

## Treasure Hunts

With lack of foresight but no malice aforethought in anticipating moon possibilities, the Research School, on August 7, of a Saturday eve, launched the Chaco Summer Session social season by entertaining and wearing out the General Session Chaco Canyon residents (and themselves) on a treasure hunt.

It was primordially Margaret Woods and Betty Murphey's bright idea, but personal inquiries under bond of secrecy will have to be made into their elimination as clue distributors and eventual emergence as prize winners. As it actually happened, Dotty Luhrs and Neola Eyer, blossoming forth with poetic license, composed and planted the clues which at times so violently led and misled both the old-timers and the canyon neophytes.

Concealed resources of energy had to be tapped in digging out cars and endeavoring to alight somewhere within the landing field of the car's physical limitation while racing over Navajo roads.

Before the racing orgy began, all assembled in the Pueblo Bonito Sanctuary where Reginald Fisher read the rules and numbers were drawn dividing the people into groups of four with one seasoned Chaqueño as a member. The clues were supposed to cover all phases of Chaco Canyon culture and were to be left where found, the finder having sketched the symbol on a card to be later presented as evidence of actual discovery. The first clue read:

Whether for pleasure or utility  
All obtain it at the best of their ability  
It is useful in and pleasant out  
And it is found where there are no trout.

It isn't wind and it isn't a flood  
But after a hot day it takes off the mud.

Find the source

And you are on the course!

The symbol was a Pueblo raincloud design.

Many started on foot, but after a few minutes of wild searching for water sources it was inevitable that automotive conveyance should appear absolutely necessary, and in such a manner was the search continued.

Clue two with an altar design symbol directed

Where the intricate designs of ancient architecture

Supply the source for many a lecture.

Where concrete and iron now stand beside

The ancient walls, the archaeologists' pride.

Clue three, borrowed from a Navajo poem, had a hogan symbol:

This road of light ever and always led in peace to my home.

From my haed to my feet

It was delightful.

Where I lay it was delightful.

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It was delightful as I walked about my house

Where it was delightful, my house

“Lily doesn't live here any more.”

By this time it was very, very dark and all of the flashlights seemed to be developing weak-battery trouble. Then too, only a few ethnologically minded souls appeared to have cultivated the deceased Lillie's erstwhile charming acquaintance. However, his “delightful house” was eventually found and so on to clue four, whose symbol was a prairie dog holding a bean pot.

Between the beautiful and the pot  
Is a hole which no prairie dog begot.  
Larger than any of the rest  
It will give answer to your quest.

This was found with nothing worse than a few scratched legs resulting but it was number five with the tree symbol which proved fatal to most. How ironic this sounded for Chaco:

I think that I shall never see  
A poem as lovely as a tree,  
A tree whose thirsty mouth does rest  
Beside the river's flowing crest.

With mesquite, sagebrush, scrubby junipers and other species looming up in the Stygian blackness, who could ever have been expected to find a "mythical" tree. By this time everyone was trying to elicit information from any possible source. So many "bum steers" were being bandied about that the truth, as given out by the Colonel and Trading Post authorities concerning a certain cottonwood down the arroyo, was taken as simply another snipe hunting expedition. Johnny Corbett took his party, including Dr. Castetter, who really should have had that particular tree spotted, on a most bumptious ride up the Cuba road to where three cottonwoods were growing. Other searches led to and fro up both sides of the arroyo. But at last the tree was found. Former Monument Custodian Hurst Julian was a visitor that night and he knew of where there was a cottonwood growing down by the arroyo. Soon a couple of other parties caught up with the notorious tree, and rushed on to clue six with its circle symbol:

General Sessions, this place you must know.  
O.K. if you do,--if you don't a zer-o.

This led to the pottery tent at the General Digs.

Finally number seven directed to the sign of the cross:

Where secret halls admitted the selected few  
Where sacred balconies beheld the religious crew.

One hour had been thought sufficient time to recover the clues before darkness would descend, but the pall of night fell all too soon and at ten o'clock some of the stragglers still hadn't arrived. Why was Dr. Brand so long coming in? Cherchez la femme! Was it Lillie, or la Cottonwood who kept him guessing? Or maybe just the sinking sands who bade him longer linger!

At last the Great Sanctuary of Rinconada claimed all of its wandering children, who gathered about her glowing bosom, toasted marshmallows and drank coffee.

Prizes were awarded to the first parties in who correctly presented the copied symbols. First winners who emerged with pottery ash trays were Hurst Julian, Roy Malcolm, Ann Harding, and Elizabeth Puckett, who later had an unfortunate accident in attempting to commune with the Ancients down Rinconada's underground passageway. The second and third parties to come in seemed to have aligned themselves as co-hunters and Frank Hibben, John Keur, Bill Mulloy, Molly Boynton, Homer and Mary Hastings, Jimmy Brewer, Margaret Woods and Betty Murphey were all claimants to antique pieces of Navajo jewelry and candy kisses.

