



*The author enjoys early March sunshine between Sacaton and Casa Grande, Arizona.*

# *We Are Desert Gypsies . . .*

By BETTY WOODS  
Photos by the Author

**W**E STOPPED our car and house-trailer at the base of a rim-rocked mesa that rose up and split the road in two. The left trail headed straight into the fanfare of a desert sunset. The wagon-rutted pathway on our right hurried into a clump of sandstone and cedar.

"Which road will it be?" asked Poncho, my writer-husband. Poncho is one of his fiction characters.

"Let's flip a nickel," I suggested. "Heads, left. Tails, right."

Tails won. That's the way we've done for years. Just let the flip of a coin decide which road we'll take. You can do that when you trailer on the desert. Fill the water tank. Pack ice in the refrigerator. Stock up with groceries. Then start hunting for adventure.

We were in Navajo country, which meant material for our stories. So now we turned up a secluded canyon peopled with human-like formations. Great pot-bellied boulders squatted on

Many people who are caught in the mesh of artificial restrictions imposed by today's high-speed living dream of being able to start out and go where they will when they will for as long as they wish. And it can be done. Here Betty Woods tells how she and her writer-husband have found the answer to this yearning by using a modern auto trailer in which they visit little-known areas of the great Southwest desert country.

the hillsides, and sandstone gnomes balanced whimsical burdens on their heads. We found a camping spot among the pinyons and pines. Soon we had a fire crackling beside the trailer even though I cook inside on the Coleman high-test gas range. A campfire invites people to stop and talk. We had just finished the last cup of coffee when we heard horses com-

ing down the canyon. Three young Navajos in black hats, purple shirts and blue jeans rode into the firelight.

"Hello," we said.

"Hello," the oldest boy answered.

"Where you from?" the youngest wanted to know.

The third boy looked past us to the trailer. I took the hint. "Would you like to see inside our rolling hogan?" He didn't answer. He just got off his horse and followed us into the trailer. We showed him everything from the medicine cabinet in the tiny bathroom to the modern gas range. Then he looked around with a very bored air.

"Pretty smooth job. Where did you buy it?"

The other two boys came in and made comments in Navajo. In English they asked, "How much did it cost?"

I made another pot of coffee while Poncho built up the fire. The three boys stretched out on the ground. Now began another of those wonderful nights on the desert. Getting to know a neighbor race better. Navajos understanding white people better. We