song is.

You're goin' to hear that song, you're goin' to hear it a lot. It's got a nice lazy swing to it—it fits Lem all right and here's how it got written.

All the time Lem and that fella' was

BITS OF DESERT LIFE
[[image]] BY HARRY OLIVER

DRY LAKE HUMOR

And that reminds us of the Parumph farmer who took a load of hay to Las Vegas and sold it for a good price. Thought he: "I'll surprise my wife." He bought a suit of clothes, a hat, new underwear and a pair of shoes. He placed them in the back of the wagon and started home. Nearly there he stopped by a dry lake, took off his old clothes and threw them in the lake. They sank immediately. When he went around to the back of the wagon, his new clothes were gone. He hesitated for a minute, then got in the wagon and said: "Giddap, Maud - we'll surprise her anyway."
-The Legion Liar, Las Vegas, Nevada

GRUB-PILE DOWN IN COCHISE COUNTY

By George Bideaux

The Dry Lake Dude was talking to a lorn looking cowboy over on Maley street the other morning. "What's the matter, bud?", he asked. "They don't treat me right out at the reach anymore since they turned it into a dude outfit," replied the waddie, "they used to let me sit at the table with the family." "How come they cut you off?" asked the DLD, "bad table manners?" "Nope! that wasn't it, they say my appetite's to big. I set a bad example for the payin' guests."
—Brewery Gulch Gazette

Thar's

GOLD in them thar' hills

MORE GOLD IN PRODUCTION OF LOST DUTCHMAN MAPS THAN
IN LEGENDARY MINE

Happens Every Summer

During recent decades the sale of maps has brought a far greater return than has the mine. Every summer, chamber officials report, they recieve letters reading like this: "I have come into possession of an old map showing the location of the Lost Dutchman mine. Can you please send me information on how to outfit an expedition?" Sheriffs Lynn Early of Pinal and Cal Boies of Maricopa urge extreme caution on the part of the would-be fortune hunters. They estimate almost 20 persons have lost their lives in the barn Superstitions. Both advise prospective map buyers and those who believe they hold the key to the treasure to use extreme care and caution in accepting the validity of maps and in attempting to explore the mountain fastnesses.

A MONTANA STORY

A See-bee's Grandpa

Saying is one thing and doing is another. In MONTana a railway bridge had been destroyed by fire, and it was necessary to replace it. The bridge—

Good Old Desert Fun.

Ol' RIP-SNORTIN', two-fisted drinker, gives with some cheer

OLD RIP-SNORTIN' says he was standing astraddle the Mexican-California line with that earthquake messed up those towns'

name—Mexi-cali and Cale-xico.

There are more old Drunks than old Doctors—These Radio cigarette tests must be killin' them Doctors off.

"The trouble with whiskey is that you take a drink and it makes a new man of you. Than he has to have a drink."

A tourist asked Rip..."Isn't there another cure for snake bite besides whiskey?" Rip's answer was: "Who Cares?"

Rip says, "Prohibition was better than no liquor at all."

Old Rip-Snortin' ain't no prohibitionist, we all know, but when he was charged with selling liquor to the Indians it took his friend Caculatin' Cal to get him away from the Law. Cal's smart, he just says to the Law- "Look at Rip-look at him again-now gentlemen, do you honestly think that if he had a quart of whiskey he would see it?" Old Rip-Snortin's free of the Law and says he's glad he switched to Calvert.

[[image]]

IDEAL WEATHER IS WEATHER NOT TOO COLD FOR BEER AND NOT TOO HOT FOR WHISKEY.

RIP'S JUMPIN' CACTUS DRINK
By HARRY OLIVER

We always called him Rip-Snortin' because he is and was a two fistd drinker. Back in the old days he used to mix Sloan's Liniment with his whiskey so's he could tell he was drinkin'. After prohibition he was happy for a while because that white mule bootleg stuff seemed to agree with his in-ards. Then to get a scratch out of his liquor he took to puttin' sand burrs in it.

He says tequila ain't bad if you sit on cactus while you're drinkin' it, but after three days of drinkin' and settin' you get used to it.

It was the old Fig Tree John that told Rip the story about the jumping cactus drink the Indians call Hello Hell. Twenty-two Indians got together on a party once with just enough Hello Hell for a few drinks around. Two drinks apiece put them dead asleep like as if they'd been drugged. It was one of them fifteen-minute parties. Well, eleven days later eleven of the twenty-two wok up and buried the other eleven, took another drink and went off to sleep again. No sooner did the grave diggin' lot pass out than the lot they buried woke up, heaved the dirt off their chests and buried the eleven they found layin' around loose, leavin' the place tidy-like.

Rip Snortin' gets the instructions for makin' this brew and thinkin' he's on the way towards a real drink, goes to his cabin on the ridge of Sleepy Mountain and starts manufacturin' it.

The one thing Rip likes better'n his liquor is that runt baby burro of his. He trained it to paw three times and heehaw so's to get a lump of sugar. The burro was good a it, and Rip could do his part no matter how hard he'd been drinkin'.

Well, the night for tryin' that Hello Hell drink comes and Rip hits it with one drink after another not carin' much if he did sleep away some of his time like Fig Tree John says he would, because no one ever come up on top of the mountain to his mine anyway. But he did hide the shovels, not-

-ures maybe the runt is around by the sugar can, and finds signs of philanderin' pack rats but no burro.
Rip's burnin' up inside and cold as ice outside, so he starts down the mountain for the Busy Bee store where he can reverse them conditions. Now in good weather it take about four hours to come down the mountain. Rip's watch had stopped and wouldn't start when he wound it, like it was paralyzed from not bein' used. Of course, his trail down the ridge was lost in the snow drifts, but Rip had been down there too many times to worry about losin' his way. He keeps goin' down the side of the mountain till way after dark. Soon he sees a lot of lights ahead and can't figure 'em out.
"Well, I'll be blowed!" he says. What's happened to Borego Valley?"
Then he hits a highway. "Paved roads," he says. "What hombre coulda paved that in eleven days?"
Next he comes to some date trees and gets sick all over, so sick he has to sit down. Figurin' how Pat Boomer was the only one that had planted dates in Borego, last he remembered, and how these big trees are an old stand, bearin' in their prime, he knows he musta slept fifteen years or more. It's not far from Pat's place to the Busy Bee store, but everything looks different now.
Rip goes on down the road, gettin' dizzier with each step. There's lots of date farms everywhere and not far ahead a town. Yet. A town has grown and automobiles are thicker than hornets. He drags himself along feelin' mighty old with the fifteen years he's slept and sayin' to himself he's had all the drinkin' he'll ever want in that one last spree.
When he gets to the town he asks, "Where's the Busy Bee store?"
"Is it supposed to be in Borego Valley?"-

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