

SEPTEMBER, 1945

Squadron
82in active
duty?

TERMINAL

LEAVE

1937 FORD

NATIONAL

PARKS

VB Squadron, giving me a choice of several, however. I instead of choosing 17 I picked 82 hearing that the former was going to be based in the desert at Fallon, Nev., whereas the latter was going to get Watsonville or beautiful Monterey Bay, and besides few of my particular friends were back with 17. As it turned out, I could just as well have gone to 17 because both 17 and 82 released all men eligible for release and requesting same. None of us had to worry about points as DFC* or better being all that was necessary.

I barely got to know the people in VB-82 and only just managed to get my flight time to date before my terminal leave started, Sept. 12. In the meantime I had bought a car, a 1937 blue Ford coupe, with the intention of driving home in it and seeing some of the sights on the way. I didn't get very far ^{far} the first day, in fact spent several days in Oakland. At one time I had vaguely hoped to get Joe Bradley to climb Mt. Whitney with me, but had to be content with going to the Top of the U.S. and back (from the short easterly approach) by myself. That was after visiting Kings Canyon and the Giant Forest, which, of course, meant crossing the

* DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

MT. WHITNEY

Sierra somewhere, as it turned out via the first available pass to the south. It was an easy climb as far as gradient was concerned though long the way I chose to do it - up and back in one day from where I left the car. This was a short distance below a place called Whitney Portal, at about 8000 ft., which was as far as the road was passable at the time. I spent the previous night there in my sleeping bag.

27 ± MILES

At perhaps

14,000 ft. while I was lying down to rest, a flock of ravens appeared and began circling and even pecking off to get a better view - ^{an} eerie experience!

The round trip was something like 27 miles and involved a climb and then a descent, of about 6500 ft. The high altitude bothered my wind considerably, and the last few miles of the descent were too much for my feet, my sneakers being a little too small and eventually causing the pressure on my big toes to turn the toe-nails black, which they remained for months. It was, however, a grand trip altogether. Mt. Whitney is an impressive peak from the east side and would be a very difficult climb except for the zig-zagging of the trail.

There is considerable timber at medium altitudes (above the desert and below timberline) - ponderosa, lodgepole and post oak pine predominating

TREES

TARNS

at progressively higher altitudes. There are little ponds or tarns in most of the glacial basins or cirques between 9000 and 12,000 feet, and two or three are strikingly beautiful. The animal life seen featured one mammal and various birds, including

SUMMIT

ravens. It was balmy on top, and I found two young "draft dodgers" there enjoying the view. I went down with them as far as their camp at about 10,000 ft., passing another party I had overhauled at about a thousand feet below the top. The two men had left their third companion, a girl in ski boots, the wife of one of them who had never climbed before, to wait at the col where first views to the west were obtained. How she ever got that far amazed us, and how she fared on the long descent remains a mystery. After getting back to the car, at about dusk, I decided to return to Lone Pine and relax in the luxury of a bath and a good bed rather than spend another night on the mountain. There were no regrets.

LOST WALLET

The next day I drove to June Lake and after eating supper at the lodge found I had lost my wallet, which contained all my money, my car registration and my first bonus checks. The management was very kind and offered me a