

①

NORTH PEAK

Never in my years of glory did I have the slightest desire to climb the North Peak of Inlet. Everest, yes, and McKinley and Cook, even the <sup>South,</sup> Main Peak of Inlet, but never the North Peak. ~~It never even occurred to me up the sort of climb any reasonable mountaineer would ~~do~~ dream of in his right mind.~~ The first ascent party, in 1929, were said to have come off the peaks in a state of hysteria, totally unable to describe their route. Not until the second ascent party ~~with~~ ~~of~~ ~~a~~ ~~previous~~ ~~of~~ ~~climbers~~ ~~was~~ ~~their~~ ~~stay~~ ~~behind.~~ a decade later when found evidence ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mountain~~ ~~was~~ ~~their~~ ~~stay~~ ~~behind.~~

Not until ~~late winter and~~ early spring of 1950 did I ~~as much as look~~ ~~at~~ ~~North~~ ~~Peak,~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~that~~ ~~was~~ because every time we ~~had~~ drove over Stevens Pass on our way to the granite prairie cliffs of Inverate Canyon, east of the Cascade, always and invariably Bob Drent and Dick Safely ~~lost~~ ~~their~~ ~~mind~~ insisted on me stopping the ~~old~~ wagon. As they

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leapt and screamed and abused themselves, screaming to North Peak! North Peak! I looked <sup>up</sup> with loathing and disgust at the nasty thing, saying at last "nein gletscher, nein geyfel."

Tom Miller also ~~leapt~~ held himself desperately aloof from the madness, even though had it not been for ~~me~~ getting hit on the hand by a rock he would have been along with Bob and Dick on their ~~ascent of~~ ~~North Peak~~, ~~the~~ sixth ascent, the summer before. I did not put this reserve down to some grapes but ~~the~~ good sense.

By August of 1950 I was ~~estimated~~ <sup>fagged</sup> out. ~~A~~ all but three weeks since the first of the year I'd been in the mountains, <sup>skinning, painting, climbing,</sup> and had ~~climbed~~ made 16 summits, including Bonanza and the superb <sup>North</sup> Putate. I ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ wanted a little rest before Tom and Betty and I set out on ~~our~~ ~~trip~~ ~~from~~ the Grand Invasion of Canada we'd planned since winter.

Actually all through July I was running down. ~~Estimated~~ Over a four-day <sup>July Fourth</sup> weekend we'd climbed Snowfield and <sup>with a mountain guy</sup> ~~estimated~~.

③ fine glaciated peaks above Diabla Dam, but it was  
a horrid hot spell, so <sup>that he in our surroundings</sup> ~~hot~~ (the mosquito  
stayed awake all night. ~~White~~ <sup>for Henry, Jan and Ted and I</sup> ~~praying~~ <sup>more</sup>  
rocks from the summit of Colonel I swatched  
a finger and ~~of~~ spent a night ~~lay~~ in agony.  
The mosquito made me so mad, staying up that  
way, ~~it~~ in the midst of some domestic  
quarrel I threw a cup of water in Betty's  
face.

The next weekend, after fighting through the  
stacked trees and ~~bank~~ of the  
~~Forbidden~~ avalanche, on the way to Cascade Pass,  
me at last found the <sup>broad</sup> ~~trail~~ <sup>after a long</sup> ~~trail~~ <sup>and promptly</sup>  
left it ~~as a probable thing~~ <sup>for a minor</sup> gauge in the hills ~~because~~  
which led ~~me~~ <sup>through the</sup> ~~to~~ the Dorothy Lodge, as the  
sign proclaimed it.

The following weekend it was necessary to  
get Rainier over with for the year. ~~In that~~  
~~day~~ Rainier <sup>by the</sup> ~~was~~ like ~~a~~ ~~level~~ ~~mountain~~,  
something that had to be <sup>visited</sup> ~~seen~~ regularly  
but ~~was~~ not for fear. Friday night,  
with some non-sleeping friends, I closed up the  
Blue Moon & ☉ Saturday noon, at Paradise,  
I felt sufficiently recovered to take solid  
nourishment, and in an excess of had

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judgment ate one of the frozen lodge meals, a scoop  
of cold lumpy mashed potatoes ~~smashed~~ <sup>dribbling</sup> with ~~fat~~  
~~some~~ <sup>dirty congealed</sup> grease, a chunk of stea gristle,  
a piece of stale bread and a mug of  
cold, weak coffee. At 9000 feet I  
developed a full-fledged case of mountain  
sickness, and ~~with~~ only the kind urging of  
Ray Pigg - who kept offering to take my pack -  
got me to Camp Muir at 6:30. It was 9:00  
before I felt ~~so~~ strong enough to crawl  
into my bag.

~~At~~ About an hour later Bob Grant  
arrived in camp, <sup>and started</sup> ~~working~~ up a Tin Can of  
stew, and ~~went to bed.~~

When Vic, the <sup>climber</sup> leader, ~~of the~~ ~~stew~~  
gave the rising call at midnight I burrowed  
deeper in my bag. Dimly the truth was  
dawning, it is not necessary to drink beer.  
An hour later camp was <sup>mostly</sup> emptied out, and  
Vic began ~~showing~~ <sup>directing</sup> increased attention to me.  
I mustered strength to tell him I was not  
climbing. Bob <sub>x</sub> heard my declaration. He had  
eaten his Tin Can of stew, lain in the sack

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an hour, got up with the rising call, larked up  
the Ten Can of stew, and was now wandering  
~~mainly~~ in a <sup>hurry</sup> around the dark windy rubble of  
Muir, wondering also whether it was really  
necessary to climb Paimier. My gear was  
enough. He crawled into Kay Biggs'  
washed bag near mine. When Vic came  
to around to urge us on we presented  
a united front, go to hell Vic Jondal!  
Get out of here and leave us alone!

At 1:30 he left us, but not alone.  
Over our bags hovered a girl, teeth chattering,  
miserable. Said the girl, Vic said you  
are my rescuers. We attempted to  
dissuade her, we told her she wouldn't  
like Paimier a bit, she'd be much  
happier with a good night's sleep at Muir.  
She ~~was~~ ~~of~~ agreed, but plaintively said she  
would probably never be able to undergo  
again the conditioning program of this year,  
~~she~~ ~~arrived~~ if she didn't climb Paimier  
now she probably never would. And so,  
at 2 A.M., Bob and I and our girl by

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set out across the Custy Glacier, yelling  
toward the mass of fleshlights ahead,  
god damn you all to hell Via Jesendal!

The scheduled route for this Experience Club  
had been the Ingotan Glacier, which the  
year before was ~~smooth snow~~ <sup>smooth snow</sup>, but ~~the~~ <sup>in</sup>  
1150 was an icefall. Thus we  
crossed ~~the~~ of the Custy Glacier and the  
clayaban into the Comras, moved back  
and forth between crevasses, (or ~~rather~~ <sup>there is not</sup>)  
<sup>on the side of</sup> Comras route above Sleambat Prow,  
~~the~~ an uncrevassed Corridor extending far  
up toward the summit. Higher up we  
were forced back into the clayaban and  
finally into the Muesqually. Eight hours  
out of Muir Liz was willing to quit,  
but Bob and I would have some of it.  
~~The last~~ <sup>ten hours out of Muir</sup> When she fell <sup>with a bit of frosty</sup> face down on  
the snow, ~~about as close to the~~ <sup>a few hundred feet from the</sup>  
crate rim, we yoked up and dragged  
her ~~on her stomach~~ to the top. At 4



and the part in him taking any real out of Darwin except the right one.

to leave me alone until, I'd had a cup of cocoa and a cigarette, cheerful and happy, enjoying one of the finest outings of my life.

But ~~that~~ the Pickets were enough - at last enough until Canada. I don't know why we climbed Snow Peak next weekend, except it seemed a con to spend a summer weekend in town. Nothing went right on that climb, it was a

disaster. ~~Bob, Ben, Ron, Irving, Betty and I~~ <sup>and Al</sup> left town too late ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> battling

blizzards and avalanche trash ~~to~~ <sup>the</sup> up Pedal Creek, we reached the meadows at 9:00, much too late.

~~Bob and I had a simple supper but~~ <sup>Drift Doria</sup> ~~Bob~~ <sup>Bob</sup> cooked up a Ten Can of ~~supper~~ <sup>supper</sup> in

a primitive stove & and just when it was ready to eat ~~lacked~~ <sup>lacked</sup> it over. ~~Getting~~ <sup>Getting</sup> the

yielded to Pan, hurrying up before it all gets away! The two of them <sup>huddled</sup> on their knees, <sup>see the girls star</sup>

flashlight in one hand, spoon in the other, ~~ate~~ <sup>star</sup> managed to ~~take~~ <sup>take</sup> ~~some~~ <sup>some</sup> ~~supper~~ <sup>supper</sup>.

Before supper Bob had made a private trip into the darkness. ~~After~~ <sup>After</sup> supper she

was sitting warm in the lantern for a good



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place to sleep, when we heard a plaintive,  
discouraged wailing from the night, god  
damn it all!

With too little sleep we left  
camp too late, in horrid tempers. ~~It~~  
When Betty <sup>unreasonably</sup> insisted on going slowly and  
carefully over steep hard snowfields <sup>with that result</sup> I  
raged and she yelled and we cursed  
each other in a way that left Bob and  
Ron weak with shock. In a surging  
mood Betty quit for the day.

On the snowfield ~~before~~ me roped.  
Bob wanted to lead, he ~~it~~ needed the  
practice if he was going to ~~of~~ he ~~is~~ go  
a great rock climber. He had a hell of a  
time ~~on the~~ ~~on~~ getting over the moat  
onto the rock ~~and~~ hardly moved at all  
getting over the downslabs of the Frost  
Monkey Arging Ledge. I managed okay with a  
upper belay. Ron was up before I could get a  
belay set.  
In the gully leading to the second Monkey  
Arging Ledge there was a wall some ten feet



late to bed late, to work early, somehow staying awake until supper, then out for the ascent on the south, a typical slumber Monday. Typical, too, was the Monday night call-around. The difference this Monday was I had no thrill of conquest to out <sup>through</sup> the messiness. ~~Also~~ with a minor summit, a sloppy climb, <sup>the</sup> messiness was beyond the reason.

~~I was~~

Pete Schoening was first to call.

Groggy ~~though~~ I was ~~it'd been waiting~~

eager to hear the details of his weekend, during which he had made the first traverse of the peaks of Index, leaving Seattle Saturday morning, climbing the North Peak, descending into the notch, making the first ascent of Middle Peak, spending the night on top, and Sunday descending into the R notch and climbing Main Peak. What puzzled him was all the big talk about North Peak. He kept expecting something difficult, or at

One joke was the two kids from Everett who had tried to beat out Pete for the first, but settled for North Peak.

least a patch or two that required ~~me~~ a second look before running up. But it was nothing, just a matter of ~~the~~ ~~that~~ I'd have to go about North Peak and see what a joke it was.



The next call to rouse me from my couch was from Vic. The Climbing Chairman had done his duty by helping out on our Cypreine Climb and had nothing exciting to report. No did I about Sloan, so I passed on the news from Pete, and ended with ~~the~~ what a joke "North Peak" was. Said Vic, ~~that's good news~~ I've always wanted to climb North Peak, will have to do it sometime. ~~but I~~ gave ~~you~~ sleepy agreement. ~~The long~~ ~~was~~ said Vic, swell! When shall we go? I said I, well, ~~we're leaving for Canada next weekend~~, <sup>me</sup> won't be back <sup>from Canada</sup> until Labor Day, maybe the weekend after that. said Vic, that's too late, the days are too short, how about next weekend? said I, well,

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were leaving for Canada, <sup>and you know</sup> we've been planning since winter. I felt the walls closing in when Vic asked, if it's okay with Tom to put off leaving a couple days is it okay with you? I guessed so and went back to sleep. For a few minutes it was Vic again. Tom was hot to go up North Peak. It hadn't been good sense, it was sour grapes.

Tuesday morning my head was clear. I had North Peak in perspective, all well and good for some, but madness for me. However, I needed an ally against Vic and Tom. ~~At~~ <sup>By the way</sup> when I saw Ted, ~~the~~ the proposed fourth member of the party, I was ready for a good ~~some~~ chuckle, and merely asked, hey Ted, how about climbing North Peak this weekend? To my consternation he replied that he'd always sort of wanted to climb North Peak.

The way the three of them aspired  
 and shuddered and staggered their hands  
 Saturday & was enough to turn my stomach,  
 which was already turning, actually ~~from~~  
 the night before & ~~so~~ I bade farewell  
 to my lone companions of the Blue  
 Moon & ~~had~~ told them to turn in  
 an empty ~~pitcher~~ <sup>pot</sup> for me & next night,  
 and pity me & under ~~the~~ North Peak &  
 facing the longest <sup>and most dreadful</sup> journey of my life.

We stopped in Mammoth for lunch. ~~Then~~ We  
 had to have a flag, nothing would do  
 but we had a summit flag, so we bought  
~~some~~ a few yards of cloth and Ed  
 busied himself making flags for the summit  
 picture, just like they always have on  
 big expeditions. Sike!

It was a short and leisurely hike  
 over the logging roads to the base of  
 Bridal Veil Falls, then up the ladderway of  
 roots and rocks and handrails that is the  
 trail to Lake Serene. But we couldn't

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camp by the pleasant waters of the lake, we had to climb 500 feet higher to some time in the morning. With soft meadows and ~~old~~ <sup>plenty of</sup> water below we camped in a dusty clump of scrub trees and collected drips from a snowfield. As we were settling into camp three climbers came down out of the cedar trees above. From talking to them we found they were almost totally inexperienced, yet they had climbed North Peak. Young idiots! They didn't know enough to realize what a miserable time they'd had.

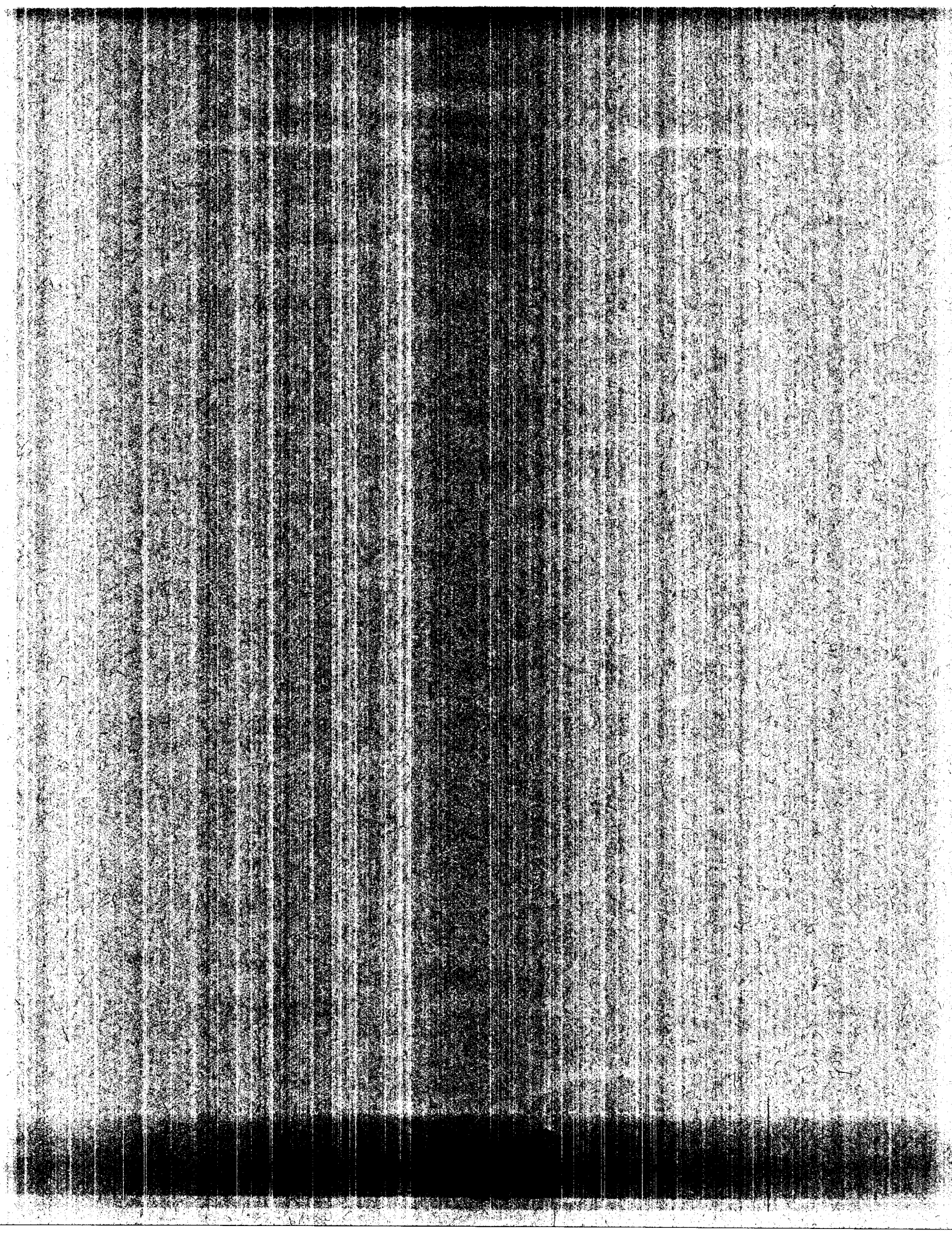
transmission

The night <sup>sky</sup> ~~was~~ ~~was~~ ~~and~~ ~~still~~ <sup>cloudless</sup> the air was mild and still. 2500 feet below the Skagboom River maintained a steady distant roar. 2400 feet above was the summit of the North Peak of Andes. The night was too ~~start~~. At 5 AM, as the ~~darkness~~ <sup>light</sup> above began to resolve ~~into~~ from a general darkness into ~~the~~ separate darknesses, Tom and Vic ~~came~~ out of their bags like bullets. More slowly came Ted, and last of all me. At 5:30 Tom left up into the cedar trees, <sup>followed by</sup> Ted. In the dim light Vic peered into my face and said, you look sick. ~~Said I, I~~ I, I feel terrible. Said Vic, ruminating, better eat something. Said I, can't. Said Vic, let's go!

Vic left up into the cedar trees, and I ~~was~~ followed me slow steps at a time, closely observed by Vic, visibly twitching with eagerness to come to grips with the peak. We roged, and then it was harder to log



(17) behind. ~~The rope~~ Not that Vic reeled me in,  
but the rope was always tight, and  
far above, unseen, ~~in the~~ were Tom and Ted.

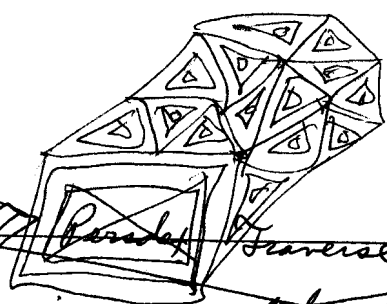




a bit more on foot, and then the road scattered into bulldozer tracks and the old slash and soaked brush of a logging show. With the sky blacker and lower by the minute I chose not to leave the road. I did not see Persis at all. ~~xxxxxxx~~

①

PERSDEX



~~The <sup>happy</sup> Persdex exercise was so sweet and whimsical. Between ~~the~~ first inspiration ~~to~~ and final assault five years passed, ~~with four with three with three friends~~~~

~~It keeps peaking, that's what I was looking for in 1947, and from the wide spacing of the contours Persia was~~

~~It was ~~on~~ <sup>On a</sup> black <sup>Jung</sup> Saturday in ~~June~~ <sup>1947</sup> with ~~friends~~ <sup>that</sup> I made my first attempt ~~on~~ <sup>on</sup> Persia. ~~Betty~~ <sup>Betty</sup> was still drying out from our last trip.~~

My first Persia fix was on a black June Saturday in 1947. ~~I~~ <sup>I</sup> was alone, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> Betty was still drying out from our ~~last~~ <sup>honeymoon</sup> hike ~~and saw no point~~ several weeks before, and ~~on~~ <sup>on</sup> two ~~other~~ <sup>previous</sup> ~~trips~~ <sup>trips</sup>, both met. ~~and saw no point~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~what~~ <sup>what</sup> attracted me to Persia.

It was not the sight of Persia that attracted me. I didn't really remember having seen it, except ~~in~~ in a vague way as a ~~near~~ <sup>near</sup> neighbor of ~~Indef.~~ <sup>Indef.</sup> ~~As a~~ <sup>As a</sup> ~~hiker~~ <sup>hiker</sup> I

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was looking for a walkway peak within convenient  
Model A range of Seattle, and ~~from~~ <sup>with</sup> the  
wide contour intervals ~~shown~~ <sup>on</sup> by the Fulton  
Quadrangle, and <sup>being</sup> only some sixty miles, or  
two Model-A-hours distant, Persis seemed  
a likely objective. For some months  
I had been looking at ~~the~~ Persis on  
the map. ~~Indeed, even then a major~~  
I had been looking, too, at the ~~low~~  
~~ridge~~ ~~between~~ horseshoe ridge <sup>with</sup> Persis at  
one end, and at the other. From  
the contours the ridge it appeared <sup>it might be</sup> a feasible  
~~hike~~ <sup>walk</sup>. Moreover, though I knew ~~indeed~~ by  
the ordinary Lake Geneva route on the  
east was beyond my <sup>safe</sup> hiking range —  
two ~~long~~ <sup>hikes</sup> had disappeared somewhere on that  
route the ~~area~~ <sup>of</sup> summer before — the  
horseshoe ridge led ~~into~~ onto <sup>the</sup> ~~gentle~~ <sup>what might be</sup> ~~southern~~  
slopes on the southwest ridge.

I set out that Saturday morning hoping  
to find some trace of the old miner's trail  
~~shown~~ on the map, ~~since~~ that night in

3  
meadows near the 5467-foot summit of Persis,  
and next morning explore the ridge toward  
Lindley. Leaving the <sup>Stevens Pass</sup> highway at an elevation

~~I did not~~  
of approximately 400 feet I ~~joined~~ ~~descended~~  
down the Model A up<sup>n</sup> Proctor Creek logging  
road to perhaps 800 feet, made another 200  
feet of elevation walking. I was then  
faced with the necessity of leaving the road,  
plunging into ~~the~~ ~~the~~ old jackstraws and  
brush of logged over land. ~~Now~~ With  
the sky blacker and lower by the minute  
I went home instead. I did not see  
Persis.

My second Persis faeco was on  
a ~~cold, rainy~~ <sup>usual March</sup> ~~day~~ Sunday in 1950. ~~The~~  
~~year before~~ ~~no~~ Morning pushed the climbing  
season back into early April the  
year before ~~x~~ <sup>non-stairs</sup> were determined to <sup>now</sup> ~~summit~~  
March as well. It was ridiculous even to  
leave town, much less get out of the yard,  
but Tom Miller, Jim Henry, Chuck Allyn and his

rephers Homer and I ~~found~~ <sup>pushed</sup> the route to a new  
 high. We followed ~~old~~ <sup>old</sup> ~~traced-out~~ <sup>traced-out</sup> logging roads down to the head  
 of one branch of ~~the~~ Proctor Creek, and even fought  
~~staggered~~ <sup>a few yards</sup> through the yuccatrons and brush, attaining  
 an elevation of ~~nearly~~ maybe 1200 feet. That  
 was far enough; we succeeded March to the  
 stairs.

Jan, Chuck back again.  
 Vic, Cecil, D. - Chuck, Lynn & Betty

It seemed impossible Persia could resist the  
~~next~~ assault, ~~if~~ ~~The sun was bright, the month~~  
~~of~~ ~~April~~ <sup>1951</sup> ~~the sun was bright~~ We had  
 a large, strong party & the weather was ~~so~~  
 bright and warm. That was the trouble, it

~~it~~ was too ~~bright and~~ warm. ~~We didn't~~  
 It ~~was~~ seemed too much trouble to follow  
 our previous route, hiking all that way up  
 Proctor Creek. We didn't look to ~~look at~~ <sup>study</sup>  
 the map & but just headed uphill ~~on~~ the  
~~fast~~ from the cars & on the broadest ridge. There  
 are some slyppy little cliffs in the trees  
 on that ridge. Half the party decided it was  
 too hot to fool around on slyppy little  
~~the~~ cliffs; we retreated to Proctor Creek and



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had a water fight. It didn't matter anyway, and  
been so long up to that point those who  
pushed ahead ~~the~~ had to turn back <sup>in hours</sup> ~~before~~  
~~reading~~ from the summit.

after this third Persia fiasco I  
consulted with Jim Crooks, well-known  
climbing philosopher. Jim told me I was just  
getting started. He had tried Persia five  
times and long since given up the peak as  
unclimbable. It was his opinion nobody had  
ever climbed Persia. ~~There~~ <sup>The hundreds</sup> who ~~claimed~~ <sup>to have</sup>  
~~made the~~ <sup>recent</sup> had simply cracked after repeated  
failures and found in fantasy what was  
so beyond reach in reality.