Music ended the gathering of the clans and out from under Rinconada's star-studded canopy emerged the weary treasure seekers and wended their way homeward in peace or in pieces.

*Interlude.*

Two weeks have elapsed. Behold! What is this strange apparition which approacheth with menacing and threatening mien before the very doors of Research Station? Within his mouth writhes a venomous serpent with little bells upon his tail. In the viper's coils are held an ancient parchment. It comes closer—into the innermost room—and from the skeletonous figure's mouth is spewed forth the message bearing serpent. The apparition cavorts and vanishes, born away by a horseless mechanism. The Researchers warily

approach and gaze upon the message. Ah! “Vengeance is mine,” saith the handwriting on the parchment. We read:

“The Spirit of Wijiji walks until a treasure sought by his master, long since dead, is found. Wijiji wishes to rest in his grave. Can you meet him in the General Session tents at 6:45 p.m. Saturday, August 21, so that he may start you on the trail to the hoard sought but never found.

Wijiji.”

The Researchers realized the seriousness of putting Wijiji’s bones to rest. They went into the inner recesses of the secret kiva and conjured up Wijiji’s spirit. His apparition appeared. In whinnying, sepulchral tones he gave instructions to reassemble his bones and with his two fore feet he would carry back a message (in proper atmospheric setting) to let the General Session know that only too gladly would the Hohanites join in seeking the long lost hoard so his bones could lie at rest.

At the appointed time the assembled groups received instructions from Dr. Brand, who with MacKinney had previously torn up the country planting the clues. The mileage limits were defined. What! Is this to be a marathon? Within the canyon to the north; 9 miles to the southwest, fifteen to the south and five to the east—to be done (barring getting lost) in 44 miles. Shades of Wijiji! Do your bones demand this to lie at rest? The first clue is announced and off the hunters race to the Post. From here the trail led to the gastronomic asepasing (sic) metallic clanker and then to the bridge. But now the fun began, for the clue directed nine miles to the southwest to the Dark House, Kin Klizhin. Sinister tales have since been rumored of barbed wire fences held apart for cars to pass, which said fences resented the stretched tension of their strands and in retaliation clawed viciously at certain tops and Frankly catapulted Hibben some full ten to twenty feet into the eery (sic) spaces of the night; of roads that vied to suck into their muddy squash and sandy depths some unsuspecting prey; of gophers that maliciously undermined the earth in the path of an oncoming car until in ignominy the differential came to rest within the gopher’s private hall, and then the inmates of the car had to heave and sweat to Fisher out; and of a certain car which thought it would be heavenly Bliss to oust its lights to lose

another car and by short circuiting be the first to reach the ruin. But oh, how ruinous was that move, for as the hours passed and passed, it almost forced poor Gordon out into the night to seek his Myrtle.

Kin Klizhin's tower kiva revealed the next endurance race three leagues or more away toward Crownpoint to find the Round House beside the road. But after this the scribe begins to falter, for lagging far behind, the other clues were never found, while more ambitious knowing souls went on and upwards toiling in the night to hogans close to Hungopavi, then to Wileto's old adobe and on to Bertha's Dig, where Johnny Atkinson, by this time somewhat affected by the night's unusual speed, simply leaped forth into space and landed in a mass of tumbleweeds, sank into the shaft, emerging with minor bruises. Dorothy Keur was also able to parade unusual scratches from this pit. The last clue led to the old southern stairway and then back to the campfire. There was a little retracing of tracks to recover lost clues but eventually four cars raced in triumphant. Our own Reginald, with his group, upholding the honor of Research, came in first with the least mileage. To them was granted a toss-up for a copy of "Tseh So, A Small House Ruin," and molasses sticks for all.

In length of time consumed... Wittmore's group under Wes Hurt's expert guidance carried off the honors and here again a toss-up for "Tseh So." Next in order came Atkinson's group and then Corbett's. Reginald threw the gauntlet down to all of the cars who had gone betwixt the Colonel's barbed wire fence, but the bout was called because of previous crooked fixing on the part of the managers.

After the strenuous hunt and the thrill of seeing Kin Klizhin by the most gorgeous moonlight of the season, the subsequent relaxation around the campfire was thoroughly enjoyed by all, while Mary Scanlon coaxed tunes forth from her accordion and by special request Frank entertained by singing in accents sad and disconsolate the group's favorite gory, bloody and touching ballads. And so the night ended. Tired hunters left to put their weary bones to rest and bid Wijiji's Spirit never more to roam but lie in peace in mother earth.

Luhrs, Dorothy L., ed., "Treasure Hunts." *El Palacio* 43 (September 29, October 6-13, 1937): 74-80.