ONE OF THE MORE unusual sights connected with the Governor’s Conference last June was the fleet of sixty Ford sedans seen each morning in front of the Broadmoor Hotel, Colorado Springs, where the Conference was held.

The fleet, specially painted in Columbine blue, Colorado’s state color, was provided for the use of the state and territorial governors and their families during the conclave by the Ford Motor Company through its Colorado dealers.

This year the Conference enjoyed the largest attendance in its history. It was begun in 1908 by Theodore Roosevelt when he called the governors together at the White House for a discussion of conservation. National problems, including highway construction, are still the principal topic.
THE old Caddo Indian came down from the Oklahoma reservation for a last look at Caddo Lake. As he pointed across the broad waters and began to speak, he reported, perhaps without realizing it, the greatest news story that has rocked the North American continent since the white man came. He was giving an eyewitness account of what happened on December 16, 1811, as follows:

"Here (near the Texas-Louisiana line) was once a prairie where we hunted buffalo. But that was before the earth had chills and fever, and shook in the night, and our village sank. Then the waters of Cypress Bayou rolled over our home ground, and we fled to the hills."

The Indian was describing the outstanding natural phenomenon of our time—one of the largest earthquakes on record. The quake's epicenter was near New Madrid, Missouri. It is known as the New Madrid Earthquake, which is slightly inadequate in view of the fact that it affected 2,000,000 square miles. It produced striking topographical changes over a vast area. The current of the Mississippi River was reversed for a matter of minutes. Its banks heaved and caved. Landslides roared down cliffs. The sky was darkened by dust or by sulphurous clouds flung skyward from the rotting, subterranean vegetation.

In Boston, buildings shook. In Charleston, walls cracked, and church bells tolled eerily, with no one near the bell ropes.

Actually little damage was done in comparison to much smaller quakes. The area was then sparsely settled. But the
New Madrid quake, which recorded no less than 1874 shocks between December and March, 1811-1812, created a major topographical change. Where once the old Caddo Indian hunted his buffalo is Caddo Lake. Its 150,000 acres sprawl for 65 miles through northeast Texas into the northwest tip of Louisiana.

Caddo! Where the ground sank, and meandering Cypress Bayou spread over the great valley. I am tempted to call Caddo Lake a sportsmen's paradise, but it deserves something much better than a cliché. Caddo Lake has mystery, history, and a fascination you can't copyright.

For instance, there is that Caddo Indian Village. And there are the long-continuing earth shocks. In 1921, on a still summer afternoon my father was fishing in Pine Island Pond, an arm of Caddo Lake. He looked up and saw a wall of water rolling toward him over the previously dead calm lake. The wall, or wave, was about two feet high. He said that the unearthly stillness, and the lack of apparent cause for the wave, were terrifying. He turned his small boat into the wave, rode through, and afterwards the pond settled down again.

If the earthquake was disaster to the Indian Village, it has proved a boon to the sportsmen of the southwest. Caddo Lake has everything! Her alligators, garfish and 200-pound loggerhead turtles, her fantastic, moss-bearded cypresses, are links with prehistoric times. But the giant catfish, the pearls and caviar, the deer, ducks and geese, the bass, and the barn-door-sized perch—all these belong to our time.

You can drive in over good roads from Denver, Dallas, and Shreveport, from Marshall and Houston, for days or weeks of sport in a setting strange and primitive. You can easily imagine a dinosaur floundering in the murky depths of Mossy Brake, or a pterodactyl banking for a clumsy landing in Eagle Nest Pond.

Around the solid edges of Caddo's intricate maze of ponds, sloughs and bayous, are 25 or more commercial sporting camps. Comfortable quarters, meals, boats, guides.

Many of these camps offer fish or chicken dinners which should be avoided by the man who must watch his waistline. The fish dinners are served with unlimited hush puppies, French fried potatoes, cole slaw, little green onions, and the works.

In Caddo Lake the black bass are plentiful. They have been
taken up to eight pounds. A new bass, the Kentucky or spotted, has been introduced and is thriving. They run up to two or three pounds, and are fine sport.

Fly fishermen specialize on wall-eyed pike, bream, sunfish, calico and striped bass, barfish, yellow belly, and the new Kentucky exotic.

Bait fishermen, using minnows, catch gaspergou, sturgeon, spoonbill cat, and the occasional alligator gar, which will tear your tackle to pieces. These gars, growing to seven feet in length, are predators. Sportsmen are trying to build up an interest in taking them on light tackle, as you would tarpon.

Caddo is also famous for her giant catfish. The average big one is a fifty-pounder. But in 1946 a blue channel cat weighing 170 pounds was taken.

Deer have always roamed the thick forests, but several years ago the Federal Government restocked the area. Today most hunters quickly get their limit when the season opens.

Caddo Lake's mussels have provided many beautiful pearls and a few small fortunes for pearl fishers. One of the most famous is George Murata, who made $3,000 his first year. The next year George's luck ran out. "So," said he, "I took to fishing spoonbill cats, and shipped their eggs iced in barrels to St. Louis, for 'Russian caviar'. This Caddo Lake furnished some of the best 'imported' Russian caviar in the country—in cans, with labels all in Russian!"

But for me, always, when I get carried away by the fish and game, the cypress or the scenery, I suddenly remember that quotation from the old Caddo Indian... "the waters rolled over our home ground, and we fled to the hills."

I found the remains of the original Caddo Indian Village in 1938. I found them under two or three feet of water at the southern point of Little Green Brake, near the Texas-Louisiana line.

There were flint chips, many finished and partly finished arrowheads, stone hammers, charred rocks of heavy iron content, which the Indians heated in coals and dropped into clay pots to heat water.

Scientists from the University of Texas looked at these artifacts, and said they proved the story of the old Caddo Indian, just as the Indian told it many years ago, when he came down to Caddo Lake for a last look. To me, Caddo Lake is the greatest nature story of our time. You want to go down there for a look!