It seemed a pity, under the circumstances,  
that Persia was scheduled for an experience  
climb in May. As Climbing Chairman it  
was my heart to send ~~out~~ <sup>a multitude of</sup> ~~people~~  
~~handing~~ <sup>novices</sup> out to attempt a peak I couldn't  
climb, Crooks couldn't climb, ~~and~~ <sup>was</sup> considered  
~~likely~~ ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> impossible, at the

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Course lecture that week, comparing the two climbs offered, I ~~merely~~ said merely that Whitehorse required an elevation gain of about 6000 feet, and Persia about 4500 feet, <sup>so</sup> I should have said more.

~~I gave an~~ ~~to point out~~ ~~that~~ ~~Whitehorse~~ ~~is~~ ~~known~~ ~~as~~ ~~such~~ Examining the signposts sheets

Friday I found the Persia party of <sup>36</sup> included <sup>consisted</sup>

~~about~~ ~~entirely~~ of 25 girls ~~;~~ ~~25~~ out of 36 ~~x~~

~~climbers~~, and the 11 men, ~~and~~ ~~except~~

for some husbands and boy friends, ~~and~~ ~~and~~

the usual ratio of <sup>extra big game</sup> ~~climbers~~ is 3 or 4 to 1, <sup>or</sup>

the other way.)

→ Then, Friday night, came a phone call.

While scouting Persia that day the scheduled leader had broken his ankle. As

Clayton Chavira my duty was clear. If I couldn't climb Persia I at least ~~to~~ should ~~at~~ be along to supervise the fessico. Of other veterans, however, only Chuck was available to assist.

7

~~the~~  
~~at~~  
~~the~~

Everything started out according to plan - the plan of Persia, not ~~was~~ us. One carload of girls got lost on the highway & ~~had to be~~ had to be retraced by a search car. ~~had to be sent out for them.~~ On ~~the~~ a steep <sup>logging</sup> grade one girl-type driver stalled her car and had to have it started for her. ~~Further along,~~ <sup>with Persia to our east,</sup> ~~one~~

~~girl-type driver~~ <sup>she had</sup> ~~for unknown reasons~~ left the convoy and took off on a side road that headed ~~down~~ west.

At road end we discovered ~~we had lost a car~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~loss~~ and <sup>after</sup> ~~soundly~~ all our horns in unison heard, far off in the distance, a plaintive wailing horn. When the girl-type driver it had turned in on our <sup>road</sup> ~~home~~ we found ~~at~~ that

self, ~~during~~ <sup>after</sup> the first half hour of the drive, I had proposed immediate retreat, I'd have been sheered by the great majority. As it was, another hundred yards of walking ~~the~~ logs high in the air & and

the thing is right that had be a matter

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fighting back way down below & and the great  
majority would have renounced ~~their~~ <sup>all sorts of</sup> loyalty to  
their peerless leader and Clementy Chavira.

But ~~the~~ ~~gaining~~ ~~result~~ ended in the open  
forest & but <sup>around</sup> ~~after~~ several thousand feet of steep  
~~of~~ forest & with ~~no~~ ~~obvious~~ ~~straight~~ ~~way~~ a  
bushy rockslide just about did it. ~~It~~  
Three girls did quit at that point.  
However, a few yards above the angle  
eased off, we walked into snow,  
and then out of forest, and there we  
were, Chuck and I, shaking hands on  
the summit, <sup>in bright sunshine</sup> our minds reeling with wonder.

Of course, when I reported this success  
to Crooks he ~~just~~ ~~smiled~~ ~~knowingly~~,  
so if to say, you ~~with~~ too have escaped reality,  
~~into~~ ~~fantasy~~, and like the others, have  
faded photographs - series or telephotos ~~propagated~~  
to "prove" your fantasy.

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Be that as it may, what I saw, or imagined  
I saw when I ~~thought~~ I was <sup>or thought I was</sup> on the summit of  
Persia, brought rushing back those speculations  
of my hiking days. It was true, all  
true, the ridge to Indef was nothing  
more than a stroll, a matter of two  
or three leisurely hours from summit  
to summit.

Right then, in May of 1951, the  
~~old plan~~ ~~for~~ of Persia - Indef, <sup>or Persia,</sup> (Frerese, became  
the first item on the 1952 agenda.  
In January, when Betty and I moved to  
Casper Mountain, ~~we found~~ it was like fate  
finding right square in the middle of our  
~~Cascade~~ <sup>pasture</sup> ~~view~~ <sup>window</sup> Persia and Indef and the  
connecting ridge. Fieldglass inspection confirmed  
the route as a simple hike. ~~It~~  
~~It~~ was, indeed, much too easy to rate  
as an important expedition. However, ~~if~~  
early ~~in the~~ <sup>in the</sup> opening <sup>conditions</sup> would add interest:

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Over the winter scores of climbers caught the  
 contagion, some looking for a good <sup>novel</sup> ~~and grand~~ ~~summit~~  
 hike, ~~others~~ ~~Persia~~ Persia veterans of Persia fiasco  
 who wanted to get the summit, veterans  
 of the North Peak of Ardet who wanted  
 photographs and also wanted to get the Main  
 Peak out of the way - the Main Peak  
 scarcely deserving a summer weekend.

But when it got down to ~~reality~~,  
 the party that left Seattle Saturday  
 afternoon, May 2, consisted of <sup>only two Persia ~~Summit~~ - North Peak party of the</sup> Tom Miller  
 and I, with <sup>new recruits</sup> Al Krue, Paul Brinkoff,  
 and a Gunk climbing <sup>friend of Tom's</sup> ~~friend~~ ~~recently~~ ~~arrived~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~  
~~set sawagants~~ <sup>Rensselaer Hoch in</sup> New York, ~~Tommy~~ Mohling.

The weather was pretty miscellaneous but plenty  
 good for ~~a~~ Persia. After ~~split~~ parking  
 Paul's car at ~~the~~ ~~place~~ ~~is~~ ~~possible~~ the closest  
 approach to the Lake Geneva trail we drove  
 up Protha Creek <sup>in my</sup> Willys Wagon ~~as far up as~~  
~~the~~ and made camp.

We awoke at 4, but it was too dark to see the weather. At dawn we could see there ~~was~~ was just the normal amount of clouds, and so at 6 we set out, and at 10:30 were in the fog stage. Basis, ~~just~~ good average time for 4500 feet of ~~at~~ elevation, particularly ~~was~~ with the upper half all in soft snow and since this was, for all of us, either our first or second <sup>spring</sup> ~~ambitious~~ hike.

Now cheerful and joyous we were, having that half hour of ~~innocence~~ ~~stage~~ on the summit of Basis! The clouds parted and rose ~~a~~ <sup>lifted</sup> but, revealing the snow-plastered crags of the three peaks of Index. The ~~mountain~~ ridge curved <sup>smoothly</sup> around, ~~the~~ ~~so~~ our work was done, from now on we had a romp in the snow.

~~Leaving~~ Leaving Basis at 11 we expected to be ~~stop~~ ~~at~~ ~~by~~ 3, allowing for the soft snow and many, many stops for taking pictures.

To be sure, our first steps led down, but <sup>to pass some ~~small~~ ~~little~~ rock towers</sup> ~~that was expected,~~ a few little ups and downs are part of any traverse. Around a bend in the ridge we climbed quickly ~~to~~ to the crest of a subsidiary spur, intending to follow it onto the main ridge. But from the spur we saw the main ridge was, <sup>at this point,</sup> a narrow crest topped by rock towers and ~~snow~~ cornice. ~~to me~~ we would, then, have to detour this portion of the main ridge. We dropped down ~~from~~ the spur into a small ~~lakelet~~ basin, climbed the next spur. Here, too, the main ridge was all towers and cornice. And so, down a spur ~~into a~~ ~~to~~ and up another, and down that we also and up the next ~~to~~ ~~basically~~ we lost sight of ~~climax~~ entirely. A <sup>few</sup> ~~little~~ <sup>flashes</sup> ~~bit~~ of sunlight hit us, <sup>not enough to dry our ~~soaked~~ ~~clothes~~ but</sup> enough to further soften the snow, which averaged out just below our knees, with the occasional knee-deep hole. We weren't going to have lunch, <sup>late</sup> ~~late~~ ~~me,~~ <sup>on</sup> ~~climax~~, that was sure, so we stopped



13

for a rest before climbing the final spur, beyond which we ~~were~~ were certain Inok would be only a short walk. My own lunch had been eaten <sup>during</sup> the ~~previous~~ night by snowman camp visitors, which left me dependent on charity - no problem, since <sup>all</sup> Ruy always carries enough lunch for a day of charity use.

When ~~the~~ snow came driving in on a cold gale we quit eating and started walking. We reached the crest of <sup>the</sup> ~~our~~ final spur at 3 P M,

snow clouds cleared, and ~~there~~ <sup>below us was a large cirque basin, and there above us <sup>was the basin</sup> were</sup> more than a thousand feet above us, and looking just as far away as it had from Persis ~~at~~ 4 hours before, was Inok. The Sultan Quadrangle is a lousy map. <sup>More had</sup> ~~and~~ the fieldlers <sup>some thirty miles away</sup> ~~had not~~ <sup>prepare</sup> is for this awful surprise.

4500  
1000  
1000  
500  
500  
500

(14)

We were 4 hours from Pensis, and on the way had gained and lost me a thousand feet of elevation <sup>in soft snow</sup>. We were, now, lower than Pensis. If we turned back we would scarcely expect to be back on Pensis before 7; our best energies <sup>were spent,</sup> had gone into me were ~~being~~ <sup>being</sup> into reserves. Our fastest ~~route~~ escape ~~for~~ was to complete the traverse.

And so we dropped into the broad crevice and started up the long haul.

~~It was a case of~~ ~~being your forty meters,~~ ~~collapse and~~ ~~step back and collapse~~ ~~and~~ ~~fall~~ <sup>struggle</sup> in at the end of the line. Once Krump held the lead ~~to~~ <sup>past</sup> the point of sixty, ~~at which~~ <sup>critical</sup> ~~point~~ he was warned ~~that~~ it was small of him to be a hero but if he ~~tried~~ <sup>tried</sup> ~~for~~ ~~of~~ exhaustion he was going to be buried where he fell.

~~at 5~~ ~~was~~ ~~at length~~ ~~The~~ ~~slope~~ ~~flattened,~~ ~~and~~ ~~gelling~~ ~~and~~ ~~falling~~ ~~we~~ ~~found~~ ~~strength~~ ~~to~~ ~~see~~ ~~back~~ ~~on~~ ~~great~~ ~~cornices,~~ ~~clumps~~ ~~of~~ ~~shrubs~~ <sup>alpine trees</sup> loaded with hoarfrost, over ~~rocks~~ <sup>hard</sup> ~~wounded~~

15) snow to the summit. We had done it, we  
had completed the famous Persley Traverse!  
~~It had not~~ No ~~was~~ easy. ~~with some~~  
conditioning hike this, with some 6500 feet of  
elevation gained, but it was grand to be  
in ~~and winter in~~ that ~~summit~~ ~~the summit~~ looking down  
upon the ~~iced cliffs of~~ Middle and North peaks, down to  
springtime <sup>in the valley</sup>, ~~the~~ creamy-smooth rolls of  
the snow ridge to the south, the cold  
blue sea Cogan Mountain, ~~and~~ <sup>thirty miles</sup> south  
in the sunshine, and Lake Washington  
and Seattle.

We had rejoiced on Persley that  
morning x that the work was done. Now at  
last ~~in~~ ~~indeed~~ we could rejoice <sup>with confidence.</sup> ~~certainly~~  
~~no surprises remained.~~ ~~It~~ was all downhill  
now, and Paul knew the route. But  
it was 5:30 and time to ~~move~~ ~~down~~  
down. We would not, as planned, be home  
~~in time~~ for supper but ~~at~~ at last we  
would be early to bed after our long  
strenuous day.

Paul led the dash, ~~but~~ ~~straying~~ back a short way in our tracks, then ~~on~~ ~~the~~ ~~for~~ down to the east & into ~~at~~ the mouth of a gully.

And ~~straying~~ ~~with~~ <sup>straying</sup> on our glad <sup>of "Homeward!"</sup> ~~eyes~~ ~~trying~~ we stopped ~~in~~ short and stared down that gully, that <sup>narrow</sup> death-white chute of <sup>priced</sup> <sup>glac</sup> <sup>between</sup> ~~glac~~ dark cold <sup>after a</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>silence</sup> ~~cliffs~~ ~~Paul~~, ~~but~~ ~~it's~~ but it's just a boulder scramble in the summer.

It was nearly summer below, where automobiles travelled the highway. It was deep winter on Ardat.

We could not tell from looking. The white might have ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> hard, thick crust, we might have to cut steps and belly its entire length. Or it might be a hard slab poised to <sup>under</sup> ~~unlanch~~ ~~with~~ ~~our~~ ~~weight~~ ~~by~~ our weight.

It was 1.6 P.M. A return to Beras, 5 home <sup>2</sup> <sup>more</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>Wallys</sup> ~~way~~, ~~would~~ mean a bivouac. It was the chute ~~or~~ ~~a~~ ~~solid~~ <sup>bivouac</sup>.

~~Traverse in~~

Paul and Al and I roped on our 120-foot line, and solidly-belayed I set out to test the slope. ~~It~~ at least it was not

ice. There was a crust, but it broke ~~early~~ <sup>early</sup> and with two of us on the slope it <sup>still</sup> held.

Thank heaven for a cold day!

~~A false sense of security?~~ The unroped and ~~crust~~ kept lurching, ~~down~~ nearly home free.

We did not leap long. The crust broke early. Indeed, it would not hold a man's weight. Under the crust was fluff.

The foot broke through, the leg sunk down, the crust grinding the shin.

~~The~~ We tried to <sup>glimpse</sup> the side. We sat down, the crust broke, we <sup>stuck fast</sup> ~~settled~~ onto the bathtub, and so we broke the crust and clenched our teeth against the pain. One or two feet down the chute, cursing and groaning and stopping now and then to soothe <sup>bruised</sup> ~~stung~~ shins, pretty whumping.

Then we were out of the sheets ~~on~~ <sup>the</sup> broad snow shelf perched above the headwaters of the North Fork of Index Creek, which drains ~~southwestward~~ <sup>into the main and ultimately</sup> into the Skybomish. We followed Paul northwestward on the shelf, ~~into the~~ traversing onto the spur that ~~comes~~ <sup>emerges from</sup> out of the Index cliffs and ~~forms~~ <sup>engenders</sup> the ~~lake~~ <sup>lake here</sup> ~~serene~~ <sup>is a small</sup>. There it was, <sup>2500-foot</sup> Lake Serene, ~~so~~ little more than a thousand feet below, appearing so close it seemed ~~as~~ a good running jump would ~~lead~~ <sup>carry me</sup> into the middle ~~with a splash~~ <sup>of its</sup> ~~ice~~ <sup>white</sup> ~~ice~~ <sup>ice</sup>.

~~The~~ The snow rolled over invitingly, Tom proposed we drop directly into the lake, but Paul protested. Directly below us, ~~the~~ <sup>two</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>had been</sup> ~~ever~~ <sup>found</sup> the skeletons of the two hikers who vanished on Index. Ansh said Paul, saying all we do ~~to~~ <sup>now</sup> is drop down the crest of the spur to the pass between Lake Serene and Index Creek.



Rejoicing the others above I explained the situation and headed nearly back up the spur, followed by Al and Paul. But Frary wondered why we couldn't follow Tom, and only grudgingly accepted the explanation.

Frary knew Tom from school. He did not know us. Nor did we know him.

Again we were gaining altitude. ~~the~~ Bad enough to gain on a traverse, but to gain on a descent is intolerable. Nor would the spur let us off. Time after time we ~~it~~ looked over the edge, and always there was just enough cliff between us and the broad shelf to hold us on the spur.

~~At last~~, 500 feet higher, we ~~left~~ <sup>escaped</sup> ~~came~~ off onto the shelf, and ~~started~~ ~~down~~ immediately dropped some 500 feet toward the headwaters of the North Fork of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~index~~ creek. But we dropped no lower, for it became



(2)

obvious we were in a double-wire, <sup>with</sup> the lower wall below us. We traversed south, away from Lake Serene, away from home, looking for an opening. But having dropped so low on the shelf we were in its dissected lower ~~parts~~ portion, little ridges and little gullies, one after another. Reluctantly we were forced upward, requiring the 500 feet we had thrown ourselves away. Tenzing questioned the route, we explained why we did not choose to go down over the wire wall. He said no more, but his facial <sup>expression</sup> was eloquent.

It was ~~at~~ 7:30 when I led ~~up~~ ~~me~~ ~~from~~ ~~one~~ ~~deep~~ ~~gully~~, climbing straight up, if it could be called climbing; ~~I~~ ~~hiked~~ ~~a~~ ~~steep~~, ~~mount~~ ~~ed~~ ~~to~~ ~~my~~ ~~knees~~, ~~and~~ ~~—~~ I felt like a fish swimming up a waterfall. I did not kick steps with my feet, I walked then with my knees and hips. And then the snow was so ~~steep~~ ~~soft~~ ~~at~~ ~~steep~~ ~~every~~ other step broke out and dropped me back. So steep was the slope that even standing

(22)

carefully ~~set~~ upright my sheet was in the snow. It was no step-ladder, it was a trench, no easier for the others to follow than me to dig. A hundred vertical feet, <sup>making the crest of</sup> ~~up~~ the angle became <sup>impossibility</sup> steep in such slope. ~~I~~ I aimed for a nearly submerged tree, ~~and~~ grasped its lower branches and hauled up. The I climbed the tree, and near its top jumped out on ~~the~~ into the snow, alone the roll, <sup>scrambled</sup> a few yards, and fell face down in a ~~the~~ ~~soft~~ very bed of snow. Al and Paul joined me. But where was Jimmy?

The figures are for chicken, no-gate.

Below, a line of tracks led to the brink of the crevasse. ~~The~~ said I, typical wise guy from the East, can't tell those quarry-climbing hotshots a thing. And the worst of it is he'll probably find a snap route through and have a big smile on his face when we catch up. Either that or he'll

but get killed and will have to spend a night  
out, and then have to look for the body  
tomorrow.

Said Paul, I don't care if we are  
<sup>checking</sup> taking the long way around. I want  
to come home alive from every mountain.  
I can climb.

Plugging ~~out~~ steps in turn, we  
at last found a ~~short~~ ~~route~~ gully  
that led ~~to~~ open and safe from shelf  
to valley. We were about to enter the  
gully when we saw a lone climber  
transversing toward us near the brink of  
the gorge. Said I, so the system  
~~hotshot~~ found out for himself.

~~They~~ We ~~there~~ were <sup>in the valley bottom</sup> ~~that way to the~~  
~~serene~~ <sup>talking</sup> beginning the 500 foot climb to  
the serene - ~~cloud~~ pass when Frank might  
ref. ~~Talking~~ We were tottering, humorless.  
Cora Kump, for the first time in my  
long knowledge of him, had stopped talking.  
Said I <sup>by saying</sup> ~~to~~ Frank, do you want to kick  
a few?

~~I said at~~

I felt it was only fair, he having followed our steps. He did a rare thing then, ~~and broke~~

~~the image of~~ saying, I guess I have it coming after the stunt I just pulled.

He lashed to the pass, ~~and~~ <sup>but</sup> after being the strongest climber all day, he was ~~struggling~~ <sup>straggling</sup> with ~~me~~ <sup>me three</sup>, totle for totle.

at the pass he explained the abrupt deterioration, how he climbed down one cedar tree into the ~~next~~ <sup>top of the</sup> ~~next~~ <sup>and so forth until,</sup> ~~at last~~

~~how~~ ~~at last~~, being hanging from the lowest limbs of one cedar, he could not reach the next without jumping. There were more cliffs below, ~~no~~ <sup>unseen</sup> ~~clear~~ ~~paths~~ ~~way~~ ~~visible~~, and so he did not jump, but climbed back up the cedar trees.

A brief rest at the pass, very brief, for it was 9:00 and ~~the~~ daylight was fast fading. ~~not~~ ~~fast~~ a huge downward stride and abruptly my legs twisted in knots ~~of~~ ~~of~~ ~~down~~ a salt pill was the



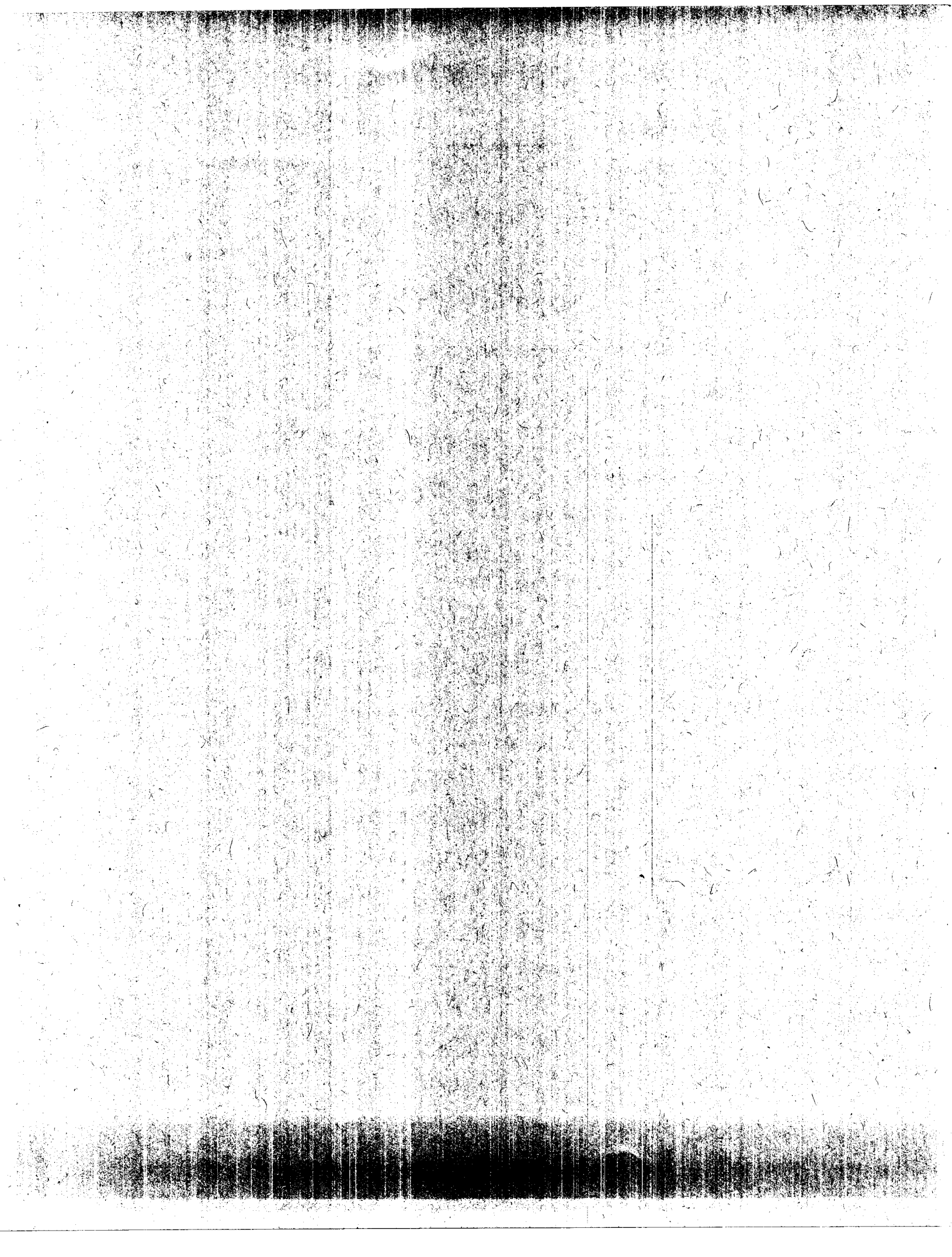
(26)

we didn't have time. One last crisis remained before the Famous Beresky Franese was history & ~~at~~ We rushed over the lake & ~~straggling~~ into the forest, ~~for~~ spread out in a line & to search for the trail, the only easy way through the cliffs below the ~~peak~~ hanging cornice of Lake Serene. We had luck. As the last light we came out of snow ~~for the first time since~~ into the ladderway of roots and rocks, and by flashlight down ~~at~~ ~~at 10:30~~. One last ~~down~~ ~~hunting~~ ~~uphill~~ stretch ~~on~~ the logging road & before we reached Paul's car at 10:30, enough slant to run the total on our ~~own~~ ~~entire~~ walk to over 8000 gained and lost. At 2:30 I was home on Carver Mountain.

For many a sleepless day thereafter it was a ~~fun on being~~ ~~was~~ ~~unable~~ ~~to~~ ~~get~~ ~~out~~ ~~the~~ ~~field~~ ~~glasses~~ ~~and~~ ~~retrace~~ ~~the~~ ~~route~~ Famous Beresky Franese. And in after years, without the glasses, I often

(27) have looked ~~as~~ ~~over~~ along that skyline. ~~it~~ ~~remember~~

~~the~~ ~~was~~ Among much else I remember  
the moment when  
Tracy and his ~~confession~~ ~~which~~ ~~is~~ ~~an~~ ~~important~~  
~~look~~ ~~and~~ ~~respectably~~ ~~the~~ ~~look~~ ~~for~~ ~~in~~ ~~succeeding~~ ~~years~~ ~~he~~  
~~became~~ ~~a~~ ~~good~~ ~~friend~~. ~~but~~  
~~friend~~. I remember Paul ~~fallen~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~  
snow, because that was ~~the~~ ~~last~~ ~~of~~ ~~our~~ ~~series~~ ~~of~~  
together. Three months later, on the summit of  
Mount Stuart, he was struck by lightning.  
~~and~~ ~~instant~~





# FAMOUS MOUNTAIN FIASCOS

## FRIENDS, FIASCOS AND DISASTERS

1948

(First season?)

