

Camp Hale Mule Artillery Makes 170-Mile Trek

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Colorado Springs, May 14. (AP) —Men and mules of the 602nd field artillery (pack) emerged from low hanging clouds and wound down the slippery mountain sides to Camp Carson Wednesday, thereby completing a day ahead of schedule a 10-day trek over rugged mountains from Camp Hale at Pando, Colo.

The men bent slightly forward under the weight of their ruck sacks strapped onto pack boards like those used in the old days by gold prospectors in these parts, but they finished as fresh as at the start of their 170-mile journey.

They convinced their commanding officer, Maj. George R. Lydick of Indianapolis, Ind., that they were hardened and in shape to march any place in the world. The commander, who made the trek, had just returned from six weeks' sick leave after a siege of pneumonia.

The march unit crossed the continental divide at 10,400 feet the first day out of Camp Hale, and thereby gained the distinction, Major Lydick said, of being the first pack artillery unit to negotiate the backbone of the continent. The mules carried full loads—75 millimeter howitzers and all other equipment for the battalion.

It would have been a tough undertaking in ideal weather, but these hardy mountaineers—toughened up in a winter of rigorous activity at Camp Hale—encountered and conquered snow, rain, sleet or hail on seven of the 10 days enroute. They did not carry tents but made leantos of pine boughs and their mantas, the large squares of canvas used to wrap the mule loads. For three days straight the men could not "dry out" even after building fires in the driving snow. 5-14-43