

## ACROSS THE TREACHEROUS FLORIDA EVERGLADES

### ON AN INDIAN CHIEF

With no other thought in mind than to successfully cross those famed Florida Swamps, Campbell traveled mile after mile through pine, palms, saw-grass and all kinds of growth. The trail bent, turned and heaved through the wildest country he had ever seen. In places there was only a plank to cross water and long stretches of deep sand followed where low gear had to be used. Soon, the first evidence of man became visible in the form of one of the trail building camps snugly nested away in the Palms of the Hammock, known as the greatest natural growth of royal palms in that latitude. "It was here that he would surely turn back," as the natives had said. However, he wasted little time reflecting over warnings and predictions but tackled trail conditions as he came upon them. Never had he seen such sand. As the wheels started to work in, they sank ten and sometimes eighteen inches. Undaunted, Campbell fought it out in low gear. The miles passed slowly. Every two miles a stop was made for rest. In the distance, workers at the camp watched with interest and they could not help but marvel at the grit of the man and the endurance of the machine. Finally, about a mile away, came the hope-sign-- a gang of state convicts placing the finishing touches on part of the trail.. With the gas open as wide as the Chief could stand and in low gear, Campbell tore his way through, landing right in the midst of the workers.

He was received with cheers, and all operations were momentarily suspended. This was the first motorcycle ever seen that far out and it was surely a strange and novel occasion for the builders of the trail.. Another two miles over nearly perfect surface brought the rider to the camp headquarters where a fresh supply of water was taken and all the assistance necessary given to the newcomer. Many attempts were made to induce Campbell to return as all were only too well aware of the dangers and trials ahead of him, but it was of no avail. They insisted that he had only been through a mild spasm of what was in store for him. However, seeing that he was really in earnest, they set about to direct him on. He was told that he would only drive about 35 miles further and then be forced to quit. From then on he would have to carry the machine on his back and wade the remainder of the way to Miami.

Campbell found Everglades, the county seat of Collier county to be a neat little town nicely planted in tropical vegetation. Here in the center of the wilds were all

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conveniences and comforts of home. He had the pleasure of meeting Barron Collier and all the other Colliers,--sturdy souls intent on an immense task, building a road against severe odds. Captain George Sorter (Judge Storter) is the oldest resident of Collier County, and much was learned about the route from him. Other officials met, were Graham Copeland, resident engineer and general manager and Otto Neal, superintendent of the East End, the real trail task. Seminole Indians were numerous. Chief Josie Billy gave much additional information as to routes. The Chief sat astride the "Chief" and was very much pleased with his mechanical brother.

### Routes Located

Three days were spent in Everglades, with much reconnoitering done to ascertain the best possible ways of getting through. Finally, a nearly sure and safe way was located and markers were placed. A compass was used to establish position and at one-quarter mile distances white flags were tacked to trees. At 'Gator Hook Strand, where there is over 15,000 feet of water, the trees were cut on two faces every hundred paces. Wire mats were then made for getting over the Strand and then everything was in readiness for the perilous plunge.

Campbell bade good-bye to the good people who had done so much to assist him and traveled for thirty-five miles to the extreme East end of the trail where the actual work was being performed. A brief stop was made to look over the massive dredges working tirelessly at the rate of less than a half mile a month. Here, men up to their waists in water and muck were plugging holes for laying dynamite. Only men of real blood these, iron men for the Everglades is no place for mollycoddles.

### Into the Cypress Swamp

Exactly, on the morning of February 22nd, which the motorcycling fraternity recognizes as Indian Day, Campbell drove his machine off the trail into the soft surface of a future highway. With the total weight of the machine somewhere near to 700 pounds he was soon sinking so fast that he was forced to shift to low. After several miles of this heartrending travel he suddenly came upon the most dangerous and difficult section of his journey--a seven mile stretch of muck, water, cypress, moccasin snakes and all sorts of wild atmosphere and life. Here he removed

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all of his clothes, leaving only a pair of swimming trunks heavy shoes and canvas leggings, the latter for protection against moccasin snakes. All articles removed together with equipment were carried into the swamp one hundred paces and marked with a flagpole called the "ambition stake." This gave added incentive to carry on and to be able to tell how much progress was being made. An effort to drive through the natural condition of the surface of the swamp soon proved disastrous, as machine and rider sank deep to the wheel hubs. It was then that Campbell started laying his wire mats. Cypress poles were cut and laid as side members to the mats, leaving an opening in the center that could be grasped by hand in removing. When laid, they stretched out twenty feet, thus preventing the machine and rider from sinking too deeply. As one mat was being laid, the machine was supported by stakes on the mat already in use.

#### Uses Revolver.

It was slow work, and very dangerous. Moccasin snakes resented this trespassing in their domain and Campbell was forced to almost constantly keep his revolver in hand and in use. The progress made in the first three hours was only 900 feet, but with greater effort, his efficiency improved and the total for the day was 4200 feet.

At this point dusk was settling so Campbell decided it would be best to leave his machine and strike for a camp which, according to directions given, lay only a short distance away. Walking in pitch dark in strange country, with reptiles lurking at his very feet was sure enough to make the stoutest of men weaken. However, forgetting the dangers, he set out to find the camp. With revolver in hand, he plunged on and on, so tired that it was only a supreme effort of will that kept bone and muscle in action. After walking about an hour, he came upon a road scraper. Here he gathered some down wood, built a fire and crawled under for a short nap. About 10:30 P. M. he awoke feeling much refreshed and was on his way again. By mid-night with still no signs of human-life about, he decided to put up till daybreak in a deserted truck on the trail.

It was about 6:30 A. M. when Campbell was found by one of the road engineers and escorted to the camp, where he was able to clean up and enjoy a warm meal. After sleeping the remainder of the day, he returned to the machine and continued his task unaided. Finally, he arrived to the Monroe Road and was lustily greeted by a group of engineers who awaited his arrival. At this point he built a monument which stands fully eighteen feet high. It

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took him three days of untiring effort to get through that swamp, and the achievement is one which will go down in the history of the building of the trail.

He then looked forward to a more hospitable trail, and faster time. However, if he thought to find ease and comfort for the remainder of the trip, he was to be sadly disappointed. More rocks, deep ruts and a way so narrow that the strong growths at the side nearly brushed him off his machine. The sturdy Indian Chief never faltered. Any inconsistency at this stage of the trip would surely have gone hard for the rider.

Finally, he reached Pine Crest and sighted the first house since leaving Everglades--it was sure good to sore eyes. Crowds gathered around in amazement. Anxious to complete his task, he continued right on and at last there appeared in the distance the beautiful tower of the Miami Biltmore Hotel. His goal was then certain, and within the hour he was riding through the streets of Miami and up to Rex Wirewire's store amidst a rousing welcome.

Made 225 Miles in 7 Days

The total distance covered from Fort Meyers was 225 miles and the actual time consumed for the trip was seven days. While Campbell owes the trip and its success to his Indian Chief, we must admit that without the man the machine could not have carried on; therefore a great deal must be said for the strong character, pluck, daring and constitution of this Indian Rider. His name will go down in the history of motoring fame throughout the world and it will be on every tongue in future days when tourists cross the 'Glades in comfort over that famous Tamiami Trail.

(From Indian News.)