Kautz

The KRAZY COURSE

Lectures not shown

0mc taping cable

10 minute rock

The Famous Descent From Hazard

Exposure on Mountain

Cannonball Gullies S;

First J practice cancelled

Avalanche

Storm on Adams

1950

Bonanza

Rainier-Pickett-sloan - North Peak (summary of 3rd year)

To Canada

Kidnapping Babies in Canada

1951

Olympus in winter

<sup>47</sup>  
<sup>50</sup>  
1952 The Famous Persdex Traverse

1952

Mortality

Shuksan, Anne and Yellowjackets

Things to Climb When Mountains Aren't Worth It

①

MORTALITY

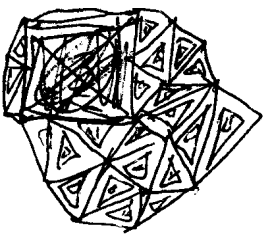
On a bright June Sunday in 1949 Chuck Allyn, Betty and I left Timberline on St. Helens, the baby of Cascade volcanoes, a mere 9671 feet high, a ~~very~~ symmetrical virtually undivided cone, a pleasant little peak scarcely to be taken seriously. ~~We~~ ~~left camp~~ ~~was~~ ~~no~~ ~~need~~ ~~for~~ 7:30 was a plenty early start, and as for route, ~~the~~ ~~is~~ ~~now~~ ~~with~~ uphill is good enough. To avoid ~~the~~ other parties and ~~of~~ for the sake of a little interest we made a long ~~vertical~~ traverse toward a small ice breakup on the skyline. We saw a ridge but ~~the~~ St. Helens glaciers are small, and so are the crevasses, compared to the big volcanoes.

The ~~ice breakup in the~~ ~~was~~ ~~very~~ ~~photogenic~~, and ~~there~~ ~~was~~ ~~nothing~~ ~~there~~ pretty on a small scale. I ~~was~~ ~~enjoying~~ at a rest stop I went running about, enjoying my hobby of looking down into ~~crevasses~~ ~~watching~~ They were all too few, ~~and~~

(2)

~~that~~ and I was on my way to ~~down~~ the  
last one handy when the floor dropped out  
from under my feet. ~~I must have~~ The expression  
on my face must have been quite comical,  
for that I was, ~~arms~~ ~~up~~ up to  
my armpits, ~~the~~ supported by my arms,  
Chuck and Betty laughing their heads off.  
I crawled out, and ~~belly~~ ~~was~~ ~~snaked~~  
on my stomach toward the end and said, 'It's  
time to roll up!'

Which we did. But ~~then~~ since the  
unreel ~~would~~ ~~have~~ ~~interfered~~ ~~with~~ ~~us~~ ~~in~~ ~~top~~  
for full enjoyment of the famous St. Helena glissade,  
nearly 4000 feet in a straight shot down  
the Sigurd cowfields, Betty was disturbed  
by the crevasses on our descent route,  
and ~~then~~ was always stopping with an  
infinitely look of terror on her face. 'Up  
the mountain. I yelled, lift up your heels and  
SLIDE! Keep moving! I'll run right over  
them! Stop and I'll go in! Lift up your  
heels and SLIDE!



② ①

~~The last weekend <sup>in</sup> June a gang of us gathered Saturday morning~~

~~The last weekend in June Bob, Tom, Betty and I~~

American Border was a break none of our gangs had climbed ~~and~~ ~~nor had any~~ ~~and~~ ~~lying~~ nor any of its near neighbors.

The attraction of new passes, new valleys, new ~~was~~ perspectives on familiar peaks x gave high and continuing priority. Bob, Tom, Betty and I ~~gathered~~ <sup>met for breakfast</sup> the last Saturday in May but the storm blowing that morning was clearly going to be good ~~for~~ ~~some~~ a couple days.

Three weeks later x ~~Bob and Betty and I~~ ~~while climbing~~ ~~on~~ ~~Banner~~ ~~we~~ ~~on~~

Banner x ~~and~~ Bob and I decided to try again in two weeks. Tom, after the

~~Banner accident~~ ~~at~~ ~~from~~ They were blustering hot weeks, so it turned out. ~~and~~

~~the~~ ~~poets~~ ~~begin~~ ~~exploding~~ ~~in~~ ~~flames~~ ~~here,~~

~~there,~~ ~~anywhere.~~ I called Bob ~~on~~ Friday, with

~~and~~ our approach to American Border ~~is~~

②

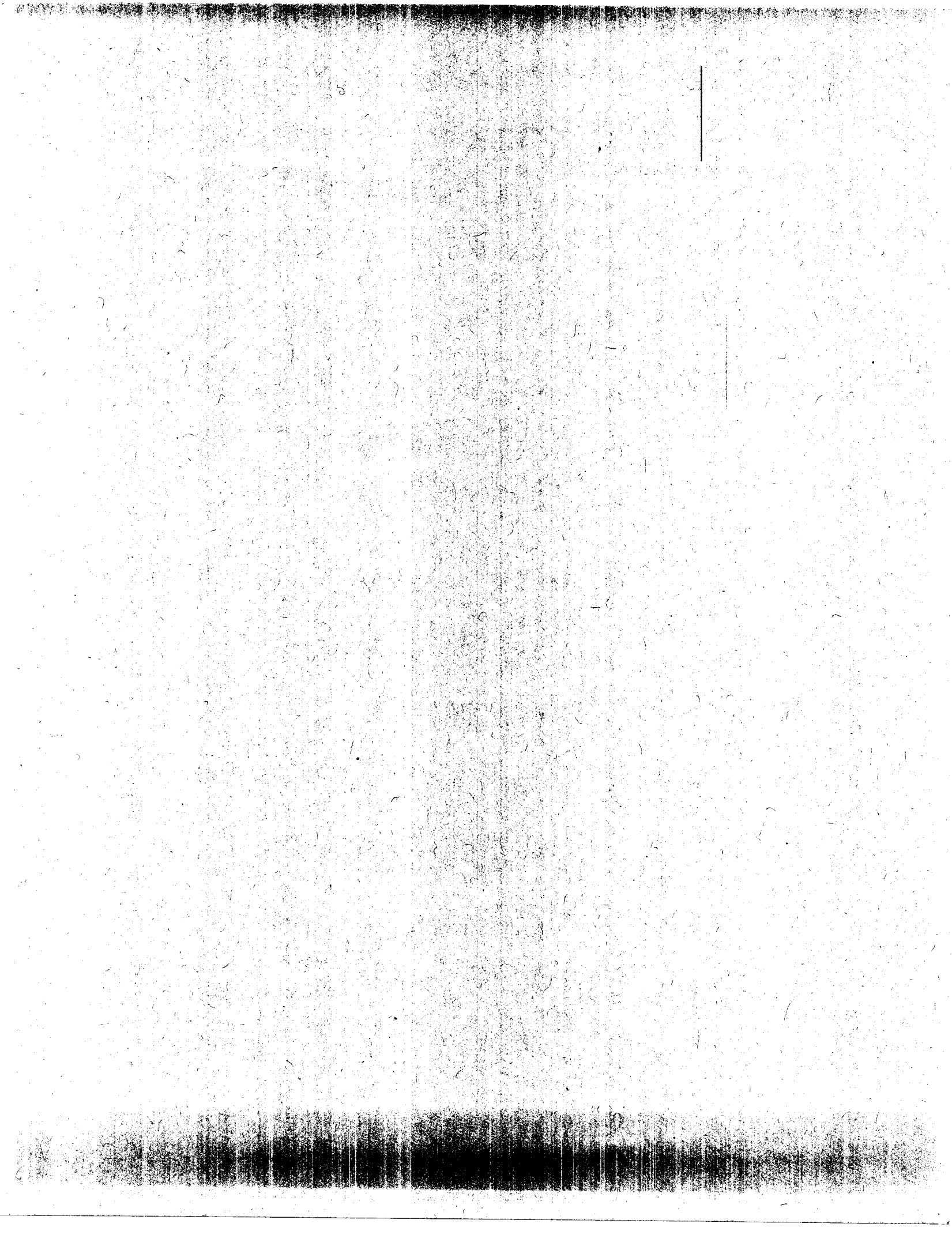
blocked by a forest fire ~~and~~ he, ~~and~~ Paul  
Birkhoff and Dusty Rhodes were ~~going~~  
~~at~~ ~~planning~~ doing the West Ridge of  
Stuart instead. ~~But~~ The thought of Stuart in  
August <sup>was</sup> appalling; ~~see~~ Memorial Day is as late  
as I can stand the hot, baked-out  
rainshadow peaks. I was not, in any event,  
still exploring ~~the~~ ~~extremes~~ ~~of~~ ~~our~~ ~~three~~ ~~acres~~ ~~on~~ ~~Conger~~  
~~eager~~ ~~to~~ ~~leave~~ ~~our~~ ~~new~~ ~~forest~~ ~~home~~  
Mountain, and the hot August weather  
was not stimulating.

Sunday afternoon, after a busy day working  
around the yard, I lay on my back  
on ~~my~~ ~~front~~ lawn and watched  
such a sight as ~~the~~ ~~never~~ ~~seen~~ ~~before~~ ~~a~~ ~~side~~.  
~~the~~ ~~arrangement~~ ~~of~~ ~~clouds~~ ~~display~~ ~~over~~ ~~the~~ ~~Cascade~~.  
~~As~~ ~~far~~ ~~as~~ ~~I~~ ~~could~~ ~~see~~ ~~along~~ ~~the~~ ~~Cascade~~ ~~entirely~~  
crest ~~was~~ ~~there~~ ~~there~~ ~~extended~~ lay below  
upon billow of giant cumulonimbus  
clouds. They came over the horizon from the  
east, not a single cloud but a solid  
rank, and rolled west to the very  
edge of the lowlands, and hung there  
for hours, ~~silent~~ ~~quiet~~

(3)

Mary & I remember ~~it~~ vividly that August 10. Later I talked to friends who watched the advance from ~~the~~ the slopes of Quimper, and another party ~~who~~ who were on a peak near Propulsion Pass, ~~and~~ ~~you~~ ~~my~~ ~~became~~ ~~down~~ when they saw the black line coming. It was a glorious, unforgettable spectacle.

Monday afternoon, at work, I was called to the phone. Bob and Paul were missing on Mount Stuart. That was the full ~~start~~ ~~of~~ all these news, ~~then~~. In the evening a car



About the funeral, well, everybody read about that in the paper. The whole Troop was there, and the teachers we liked best, and the Scoutmaster ran us through our part very neat. The only thing was, I kept thinking it was Eddy that was telling ~~me~~ Scoutmaster what to do. It's for darn sure Old Scoutmaster couldn't have buried any of the rest of us that good. He was a pretty sloppy Scoutmaster until Eddy took over as Senior Patrol Leader.

Darn it all! It ~~xxxx~~ gives me the creeps, but I still keep expecting Eddy to show up at Troop meetings. Not to take charge, but like he did the last couple of months, last spring -- just drift in, and somehow even though he didn't make a sound, ~~xx~~ everybody knew he was there, and we shaped up.

If he'd been killed just like that, then it would have hit you hard, and all at once, and you'd have got over it. But the way he went, just fading out, and us all watching ~~him~~ him go but every minute expecting him to start coming back, -- that's what makes it rough -- even there at the funeral thinking he might push up the lid and ~~say~~ tell us he wasn't through yet.

Eddy is the only guy I've ever known who died.

I mean, I remember Grandpa, and he died, but I was just a little kid, and Grandpa was an old man.

Eddy was our ~~X~~ Senior Patrol Leader, he was what made the Troop go.

Maybe it hit me harder ~~than~~ than most. After all, Eddy got me to join Scouts. He was Patrol Leader then. Also he went with me on my 14-Mile Hike, just the two of us, all the way out past Edmonds. We camped on the beach and all night long the trains kept waking us up, and they scared the heck out of me -- it was like a nightmare, waking up with a locomotive 10 feet away from your head.



~~Wally~~ It sure made me proud ~~when~~ that when Eddy moved up to Senior Patrol Leader I took over the Flying Eagles. I mean, supposedly it was the Scoutmaster named me but everybody in our Troop ~~knew~~ knew who was calling the shots.

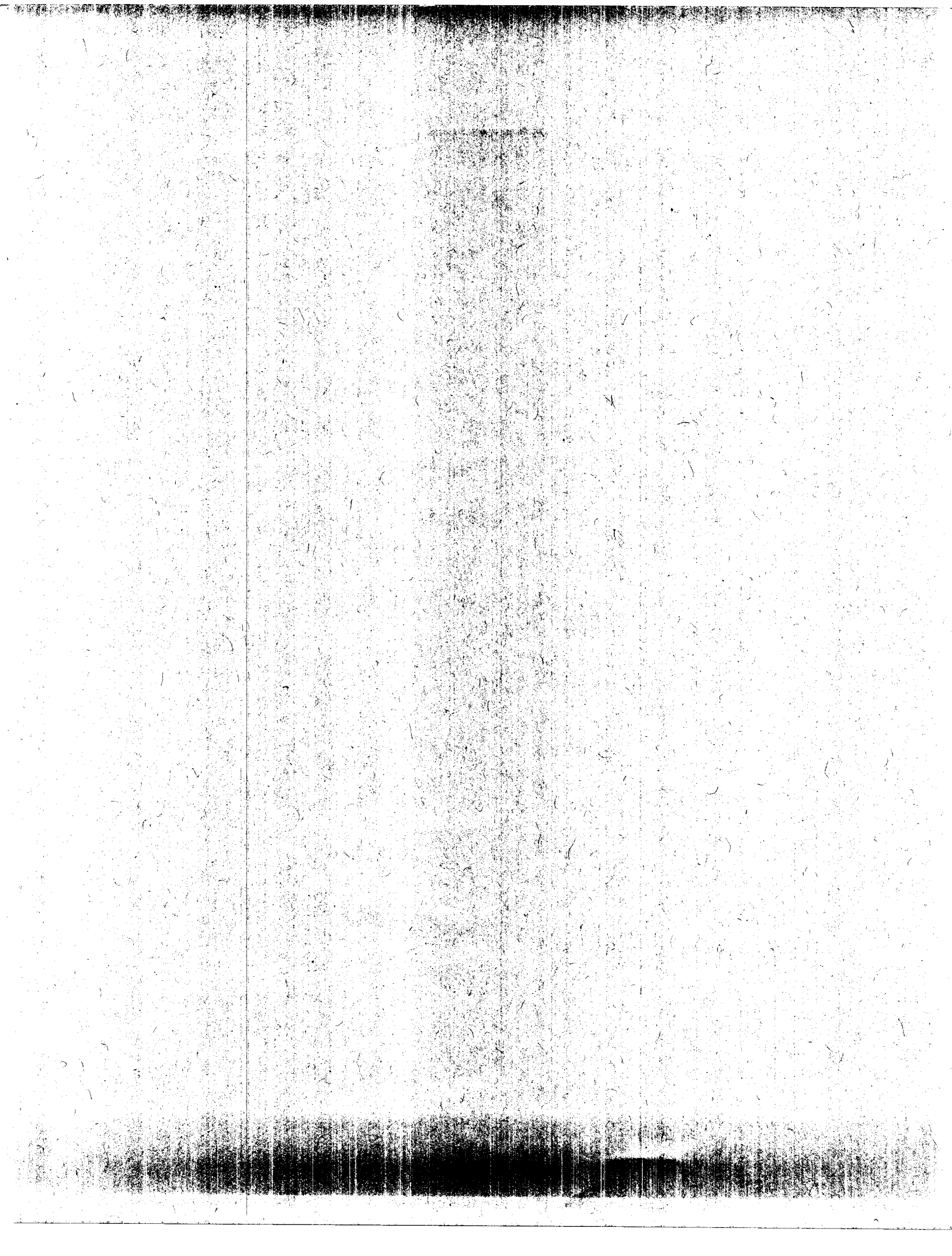
Well, I could talk on and on about Eddy, but that wasn't what I started out to talk about. You can say anything you want about Eddy and it still isn't enough.

What I wanted to tell about was Eddy's Hike -- that's what we called it, the whole time. Boy! We sure cussed him out lots of times! Every time we tried to follow the route he had marked on the map something terrible happened to us. Like we'd ~~try~~ go ~~over~~ over a ridge to get to the lake we were supposed to camp at, and when we got on top of the ridge there was no lake down there -- there was just a cliff. So we tried to climb down and ended up in the middle of the night wrapped around trees singing songs so we wouldn't go to sleep and get killed. We made up songs about Eddy, and what a terrible guy he was. We were going to sing them to him when we got back. Another reason was we sure ~~would~~ wished he was there. It was a lot of fun. But it would have been more fun with Eddy along.

Actually, like up there in the trees that night, most of the fun was talking about what Eddy would think about all this.

\*\*\*\*

Well, anyway, Eddy talked up the trip ~~over~~



Ups and Downs  
on  
High Hills and Low

Ups and Downs  
of a  
Mediocre Mountaineer

~~Cats  
and Curves~~

Slide Alder at Devils Club  
and ~~Catar Cliffs~~  
Rain Rain Rain

The Freedom of the Dark Brush Jungles is  
Adventures of a ~~Northwest~~  
Mediocre Mountaineer

Crashing Northwest Jungles

Memoirs of a Mediocre Mountaineer

Up the Rope

Last Man on the Rope

I have had my ups and downs  
~~but wotthelk wotthell~~  
~~fried oysters and velvet gown~~  
And today I herd with bumps  
~~But wotthelk wotthell~~  
oh  
I should worry of  
I should ~~frt~~  
Death and I will coquette  
through a dance in the old clame  
yet

Toujours gai  
Toujours gai

from "Song of Mchitobel"  
Pan Marquis

FREEDOM OF THE HILLS:  
Adventures of a Mediocre Mountaineer

Ups and Downs  
of a Mediocre  
Mountaineer

Hillwalking:  
The Lowdown on How  
to Get High

Ups and Downs  
on High Hills and Low

FAMOUS FIASCOES

of a

MEDIOCRE MOUNTAINEER

Feeling Around  
in the Hills

Fiasco of a  
Sky-walker

The Lot of the Red Hat  
Bandsters

Low Adventurer in  
High Sky

The Beginnings of a  
Bumbling Hillwalker

The At Homeless Hillwalker ←

by

Adventures of

Harvey Manning

"An adventure is a sign of incompetence."

... Vilhjalmur Stefansson



The climbs took place precisely as I have described them. Listening over campfires to aging companions, I find their minds dimming; invariably they remember the trips wrong, and consistently in the direction of heightening their own attractiveness as human beings at my expense. My versions in every case are more trustworthy than those of old friends who may be inclined, upon reading what is said about them here, to call me a slandering liar.

Mistakes in the text on matters of geology and botany and scholastic philosophy and the like are those I made during the period and are retained for the sake of complete honesty. Similarly, I have used my snapshots taken with a \$10 camera in order to show exactly, if vaguely, the country and the sky and the climbers as they were in the hours of which the words speak. Beautiful photos and beautiful people must be sought elsewhere.

Because in following pages I strictly remain in that past time, rigidly shunning temptations to intrude comments from the present, I must apologize for the way I then felt about Easterners, Harvard students, wealthy people, rescuers, the FBI, The Boeing Company, the Air Force, Senator Nixon, my wife, and other groups and individuals that I — again in the name of strenuous historical honesty — viciously insult. About many of these I have since changed my mind, or, if not, have gained a mature understanding of how they went astray and a realization they perhaps are more to be

*I've deliberately  
 laid a trap  
 for those  
 pecker-pickers  
 or those who'll  
 want to  
 lie  
 on my  
 record  
 in the text, I've  
 made  
 mistakes  
 of course, I  
 do, but I  
 don't  
 apologize  
 for them  
 because  
 I've  
 found  
 them  
 to  
 be  
 more  
 to  
 be  
 pitied  
 than  
 to  
 be  
 hated.*

pitted than censured. Where I have not yet forgiven, in ~~most~~ <sup>some</sup> cases I have changed names to protect the guilty.

I would like, finally, to thank the ~~climbing partners~~ <sup>comrades</sup> who helped me ~~live and survive the story~~, which is dedicated to the dozen or so (~~I long since stopped keeping a tally~~) who by one method and another got themselves killed in ~~wildlands of freeway and city as well as the hills~~ - during the narrative and its sequel.

Harvey Manning  
Cougar Mountain  
January 1974

who <sup>though</sup> ~~were~~ less  
incomplete than I  
also ~~were~~ lost  
lucky at

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## MAPS

A book about mountains that lacks proper maps is frustrating and infuriating to an experienced traveler, hopeless confusion for the novice or outlander or armchair reader.

The proposal is for simple sketch maps of various sizes, giving only enough information that the reader may be oriented, and thus follow the text with more pleasure and ease. (Not every chapter needs a map.)

### Map 1

Overall map of Olympics and (Washington) Cascades. Preferably on endpapers. Shows a few major cities and towns, highways and passes, and lakes and rivers. Shows only those peaks climbed or attempted by author 1946-1952.

### Map 2

Chapter 1 – GRAYWOLF RAMBLE

### Map 3

Chapter 2 – AWFUL TOOTH

4 – HARD TIMES IN CLIMBING COURSE

5 – HUCKLEBERRY HERO

21 – THOMPSON ON WEDNESDAY

### Map 4

Chapter 3 – BRUISER CRUISER

Map 5

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16 – AT THE POLE

22 – AT SEA

25 – KILJOY

Map 7

Chapter 12 – OPTIMUM FREQUENCY

Map 8

Chapter 13 – KOMO KULSHAN YAWKER

Map 9

Chapter 15 – BIG BANANA

Map 10

Chapter 16 – POLE OF REMOTENESS

Map 11

Chapter 17 – NORDGIPFEL

24 – Persdex

9 March 1974

1946

Chapter 1

THE DAMN NEAR FATAL GRAYWOLF RAMBLE

I was doing maybe 20 or 30 miles an hour and picking up speed despite ten fingers clawing and two heels gouging and ass muscles trying to grip snow in the crease. This wasn't what I'd planned (and went way past my idea of fun) but I'd gladly have kept it up all day and night and into next week considering what was going to happen when the sliding stopped -- my boots were aimed squarely at a gray island in the whiteness and a dozen heartbeats (from now) bones would be snapping and flesh crunching and blood spattering an acre of mountainside.

I knew how it <sup>was</sup> would feel. Like that football game when my job was to keep the enemy guard out of our backfield and the last thing I remembered was his big grin. Like the winter night I was cornered in the schoolyard and put up my fists and was hit between the eyes by a runaway truck. Like the time the masked men and women armed with knives strapped me to a table ~~under a blinding light~~ and gassed me.

Shelley was right:

"Death is here,

Death is there,

Death is busy everywhere."

At this pace it would take only a minute or so to reach the snow-surrounded oasis of alpine trees Arild and I had admired from the summit of Graywolf Pup, thinking ~~of~~ how we'd soak hot heads in the icy creek, hang a ~~ten~~ can from

a dinglestick and boil up a mess of rice and canned salmon, and unroll ~~sleeping~~ bags on soft heather and sleep under brilliant stars.

But between boots and <sup>OASIS</sup> ~~mountain grass~~ lay the ~~sinister~~ gray island.

This wintry late-July wilderness of Graywolf headwaters was the sort of place I'd choose for being stunned forever past pain. In high school I'd contemplated precisely such a suicide to pay back an unkind girl. But hell, at the moment there ~~wasn't~~ wasn't any girl, kind or unkind, thank God. Moreover, after years of skulking around the Eastlake Gardens and Red Robin and Rainbow and Blue Moon, only the week before had I earned the statutory right to relax over a schooner of beer rather than swilling nervously, awaiting the heavy bartender hand and the smirks of legal boozers watching the punk (kid) getting hustled onto the sidewalk. The place was ideal, the time was crummy.

Free, white, and newly 21. And dead.

Poor Arild, clinging to cliffs of Graywolf Pup. My troubles were nearly over. His were just starting. If the Eagle Scout veteran of Camp Parsons, member of the Exalted Order of the Silver Marmots, couldn't get down the mountain alive, what chance had a sailor who'd hardly been on dry land since 1942? The Jap kamikazes hadn't managed to kill him. When he got home from the war an old friend, an expert high-country Rambler, took care of that.

Expert!

My first blunder came this morning. Soon after hoisting packs at 3500-foot Camp Marion, 9 miles up the Dosewallips River trail from the road-end at Constance Creek, we turned off on the side-trail to 6500-foot Graywolf Pass. There wasn't any tread, merely a weathered sign pointing into knee-high flowers, but the country was open and eventually we'd intersect the path.

