Milt Sutherland's Mining Yarns

Jerry O'Neill slips two dead men their time . . . Tommy Bouse improvises a gunbarrel retort McManndies under a rosetree.

Milton Sutherland who came to Manila originally in 1933 and established the assay office of the Philippine Engineering Company, has lately been here again, taking some stock in Pan Philippines, the company who has Treasure Island in hand. In the first week of October, Sutherland leaves Manila again, to return to his home in California. During his stay in Manila this time, he has been frequently at the office on the questionable errand of winning coffee and sinkers from us, at dice, and sometimes smokes as well. He rarely loses, but his conversation is more than full compensation for defeat. Sutherland is that nexus type of scientific miner whose muscle work in the copper mines at Butte accompanied and sustained his course in mining engineering at the Montana School of Mines: he knows both sides of the game.

That was more than thirty-five years ago, in Butte's heyday, when Don Gillies, for a steel partner in Pittsburgh, Pa., at the Pittsburgh & Montana, was spending $2,500,000 in prospecting and developing before taking out a pound of copper—and subsequently taking out a fortune. They had figured it out that from the butte the pay veins extended in their direction under the flats, where they nonchalantly sunk shafts to contact them. But quicksand closed the first shaft, and when it threatened the second it was frozen off with ammonia pipes until the shaft could be timbered. However, even this was too dangerous to suit the Montana mine authorities, since a break would have meant death to every man in the mine, and so they took to drilling in hope of finding a spot where the rock bowed toward the surface. Such a spot, not far away, they found, and then at last they had their mine.

The Anaconda was the big mine, of course, and Anaconda became the generic name for all. Twenty-two miles away, at Anaconda, this property had its smelter—Anaconda became the smelter town for Butte's ore, basically copper, less than a dollar of gold per ton, and several ounces of silver. The place was roaring, and filled with Irish. Beyond the Anaconda in one direction were the Neversweat and the Saint (St. Laurence), and on another spur, W. A. Clark's great property that was to insure him a public career capped with a senatorship and permit him to build the New York home that he adorned with collections of art and left to the country as a peculiarly personal legacy. In another direction were High Ore, Diamond, Bell, and Pittsburgh & Montana.

Young Sutherland got his first job from Patrick "Paddy" Ferns at the High Ore, under Ferns's misunderstanding of his name. Ferns was the mine boss, drawing about $200 a month. The practice was for men wanting jobs to line up and brace the boss of a morning, and if men were wanted some would be hired. This morning Ferns needed some men, and when Sutherland came along he looked him over and asked his name. "Sutherland," said Sutherland. "Oh, ye're a Sullivan, ye say! Ye're hired then, come to wark in th' marnin'!" While Sutherland worked for Ferns, his name stood on the payroll as Sullivan.

Almost fifteen years later, at Bouse, Arizona, Sutherland was superintendent at the ABC mine and had gone to town on errands for the company when there got off the train a lone passenger whom Sutherland instantly recognized as Paddy Ferns. Ferns rode out to the ABC with Sutherland, because hotel accommodations were poor in Bouse, and only learned the next morning when men came round for their orders that his host was the superintendent, whereupon he grew proud over his morning coffee and reminded Sutherland that he had given him his apprenticeship—"what would ye not know now, lad, if auld Paddy hadn't learned ye!" Anaconda then had Ferns on retired pay, with travel expenses, ostensibly looking up new properties. Ferns believed the schools were ruining mining, turning out a lot of softhanded upstarts many of whom were not even Irish.

Irish bosses at Butte were not softhanded, nor were they upstarts. Sutherland recalls Jerry O'Neill's exploit. There had been blasting in Jerry's mine, and men had gone back to the head too hastily. Two had been gassed, and had stumbled back into the drift and crumpled up, dead. When O'Neill came along he took them to be asleep, and slapped an angry time slip in each jumper pocket: O'Neill had fired two men whom Nature had already taken off his payroll, and the story of it went the rounds at O'Neill's expense. Jerry was Butte's hardest man.