Lifting the 50-pound load up and up sun-blasted meadows and rockslides kept me from paying attention to the route. At noon we bumped into a cliff. Now I checked the map. Shit! We were a halfmile too far west. The smart move -- giving up some hard-won elevation, never mind the wasted sweat, and traversing to the pass -- was rejected by my sun-fried expert brains. The ridge crest was close and a dandy gully sliced the cliff.

Blunder Two. The gully steepened. I hated it and wanted ~~to get~~ out. And turned to go down and saw the only ~~way~~ way we were likely to do that was along with the crashing-smashing boulders our fumbling feet were kicking loose.

The gully blurred. When things came back in focus we were scrambling onto the 7000-foot summit of Graywolf Pup. Arild hadn't opened his mouth for an hour, which was just as well, I wouldn't have enjoyed his comments. It was damn decent of him, now, to say, "This is a heck of a lot better view than from the pass. We'd have come up here anyway."

We belched and farted and shouted obscenities, expressing our delight with the panorama east to crags of The Needles and Deception and Mystery and Constance, south to The Brothers and Anderson and high-and-mighty Rainier, west to blue-icy Olympus, and north to brown ridges standing above the Strait of Juan de Fuca. We ate the traditional Camp Parsons hike lunch, pilot bread and cheese and chocolate and raisins, and drank snow water melted in a ~~ten~~ Can. No hurry to leave -- we could run down to the green oasis in a half-hour. What a week lay ahead! Everything and more I'd promised Arild in ~~the many~~ <sup>c/o</sup> letters addressed ~~to the~~ Fleet Post Office, ~~at~~ San Francisco.

When our eyes were full we shouldered packs and boulder-hopped the ridge crest eastward -- to the brink of a cliff. Arild was wrong. From the pass we never in hell would've climbed the Pup.

Who needed the stupid pass anyhow? We dropped directly toward the snowy basin, skittering down loose-rock gullies and rubble-covered slabs -- to a cliff.

Arild had gone silent again. I'd nothing to say, either. Night was near and legs were quivery from the morning haul and guts from the fear. Cliffs barred us from the basin and the pass. The blurred ~~gully~~ gully on the Dosewallips side cut off retreat. Trapped.

One final hope. To the east a finger of snow poked high into the walls. I always felt good on snow, only rocks were mean and nasty. A band of tough little cedar ~~shrubs~~ shrubs allowed an ape-swinging traverse to the saving white.

Arild didn't see why I was so happy. Unsmiling he said, "Long way to the bottom. (Awful) damn steep." I <sup>sympathized</sup> ~~understood his qualms~~ -- he'd never been a Scout and his only mountain hikes were those we'd taken in the spring of 1942. I assured him we glissaded <sup>such</sup> slopes ~~like this~~ all the time on Parsons trips. If he watched me and did everything I did he'd be fine.

My plan was to ~~employ~~ <sup>use employ</sup> the technique familiar to every Silver Marmot. I'd leap from the rock over the moat to the snow, take off my pack, and ride it down as a sort of sled, using the frame for brakes.

I cleared the gaping moat with room to spare and landed catlike on my feet. Thus Blunder Three. The Big Blunder. In afternoon shadows the noon-slushy snow had frozen hard and slick. Boots skated and just-like-that I was whizzing toward the valley on my rear.

I wasn't worried. At Parsons we'd learned the proper remedy for ~~such~~ <sup>this</sup> problems. I dug in ~~my~~ my heels and sharp metal of tricouni nails bit the slope and sure enough, boots slowed. However, I had no nails in my ass, which quickly swung into the lead. The first law of mountaineering is never

lead with your ass. I lifted heels and scrambled to get boots downhill -- and with the brakes off accelerated. Never fear. Most Parsons glissades were spooky but snow always flattens eventually, sooner or later stopping is automatic.

Then I <sup>saw</sup> ~~noticed~~ the gray island. Now I worried. At Parsons they ~~never~~ <sup>didn't</sup> ~~teach~~ <sup>taught</sup> us a technique for that.

Dig in heels and the pivot begins. Lift heels and speed increases. Faster, faster. Pack wrenches shoulders, batters head. (Six years ago, on my last Parsons hike, we were blasted out of our camp below the Lillian Glacier by a three-day blow and retreated along the crest of Lost Ridge in a screaming gale and afterward the doctor said I couldn't go hiking for a year. But I wasn't near death on that trip or any other. I didn't <sup>really believe</sup> ~~realize~~ until today you could die in the mountains.)

Clutch snow and don't fret about ~~damaging~~ damaging fingers. If impact speed can be reduced even a mile an hour it's worth eroding off fingers up to the elbows. (Alone in the Dosewallips a month ago, fleeing from the woman who refused to concede the marriage was a mistake and pursued me in my dodgings through the city, I saw the trail sign pointing to Graywolf Pass and was excited by the mystery of what lay beyond the divide. Now I'd crossed over.)

Bounce high in air, slam down hard on concrete snow, probably fracturing both hips. (Will the English Department survive my loss? The kind professors regretted I'd blown my chances for a Rhodes but hell, there'll always be an England. They understood my dropping out of graduate school this spring to earn some money in a lumber mill and get single again and were awaiting my return and had the skids greased to run me ~~on~~ through to the union card in



record time. Yeah, they'll miss me, but amid the ~~crash~~ <sup>galaxy of bright</sup> vets memory of the old star ~~will~~ <sup>will</sup> soon dim.)

Here come the rocks. (I shouldn't be doing this to my folks. They never ~~kept me~~ <sup>me</sup> tied to apron strings, let me run where I pleased, didn't argue ~~when~~ when I left home at 17, we were ~~great~~ <sup>true</sup> friends. And now they are childless.)

Keep boots in front. Clinically observe, sentimentally treasure, every detail of these final microseconds on Earth.

The rocks are here. Goodbye.

POW! An eruption of dust and pebbles, ~~is~~ a bomb exploding.

Gracefully I rise into headfirst flight, arms spread wide, and soar through soft silent air, flapping wings. What a marvelous afternoon for learning how to fly.

CRUMPH! That's all.

Not quite. A somersault. A cartwheel. Odd -- other kids could do these stunts but I was too clumsy. Now everything is so easy. ~~is~~ This must be Heaven. To think I was an unbeliever!

Silence.

Stillness.

The greatest silence ever heard, the greatest stillness ever felt.

Eternal silence, stillness?

No. That <sup>lovely marvellous</sup> ~~splashing~~ <sup>is</sup> -- a meltwater creek ~~gushing~~ <sup>gushing</sup> from under the snow? That <sup>lovely</sup> amazing dome of blue -- the same sky we saw from the Pup? Not in Heaven, not yet. Soon, of course, ~~being~~ <sup>being</sup> fatally mangled, ~~as~~ <sup>as</sup> I am.

Listen to the water music, sweeter than Handel's, drink deep of the terrific blue, mingle with the <sup>tall</sup> ~~tall~~ spikes of ~~tall~~ rock which for eight years have guarded the heart of my dreams, merge into the One that remains while the Many change and pass.

How do you  
like your  
blue-eyed  
boy, Mister  
Death?

Don't move a muscle. The machine is a wreck. The matter shortly will be feeding beetles and flowers. Yet the Me within lingers and this perfect moment is the last of life for which the first was made. Move ever so slightly and pain will overwhelm glory ↗

Ruined flesh betrays clean spirit. The moment is lost forever. Dammit! I'm dead but I've got to take a piss.

That requires, for openers, use of the right hand. Tentatively give the order. The message races from the brain. Look! Fingers wiggle. Wrist flexes, and elbow and shoulder. The left assembly? It too obeys. Legs? That ankle operates, and the connected knee and hip. Also the other set. Surely the neck is broken? No, the head wobbles. What about the spine? I can sit up. I can stand up! (Careful, not too fast, a little dizziness there.)

An ugly scene, ~~this~~ scratches and gashes and abrasions -- and doubtless concealed bruises and contusions and internal injuries. Blood on the rocks and blood on the snow, the body all bloody from head to toe, oh pity this hiker all covered with gore, he'll never go pounding the high trails no more.

But I will. I work! Each moment of life from here on is pure gravy.

Arild. I forgot Arild. Never forgive myself if I've killed him. Sorry, old buddy. Too late to help you now.

A dozen yards away I found my pack, unwounded. Not surprising, since the Army built these steel-frame Bergans to stand up in the battles everyone expected would be necessary to roust Hitler from his Alpine Redoubt. Surplus stores were selling them for a buck apiece, or four bits if you shopped around. Good merchandise and cheap, but I guessed after this trip I'd revert

to the wood-frame Trapper Nelson ~~park~~ Dad made for me when I joined the Scouts; it felt homier on the back.

I staggered to the green oasis and at 5500 feet above sealevel collapsed in flowers to observe the drama on high. However, Arild wasn't cut out for starring roles. He gave a ~~very~~ boring performance, flatly disobeying my instructions to "do everything I <sup>do</sup> ~~do~~."

Arriving in twilight, he explained my fantastic glissade made him feel impossibly inferior, ~~xxxx~~ confirmed his fear that four Navy years had rotted his youthful strength. He also was flabbergasted by my acrobatics on the rockpile, but about then wondered if four University years hadn't rotted my brain. In any event, not being a Silver Marmot, he chose to climb cautiously down into the moat and out again and creep across steep snow to gentler slopes and descend one slow step at a time. My route took a couple minutes and his a couple hours, but he was satisfied.

The camp was the best we'd ever shared. From our <sup>white-ringed</sup> ~~xxxx~~ island of Christmas trees and spring flowers we saluted the dreadful Graywolf Pup and jeered the small-balls pussyfooting along the Dose turnpike. We'd crossed the divide to brighter flowers, wetter water, we were Graywolfers! Ashes on the knoll, flattened and leached by snows of many winters, said nobody had camped here since before the war. Wounds began to ache -- I exulted in the pulse of pain, of life.

The ~~Ten~~ Can of coffee hanging from the dinglestick, blacker and bitterer and better as the evening went on, kept us talking late by the flames, under the stars, about the good old days before the war. We'd little to say about Ronald Grade School, from which we graduated in 1938 -- quiet boys, good boys, practically never <sup>dragged</sup> ~~xxxx~~ into the principal's office for a licking.

The epic era began in the spring of 1941, our junior year at Lincoln High, when we got into a feud with the schoolbus driver who delivered us to Seattle every morning, returned us to the country every afternoon, and wore a big hat he thought made him look like a deputy sheriff. He was determined to run a tight ship and of course that forced us to horse around. One night he read me the riot act and officially banned me from the bus. I couldn't believe it because for once I was innocent. Next morning I righteously boarded the bus and he jumped from his seat and threw me down the steps. While falling to the ground I grabbed his deputy sheriff hat and sailed it off in the woods. He charged into the brush and found his hat but when he tried to get on the bus Arild had shut the door and locked it. Busdriver pounded on door and bellowed, ~~and~~ I cussed his mother, ~~and~~ the kids inside hollered and clapped. Finally a finky girl opened the door and everybody but me left for the city. I hitchhiked in. Next day Arild got the boot and then so many other rummies it was hardly worth ~~running~~ running the bus and the School Board mediated a truce.

Senior year we ignored the busdriver. The chemistry teacher, <sup>another</sup> ~~a~~ hardnosed simpleton, was more fun. One day in the lab Arild and I were doing the assigned experiment, generating hydrogen gas and igniting it. A few cc's of hydrogen made a neat little ~~pop~~ "pop!" What sort of ~~bang~~ bang would you get, say, <sup>from</sup> ~~with~~ a liter of hydrogen? The result wasn't quite as spectacular as the Hindenburg disaster but very nicely shook up the teacher. Another day, therefore, we tied balloons to the air jets and when they began to explode the teacher yelled "The Japs are here!" and ran out to sound the air-raid alarm.

Since ~~last~~ summer we'd both owned Model A Fords. I'd taken my life savings of \$25 and borrowed \$50 from ~~my~~ Dad and bought one in excellent running

condition

^ and with all sorts of extras, including a radio. Arild had assembled his from several junks at a total cost of maybe \$10. Wheels made us free and we razzed all over the countryside. On washboard gravel roads any speed above ~~25~~ <sup>25</sup> was as exciting as a bucking bronco. The most my A would do, flat out on smooth pavement, was 55, but Arild had his so hopped up it could break 60. A few seconds of that were plenty, though. It took an hour for our eyeballs to stop rolling around ~~like marbles.~~

Spring evenings we drove down to Puget Sound, ~~scouted for~~ <sup>gathered</sup> beer bottles ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> passion pits behind the driftwood, tossed them in the water and threw rocks, cheering every solid smash. When it was too dark to see targets we walked along the beach listening to waves rattling pebbles and watching sunset colors fade from the sky ~~above~~ <sup>behind</sup> the ragged black line of the Olympic Mountains.

I hadn't been in the hills for a year and started telling Arild ~~about~~ <sup>stories</sup> high-country and he was fascinated. However, he worked weekends in a gas station and I had an every-Saturday job logging off <sup>wild</sup> a ravine a rich family wanted to turn into a formal garden. Well, screw school. There was a ~~girl~~ girl there I wanted to forget and ~~I could tell~~ Arild also had things on his mind, though he didn't talk about them. We began <sup>taking off</sup> ~~regularly shipping~~ in midweek, camping by <sup>brawling</sup> ~~wild~~ rivers in lonesome valleys, climbing trails to deep snow and floundering ~~around~~ in fog, laughing like maniacs ~~at~~ at the thought of our buddies ~~who that many minutes were~~ in warm city classrooms studying calculus and grammar and personal hygiene and all that crap.

Even without the war the spring of 1942 would have been dream-strange. But there was a war and along with the whole world Arild went mad. Having skipped a year in grade school X I was only 16 when we graduated, safe.

Arild, though, was draft bait as soon as they handed him his ~~diploma~~ diploma.  
 But ~~still~~ that was no excuse for what he did in June, the week after our last hike. Newspapers were still mourning Torpedo Squadron 8, wiped out at Midway, when he volunteered to ride a torpedo plane.

Fortunately (my opinion) he was a Norwegian and had the malocclusion to prove it. In letters he complained he "didn't enlist to bite the Japs." No matter, the Navy wouldn't let a man fly if his teeth didn't meet. ~~They~~ <sup>Instead</sup> they taught him to read a barometer and a wet-bulb thermometer ~~and weather charts.~~ <sup>and weather charts.</sup> Ironically, he ended up in the quietest place in the whole war, riding with Bull Halsey in the exact center of the fleet, ringed by miles and miles of submarines and destroyers and cruisers and battlewagons and aircraft carriers. Boredom occasionally was relieved by a typhoon ~~or~~ kamikazes that broke through massed gunpower of the fleet, ~~to the heads~~ <sup>Otherwise</sup> ~~aside from that~~ the only excitement on the USS Missouri was eating ice cream and reading letters from home. The most thrilling, of course, were those narrating the perils of a 4-F at the University of Washington. Compared to my war, Arild's was a rest cure.

Now both wars were over. <sup>In</sup> ~~the~~ fall Arild would enter the University on the GI Bill and become a forester. I'd return to graduate school and get the doctorate and go on to glory as a famous and wealthy professor.

Fall was months away. Forget it. This was the second night of the great wilderness ramble we'd so long discussed by V-mail and we owned an entire splendid valley and for a week it was 1942 again.

Was there ever such a Tuesday in the history of the world? We were different people at night than ~~at~~ noon. ~~As~~ As Wednesday was to show.

and later on by the surrender ceremonies in Tokyo Bay.

In the bright morning we set out to follow the line I'd confidently drawn on the map. The way was up snow of only moderate angle, yet I found myself kicking bathtub-sized steps. I ~~didn't like~~ <sup>wasn't as happy on</sup> snow as much as I used to ~~x~~ be. At the 6000-foot pass between the two branches of the Graywolf headwaters ~~we~~ we stared into the savage gorge beneath The Needles and 7788-foot Deception, second-highest peak in the Olympics. The adventure of walking below those cruel walls had intrigued me. But the snowfield leading down was too damn adventurous. <sup>if your balls freeze,</sup> Revise plans, retreat.

Easier said than done. Turning to descend, I saw the gentle snowfield had <sup>itself</sup> magically transformed into a vertical white wall. Trapped again! I now recalled the trusty pack-sled braking system never had worked, though everyone thought it should. The only thing a pack did ~~on a slide~~ slide was bash your head, push you faster. The hell with that -- we threw our Bergans <sup>over the brink</sup> ~~down the hill~~ and watched them bounce and roll to a stop on the flat below. Now, our turn. The snow was ~~soft~~ and ~~boots~~ churned up blizzards and we zoomed downward blind and helpless. The ride was short, quickly and safely over. But ~~it~~ it didn't feel safe. (It felt dangerous.) Penetrating the mist of mythic memory, I realized there wasn't any real Camp Parsons glissading technique, all my slides had been jump-off-and-pray. Never having been killed convinced me I was an expert. Until yesterday.

Down the valley we retreated, below snowline onto forest trail (bless the unwhite dirt!) to the 4500-foot junction of the two Graywolf branches, then once more left the security of tread, climbing open forest to a tributary stream heading at a 7000-foot pass through The Needles. (My map line crossed the pass into Royal Basin. Think about that tomorrow.) In late afternoon we emerged from trees at a tiny lake, actually a wide spot in the creek at 5200 feet. Weathered charcoal on the inlet delta showed somebody had camped ~~there~~.

here, many years ago. Did they escape? We were far from anywhere, in the middle of nowhere. Vulnerable.

Arild slept in the trees. I sacked out on the gravel delta and lay in my bag looking into and beyond piercing-bright stars. I'd almost forgotten my childhood fear of the night sky, worrying about how big was infinity, how long was eternity, and could I possibly avoid being damned to the Hell I richly deserved.

A Blackness obliterated a million stars. A Blackness with wings. I leapt to my feet -- or tried. Bag-trapped body managed only convulsions. Help! No help. Arild is silent. Did it get Arild? Am I now alone?

Reason said it was an owl. Yeah, an owl as huge as a million stars....

Morning gave reprieve from the outer wilderness never to be solved but left us within a wilderness that could swallow <sup>us</sup> ~~as~~ as ~~quickly and~~ irrevocably <sup>on the beach</sup> as once, <sup>at</sup> Parsons, I gulped a raw oyster. How long did the slime live before drowning in stomach juices? Was the Graywolf to me as I was to the oyster?

God may have made the rest of the world. The architect of the Graywolf was the Enemy of Mankind. That was no owl. I yearned to escape this <sup>awful</sup> ~~scary~~ valley. Not, though, via the 7000-foot pass. While bravely dreaming in the city, I <sup>h</sup> hadn't noticed how the contour lines ran together on the map in a ghastly smear of brown ink.

Another retreat, climbing steeply up forest above the lake, breaking out onto broad, gentle slopes of shale splinters sprinkled with tiny flowers. Arild laughed aloud -- the first time since the oasis. We loped around the end of the scary Needles, their brutal basalt crags contrasting with gentle



to which the ~~line of~~ Needles connect, brown slopes of sedimentary Graywolf Ridge, and scrambled to the 6400-foot pass, our escape from the Graywolf to Royal Creek. During a long and laughing lunch we looked back almost fondly to scenes of Terrible Tuesday and Wobbly Wednesday, rejoicing that the bad days were behind.

Royal Creek babbled far below, inviting us to the party. We jumped and skidded down a ~~deep~~ gully -- to the brink of a 30-foot cliff. Traps! Traps! Everywhere traps!

We should <sup>have</sup> ~~have~~ climbed back up and found a better route but I didn't want to, I felt pursued. Royal Creek, valley of peace, was close. Once past the cliff the way was clear. Could we get past?

Some 50 horizontal feet distant, across a slab on the edge of the dropoff, a tributary gully offered a staircase to safety. Arild, though startled when the Silver Marmot suggested he go first, quickly ~~was~~ crab-squirmed over the slab in a sitting position and at the bottom of the staircase burst into ~~laughter.~~ <sup>laughter. The bastard. What about me?</sup> Halfway over the slab my buttocks lost grip and I slid near the brink and suddenly was clinically detached, as on Tuesday before boots hit rock.

Friction of hands and ass held me to Earth. At every sideways move the Bergan pushed me down, closer. I warned Arild the pack and I were ~~separating.~~ <sup>separating.</sup> The redheaded Norwegian fool who volunteered to ride shotgun on a suicide plane thrust out maloccluded jaw at the 50-pound bomb, made a beautiful midair catch -- and the pack kept right on falling, the two of them tumbling together.

Both survived. ~~So~~ So did I -- yet finally and absolutely demoralized. On every Parsons hike we had a scare or two, that was part of the fun. Arild and I had endured four mortal terrors in 48 hours, two by rock and two by

snow. (For me there <sup>was</sup> a fifth -- the "owl.") The joke had gone too far.

Almost we wept when boots met the Royal Creek trail, a narrow lane of civilization through man-eating wilderness. Gratefully we followed the path up the valley to 5100-foot Royal Lake, ringed by subalpine trees and fields of heather ~~and swarming with mosquitoes.~~ <sup>and swarming with mosquitoes.</sup> ~~In the cool-~~ <sup>the bugs gone to bed,</sup> of evening, I reviewed my bold line on the map. The climax of my grand plan was to ~~climb from the lake into~~ <sup>cross from</sup> Royal Basin, ~~to~~ Deception Basin, then to Heather Basin, and from there rejoin the trail on Delmonte Ridge for the descent to the Dose. Two ridges, brown blurs of ~~colours,~~ <sup>contours</sup> no trail, steep snow. The old Silver Marmot turned yellow clean through. The sailor was silent. The retreat became a ~~route~~ rout. Friday morning we slunk down the valley, abandoning noble dreams for a safe-trail detour around adventure, descending 8 miles to Royal Creek's 2700-foot junction with the Dungeness River, up which we then ascended 9 miles to 5000-foot Boulder Shelter.

Except for the shame, the detour was a ~~joy.~~ <sup>joy.</sup> Days of highland trickles and little flowers and miniature trees amplified the roar of rivers, enriched jungle green, enlarged forest giants. <sup>And then</sup> The deep-woods interlude refreshed colors of alpine blossoms and widened the highland sky. Pounding 17 miles in a day proved that chickens on snow and rock still could be tigers on trail. At Boulder Shelter there was, for me, a melancholy gladness in revisiting as a vicious ancient of 21 a place I'd last seen as an innocent lad of 12, on my first Parsons hike.

The night should ~~have~~ <sup>we</sup> been serene, what with heroism meekly ~~abandoned.~~ <sup>forsaken.</sup> But once your nerve cracks the wilderness closes in for the kill. In twilight we ~~snapped~~ <sup>jerked</sup> alert, hearing a moan in dark forest -- a choked scream -- a hoarse growl. It was here -- now there -- circling the campfire. A misanthropic

bear, a crazed elk, a rabid cougar? Or was it the "owl"? We slept, or tried, in the ~~gummy~~ shelter, which was open on one side and thus no real protection. <sup>to the night</sup>

At dawn appeared the wrecker of our sleep -- a deer with a bad cough. We laughed, quietly, sorry for the deer, and I, at least, certain the return of darkness would bring a doubt. (Yes, ~~They'd~~ like you to believe it was only a deer.)

A short walk led to 5400-foot Home Lake, cupped in rocks and snowfields under ~~the~~ violent walls of the 7500-foot East Peak of Constance. This was the spot where in 1938 I canceled plans to someday sail a small boat around the world, alone, in favor of making the first ascent of Mount Everest, solo. We stripped, jumped in ~~the~~ icewater, turned blue, crawled out on the rocky shore in blazing sun, and to make up for the ordeal of the sick deer napped away the afternoon in the shade of alpine firs.

Sunday morning, the Model A several hours distant, we started up to ~~Constance~~ Constance Pass -- and this ~~element~~ <sup>near safety</sup> ~~time~~ were betrayed by the valley of the cowards. The trail was blocked by steep snow! I heard the dark wings. (Dear God, is there no way out? How far ~~is it~~ down the Dungeness to the <sup>road?</sup> ~~highway?~~) We could hitchhike around to the Dose, <sup>it</sup> ~~this fine~~ ~~road~~ would take only a couple extra days.) False alarm -- the snowbank was easily bypassed, and with this <sup>last warning we were released.</sup> ~~final fright the wilderness, alerted.~~

On the summit of 6500-foot Delmonte Ridge, amid ~~violent~~ gusts of ~~gusts~~ cold wind, under dense-blue sky, we yelled at views over Puget Sound to the stupendous white volcanoes of Rainier and Adams and St. Helens, west into the Olympic wilderness from which we'd <sup>finally</sup> ~~at last~~ escaped, north to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Vancouver Island and mountain ranges in Canada. We thundered down gardens of Sunnybrook Meadows, down young forest, down old forest, down

and down, losing a vertical mile. We didn't need it anymore, were ready for the slothful ease of lowlands. When we hit the Dose trail knees were rag-doll floppy and mouths desert-dusty yet we ran by creeks loaded with delicious water taking nary a sip, ~~drawn from the~~ by the rock of hop juice from a bottle ~~busted on the rough side of the Dose road. Other bottles were~~ ~~intact, hidden under a rock.~~

We tore off sweat-stinking clothes and flopped <sup>in</sup> ~~to~~ Constance Creek, howling as ~~submerging~~ foam shocked legs and froze balls, boiled over belly and back, flooded nose and eyes and ears. But we did not drink, were ~~we~~ careful to preserve the great thirst. Then, in clean clothes, we sprawled in warm sun by loud torrent ~~and spent bottles and tilted them higher~~

Bubbles tingle in nose and explode in parched throat, cold <sup>hop juice</sup> ~~stuns~~ stuns empty stomach, alcohol shoots through dehydrated blood to brain.

Seven days wild, twice nearly killed, nerves shot ~~to~~ to hell. Sniveling cowards? Of course, but alive, and better than that, drunk!

Built by Henry Ford in 1930, bought by me in 1941, the Model A was -- like Arild and me -- only entering its prime. Down the Dose road we bounced and jounced at speeds often in excess of 20 miles an hour, trailing a storm of dust, swinging corners with rear wheels skidding sideways, honking horn crazily, chasing <sup>picnic-bound</sup> ~~Sunday picnic~~ Sunday drivers ~~out for picnic~~ toward the ditch, maybe into the ditch -- who kept score?

I drove in the style of my famous Graywolf glissade, of the kamikazes that attacked Arild in the Pacific.

and withdrew bottles from ~~under~~ a waterfall and flipped off ~~the~~ caps.

~~It~~

Rattling over planks of the ferry slip at Port Ludlow for the voyage  
~~across~~ the waters into past and future, I ~~scared~~<sup>annoyed</sup> tourists and embarrassed  
Arild, ~~the~~ singing:

"I have been to Ludlow Fair  
And left my necktie God knows where  
And carried halfway home, or near,  
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer.  
Then the world seemed none so bad,  
And I, myself, a sterling lad...."

15 March 1974

1946

Chapter 2

WITH WHAT STRANGE UTTERANCE DID THE LOUD WIND BLOW

Never was a summer so perfectly footloose. I was free of school for the first time since the fall of 1942, having attended the University continuously during the war. I was free of work for the first time since I was old enough to split wood and hoe weeds and feed chickens. I was free of foreign entanglements for the first time in a couple years and, better than that, free of ~~from~~ the <sup>urgent</sup> longing for the first time since the onset of puberty. Nothing to do and the whole summer to do it.

I spent 35 days in the hills, roaming the Olympics from the Skokomish and Hamma Hamma and Dosewallips and Quilcene Rivers, flowing into Hood Canal, to the Dungeness and Elwha entering the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to the Soleduc and Bogachiel and Hoh running to the ocean. Some trips I was alone, on others with ~~my folks~~ <sup>with</sup> Arild or Bob, another Lincoln High buddy returned from the war.

Between hikes, in the city, I awoke each morning utterly free of responsibility or plan or aim and set out a-wandering, wondering what surprise the day might ~~offer~~ <sup>bring</sup>.

I explored the Northlake District, where I'd rented a room in a tumbledown building (that) once had been a hotel for mill ~~workers~~ <sup>workers</sup> and loggers. I was the only person in the neighborhood younger than 70 and the old sawyers and planermen and shingleweavers and filers and riggers and fallers and buckers

and donkeymen called me "the student." They seemed to enjoy (the novelty of) having me around and I enjoyed them, listening (for hours) to reminiscences about the glory years when they gypsied from one mill or logging camp to the next, <sup>boozed at</sup> brawled and whored on every skidroad from Hoquiam to Bellingham.

I'd leave them to go sit on a collapsing dock and look out over Lake Union, visualizing the scene as it was in their youths, the lake ringed by mills running 24 hours a day seven days a week, turning forests being clearcut a couple miles from town into lumber and shingles that would be loaded on <sup>sailing ships</sup> ~~lumber schooners~~ for <sup>delivery</sup> ~~shipment~~ throughout the world. The Northlake District then offered as much <sup>sport</sup> ~~fun~~ as a brave lad had the cash to pay for and the guts to handle. For more the streetcar would take him to Seattle, at the other end of the lake, and the most <sup>glorious-</sup> ~~notorious~~ skidroad of all.

When I was in a mood to be with "my own" I'd walk up to the Avenue, ~~10~~ 10 minutes away, and browse in bookstores or hole up in a music-shop listening booth with a stack of Mozart records, or maybe run into friends and drink a gallon of coffee in the lone restaurant that hadn't learned ~~not~~ giving students unlimited free refills was a fast road to bankruptcy.

I had enough bucks in the sock to hold out until fall, when I'd go back on the University payroll, and meanwhile made myself rich by making my wants small. Room rent was ~~\$~~ \$6 a month and I ate on four bits a day, with an unvarying menu of a bowl of bread and milk for breakfast, no lunch, and a supper of two ham sandwiches and a doughnut and a pint of milk. About once a week I drove a half-hour ~~west~~ north of the city to visit my folks, mainly for sociability but in the process getting a square meal.

Aside from mountains my biggest expense was beer. Every week, on no particular schedule, Arild would blast down Northlake Way in his shiny

*yellow*

~~Desoto~~ Desoto, ordered when he joined the Navy and thus one of the earliest off the postwar assembly line. We'd tavern-hop through the countryside of our childhood, at some point in the evening usually visiting the Highlands Golf Course, where Arild had caddied as a kid, so he could climb the Cyclone fence (erected to guard the realm of the princes from us woodland peasants) and steal the flag from the 13th hole.

Bob was on the loose, waiting to reenter the University in fall and pick up his education where it was chepped off in 1943, and a couple times a week we made the Eastlake Gardens-Red Robin shuttle. He'd had a boring and soul-smothering war, partly in a hospital recovering from the shots the Army nearly killed him with during basic training, much of the rest shuffling papers <sup>at a desk</sup> in New Jersey and answering my ~~lengthy~~ letters. After the 1 o'clock closing we'd go up to the Avenue for hamburgers at the Robin Hood Grill and, honoring the name, walk out without paying the check. Then we'd tour the city night seeking adventure, ~~investigating a~~ graveyard and climbing monuments and tipping over headstones, or prowling the campus breaking into buildings, not for the sake of plunder and pillage but simply because they were there.

I wasn't entirely soured on girls -- at least, not those ~~who~~ who were guaranteed safe. Dorothy, whom I'd known in Parrington Hall for years, frequently invited me to dinner and we took long walks and talked by the hour about books we were reading. I liked Dorothy because she was brilliant and beautiful and vivacious and a good cook and was just emerging from a disastrous affair and no more interested than I in fooling around. Her only fault, and the reason we eventually stopped seeing each other, was she didn't like beer.



During Avenue ramblings I noted Betty had returned to the scene ~~later~~ after being away some months, having gone home to Portland to recuperate from an operation. she explained, When we first met, a couple years before in Parrington, she had a loose eye that gave an intriguing air of elusiveness -- I never was sure whether she was looking at me, or over my shoulder at somebody passing by, or both at once. To divert attention from the wandering eye she kept her mouth going constantly a mile a minute -- even when I was talking her lips were twitching. She'd just transferred from Reed College in Portland and with the typical Reedy snobbishness made it clear nothing but poverty could have driven her from the "Harvard of the Northwest" to mingle with the rabble of a public school. However, when we got into a literary-philosophical put-down match she learned to her consternation ~~that~~ even some plebeians are literate. I was sort of sorry to deflate her balloon but she never could've maintained the smoothy-smarty pose anyway -- due to the errant eye she lacked depth perception and had a tendency to stumble on staircases and fall off sidewalks and bump into things.

The operation had anchored her eye -- a pity, since to me it was the essence of her charm -- but ~~had not~~ <sup>hadn't</sup> cured her accident-on-the-way-to-happening clumsiness (or ~~her~~ oral diarrhea.) She was still fun and not in the least threatening and therefore, one evening when we ran into each other (literally) on the Avenue I invited her to the Red Robin, where I was meeting a gang. With the first beer she was crocked and began erupting words so fast half were lost and everybody was laughing too hard to drink. She ~~obviously~~ was delighted to be the star of the show but after a while ran out of routines and asked for a cigarette -- a transparent ploy to occupy her mouth and thus get off stage.

Unfortunately, when I offered the lighted match she misjudged the distance and scorched her eyebrows. From then on I often took her boozing, which I easily could afford because she was a really cheap drunk.

One night when I stopped by Betty's "apartment," <sup>one of a thousand such</sup> ~~a typical~~ University District basement <sup>equipped</sup> cave with broken-down furniture and a hot plate, another girl was there. Betty, well aware I considered myself something of a high-country hero, enthusiastically introduced her friend, saying, "Monie climbs mountains!"

Well, I wasn't thrilled. I'd never met an honest-to-gosh climber and despite having ~~long ago~~ outgrown my own alpine ambitions was inclined to dislike her on principle. Yet <sup>evening</sup> ~~that evening~~ and others I listened fascinated to her tales of blood and slaughter on the peaks, enjoying the shivers running up and down my yellow spine.

Not that Monie was invariably grim; indeed, for the most part she was an amiable lunatic. She told of the time she and her sister were practicing rappelling at home, jumping out their second-floor bedroom window, howling and screeching, and sliding down a rope to the ground, then dashing upstairs to do it again, and the neighbors panicked and the session was ended by the arrival of police cars and fire trucks. Walking along the Avenue, <sup>with us</sup> she'd close ~~her~~ her eyes and run fingers over a stucco wall and laugh -- or rather, cackle -- hysterically. During a prolonged period of blindness caused by a medical blunder she'd learned Braille and now "read" stucco walls, claiming they were covered with weird messages -- which, however, she couldn't repeat in mixed company.

Her prime attraction for me was a rich knowledge of mountains, not merely ~~the~~ cliffs and glaciers but ~~the~~ lower realms <sup>traveled on</sup> childhood hikes with her family. She knew my home hills, the Olympics, better than I and her descriptions of cozy basins and sky-slicing ridges made me hungry.

As a consequence, in early September Monie led Bob and me and Betty (who'd been <sup>in</sup> the mountains just once before and narrowly escaped alive) on a five-day loop trip through the northeastern Olympics. The hike began from Bark Shanty Shelter at the end of the Quilcene River road, well-remembered ~~to me~~ as the start of my first Parsons <sup>adventure</sup> hike, in 1938. We followed the trail up Townsend Creek to the summit of 6280-foot Townsend, down to Copper City, a cluster of old mine shacks, up to Buckhorn Pass and around the side of 6988-foot Buckhorn to Marmot Pass, where in a sunset eight years ago I'd been forever captured by the Gleam, and down the Quilcene to Bark Shanty.

It was an altogether magnificent ramble ~~through superb highlands~~ -- and very leisurely, Betty so slow you had to stare at her several minutes to be sure she was moving, which half the time she wasn't. New aspects of Monie were revealed. Periodically she'd disappear and we'd hear far-off melodies evoking visions of pagan deities and spot her perched on a high rock blowing a flute. Considering her the ultimate treasury of alpine lore, <sup>on</sup> ~~when~~ <sup>seeing</sup> ~~seeing~~ an unfamiliar flower I asked its name and she cackled, "There are only two mountain flowers -- Indian paintbrush and the other kind." She knew rocks and snow <sup>intimately</sup> but of flora and fauna was so ignorant as barely to be able to tell the flowers from the birds.

The climax of the trip was the short stroll to the top of ~~the~~ Buckhorn, with grand views east across the Dungeness valley to ~~the~~ Needles, whose vile

basalt fangs still gave me the creeps. During the lunch sackout Monie demonstrated climbing techniques on the steep side of the summit block and we hikers were dumbfounded by her fluid motion up and down glassy-blank rock. Bob tried the wall and did quite well but I let it alone. He always was more agile than me (better, for example, at climbing graveyard monuments and campus trees by the light of the moon) and more daring. Senior year at Lincoln our gang put on a burlesque skit for a pep assembly and Bob, ~~being~~ the shortest <sup>of us,</sup> naturally was cast as Abe Lincoln. In the wings awaiting his cue he spotted a dangling rope and when we yelled "Here comes Abe Lincoln now!" ~~he~~ made his entry not striding pompously, as we'd rehearsed it, but flying through the air, stunning ~~the rest of~~ the cast and the audience -- and also himself when he let go of the rope and crashed to the boards.

Buckhorn was meant to be the final high walk of summer, since Bob and I were planning to take ~~our~~ sleeping bags and toothbrushes and stand by a highway and stick out ~~our~~ thumbs and see how much of America we could cover in the month before opening of fall quarter. However, the third member of the Lincoln debate team's Three Musketeers (as we were called by the coach) came home from the war, which he'd spent tending psychos in an Army hospital <sup>in Kansas</sup> and writing letters to Bob and me. Bill blew into Seattle for a ~~quick~~ visit before entering Cal Tech so we gave up the hitchhiking tour for a wild reunion ~~at~~.

In October Bob and Betty and I ~~made~~ <sup>slid</sup> separate <sup>ly</sup> ~~reentries~~ into University routine. From time to time we regathered, occasionally joined by Monie, who though several years beyond school and newly <sup>hired</sup> ~~employed~~ at Boeing, hung out on the Avenue a lot. Days growing shorter and ~~fast~~ storms darker, we four

were one night fondly recalling Townsend and Buckhorn and wishing we were again in the hills. Monie pointed out ~~that~~ a spell of good weather had settled in and suggested it offered a chance for a last hike before the long months of deep snows.

Later, Bob and I discussed how we'd been manipulated. Monie, as ~~was~~ usual nursing a single beer while the rest of us got plastered, presented an entrancing scenario for a lovely walk in autumn colors. When we'd enthusiastically ~~endorsed~~ <sup>endorsed</sup> ~~bought~~ the plan she offhandedly mentioned a peak.

"Cruiser is a cheap thrill," she said. "Good for laughs." And -- the warning we failed to heed -- she exploded in that crazy witch's cackle.

When did we ~~agree to~~ <sup>accept</sup> the peak? Never. Yet we made no complaint as she described how with a rope from above we couldn't fall, were as safe as in our beds. I guess we didn't really believe in the reality of ~~the peak~~ <sup>the peak</sup>, ~~not~~

Sitting in the raucous tavern full of beer,

Saturday was a perfectly normal day on the trail, ascending ~~freshly~~ ~~rain-washed~~ forest from the Skokomish River to 3900-foot Flapjack Lakes. At our camp in subalpine trees on the isthmus between the two lakes we watched the full moon rise behind basalt spires of The Sawtooths, then crawled in bags and slept peacefully.

Sunday also began in familiar fashion, the path rising above trees into rolling fields of straw-yellow grass and wine-red huckleberry leaves glowing in low October sun, ~~under pure blue sky.~~

But the character of the day abruptly changed at 5000-foot Gladys Pass. One of those lurching splinters <sup>on high</sup> ~~up there~~ was Cruiser. And with no preamble or discussion Monie walked away from the meadows, the trail, up a rockslide toward a 6000-foot col. We three fell in humbly behind, none of us having the wits to say, "Hey! Wait a minute! Let's talk about this!"

were certain we'd committed ourselves to naught but meadows.

The rockslide was easy for a person with depth perception -- Betty teetered and tottered from boulder to boulder as if they were skyscrapers. The way narrowed into a couloir and steepened -- Monie, pitying Betty, though not to the extent of suggesting we turn back, uncoiled the rope and tied us in. I'd no need for the rope myself; still, the feel of it around my waist was exciting and I enjoyed pretending I was Whymper on the Matterhorn. The upper couloir was snow-filled; the moat provided a simple way <sup>past</sup> but while Monie was occupied with Betty I borrowed <sup>her</sup> ~~the~~ ice ax and hacked at the snow wall, pretending I was Mallory on Everest.

At the col we met a gale from the North Pole and huddled in a sheltered corner, listening to the close roar and eating lunch (not Betty, she'd no appetite). Monie entertained us with anecdotes of her three ~~past~~ previous ascents of Cruiser. However, lunch over, she ~~had~~ conceded the summit was beyond our grasp, we'd spent too much time in the couloir. Sometimes it's worth having a Betty in the party.

Then Monie said, "We might as well run up to the false summit. It's just a walk." And she unroped and disappeared. So did Bob.

Betty and I remained. Her interest in the false summit was zero. Lips quivering, she stared down the couloir to the safe meadows. How had so miserable an incompetent allowed herself to be dragged into such terror? She could <sup>ve</sup> ~~have~~ quit in the meadows. Nobody blames girls for being cowards.

They blame boys, though. It wasn't Monie who forced me upward -- she was a freak, irrelevant. But Bob had followed her and thus I had no choice.

I poked my head over an edge of rock into the brutal torrent of air. Man couldn't withstand such a force. Yet one had, and also a frail woman. I

crawled over the edge onto the roof of the world, alone -- the two above, the one below, none to help.

The knobby greenish basalt was easier ~~to~~ than the slick shingles of Parrington Hall I'd climbed many a campus night, sometimes wild and whirling, shouting insults at the city and the old cop <sup>down on the ground</sup> shining a flashlight <sup>up at me,</sup> ~~from the ground,~~ other times soberly-quietly to watch the sun <sup>rise from</sup> ~~come up out of~~ the Cascades. But this roof was high, way high, above gardens of Gladys Pass and forests of the Hamma Hamma and I'd neither gin in my blood nor Truth and Beauty in my soul. Loud wind roared by ears, deafening, unsettling. I hung onto hat with one hand and glasses with the other, leaving only knees and elbows for hanging onto Earth. Any moment a gust would hurl me into the void.

Listen! Voices! Not Bob and Monie. The wind! Since reading Wordsworth and Shelley I've been seeking a mystic experience but shit, this isn't what I expected, I don't want to hear these Voices.

Nobody will see me go. Monie and Bob will return to Betty and ask, "Where's Harvey?" And she'll answer, "Isn't he with you?" And I'll be halfway to California.

I retreated to Betty. She smiled, <sup>eagerly</sup> glad to see me. I smiled, <sup>eagerly</sup> glad to see her. The two returned from above, Monie cackling, Bob solemn, remote. He and I quickly descended to Gladys Pass and in dying meadows pulsing yellow and red in October sunset sat down to <sup>for</sup> wait the rear guard.

After a silence he asked, "You ever seen a picture of Cruiser? Know what it looks like?"

"No."

"Well, it's incredible. I couldn't believe it. There's something wrong with Monie. No sane person could dream of taking people like us up there."

The girls arrived and we hiked to Flapjack Lakes and the road and drove to the city. On the surface we were a jolly group ~~of friends~~ returning from a happy weekend ~~in the hills~~. Betty's mouth was breaking the sound barrier. Monie was cackling about a time on Cruiser when half the party, reaching the false summit and seeing the peak, quit cold. Bob and I exchanged glances. We'd be extremely wary of Monie in future. She was a dangerous woman.



17 March 1974

1947

Chapter 3

TERROR OF AIR ON THE AWFUL TOOTH

After undergraduate years ~~of~~ communing ~~and~~ with major poets, it was now my lot to be drowned in drivel of minor poets unread for centuries -- except by aspiring scholars. Whatever pulses of antiquarian enthusiasm I was able to pump up by sheer force of will ~~and~~ were stifled in mandatory graduate courses <sup>taught</sup> ~~received~~ by ~~ancient custom for~~ the most senile members of the faculty, few of whom could stay awake ~~to the end of~~ <sup>through</sup> a two-hour seminar. My monthly stipend of \$42 was earned by spending ~~and~~ <sup>a</sup> ~~brain-fogging~~ <sup>feeding</sup> dozen-odd hours a week grading the torrent of "bluebooks" gushing from the army of vets who'd invaded the campus, so quiet a year ago. Academia was a darkling plain offering no surcease from the pain of Cowper and Crabbe and one damn <sup>stack</sup> ~~pile~~ of bluebooks after another.

The ~~half-year~~ <sup>summer</sup> of freedom had been my ruination. Boredom was intolerable, and never mind what fame and wealth its discipline might bring in ~~the distant~~ future. When the world was too much with me, late and soon, desk so buried in bluebooks I couldn't see the collected works of John Dryden, I'd skip an afternoon seminar and run off in the Model A to a beach on Puget Sound or ~~the~~ mossy depths of Green River Gorge -- places where life was real, life was earnest, and the doctoral dissertation was not its goal.

As a further distraction, during a winter evening that began with the same old fun and games I was startled to discover Betty was not merely a

crazy face but a warm body. We began escaping from Parrington together -- to the ocean, walking lonesome sands pounded by thundering surf, <sup>to the Olympics,</sup> up gloomy-dripping ~~rain-soaked~~ valley forests into high-bright snows. If she was as slow and clumsy as ever, somehow it didn't matter.

Mountains, woman, and school. One had to go, there wasn't enough time for all three. Thus at the end of winter quarter I turned in my last stack of bluebooks and left the University payroll. Where next? My ~~only~~ <sup>only</sup> long-range plans were to wander as many hills as possible. Dominating the short run, though, was the decision by Betty and me to <sup>avoid</sup> save trouble with University District landladies -- ~~salacious~~ <sup>dirty</sup> old crones who stay<sup>ed</sup> up all night spying on ~~their~~ tenants -- by making our arrangement legal.

This required, to start ~~with~~, space suitable for light housekeeping, not easy to ~~find anymore~~ <sup>obtain in competition with</sup> the horde of vets. However, several blocks from the Avenue, in a decrepit ~~house~~ <sup>mansion</sup> minutely subdivided into a student warren, we found an "apartment" -- a third-floor garret consisting of ~~a two rooms~~ <sup>one</sup> room large enough for a bed and a desk, ~~plus a kitchen, formerly a~~ <sup>the other a closet-became-kitchen</sup> equipped with sink and ~~two~~ gas plates. Two other apartments shared the refrigerator in the hall and the ~~red-tiled~~ <sup>basics-only</sup> bathroom. Rent was a <sup>gouging</sup> ~~profit-taking~~ \$25 a month but we were in no position to object.

The second need was a job. What does an English major do if he doesn't become a professor? I thought there ~~might~~ <sup>must</sup> be a spot someplace <sup>around the city</sup> working with words. At radio stations I learned the ~~terrifying approach~~ <sup>imminent arrival</sup> of ~~the~~ television had made live local programming a thing of the past. The city editor of the Seattle Star offered me a tryout as a cub reporter starting

the next day -- but next day the Star didn't publish, having been bought overnight by the other ~~evening~~ <sup>afternoon</sup> newspaper, the Times, and put to death.

If I couldn't sell my brain surely I could sell my ~~back~~ <sup>muscles</sup>, as throughout the war. Not necessarily. Defense industries had been dismantled and the vets were ~~returned~~ <sup>back</sup>. Weeks of searching were fruitless, discouragement deepened to despondency, and I ~~concluded~~ <sup>suspected</sup> the only career open to me was shoplifting from supermarkets. Then I lucked out and by paying ~~a~~ <sup>an enormous</sup> bribe (the money borrowed from my folks) to an employment agency was hired by Ernst Hardware to push a handtruck in a warehouse 40 hours a week for \$35. We were in business.

The evening of Wednesday, May 28, Betty and I had a short session with the preacher of a convenient church. Friday morning, Memorial Day, the three of us set out on our honeymoon. The third member? Not the preacher, for God's sake. Monie.

#### Monie?

Well, despite the tittering ~~that went around~~ <sup>among acquaintances</sup> it was a perfectly square affair. Betty and I, rather ~~completely~~ <sup>totally</sup> self-~~occupied~~ <sup>absorbed</sup>, had lost touch with ~~such~~ <sup>such</sup> as Arild and Bob ~~most~~ <sup>entanglements</sup> old friends, who in any event were fully involved in their own new ~~lives~~. But Monie was around, as always, and often over a pitcher of beer we listened to more sagas of alpine disasters, more anecdotes about her ~~group~~ group of eccentrics, The Mountaineers. Now and ~~then~~ again she hinted we ought to take up climbing -- I brushed aside every sly invitation. I was a ridgerunner and satisfied. Betty was barely fit to be a valley-pounder. The hell with that Cruiser crap. The wicked witch never would snare this Hansel and Gretel.

However, the question had arisen of where to go hiking Memorial Day, which because of my job would be one of our three long weekends the whole summer and could not be wasted. <sup>Because of the bribe</sup> ~~We~~ were too broke for the expensive ferry ride across the Sound to the Olympics. ~~My~~ knowledge of the Cascades was meager.

When Monie suggested Monte Cristo I almost spilled my beer. Twice in the spring of 1942 Arild and I had battled toward this legendary 1890s ghost town, first from the South Fork Stillaguamish River and then up Silver Creek from the North Fork Skykomish, and both times bogged down in soft snow. In all the Cascades it was one of the few places that stirred my imagination. Monie <sup>told</sup> ~~informed~~ me, what I ~~hadn't~~ hadn't known, that a road recently had been pushed through to the townsite. From there, she said, we could haul our packs <sup>a camp at</sup> up to Silver Lake and explore. She volunteered to come along as guide and <sup>gladly accepted.</sup> we ~~thought that was swell.~~

"There's a nice little peak above the lake," she said. "We could climb Silvertip in several hours."

Climb! "Dammit, Monie, don't you ever give up?"

"Well gosh, it's mainly easy snow this time of year. There's a little bit of rock at the top but only one move you could call climbing. It's really just a hike -- really."