The ABC at Bouse, Arizona, was the discovery of two cowboys, Thomas "Tommy" Bouse, the little Dutchman for whom the town is named, who still lives there, and Robert "Bob" McMann, who, on selling out to the ABC for $75,000, half of it Bouse's share, moved to a sylvan place in California, where he recently died.

McMann and Bouse held their property, mainly copper, twenty-seven years before cashing in. And during twenty years they were quite alone at the place, save when an occasional outlaw paid them an unwelcome visit, for Bouse is 40 miles in from the Colorado-river border between Arizona and California, with Needles 100 miles north, Yuma 100 miles south, and Wickenburg

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Junction, toward Phoenix, 100 miles southeast. Bouse and McMann could have made a brass image chortle when recounting their experiences squatting 20 years on that arroyo. Each, working for different outfits, had originally gone out there in search of strayed cattle after heavy freshets in July and August, when with abundant new grass, cattle would scatter widely over the whole range. Each man had blankets and supplies for as much as a month's lone herding.

Wending down this arroyo, dry after the floods, where they knew cattle would be lurking, they had come independently on some very promising float, some malachite and some azurite, and each had taken some of this stuff back to headquarters with him. But on this trip they had not met. However, at the opportune time for it, each now quit his job and struck out for the arroyo, with pack burros loaded for business. McMann hit the arroyo at one point, Bouse at a point opposite, and in prospecting they met midway. But instead of quarreling over which man might have got there first, or racing for it to see which could file his claims first, very sensibly they sat down and formed a partnership, the chief asset of which was a white mule, though at first it seemed to be the docile burros.

Palma verde and ironwood could be found in the arroyo, so in time a fair camp was made.

Nothing else would grow, of course, and the dessert boasted only cacti and mesquite. Distances were grand, but not good meals, and neither were the dessert colors and the vasty silence. At least twice a year, it was necessary to get to a town for supplies. Who should go was always decided by games of seven-up, the competitions sometimes lasting a week. The man elected was finally reduced to hoofing it, because the white mule died and the burros proved inconstant.

This introduces a desert feud the partners ruefully observed, among the animals. There were many wild burros on the desert, existing by their cunning. They enticed all the tame jennies to join them, and drove all the men burros far away—making things so hot for them that they never came within halter distance again, but probably went wild too and founded clans of their own in unclaimed territory. But no burro would ever take up with the mule, having great contempt for him, and he, in order to get water and feed, had to stay at the camp. So the situation dragged on, for years, during which the white mule grew old, and a seven-up game decided that Bouse had to go out for supplies, and of course take the mule, which would first have to be shod.

Bouse tried to shoe the mule, McMann his helper, but its kicking made the job hard and it was finally decided to tie its feet all together and truss it up on an ironwood pole, hoofs upward, for greater safety and convenience. This was done, though with difficulty, and at last the mule was well shod for the 100-mile trip to Needles, where on that occasion Bouse had decided to go. But when they removed the hobbles and gave the mule a chance to get to its feet, they found that when he had stopped kicking he had also stopped breathing. He rolled over from the hobbles, profoundly and irretrievably dead.

After that, the seven-up games, played oftener, took on new significance—the loser had to hoof it to town and back, 200 miles!

To get out gold enough to keep them going, the partners had set up a Spanish *arrastre, or getter-outer,* a circular plane with a crib around it, over which rocks, to pulverize the ore, were dragged by a sweep. The burros had deserted from this sweep, when their wild fellows made eyes at them, and now that the mule was dead, it was a case of the partners pushing the sweep themselves, slaves at the mills of Gaza! When the stuff was pulverized sufficiently, mercury was used to draw off the gold in an amalgam. When the gold was sold, the mercury was either recovered or taken into account so it could be replaced. This simple system of economy was complicated when an outlaw came along, with ore of his own to be pulverized and the gold recovered from it, because when the amalgamating process was completed the whole stock of mercury at camp was in the outlaw's gold.

He was all for making off with his gold, mercury and all, but Bouse managed courage to tell him he couldn't do that and would have to leave the mercury behind. How Bouse proposed to recover the mercury was ingenius, but nearly cost him his life. He told the outlaw that he, Bouse, had a worthless old shotgun in the shack whose double barrels filled with amalgam at the middle,

(*Continued on next page*)

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