She confessed Cruiser <sup>was</sup> ~~had been~~ a swindle, her hope had been to get us to the false summit and enjoy our nervous collapse. But Silvertip was no plot, <sup>↑</sup> She sounded honest. And surely, making our honeymoon an ordeal was beyond even her shame threshold. She'd get sufficient kicks ~~by~~ breaking up her fellow Mountaineer freaks. ("What did you climb Memorial Day, Monie?" they ask. Cackles she, "Oh, the Mannings and me were too busy to climb -- it was our honeymoon!")

was hardly more complicated than Buckhorn.

~~She comforted Elvise had been a while. Silver tip wasn't in the same class, and his sounded honest. Any way, it was our honeymoon and we had to get beyond even he and his wife.~~

The Model A rattle-banged along the narrow, rough road, much of it the bed of the old railway that stopped running in the <sup>early</sup> 1930s. The ghost town was ghostly indeed in dark fog and drizzle, collapsing buildings engulfed by brush and young forest. We started up the hill, meeting a steady stream of fishermen descending from Silver Lake, complaining there wasn't a drop of water showing.

No fishermen we. I was carrying my own personal ice ax — rented for the weekend at the ~~Coop~~, but who could tell? Fishermen took me for a climber and showed due respect, marred by their indiscriminately extending it to Betty as well.

Monie pitched the tent on a patch of soggy, snow-surrounded ground near the 4200-foot lake. We melted snow in ~~Ten Cans~~ over smoke billowing from soaking-wet wood. Hard rain drove our honeymoon threesome to the tent for a 12-hour sleep.

In late morning we crawled out into drifting mists and ascended slopes above the frozen lake, kicking steps in soft snow. Trees grew smaller and thinned and the ridge got steep and airy — yet I felt amazingly comfortable, securely connected to the mountain by the ice ax stabbed firmly into treacherous whiteness. How different would have been the Graywolf Ramble had Arild and I possessed these third legs!

Betty needed more help than that, preferably a stretcher. On a nearly level bench she lost footing, flopped on her stomach, and every so slowly began sliding.

Monie and I watched, incredulous. Only a virtuoso incompetent could slide on flat snow.

Plaintively she wailed, "Help me! Help me!"

If she maintained the pace, and I wouldn't put it past her, in a half-hour she would go over the cliff-edge a dozen feet distant. So, after finishing my sandwiches ~~and~~ I gave her a hand and saved her life, warning her to be more careful when the honeymoon was over.

We clambered onto the rock jumble of the 6000-foot summit ridge and looked all around into a bewilderment of gray walls and white snows sliding in and out of black clouds, spotlighted now and then by come-and-go shafts of startling sun.

Below was Silver Creek, where Arild and I had hiked through virgin forest beside white waterfalls. The valley now was a desolation of brown clearcuts; logging trucks rumbled at the very base of Silvertip. So the stomach turns. Down there were the vandalized ruins of Eden, my youth. I was getting old and rotten and so was the whole bloody damn world.

We fell short of the 6100-foot summit. Confronted with the reality of the "little bit of ~~exposed~~ rock" I was, despite decorations of rope and ax, an adamant hiker. As for Betty, ~~she had~~ <sup>she'd</sup> progressed from tearful trembling to catatonia and when time came to descend refused to move until we tied her

(And how did my aged Northlake neighbors feel about the devastation of the Seattle-surrounding forests they'd known as children?)

to the rope and by brute strength dragged her off the rocks into the snow.

Down the sparkling-white crest cleaving the turmoil of boiling clouds we plunged. I paused to take pictures featuring rope and axes, the better to jolt the folks back home. ~~At some point~~ Betty revived, entered the spirit of things, and jumped off a small cornice to sit-slide into a little bowl. She ought to have mentioned her plan beforehand. Monie and I were rapturizing over the scenery at one moment — and the next I was flying <sup>and instantly thereafter, Monie too</sup> — Betty had forgotten we were roped. Well, thought I, tumbling head over heels, hearing squeals of delight below, at least my ~~idiot~~ bride was getting some fun from the honeymoon.

Monie disappeared after Memorial Day. We scarcely noticed, ~~immediately~~ <sup>busy</sup> ~~in the enchantment of~~ playing house in our garret "~~apart~~" and in the high country. Twice we crossed the saltwater to ~~my home hills~~ the Olympics, and several other weekends explored the alien but cheaper, handier, Cascades. Had it not been for 1946, when I covered more wildland miles than in any previous year of my life, 1947 would have been ~~among~~ the best of mountain summers.

To be sure, problems misted over during courtship became prominent. I wanted to hike every weekend — and Betty often found reasons to hibernate in the garret. On every trip she was exhausted and/or terrified — and on no trip were my muscles or nerves stretched. This was the price for growing up, busting out of graduate school, going to work in a warehouse, getting married. The compensations were considerable.

to be in some degree a prison.

I wasn't complaining. I'd always <sup>expected</sup> ~~known~~ adulthood ~~would be grim~~

On a bright Sunday in August when we should <sup>we</sup> ~~have~~ been in highlands but were lazying around the garret because Betty was recovering from a case of mosquito poisoning, Monie reappeared, newly back from weeks in Wyoming, "climbing a Teton a day."

We compared summers. She told of dodging a lightning storm on the summit of the Grand Teton — and we of sniffing flowers in Seven Lakes Basin. She described rappelling <sup>by flashlight</sup> ~~through the night~~ down cliffs of Mt. "Moron" — and we of swimming in Margaret Lake.

I wasn't jealous. Monie was welcome to my share of the Tetons, and for good measure throw in the Alps and Himalayas and Mountains of the Moon. I no more wanted to be a climber than to sail a small boat alone around the world or be a professor of English literature, ~~to mention a couple other outrageous ambitions.~~

Yet the Teton tales poignantly reminded how dull was my mountain life nowadays. I never would <sup>we</sup> ~~have~~ believed it possible during the cowards' retreat from the Graywolf, but I missed being scared. In this soft newlywed summer an itch wanted scratching.

Monie spotted the symptoms and struck like a cobra. Why don't we all go hiking next Sunday? Great — where to? How about the good old South Face of The Tooth?

I snapped to attention. She was at it again.

In her most soothing and sincere voice she lauded the South Face.

The route was a staircase of buckets and doorknobs, she knew every hold





~~some of the flute on bikes and perched atop window knolls in twilight blowing  
melodies suggesting conspiracy with pagan deities. She single-mindedly  
detected me as she walked down that she identified some familiar flowers  
and asked its name she authoritatively repeated that they were  
are only the mountain flowers. Indian brush and the other plants~~

~~... Betty and me? I doubted she~~  
intended to murder us in the first degree. It was conceivable, though, she  
had chosen us as the butts of her ultimate practical joke, the one that would  
make her all-time champion of her wild bunch.

Sunday morning, August 24, we drove east from Seattle nearly to  
Snoqualmie Pass, hiked several miles up the Denny Creek trail, and  
climbed 2000 feet of brush, heather, and rockslides to Gum Ridge. There,  
in the notch between the False Teeth and The Tooth, Betty and I shivered in  
the warm sun while Monie chomped squirrel food and dropped all pretense.

We learned the supreme jest in Monie's crowd was beguiling  
~~trusting~~ fools onto the South Face. Some behaved very badly, weeping,  
going limp, being half-carried to the meadows. Others were crazed by anger  
and vowed awful revenge — and some carried out their threats. There was  
the sad case of Limber Jim, who during the war chanced to encounter one of  
his old victims, then training as a fighter pilot. Rancor seemed buried  
in the unexpected pleasure of the far-from-home reunion and Jim eagerly  
accepted the offer of a joy ride. At 10,000 feet Old Victim said over the  
intercom, "Remember the South Face? WELL, HANG ON!" Jim had to  
sleep on the floor that night because he kept falling out of bed.

Monie munched squirrel food and cackled. Betty and I did not eat, did not smile.

I averted eyes from the jumble above. Bending the neck that far back made me dizzy. I couldn't see any possibility of a first step from the notch where we were sitting, much less a route up the cliffs shooting interminably into whirling blue. This would be no agony of minutes. We might be up there all week.

Monie tied bowlines around our waists — the rope supposedly was the symbol of security; actually it meant entrapment. She walked along what presumably was a ledge, though I saw nothing under her tennis shoes but air, rounded a corner, and re-materialized 40 feet above my head.

"Belay on!" she yelled.

My turn.

Betty was staring intently at something in, or beyond, the sky. If she broke down we might both be saved even this late in the game. But she seemed neither to know nor care what was happening to her — and more importantly, to me.

Breathe deep. Wipe palms on pants. Stiffen knees. Mechanically thrust the foot forward, the hands. It has begun.

The ledge actually was quite wide. But at each step away from the notch the cliff below lengthened. I came to the corner, the end of the ledge, the boundary of sky. I looked down between my legs — DOWN — to shrubs in Source Creek. Dear God, I happened to know those shrubs were trees a hundred feet tall!

Knees jittered. Sweat on fingertips greased holds. Eyes blurred. Naught could I see but the thin manila line — the blessed, saving rope.

Monie kindly called down, "Take your time. We've got all day. You couldn't pull me off if you tried. You couldn't go anyplace if you fainted."

Fainting was precisely what I had in mind. But I wouldn't have the satisfaction of dying, I'd hang like a sack of potatoes and when I revived the wall would still be there. Monie wasn't likely to give me enough slack to return to the notch.

Hands fumbled — and gripped doorknobs. Feet stuttered — into buckets. The muddle came into sharp focus as a staircase, exactly as advertised. I joined Monie and instantly sat down so she wouldn't notice the shocking condition of my knees.

"You're ~~in a bind~~ <sup>over the hump</sup> now," she said. "That was the worst of it."

"Really?" I giggled. "That wasn't bad!" I'd mastered the first skill of a climber — how to lie.

Now Betty's turn, me belaying. By moans and whines I traced her unseen passage. Her pitiable face emerged from sky beneath my feet, chin quivering, tears rolling down cheeks.

"What do I do now?" she sobbed.

"Follow the rope," said I cheerily. "Walk up the steps. You can't fall. This belay has a moneyback guarantee."

Already I was an expert.

Upward we followed the vertical path ~~established by generations~~ <sup>traced by hundreds</sup> of

*since the first ascent in 1929.*

Mountaineers, Eyes, hands, and feet settled into rhythmic coordination. It was just like climbing a tree and as a kid I'd been great on trees.

All that air? I was inside the sky but on the rock. The rope would save me from flying off and down and forever away. An inch from death (or call it 7/16 of an inch, the diameter of the line) yet gloriously, victoriously alive!

One last sheer wall of lovely rock splendidly split by a cozy chimney and the South Face was over forever. We would descend by the easy north ridge. These pleasures I'd never have to repeat.

Betty toppled into a face-down coma. I scampered around the summit in a frenzy, had Monie take a picture of me on the topmost point wearing the rope — what shudders this shot would give hiker friends!

I gobbled squirrel food, raved at the views, laughed at everything and nothing.

I'd thrown such a fit on Delmonte Ridge in honor of ~~the~~ perils of a wildland week. Now I was delirious from a mere hour on The Tooth — an hour compressing more fear, more exhilaration, than a whole summer of trail-pounding, ridge-running.

So wild I was as to make a madman's joke: "Okay, Monie, now how about Cruiser?"

The witch cackled.

21 March 1974

1947

Chapter 4

BRUISER CRUISER

Early in September the president of Ernst Hardware made one of his notorious lightning tours of the lower depths, caught me in the middle of a coffee break reading Marlowe's Tamburlaine, concluded I'd never be a candidate for top management, and fired me out of the warehouse. Income abruptly chopped off, domestic tranquility threatened, I swallowed pride and returned to the University, to the placement office maintained to help graduates find a proper use for their education. ~~By golly,~~ They happened to have a perfect spot for an ~~English~~ English major, and right on campus, ~~tending~~ <sup>running</sup> a chemistry stockroom. The pay was a giant leap up from the warehouse, a pocket-bulging \$190 a month, with an automatic raise to \$210 after a year. Wealth enough to gratify the Jew of Malta! And Bagley Hall was a 10-minute stroll from the garret and next summer I'd get a ~~two-week~~ <sup>week of</sup> vacation.

As a bonus, the job didn't start ~~for a week,~~ <sup>immediately,</sup> giving Betty and me an unexpected chance for a long walk. Where? Standing atop The Tooth, gazing eastward, I'd been impressed by the mass of big, rough peaks at the headwaters of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River, <sup>peaks</sup> an order of magnitude larger than those in the vicinity of Snoqualmie Pass and supporting ~~the a number of~~ living glaciers, the closest to Seattle. The names on the map there were intriguing --

Lake Ivanhoe, Lake Rowena, Lake Rebecca, La Bohn Gap. Some explorer of long ago obviously had found it a land of romance and adventure.

We were two days hiking from Salmon La Sac, on the east side of the range, up the Waptus River to Dutch Miller Gap on the Cascade Crest, then down into the Middle Fork and up again to La Bohn Gap. A fit lair it was for that villain, no mistake. Roaming grandly-bleak buttresses of glacier-gouged granite, I conceded the Cascades were more than a cheap substitute for the Olympics. Certainly the weather was just as spectacular ~~and~~ -- the storm that blasted us into a soaking-wet, half-frozen, semi-starving 20-mile retreat to Salmon La Sac was the most splendidly vicious three-day blow I'd seen since the Lost Ridge disaster in 1940.

Before gale-driven clouds engulfed Bears Breast, Summit Chief, Overcoat, and Chimney Rock, I learned another benefit of having climbed through the sky on the South Face. Formerly, every tall mountain wall was an impenetrable mystery. Now, knowing one cliff intimately with hands and feet, I knew something of all cliffs. The peaks had a new dimension.

I wasn't hooked and wasn't going to be, my determination was firm as ever to remain a ridgerunner. But one more hour of sublime fright would make the winter that much shorter. When we were out with Monie and I'd drunk enough beer to be foolish I'd repeat the mad joke from the summit of The Tooth.

One night Monie didn't cackle. Quietly, distantly, she explained that enticing hikers to the false summit to enjoy their disintegration was one thing. Hauling a hiker up the actual peak was another. She wanted me to understand Cruiser was no South Face. The crux was a chillingly-exposed

From Seattle, W. Olympic mts, clear, dramatic. Cascade east. From V. Riedel. 35 miles to the top of each - but Olympics more dramatic because of water discharges. And the high peaks of Cascade are better, or better than Seattle - the welcome. Describe Seattle on the Sound

hundred-foot lead on tiny holds. No piton cracks. If the leader fell nobody could do anything but wave goodbye. And as it happened, she'd never led that pitch, always had had an upper belay.

Okay! All right! Enough said! I wanted to be terrified, not killed. I directed the conversation to other mountains, to lakes and ridges and meadows. Not for long.

From a remote and private place, Monie suddenly began speaking again of Cruiser. She said that on her last ascent, two years ago, the party left a fixed rope. If it was still there the leader wouldn't be stark naked. She'd like to try. But winter was close, we'd have to go soon. In fact, with the weather looking good for the weekend, we'd better go now.

The joke was over. Monie was dead serious. Was I? Incredibly, yes. A peak I'd never seen, not even in a picture, a peak the very sight of which petrified Bob, a lot nervier guy than me, was gnawing at my vitals.

Betty, hearing Monie and I come grimly to the decision, took flight. She'd be months recuperating from The Tooth and La Bohn Gap and anyway wanted to visit her folks in Portland. Her flat refusal ended the matter -- Monie declared we couldn't go without a third member. Why not? The only explanation offered was some poppycock about the "climbing code" of The Mountaineers. Was she worried about propriety? Not bloody likely, not her. The role of the third person must be to call the undertaker.

Well, that was that. Walking home from the Rainbow, I felt satisfied. I'd done my best to face Cruiser and it wasn't my fault Betty was a coward.

But next night Monie <sup>called</sup> ~~came by the house~~ to announce (no cackles) her brother Al had agreed to come along -- not to climb, since he'd never



succumbed to the malady that afflicted two sisters and a brother -- but to fish in Flapjack Lakes and loaf around the meadows. Thus the sentence for the crime of loose talk in a tavern. A cruel and unusual punishment indeed.

Saturday morning, September 28, Betty boarded the train to Portland and the three of us set out for the Olympics in my new 1935 Ford V-8 coupe. The sky was solid blue and the Weather Bureau said high pressure covered the whole Pacific Ocean and the nearest clouds were over Madagascar. No storm would stop us. Nothing would stop us except chickening out.

Not this time.

Astounding! I was resolved to risk death rather than quit. What the hell had happened to me? In the Graywolf I'd edged up to eternity -- but not on purpose, for God's sake. Why was it necessary to settle that score of last October, expunge that moment of cowardice in the great wind? What was I trying to prove, to whom? What could I win that was worth losing everything, including a passionate wife in a cozy garret, myriad ridges of Olympics and Cascades awaiting my boots, and a cool \$190 a month?

The V-8 was stuttering. There might yet be an honorable escape. From the time ~~of~~ I bought the awkward hulk, in July, I'd suspected a terminal disease, what with the trailing cloud of blue smoke. But ~~some~~ <sup>everyone</sup> said that was normal, the cars came smoking off the Ford assembly line in 1935, all you did was buy oil by the five-gallon can and stop every hour to fill the crankcase. To driving <sup>g</sup> and oil-burner and blotting out the landscape behind I could easily adjust, but not to descending from my wide-view Model A throne into a deep pit behind the steering wheel. Also, I missed being <sup>master of</sup> a square-cut anachronism skipping nimbly, helter-skelter, through the countryside, annoying

the super-streamlined, <sup>high-speed,</sup> heavy-haunched frogs that infested postwar highways. Nevertheless, though selling the Model A was like selling my youth, selling the Declaration of Independence, there was no denying that in the A any speed greater than 28 miles per hour was too ~~steep~~ <sup>bone-rattling</sup> to maintain hour after hour, whereas for all its slow-wittedness the V-8 ran comfortably at a steady 42, bringing the mountains much closer. But now, on an upgrade, the clumsy beast coughed, faltered, quit. Was I saved? No. Al revealed himself as an expert on fixing V-8 gas pumps with chewing gum. Onward, and onward.

At the ~~trailhead~~ trailhead the familiar routine of pulling on boots, stowing gear in pack, gave a comforting, deceptive feel of normality. In 4 miles we reached Flapjack Lakes, placid tree-ringed waters under crags of the same ~~basalt~~ basalt we'd be climbing on Cruiser. Al stopped to fish while Monie and I continued 2 miles, nearly to Gladys Pass, to make camp in a small grass-and-moss flat, water supplied by a cold trickle from a lingering snowpatch.

Beside the flat rose a block of pillow ~~lava~~ lava, the top littered with decayed logs and shingles, rusty pots and pans, and broken bottles -- remains of a collapsed cabin, a dead home. Some 30 or 50 years ago a prospector busted his butt hereabouts summer after summer, swinging pick at ~~the~~ pockets of reddish rock -- low-grade ~~ore~~ manganese ore -- scattered through gray-green basalt. He probably never raised aspiring eyes to the maze of pinnacles. Who was the true idiot, that ~~some~~ dumb ~~bastard~~ bastard or me?

~~Which pinnacle was Cruiser? From here we couldn't tell. They all looked alike, awful.~~

In dusk Al arrived, <sup>fishless</sup> ~~no fish~~ and soaking wet, <sup>having</sup> ~~been~~ <sup>stranded</sup> on an island ~~when~~ his raft drifted away, ~~and he had to swim to shore.~~ He didn't mind.

The mild fall twilight was ideal for a <sup>swim</sup> ~~trip~~ and the blaze of bone-dry, time-bleached wood soon dried his clothes.

Monie and Al spread a fantastic supper of green salad, steak, and fried potatoes; a condemned man could ask no better last meal. We sprawled around the fire for a <sup>tea-stimulated</sup> ~~evening-long~~ psychiatric seminar, Al discussing aspects of Monie's childhood that caused her neurotic compulsion, speculating why such a seemingly sensible fellow as I should abandon <sup>sweet reason</sup> ~~the hiker's~~ ~~of reason~~ for the climber's <sup>dark</sup> ~~tangled~~ sickness.

-even for this one last time, as I insisted -

He could laugh. Not me. This was among my prettiest camps and loveliest mountain nights and would be one of my most <sup>memorable</sup> ~~delightful~~ hikes if, tomorrow, I roamed meadowlands with Al. Instead I'd be creeping up evil basalt with his demented sister.

Monie's tarp, a 7- by 11-foot war-surplus liferaft sail, orange on one side and blue on the other, kept out star chill. The grass bed was soft. I crawled into my bag and closed my eyes and just like that it was 6:30, time to get up. I felt cheated, having slept too deep to savor what delicious sleep it was. And it should have given me strength but instead dissolved the steely core of resolution. When I stood under the dawn sky and saw the <sup>cold</sup> ~~somber~~ walls my guts were jello.

Together we walked to Gladys Pass. Al sacked out for a smoke before heading up dream-inviting benches and draws of Gladys Peak. He was in no hurry. His summit was a half-hour away and he had all day. Comments

on our neuroses followed us up the talus.

I focused<sup>y</sup> on each step as it came and pushed away thoughts of coming events — events which didn't have to come. There was still time for an attack of appendicitis. Or an earthquake.

The couloir was a snap <sup>without Betty</sup> ~~after the tooth~~ — no need for the rope. From the notch we spotted Al, sitting more than walking. Wherever he was, that's where he wanted to be.

Where was Betty? Having breakfast with her folks. Maybe they'd drive to Cannon Beach this afternoon and walk sands beside the breakers. I missed the sobbing incompetence that <sup>made</sup> me look brave and skillful. Any crying on this trip would have to be done by me.

Now, the dreaded roof, the scene of shame. Clench jaw, breathe deep. But in calm air it was a no-hands stroll — I passed the chicken-out point and grew a foot taller. I'd worried too much. Now we scrambled onto the false summit. And for the first time I saw Cruiser Peak . . . .

One day in the stockroom I accidentally spilled a powdery white chemical and inhaled a bit of dust. Abruptly hands and feet retreated infinitely far from head, consciousness imploded into a white-hot star burning behind eyes, time froze around me and I raced alone through eternity a million years a second. I didn't want to die in Bagley Hall and started home, stalking mechanically across ~~the~~ <sup>walking</sup> campus, <sup>^</sup> so tall that when I toppled I'd crush hundreds of students and professors, the roar of the star so loud I wondered they did not press hands to ears. In ~~our apartment~~ <sup>the garret</sup> I fell on ~~the~~ <sup>our</sup> bed and stared at the ceiling until the star diffused and cooled.

8

On the false summit I felt the star ignite. And it would burn bright so long as that fang of basalt was poised to rend me, that sea of space awaited to drown my dying howl. Bob hadn't told the half.

Monie was too preoccupied to try to laugh me out of jaw-drooping, bug-eyed silence. What was scaring her? I didn't know. What was scaring me was the Thing of nightmares when I was a kid terrified by God and Hell, the Thing now symbolized in broad daylight by that horrid thrust of lava.

Cruiser was a doomed remnant of ~~an~~ undersea volcanic eruptions millions of years ago, had mere hundreds of thousands of years left before frost wedged its unified menace into separate blocks, gravity dragged them down to the valley, streams and organic acids turned hard fragments into little sands and soft soils. The proud spire would be humbled, was dying, as all mountains are.

Why should I pity damn Cruiser! I was going to be humbled, was going to die, a lot faster.

A yell from <sup>lower space.</sup> ~~the void.~~ Al calling attention to a mountain goat under us on the cliffs. One more fine day in the hills for Al and the goat.

We scrambled up and down the ridge crest. The tower loomed larger, <sup>larger. That was the way of / relentlessly</sup> ~~in the usual habit of~~ the Thing, closing in until at the last moment before being overwhelmed I awoke screaming. Today there might be screaming but naught to awake to — except the long silence.

We traversed a narrow ledge, frightfully exposed. In the middle my <sup>Bergan</sup> ~~shoulder~~ hit the wall and the rebound nearly shoved me off. I'd have fallen alone; we hadn't thought to rope.

A wide chimney was almost filled by an enormous chockstone, actually a former false summit split off the crest; we climbed beneath, entering the interior of the mountain, ~~cold~~<sup>dank</sup> and dark as a tomb.

Nothing so far was beyond preparation given by the South Face. At 10 o'clock we crawled from inner gloom to the base of the summit tower. Now we were beyond.

For a mercy I couldn't see the final wall, hidden around the corner. But I had seen it.

I gulped air — what a pleasure to breathe, we do it so often we grow oblivious to the ~~savory~~ flavor of Earth's atmosphere. My heart beat hard and fast — what a delight to feel blood being pumped through a vibrant body. Sweat flowed from forehead and palms and armpits — God it's fun to sweat.

A taunting yodel from distant gardens reminded of the alternative still open.

Monie — serious, formal — showed me where to sit, where to brace feet, how to hold the rope. Keep a solid grip but don't pull, please leave slack. In case of a fall, wrap rope around waist and stiffen knees. The stance was bombproof, nothing could pull me out. I forgot to ask what to do after the fall. In parting she said, "Don't worry."

Dear God, why not?

She rapidly climbed the dozen vertical feet above me, swung a leg over the corner, and vanished. I was alone.

The rope payed out, slowly. She was moving, slowly.

The rope stopped. I gripped hard. Heart pounded. Ears roared.

Sweat spouted.

Monie called, voice faint. "Fixed rope — off route — on ridge — can't reach."

Would she scream, then the rope leap like a crazy snake? Then would I scream? Or just pass out cold?

The rope did not move.

For 15 minutes by the clock the rope did not move. And no word came. Monie was stuck.

Does the condemned man have a final request before the blindfold? With free hand I fumbled cigarette and matches from shirt pocket.

"Try traverse — rope not far — bad spot — hang on."

My rope trembled alive. I payed out slack. Smelled a sickening odor. Saw cigarette ~~burning~~ burning ~~into~~ flesh of arm, But felt no pain.

"GOT IT!"

That came loud and clear.

"TIED IN!"

Almost she was cackling. The rope payed out steadily, smoothly.

"Belay on! Climb!"

I stood up, yelled "Climbing!" The hell I was. Legs were rubbery, arms limp, hands awkward as boxing gloves.

Robot-like I moved up to the corner. And peeked over the edge. And spun. The final face was a glass-smooth slab rising so abruptly I couldn't see the top without falling over backward, dropping so swooningly the valley was a green blur.

I clutched the edge and closed my eyes. I'd gone through this on the first pitch of the South Face, it was simply a matter of concentrating.

Another peek. This was no South Face! Tilt the slab to the horizontal and it would make a great roller rink.

A happy yip from another world. Al, please shut up!

"I've got you!" yelled unseen Monie. That was my very kind friend speaking, reassuring me her belay was solid — yet it was a fact the wicked witch finally had got me.

But the witch was my only salvation. If I retreated to sane Al nevermore would I know peace.

Throw a leg over — tennis shoes find nothing. Move shaking guts onto the edge, extend a palsied arm — fingers slip off round bumps of pillow lava.

Slither onto the face, fully committed in body and (if any) soul. Chest pressed against green basalt gains no comfort from the embrace. Don't look down! But out of morbid curiosity I did — down to far-below forest of tiny trees. Knees began to quiver, and wrists, and lower lip.

Not toes and fingers but only this thin line of vegetable fiber next to mine eyes held me to the slab, to life. I wiggled up rounded greenish pillows of slick lava. Did I climb or did Monie ~~pull~~<sup>reel</sup> me in like a fish?

Suddenly the rock turned reddish and feet found buckets and fingers doorknobs and the rope drooped because Monie couldn't take in slack fast enough. I pulled myself over the knife-edge of the summit ridge and fell



onto her small belay ledge. I babbled about admirable Red Rock, hateful Green Rock.

A yell from below. Insolent Al on his 5600-foot meadow summit.

We ran up the blade of the knife to our 6104-foot rock summit. There was barely room for two to sit, none to relax.

I recalled Monie's harrowing tale of an ascent by nine climbers in three teams. Since the route is strictly one climber wide, no room to pass, the first team spent ~~2~~<sup>two</sup> hours straddling the ridge, waiting. When their turn came to descend one member had to be lowered like a cadaver and said not a word on the rest of the trip and never again was seen on a mountain.

Ten minutes were plenty for me. Nerves didn't recuperate, were ~~progressively~~ deteriorating.

The descent was worse, facing outward, unavoidably confronting the vast emptiness, lowering feet onto holds below which was nothing but dizzy air. But the rope was tight on my waist and soon I was safe. Now began Monie's ordeal, guarded only by the fixed rope weathered by winter ice and wind and summer sun and rain, frayed and bleached, as sturdy as your father's mustache. And on the trickiest section of the slab, at the bottom, she lacked even that thin consolation. But soon she too was safe.

At noon we both were off the face. Merely ~~2~~<sup>two</sup> hours since Monie began her suicide lead. Two hours! All my childhood nightmares together probably didn't add up to this much elapsed time.

I wanted to hug and kiss Monie but that would have complicated our

relationship and anyway would have been anticlimax to the hours we were linked purely by rope yet were closer than husband and wife.

On the return to the false summit I snapped many pictures. Most came out fuzzy — the damn camera wouldn't stop trembling. At 2:30 we ~~two~~ <sup>three</sup> assembled in camp. Al contrasted his happy relaxation to our delirium and wondered what good this day had done our neuroses.

I raved about the Bad Fifteen Minutes when Monie did not move and I burned my flesh and felt no pain, ~~pondering her folly and mine.~~

She cackled, "You had nothing to worry about. If I'd fallen the rope would have broken and you'd have been sitting with a loose line in your hands. I wasn't worrying about you!"

~~I guess she wasn't.~~ While Al and I luxuriated in fall-colored meadows and smoked last cigarettes before hoisting packs, <sup>Monie</sup> ~~she~~ took off like a shot from ~~the glorious~~ camp and when we got to the V-8 ~~down in the woods~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~she'd~~ drunk practically all the beer — and she didn't even like beer. I'd never seen her ~~so giggling~~ smashed. In the car she immediately passed out.

I didn't need booze. I'd never climb Cruiser again, that was for sure. But by the holy, once in my life I'd stood up to the Thing of nightmares.

Back in Seattle I sent Betty a telegram:

"BRUISER CRUISER SUBDUED."

A pardonable exaggeration.

23 March 1974

1948

Chapter 5

HARD TIMES IN THE CLIMBING COURSE

My plan for 1948 was elegantly simple. In the spring Monie would lead Betty and me on a couple more rock climbs like The Tooth and a couple more snow climbs like Silvertip. By summer we'd know everything about ax and rope needed to do Graywolf Rambles forever -- minus the trembling and bleeding, ~~and~~ ~~beneficial~~ ~~of~~ ~~course~~, <sup>Granted</sup> Betty was <sup>scarcely a fit</sup> ~~a~~ ~~dubious~~ partner for ~~the~~ <sup>a</sup> super-hiker, ~~with~~ ~~her~~ ~~own~~ ~~ambitions~~, but she was a ~~good~~ <sup>good</sup> meadow-meandering and camp companion and in time was bound to get a little less slow and clumsy. When atrophy threatened my legs and lungs I could always take off for a solo run through the wilderness.

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with  
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own  
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During Monie's October visits to the garret her enthusiasm for the <sup>Manning</sup> ~~my~~ ~~plan~~ <sup>matched</sup> mine and we <sup>intensively</sup> ~~discussively~~ discussed the several ~~other~~ summits that would join Tooth and Cruiser in my bag, the fruits of a <sup>quick</sup> ~~fast~~ fling with <sup>the</sup> peaks before settling into a <sup>long and</sup> faithful marriage to ridges. In November, though, she often changed the subject and in December began vaguely referring to the uncertainty of her whereabouts in spring and saying "Let's wait and see." In January she blurted it right out. She couldn't take the responsibility. The cackling terrorist abruptly became a mealy-mouthed evangelist preaching the gospel of "safety." If I wanted more alpine action, said the damn hypocrite, I'd have to join The Mountaineers and take the Climbing Course.

Stabbed in the back. Betrayed by a friend to the enemy.

Years ago, ~~at~~ <sup>during my days,</sup> Camp Parsons, I'd learned all I wanted to know about The Mountaineers. ~~Since the club was organized~~ <sup>its founding</sup> in 1906 ~~it had~~ <sup>the club had</sup> been the main show, practically the whole show, of Northwest climbing. In 1934 ~~they'd~~ <sup>it began offering</sup> ~~began~~ an annual Climbing Course that ~~regularly took~~ <sup>enrolled</sup> hikers right off the trail ~~and~~ <sup>in four</sup> ~~after six~~ months had them running up and down cliffs and glaciers. Every Silver Marmot dreamed of taking the Course and climbing Rainier and maybe, someday, Everest. But in 1940 when I tried to join the club I discovered you had to have pull to get in. The damn snobs told me, in effect, "Get away, kid, you're bothering us." Well, after Lost Ridge, <sup>who cared?</sup> ~~it didn't matter.~~ Merely to hike again was all I asked. The hell with climbing.

Those were still my sentiments. And besides, though my early hiking was ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> gang<sup>s</sup> of Scouts, in the fullness of anarchist maturity I ~~understood~~ <sup>realized</sup> the hills were meant to be lonesome, that marching in mobs was for children and soldiers. There were, as Monie admitted, 1500 members of The Mountaineers, 1495 more people than <sup>ever</sup> I wanted to see together in the wilderness at any one time. And those I'd met on trails were swaggering blowhards, lording it over creation merely because they had ice axes to brandish.

I argued, wheedled, badgered, pled. Monie was deaf. What had happened to the witch? Was it Cruiser? Had I, in fact, forced her <sup>unwillingly to face</sup> ~~to return to the~~ ~~club~~? her own deep fear? Had I scared her? Did she now look upon me as Frankenstein did his monster?

Christ, I was no monster. I wanted no more Cruisers, ~~even~~. My humble desire was to be a plain, ordinary super-hiker.

Monie grew defensive. The Mountaineers weren't so bad. I <sup>was</sup> ~~should feel~~ <sup>fortunate</sup> to have the Climbing Course available -- there wasn't another such school in America. And if it proved more than I could stomach, well, it wasn't the Army, I could walk away <sup>whenever I pleased</sup> ~~anytime~~ and nobody would come <sup>running to</sup> ~~drag me back~~ <sup>husband-wife</sup>. The experiment would be ~~very~~ cheap -- \$7 for a year's club dues and ~~four~~ <sup>four</sup> bits apiece to register in the Course. If we hung on until May, or even April, we'd learn what we wanted to know about ax and rope -- and in the bargain bag several nice little peaks.

because the faculty consisted entirely of unpaid volunteers serving on the "each one teach one" principle

She left no choice. To become a super-hiker I must endure a degrading, humiliating, nauseating spring. But then we'd quit the Course and club and the summer would be free and beautiful, and all future summers.

On a February evening Betty and I glumly ascended the stairway from Pike Street, Seattle's "uptown skidroad," lined with <sup>jukebox-jumping</sup> taverns and crowded by sailors on shore leave, to the clubrooms of The Mountaineers. I remembered the shabby ~~old~~ building from when it housed the Socialist Workers Party, whose meetings I'd <sup>occasionally</sup> attended during my <sup>evolution beyond</sup> ~~progress from~~ Capitalism through communism to anarchism. Their headquarters had prominently displayed a portrait of Leon Trotsky. He'd been assassinated in Mexico with an ice ax. When climbers moved in next door the ~~Trotskyites~~ <sup>decided</sup> ~~needed~~ if ever there was a <sup>rational</sup> time to be paranoid this was it, and moved out.

At the top of the stairs our progress was halted by a crush of humanity. The Climbing Course had begun, for all the good it did us outsiders jamming the corridor. Singly and in bunches prospective climbers gave up, disgusted, and eventually we were near enough the door to catch scattered words from inside.

The following week we came early and were among the lucky hundred to get seats. Others squatted on the floor at the lecturer's feet and stood belly-to-back in the rear of the hall. The cloakroom was a solid mass of students who could hear but not see -- except those who'd climbed the enclosing half-wall to sit on the hat shelf and peer over the top.

The temperature shot to 90° and the humidity to 100 percent. The 200-odd sweating bodies and their coughing and wheezing and foot-shuffling and chair-rattling drowned the lecturer. He raised his voice. Windows were opened to prevent an epidemic of fainting. Horn honks and jukebox blare and ~~blare~~ <sup>brawlings</sup> of sailors and ~~blare~~ <sup>barfings</sup> of winos submerged his shouts. <sup>from the street below</sup>

So ~~this~~ was the legendary Climbing Course. The Trotskyites put on a better performance. If The Mountaineers couldn't stage a proper lecture, how could they conquer peaks?

But they did, routinely, no doubt about that. They'd perfected some mysterious formula. A dark suspicion: were these city hardships deliberately planned as a preliminary test of fortitude? Far worse rigors awaited when school moved to the mountains. I knew from Monie that few of us beginners would last the spring. I sized up my classmates, the enemies. There were teenagers, fresh from the Scouts, as full of beans as ~~I was~~ at Parsons. And sturdy youths in their 20s who'd no doubt been all-conference in football ~~or track~~ <sup>or track</sup>. And men in their 30s whose eyes showed they'd been tested by fire and proved fearless. And grizzled veterans of the hills in their 40s who looked down upon the youngsters with the ~~smile~~ <sup>tolerant, confident</sup> smile of experience. ~~and~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~women~~ <sup>females</sup>, who constituted a ~~quarter~~ <sup>quarter or</sup> third of the enrollment, ~~they~~ were obviously Amazons. Athletes all -- not a one (except Betty) I could whip in a fair fight.

The leaders! Climbing Committee Chairman Cam was close to 7 feet tall, lean and agile as a spider, and took the clubroom confusion in easy unsweating stride, as he surely had countless Toths and Cruisers, though he ~~apparently~~ was only ~~about~~ 30 or so. Among the lecturers were the stars of Monie's epics, the men who'd created the Climbing Course and during the previous dozen <sup>-odd</sup> years brought Northwest alpinism from <sup>the level of</sup> bushwacking and <sup>snow-plodding and</sup> scrambling to international respectability, <sup>conquering</sup> ~~conquering~~ virgin summits in the ~~North~~ Cascades and ~~the~~ pioneering in other ranges of western America and Canada -- Lloyd of Howser Spire, Burge of Sir Donald, ~~the~~ George of the Grand Teton, Jack of Challenger, Ome of Liberty Ridge on Rainier, Bill of Inspiration, Jim of Forbidden, Wolf of Ptarmigan Ridge on Rainier, and a dozen more. To be in the same room was to feel the chill of bleak glaciers and windy crags. I could no more keep pace with such heroes than follow Mallory into a cloud on Everest.

The first practice trip was set for Sunday, March 21. Then must I demonstrate other prowess than sitting in a chair without fainting. Among the throng of ~~many~~ athletes, naked to the cold gaze of demigods, I'd again suffer humiliations of childhood, when I'd been the slowest runner, the lowest jumper, the most ball-dropping outfielder and basket-missing guard, I'd be revealed as the lousiest climber (but one) in the world. And no matter I didn't want to be a climber.

On schedule the mob gathered at Camp Long in West Seattle to

ascend Monitor Rock, a "mountain" designed and built by Clark Schurman, ~~he~~ <sup>over the</sup> chief guide on Rainier. <sup>Puget Sound</sup> A hurricane was blowing and in minutes everyone was soaked to the skin and frailer students were collapsing from exposure. To avoid wiping out the whole school before ever leaving the city the leaders called off the practice.

The following Sunday a diminished crowd returned in sunshine. We learned to tie the bowline-on-a-bight and the butterfly, to set up sitting-hip and standing-shoulder belays, to use three-point suspension, move rhythmically in balance, climb with the eyes, test holds. We traversed a ledge and stemmed a chimney and laybacked a crack and bearhugged a buttress.

My instructor shocked me by saying I showed promise. How was this possible, my 22-year-old body wasted by disease and bad habits and nothing to brag about to start with? Well, she wasn't any great shakes as a climber and her compliments meant little. Yet it was true that in steamy lecture hall and stormy city park I'd outlasted a quarter of the original contestants. But then, so had Betty.

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The next weekend we left the city, if not the lowlands, for the natural rock of Little Si, a miniature peak ~~plucked steep on one side by the Puget Glacier~~. Most of the expected volunteer faculty had looked out bedroom windows that morning to blustering winds and driving rain and gone back to sleep; I was roped to two cowering girls, Betty to two chattering boys, the six of us with a single instructor who devoted himself solely to preventing our destruction. All 150-odd students and teachers

500 feet above the Snoqualmie River a mile from the town of North Bend, on the Snoqualmie Pass highway.



were swarming up muddy, rubbly gullies and water-streaming walls held together by moss. Warning cries were continuous: "ROCK! ROCK! ROCK!" Bullets and grapeshot and cannonballs whirred and whined and thudded. We learned nothing about climbing, lots about dodging.

On the summit the leaders rigged lines for that traditional symbol of mountain-climbing, the free flight down the rope. Most students chose the 15-foot chicken rappel, belayed from the top. ~~Good enough for the likes~~

~~of Betty, [unclear]~~ <sup>Not brave enough to be a coward</sup> I lined up with aspiring heroes for the 40-foot cliff. I watched two kids go <sup>yelling and laughing</sup> ~~gleefully~~ over the brink unbelayed. Their <sup>silent,</sup> white-faced buddy wrapped himself in the rope, took a timid step down, braced boots against the wall, leaned slowly-slowly back-back-back into space — and lost his nerve, let go of the rope, clutched the edge, and was barely saved from death by helping hands. ~~He~~ <sup>humbly</sup> requested a belay and securely if ignobly dulfersitized down, and ~~passed the initiation~~

The hell with heroism. I wouldn't be playing this game long anyway. Stealing myself against sneers

Attending lectures became quite comfortable, many students having ended their careers on Monitor Rock, more on Little Si. The Elementary Course concluded with the final exam and Chairman Cam personally congratulated me for scoring the highest grade. Gratifying, to be sure, yet I'd have preferred to remain obscure; book-learning made a good bluff in the classroom but not on the cliffs and I'd seen enough of the competition to know I was a certain loser. Still, the Intermediate Course lectures started and Betty and I had left in our wake better than half the February multitude. Perhaps persistence was a fair substitute for skill.

The Elementary Course had progressed from confusion to chaos. The Intermediate deteriorated from there. Lecturers who were supposed to

talk an hour delivered perfunctory 10-minute statements. Those allotted a half-hour filibustered to midnight. ~~Some, perhaps, continuing to overstay their welcome,~~  
~~Others didn't show up at all;~~ embarrassed Cam grimly filled the gaps as best he could.

Never mind, at last we were headed for a real mountain, <sup>and snowy</sup> McClellan's Butte, <sup>rising a vertical mile</sup> ~~rising steeply~~ above the Snoqualmie Pass highway. There we'd master the ice <sup>then</sup> ax and Betty and I could flee the madhouse. But at the lecture session two days short of the scheduled departure Cam announced the practice was postponed because of avalanche danger. Next week a second postponement, and next week the trip was canceled. Nobody could recall <sup>spring</sup> snows as heavy as those ~~of the~~ ~~of~~ 1948. We'd have to stick around a bit longer.

While waiting we spent a Sunday on concrete walls of Duwamish Piers, <sup>in south Seattle</sup> relic of an old bridge over the Duwamish River, practicing rappelling, ascending a free-hanging rope on prusik knots, being rescued from a "crevasse" by bilgeri technique, holding falls with the newfangled dynamic belay which Limber Jim and other Mountain Troopers had brought home from the war.

Another suburban practice, ~~known as~~ tennis-shoe climbing on Glacier Boulder, also called Big Rock, was canceled when subdividers, now swarming all over the outskirts of Seattle ~~and halfway to Everett and Tacoma~~, invaded the fields and forests and surrounded the granite erratic with boxes; the homeowner who inherited the boulder, renamed Wedgewood Rock, landscaped the base and objected to hooligans trampling his flowers.

Impatient and frustrated, on Sunday, May 16, no Course trip scheduled, Betty and I skied from Snoqualmie Pass up Commonwealth Basin to the foot of Red. We viewed nearby Lundin, where in seven days we'd finally get into

the ax business -- if that practice wasn't canceled too, as seemed possible; from throughout the white basin came ominous rumbles.

Chairman Cam, however, fed up with the way his school was disintegrating, defiantly declared at the next lecture that the trip was on come hell or high water, and the faint of heart had better head for the ~~the~~ bunkers.

At 6:30 in the dark morning of May 23 Betty and I arrived at Snoqualmie Pass and looked around for Mountaineers. None ~~was~~ to be seen. ~~There were~~ We knew the route from ~~the previous trip~~ <sup>last Sunday</sup> and climbed the 10-foot snow wall beside the highway ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~There was~~ found the start of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> mob-tromped trench ~~and~~ <sup>which we</sup> followed ~~it~~ up the spur ridge of Guya <sup>and</sup> around the corner beneath cliffs into Commonwealth Basin. ~~At~~ <sup>At</sup> 7:30 -- exactly the announced hour of assembly -- ~~we~~ reached the city of tents and tarps where most of the 100-odd students and instructors had camped overnight.

The place was deserted. Betty and I were alone. The Mountaineers at last manage to get into real mountains and they ditch us! Bastards! Angrily we continued along the ~~the~~ trench, hurrying, and near the base of the Lundin Chute broke out of forest and saw the ant-mass above.

Atop a steep rise Chairman Cam waited -- for a friendly hello, I supposed, perhaps even to apologize to his star examination writer. No. I couldn't recognize the noble Leader of Leaders in this glowering fiend. He sternly commanded us to slide right back down the slope, and when going fast enough, to roll onto stomach, dig in toes and ax pick, and thus perform a self-arrest. We obeyed meekly, again climbed the slope -- and he acidly dissected our mistakes and ordered us down again. Once more wearily to the top and now

<sup>unmasked</sup>  
 the ~~beast~~ beast forced us to slide headfirst on our backs, tumbling and rolling and eating bushels of snow. How long he would have entertained himself with us I'll never know; a straggler trying to evade the roadblock diverted his attention and we stole away and joined the main group.

In assigning rope teams Tripleader Lloyd separated husbands ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> wives -- a club policy, he explained, designed to save marriages. Betty was startled ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> I didn't mind -- somebody would look after her and for once it wouldn't have to be me. As on Little Si, instructors were scarce and I was one of six students, on two teams, with a single teacher.

He was no ~~vicious~~ vicious Cam. Other instructors set to work on team arrests and ax belays and tedious rope-handling but he didn't bother with ~~any~~ <sup>any</sup> portion of the curriculum that hindered upward progress. Practicing ~~repeatedly~~ stepkicking and rest step exclusively, we quickly neared the uppermost rocks of 6057-foot Lundin.

"The summit's easy," said our benign boss. "Just go on up there and wait." And he glissaded down to join the <sup>mass</sup> ascent of the West Ridge, a special treat reserved for instructors.

I had to laugh. The Course was spread all over the mountain and here were we six novices, no leader in sight or sound. Well, what more could an anarchist ask? We'd escaped the mob, that was for sure. Since at the moment of abandonment I was tied to a rope-end and standing uphill from the other five, the initiative was my responsibility. Okay, what The Mountaineers have asked, through the chain of command, they'll get.

I led up the <sup>final steep</sup> snow and scrambled <sup>a rock staircase</sup> to the crest of the East Ridge. Here was one of the cheap thrills Monie had promised — the Boiler Plate, a <sup>high in the sky</sup> smooth slab <sup>vast</sup> between the ~~great~~ gulf of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River and the lesser but quite respectable gulf of Commonwealth Creek. Though the slab was comfortably wide and only moderately steep, and in tennis shoes on a dry summer day would have been a stroll, snowpatches and meltwater dribbles and tricouni-nailed boots gave the passage something of the character of ice-skating. But the exposure was nothing compared to The Tooth, much less Cruiser, and I had my orders and the Climbing Code says "Always obey the leader." Nails found niches in the slab and the final 10-foot pitch to the summit was all buckets.

Thus I completed my very first lead. That was good, very good. Better, though, was starting at the rear of the pack and despite an unjust handicap forging through to beat 100-odd athletes and heroes to the top. Best of all was having escaped the last chance of humiliation — this was freedom day for Betty and me, <sup>tonight in the garret we'd be</sup> ~~non-Mountaineers.~~

~~The second team~~ chickened out, ~~and~~ We three had the summit to ourselves for a quiet hour, eating a late lunch in windless warm air, <sup>of the La Bohm Gap and Dutch Miller Gap</sup> admiring sun-rays flashing through boiling clouds, wintry-white peaks <sup>area</sup> floating on the gray sea of the fog-filled Middle Fork.

Lundin was my first — and last — alpine ascent with ~~The~~ Mountaineers.

I'd carried my own ice ax, <sup>a</sup> bought at the Coop the past week for \$12, had learned the self-arrest. I owned the tool and the technique that would have made the Graywolf Ramble a fearless romp and needed nothing more

Nobody on the second team ever had experienced exposures as they had I

a classy example of Swiss craftsmanship

scarily thin and ice-plastered

from this bunch. I was content, smug, watching the ~~big boys~~ follow Limber Jim up the West Ridge.

big boys

A solitary leader arrived via the East Ridge, saw us, and howled, "What are you doing here?"

He wouldn't listen to my explanation and cussed me out as a suicidal fool. Well, damn him and all of them! They tell you to be at camp at 7:30 and you get there at 7:30 and they've pulled a sneak. Split your ass catching up and a sadist erects a roadblock. Obey your instructor and get chewed out for following orders. They could take their high and mighty Climbing Course and shove it.

With alienated satisfaction I observed the growing confusion.

Leaders from West Ridge and East yammered back and forth, trying to maneuver the mob onto the summit. They strung a handline along the Boiler Plate and one by one ~~students~~ crept up the slab, belay ropes tangling with fixed rope. Belatedly the ~~mob~~ <sup>chiefs</sup> realized the summit couldn't hold 100-odd people and rigged a rappel down a 20-foot cliff to an avenue-ledge bypassing the Boiler Plate. Tripleleader Lloyd, Mobmaster Burge, Chairman Cam, Limber Jim, and a dozen more bigshots shouted encouragement and threats and conflicting orders in all directions and clambered around untangling ropes and grabbing distraught students about to fall to their deaths.

Teams no longer existed. It was every man for himself and to hell with <sup>the</sup> women and children. ~~There~~ <sup>I feared for Betty's life but</sup> there was nothing I could do ~~for her~~ <sup>off the summit</sup> even if I knew where she was. I saw an opening and rappelled and from below watched the amazing spectacle — athletes inching up the fixed line and inching down the rappel, whimpering and whining, hero-leaders screaming and waving

the whole Climbing Course coming  
apart at the seams.

arms, Clouds darkened and a ~~bitter~~ squall of rain and freezing slush swept the mountain. I huddled in the lee of a rock with a gang of hysterical instructors.

A splendid joke, <sup>a classic,</sup> but drawn out hours past <sup>happy</sup> laughter. Not until 5 o'clock did a <sup>distant</sup> bellow announce the removal of the last <sup>body</sup> quivering ~~man~~ from the summit. That was the signal releasing a cluster of shivering instructors and students impatiently waiting to begin the 1200-foot sitting glissade of Lundin Chute, famed as among the finest cheap thrills in the Course.

When my turn came the track was deep-gouged by dozens of butts. ~~With~~ <sup>through</sup> a whoop I jumped and instantly was swiftly riding a snow cushion down dense fog, wind roaring by my ears. Faster and faster I blindly rode the groove, hollering away frustrations of the long spring and angers of the crummy day. I rocketed by faces white as snow — students (and some instructors!) who'd been too much thrilled, had arrested and crawled from the groove, and now were wondering how they ever would reach the bottom of the Chute this side of eternity. Faster! What did they know, never having slid into the Graywolf without an ax?

Down, down, down almost to the valley flat. Suddenly I was leading the pack again and stopped to see why.

Yells from far above. Yells closer down. A yell nearby, "There a Manning here?"

Suspiciously I confessed.

"They say your wife wants you."

Gone, gone, gone the exaltation of the wild ride. Naturally she

wanted me. As on Silvertip, as on the retreat from La Bohn Gap when I had to return a half-mile up the talus in the storm to pry loose the boot she'd stupidly wedged in the rocks. I hadn't seen her close-up since morning and had reverted to the freedom of Camp Parsons boyhood and now she'd spitefully ruined my glissade and shamed my name before 100-odd idiots who in years to come would guffaw whenever they remembered Manning.

Angrily I stomped back up, elbowed through drooling gawkers to the center of attention, flat on her back in pink snow, giggling and smirking, the life of the party. A leader was bandaging her side. As was perfectly normal for her at the end of a mountain day, she looked terrible.

"Where's your ax?" I asked.

She apologized with no words, merely a frightened smile.

Faces in the mob expressed an opinion of me. What the crap did they know?

I climbed to the jumbled avalanche from which she'd been excavated and fruitlessly kicked blocks of snow. No ax. Just this week I'd laid out a day-and-a-half's wages, ~~and a half day's wages~~ for that ax. Blood is cheap but axes cost \$12.

Bystanders told the story. Together with other incompetents terrified by the Chute she'd traversed to gentler slopes and slid through the fog in fits and starts. A dozen incompetents above her simultaneously gathered courage and glissaded in a bunch. Each ~~accumulated~~ <sup>set in motion a snow</sup> cushion, the cushions amalgamated, and Betty was engulfed by thundering tons of snow containing a dozen tumbling dummies and a dozen loose axes,

the entire unstable slope came loose,



one of which stabbed her in the ribs.

The ax was hopelessly lost so I went down to see about salvaging the wife.

Exclaimed a leader, "She's in shock!" (I didn't say out loud what I was thinking, "She's been in shock since she was born.")

Declared another hero, "She can't walk in this condition!" (I didn't say, "She can barely walk in any condition.")

Never consulting me, the Betty expert, they tied her to a "human toboggan," a student volunteer; his body would absorb the bumps and protect the casualty, who was blooming like she'd been elected Queen of the May. (I didn't say, "You're spoiling her. Now she'll expect a free ride down every mountain.")

I trotted along with the fast-moving mob of ghouls, hoping nobody connected me to that strange girl who in a single stroke had assured herself lasting fame, ~~as one more symbol of Mountaineer incompetence.~~

At camp they transferred her to a stretcher and at the highway into Limber Jim's notoriously hot ~~car~~ <sup>Nash sedan</sup> with a back seat that notoriously folded to make a bed. He was said by Monie to be the best rock-climber in the club. He was also a pure crazy, as was Chairman Cam, who rode along to get every possible kick from the affair. They hurtled toward the nearest hospital, in Seattle, stopping only twice — the first time for ice cream cones in North Bend (they didn't buy one for Betty), the second at the insistence of a highway cop. He, however, snapped to attention on viewing my wounded

wife and led the rest of the way, siren ~~wailing~~<sup>waiting</sup>, to the delirium of Jim and Cam, who never before had legally driven ~~70~~<sup>75</sup> miles per hour through Sunday traffic.

The ~~stuttering~~, smoking V-8 carried me more sedately to Harborview Hospital, where Betty was being sewed up. I found Jim and Cam in the waiting room. They didn't notice my existence, were totally ~~immersed~~<sup>absorbed</sup> in analyzing the day-long series of leadership errors.

Maybe they were in shock themselves, maybe that's why they broke up at every added detail of their bungling.

Cam said, "Another thing we forgot to do was count the party afterward. How do we know somebody isn't still up there in the avalanche?"

"We don't," said Jim, "But if they are we'll probably hear about it, sooner or later."

They almost fell off their chairs.

God!

24 March 1974

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1948

Chapter <sup>6</sup>/~~8~~

### A HUCKLEBERRY HERO

It was high time to quit according to plan. The lesson of Lundin was plain enough, ~~for only fools~~ However, the objective of the Course's first "experience climb" was none other than the climax of the Olympic horizon I'd grown up with, the center of my Camp Parsons boyhood. For ~~the~~ Constance I was willing to postpone our exit a week.

No need to bother. The long cold winter was abruptly ended by a gigantic hot-air mass rolling over the Northwest and shriveling the snowpack. <sup>monstrously - swollen</sup> The Columbia River destroyed the city of Vanport, Oregon, and everywhere in the mountains rampaging streams tore out highways and forest roads. By Sunday, May 30, the only summits accessible from Seattle were around <sup>these</sup> Snoqualmie Pass. One, Chair, was chosen for a last-minute substitute experience climb.

Monie had a better idea. With four others (not including Betty, licking wounds in the garret), she and I climbed easy rock and airy snow up the east rib of Guye. She let me lead the whole way. Then we unroped to romp along the ridge to 6278-foot Snoqualmie and there sacked out <sup>in bright sun</sup> for hours, looking north to the volcanoes of Glacier and Baker, east to Chimney

Rock and Stuart, south to Rainier, and west <sup>over Puget Sound lowlands</sup> to Constance, lost forever.

Well, Snoqualmie was joy enough — and the countless Snoqualmies of the Cascades and Olympics barred to ordinary hikers but wide-open to my boots and ax, and even Betty's.

Only when heading down did we see dots of motion across Source Creek, approaching the base of Chair. Later we learned the hundred suffering souls who started hiking at dawn, hours before our smart bunch left town, straggled to the highway at midnight. So much for the mob.

Still, the next experience climb was Sluiskin, which as a hiker <sup>in Rainier National Park</sup> I'd admired from the trail; one more Mountaineer weekend would retroactively enrich my youth. Betty pooped out at Windy Gap but I made both <sup>summits  $\frac{1}{m}$</sup>  The Chief, a one-pitch scramble on warm rock, and The Squaw, a snow <sup>plod  $\frac{1}{m}$</sup>  and watched avalanches from Rainier's ice cap flow in slow clouds down mile-high Willis Wall. For once the club ran a clean, neat operation. No mob, either, just a dozen decent, jolly folk.

Over the years I'd several times ventured onto glaciers and occasionally might want to do so again; the Nisqually <sup>Glacier high on slopes of Rainier</sup> Ice Practice was worth another week. We stamped rented crampons into blue ice and hacked seracs with axes and were lowered into a genuine crevasse and "rescued" by bilgeri technique.

Now they were offering an experience climb of Adams. A cheap and easy volcano would make a fun farewell. A gale blasted the mob of 80-odd from Mountaineer Camp on the northwest shoulder. Who needs a volcano anyhow?

So, exit time absolutely had arrived — and also the ~~time~~<sup>moment</sup> to ~~sole on~~  
~~try~~ new super-hiker wings. I asked Monie for ideas and she suggested  
 Huckleberry. Really? From Snoqualmie the peak had seemed a Cruiser-like  
 tower. Pure deception, she said — the route was on the other side and  
 the short scramble at the top was simpler than the Boiler Plate.

Betty wouldn't leave the garret. Several days earlier she'd returned  
 alone in midweek to the Lundin Chute, catching the bus to and from  
 Snoqualmie Pass — not motivated by ~~my~~ eagerness to hike but by my  
 insistence she retrieve the \$12 ax she'd stupidly lost. No luck. News of  
 the "ice ax mine" had gotten around the Mountaineer circle of thieves and  
 not a one was left.

Saturday morning, June 26. Betty was sulking, an attempt to recruit  
 Monie failed, and Huckleberry country was too ~~rough~~<sup>tricky</sup> in this season to hike  
 alone. Newly free — and ~~trapped~~<sup>stuck</sup> in the garret.

On a desperate last chance I called the only other Mountaineer I  
~~knew~~<sup>at all well, a guy about my age who'd been</sup> our passenger in the V-8 on the ride to Nisqually. No club trip was  
 scheduled and Bill was hot to walk.

A busted fan belt held us up and it was long past noon when we  
 turned off the highway east of Snoqualmie Pass onto the Gold Creek road.  
 In a couple hundred yards, chaos — a beautiful old forest freshly hacked to  
 pieces and the trail obliterated. After an hour of scouting, fighting  
 jackstraw and slash and cussing loggers, I found tread in unmolested timber.  
 At 2 o'clock, very late for the planned day's hike, we hoisted packs.

Hurrying to make some fast miles we pressed through brush, windfalls, and snowpatches. Then the path ran into the meltwater flood of Gold Creek. Bill, recently arrived from the Midwest, never had confronted such a torrent and thought the trip was over. I suspected he was right but as the wilderness veteran took off boots and pants (stowing them in pack) and tentatively stepped into white water, gripping dim-seen boulders with bare toes. Foam boiled to knees, the hypnotizing rush close under eyes unsettled balance. Another step and roaring turmoil engulfed bare ass. This was more than I'd bargained for — the roughest wade I'd ever tried. But I now learned another value of the ice ax, jammed among shifting rocks to resist the push of the flood. Feet numb, legs and private parts tingling, I emerged triumphant on the far bank.

Lowering clouds brought premature twilight. The trail vanished in solid snow and we plugged through forest gloom following blazes. At 6 o'clock I realized we'd been guided more than an hour solely by scars on trunks made not by a pathfinder's hatchet but by falling trees — "lost man's blazes." God knew where we were. I didn't. The sketchy old map was no help, especially with peaks invisible.

The map showed a single tributary stream in our presumed vicinity — Joe Creek, flowing from Joe Lake at the foot of Huckleberry. Yet we crossed torrent after torrent, any of which might be Joe. Finally I chose one by intuition ~~and intuition~~ and in dusk we kicked steps steeply upward along its course, detouring around waterfalls and cliffs. If this wasn't

Joe Creek, pretty soon we'd be tying ourselves to trees for a grim night. But at 8 o'clock the valley wall rounded over and the forest opened and we entered the basin of 4624-foot Joe Lake.

A day to remember. We had fixed the busted V-8, found the logger-wrecked trail, forded the fright of Gold Creek, beaten a track up 10 miles of virgin snow, solved the puzzle of blazes, identified Joe Creek from a <sup>half-</sup>dozen candidates, won the race against night, and achieved our <sup>desired</sup>~~planned~~ basecamp, and all in the 10 hours since I dialed Bill's number.

Clouds hid 6240-foot Huckleberry, our happy tomorrow scramble — assuming the weather cleared. If not, the camp was sufficient reward. A clump of subalpine trees beside the frozen lake provided snowfree ground for sleeping under my brandnew orange-and-blue liferaft sail. A hole in the ice at the outlet supplied water. A snag gave dry bark for a blaze that dried clothes and warmed bones and erupted light and cheer in the foggy night. Bill and I were strangers, yet comrades. When he stupidly salted the ~~Ten~~ Can of noodles, already plenty salty from chipped beef, gagging down the briny mess was our shared joke, no recriminations.

At 8 o'clock in the morning our ~~serene~~ serene sleep was broken by brightness, warmth. The sun! Quickly from bags and tarp and trees, out in blinding snow for a look around.

And we saw Huckleberry and my jaw dropped. A peak named for a fruit ought to be soft. If this screeching splinter was a scramble I was George Leigh Mallory.

We cooked a pot of oatmeal but I had no appetite. The wicked witch had ~~tricked~~ <sup>snared</sup> me again. Couldn't she get it through her skull I didn't need any more Tooths or Cruisers? I wanted to chicken out right now so I could enjoy breakfast. How would Bill take it? He was stuffing down gruel, gulping cocoa, gobbling figbars. I didn't recall ever seeing him in action amid the springtime mobs; the way he was eating he must be a nerveless athlete, the enemy.

He'd be astounded by the announcement I was quitting. Perhaps from respect for comradeship, now ended, he'd be embarrassed. Or would he get huffy about my wasting his time? Or laugh his head off?

I couldn't spit out the words. As he routinely packed rucksack, I assembled mine. We tramped across the white lake and switchbacked up the couloir <sup>SNOW.</sup> Atop the ridge, beneath the violent leap of rock, we rested in heather and ate grapes. He praised the view, ignored the cliff. How would I tell him?

At length he flipped a cigarette away and began uncoiling the rope and still I couldn't speak and time was running out. He tossed me a rope-end and mechanically I started tying in with a bowline-on-a-bight. He stopped me, demonstrating a new and better knot, the bowline-on-a-coil, he'd learned on Nisqually from a Mountain Trooper. I was impressed — and tranquilized. He was a cool athlete, no mistake. I'd sure never invite him on another hike; meanwhile, though, I'd follow Bill on Huckleberry exactly as I'd followed Monie on Tooth and Cruiser and he'd never know the truth.



He walked up heather to the cliff, calmly inspected the terrain, and said, "I can belay you from here."

WHAT?

He was busy snuggling into his stance and didn't notice my daze. How come? The rope had two ends. How come I was stuck with the leader end? Couldn't we at least talk about it? Why not? The explanation was obvious. The trip was my idea, it was my car, and he considered himself <sup>a</sup> guest and <sub>^</sub> was too nice a guy ~~to try~~ to steal my glory. Glory!

"Belay on," he declared and I lept upward like I'd been goosed, the 60-foot cliff as blurred by terror as the wall of Cruiser, except no taut rope from above held me securely to life. Social pressure by a bunch of crummy athletes was pushing me to an undeserved grave on a Sunday I'd allotted for fun.

No climbing with the eyes, no three-point suspension, no testing holds, no balance, no rhythm. No memory of how I got up. For Bill the pitch was child's play and he climbed slowly and smoothly. He was too gracious to criticize my hectic rush — in fact, he pretended to envy my speed.

Nerves steadied as we clambered along a series of gendarmes. We passed the hidden gully, a staircase, we should have ascended instead of my mad cliff; the descent would be painless. Athlete Bill would have no tales of my yellow streak to feed into the gossip mill of The Mountaineers, because ahead was the final pile of rock, Huckleberry's summit.

Only it wasn't. Beyond a gap rose the true and horrid Huckleberry.

Bill blithely pointed down and said, that nice guy, "I can belay you from the notch. "

Never trust a nice guy, or a witch, or a fruit.

I was struck too dumb by the injustice (why me, always?) to argue. No trembling of guts — I was hollow inside. Helpless as when chased by the Thing, numbly I scrambled up easy ledges from the notch, crept along a wide, smooth, tilted slab ~~to the top~~, and met the cliff with my nose.

Monie had told a funny story about the two Mountaineers who made the first ascent of Huckleberry. On the summit, before attempting to get down, they wrote their wills on their shirtcuffs. Poor duffers of olden times! Everybody is better nowadays, that's progress. In 30 years Huckleberry had been progressively downgraded from "impossible" to "for experts only" to "an easy day for a lady. "

But I was no lady. Above rose a sequence of big flower pots, strands of goat hair clinging to the plants — a veritable garden path for mountain goats. But I was no goat, either, and the hellfire void was below and no rope hung from Heaven.

Convulsively I flung up into flowers — and the rope tightened around my waist and I tottered backward into emptiness.

"SLACK!" I screamed with dying breath.

Answered calm Bill from the secure notch, "Sorry!"

I wiggled along the goat highway onto the broad summit, lay face down for minutes sniffing heather bells, then belayed Bill.

Throughout an endless hour he ate lunch, exclaiming at rich and

bewildering horizons, the huge delicious ice cream cone of Rainier. Under the glaring sun I laboriously masticated a raisin, hardly managed to swallow it, and snapped photos for the pleasure of a later day — if any. I was on the verge of fainting, from sunstroke or fear.

Because there was the descent waiting. I looked for a solid rock or shrub to anchor a rappel. Naught but blossoms. I'd have written my will on ~~my~~ cuff except my shirt was wool, ~~and there was nothing~~ and there was *a few hundred books and* nothing ~~to~~ leave my widow besides *the V-8.*

Carefree Bill was down in a minute. I sat on the edge of the flower plateau, lowered legs over the brink, and was about to take a cautious step ~~when~~ *when* ~~with~~ the rope drew taut and I spread wings to fly into the infinity of insubstantial air.

"SLACK!" I sobbed. "Dear God, SLACK!"

"Sorry!" cried Bill. The truth was out. Bill was no athlete. I'd realized earlier he never could have found the trail or pioneered the ford or identified Joe Creek. Now I knew he never could have made the lead. He was almost as incompetent as Betty. *If he didn't kill me, I could learn to like him.* ~~I liked him better all the time.~~

That was the only nervous step and soon we were sprawled in the ~~meadow~~ meadow at the top of the couloir, swilling a jug of grape juice left cooling in a snowbank in case we lived. We flashed down the white chute in standing glissade, riding boots like short skis, and from Joe Lake boldly took an alternate return route across the unknown slopes of Alaska, and rambled loose-legged down the valley, exulting in the icy ford, and bulled

through the loggers' mess to the V-8.

I'd led the Boiler Plate of Lundin and the east rib of Guye, but one was in school and the other with teacher always near. Huckleberry was my first independent lead.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

Best beware. This way lay madness. I'd have to be damn careful never again to be lured + into such a trap. Yet in super-hiker years to come it would be grand to recall Huckleberry. My last fling as a climber was the best.

25 March 1974

1948

Chapter <sup>7</sup>/<sub>6</sub>

TWO MILES TALL

- They understood that a certain quirkiness of character was required to spend 40 hours a week, year after year, surrounded by corrosive and poisonous and explosive materials, without even the incentive of eventually becoming a wealthy scientist.

Though I returned as proletarian rather than bourgeoisie-aspiring graduate student, the University of ~~Washington~~ campus felt snug and homey after months pushing a handtruck in a warehouse. ~~For one reason~~ The routine of dispensing chemicals and equipment left much leisure for reading— institutionally condoned in this center of higher learning, unlike at Ernst Hardware. Customers of my basement stockroom, mainly seniors and candidates for master's and doctor's degrees, had grown accustomed in previous courses, served by stockrooms on other floors of Bagley Hall, to eccentric attendants. I fitted the tradition and enlarged it as an English major mysteriously transported across the gulf from "upper campus" to "lower." Chemists and chemical engineers were intrigued that someone in their reeking headquarters spent his days reading such arcane works as The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, The Decline of the West, and the Cambridge Medieval History. I gave the place class.

Due to life-interruptions by the war and ~~the years-long drudgery of thesis~~ <sup>the years-long drudgery of thesis</sup> ~~indefinite~~ research ~~projects~~, most customers were about my age, <sup>Some,</sup> and despite the vast difference in cultural backgrounds, ~~some~~ turned out to have interests I shared.

There was, for example, Crazy Art, whose eerie eyes and chaotic chuckle seemed to thinly ~~mask~~ <sup>stark staring</sup> madness. ~~One of his equally unstable~~  
~~He~~ <sup>He</sup> introduced me to the glass-bead ~~pipe~~ <sup>cannon</sup>, a length of glass tubing connected by rubber tubing to a compressed-air outlet; flip open the air valve and a glass bead <sup>hisses</sup> ~~silently shoots~~ out with a muzzle velocity somewhere between that of a BB pellet and a .22 slug. I kept mine trained on Bagley's back door, directly opposite the stockroom service window. Art ~~and his cronies~~ <sup>and his cronies</sup> quickly became wary of exposing their rears but many a time a tight-skirted girl leaving the building flinched, threw a protective hand to her bitten bottom, ~~and~~ turned angrily to slam a fresh engineer — and found herself alone except for the stockroom boy in the distant window, engrossed in Gibbon.

when the inner cylinder rapidly pushes a cork through the length of the outer cylinder, violently discharges a second cork stuffed in the latter's mouth.

Art ~~They~~ also taught me the cork pistol, two ~~clown~~ <sup>nesting</sup> brass cylinders (from a set of cork-hole borers) which, ~~when the inner is thrust through the outer, a cork is discharged~~ As I was sitting on my stool pondering the Magian culture, a "pop!" would startle me into 20th century America, a cork would sting my cheek, and I'd grab my pistol and vault <sup>out</sup> ~~through~~ the window in hot pursuit. Noncombatants <sup>passing by in the hall</sup> learned to detour around the window ~~in passing~~ lest they be knocked flat by a flying ~~cork~~ <sup>stockroom boy</sup>. On occasion, feeling restless, I'd leave my post and stalk the corridors, pistol in belt, and would meet an <sup>armed</sup> ~~enemy~~ and we'd hold a fast-draw contest. Eventually nobody was bothered by a cork in the face and one day when I caught Art ~~weaponless~~ <sup>weaponless</sup> and backed him into a corner he laughed defiantly — until suddenly he was blinking and coughing, clown white from ~~his~~ <sup>chest</sup> to ~~his~~ <sup>face</sup>

roots ~~of his~~ hair. I'd escalated the arms race by inserting a charge of talcum powder behind the cork.

Firecrackers came next, but not for long, since each blast brought a dozen professors running with fire extinguishers and first-aid kits. ~~Usually, designed~~ <sup>Other</sup> bombs continued popular, though, and I sent Art and company diving for cover by tossing one in their lab; the victory was the more complete because it was merely a paper bag puffed full of cigarette smoke curling out ominously. Retaliation was swift and savage. I heard running feet and maniac laughter and Art hastily set a <sup>two</sup> ~~2~~-liter beaker on the window counter and fled. The cauldron boiled <sup>violently</sup> and blurped bubbles and steam and I hit the floor. No explosion forthcoming, I warily approached the hellish device; an innocent bystander, patiently waiting to buy chemicals, explained it was <sup>a piece of</sup> dry ice in <sup>soapy water.</sup> ~~a detergent solution.~~

The favorite weapon was the washbottle, a glass jar into which air is pumped by squeezing a rubber bulb <sup>and</sup> from which a stream of water <sup>then</sup> issues through a glass nozzle. Depending on how lovingly the nozzle is fashioned by stretching out glass tubing half-melted in a gas flame <sup>and</sup> ~~then~~ cutting the cooled constriction with a steel file, the range is anywhere up to 15 feet or so. Typically a stealthy marauder would make a surprise attack and thoroughly wet my face and I'd leap through the window for <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ shootout. But once as I chased Art, his washbottle empty, the soaking of the back of my head revealed he'd lured me into an ambush; I turned to confront three enemies and another three burst from a lab behind <sup>me</sup> ~~and~~ and I was so drenched by the pitiless crossfire I had to go home and change clothes.

I gained revenge by scaling the outside wall of Bagley to the window ledge of Art's lab and sniping at him and his gang. Busy with individual experiments, they didn't spot me, hiding behind a column, and <sup>each,</sup> when hit, stared suspiciously at lab-mates. The overall mood <sup>of the group</sup> was rather ugly by the time my water was exhausted and I triumphantly revealed myself.

A couple days later I was a millenium away with Otto the Great when the herd came pounding down the corridor, laughing hysterically, and Crazy Art <sup>shoved</sup> ~~pushed~~ a fire hose in my face and howled to an unseen accomplice, "TURN IT ON!" ~~Coming at the back of the stockroom, I hid from~~ the face-mass crowding the window to enjoy my <sup>humiliations</sup> ~~loss~~ that the hose wasn't hooked up.

I abjectly surrendered. Art's army was too many and my window too vulnerable and <sup>I wasn't at all</sup> ~~I wasn't~~ <sup>potentially homicidal</sup> sure he wasn't truly insane, Yet second only to several genuine lab disasters I produced the biggest noise in this Bagley era. Somebody stupidly reminded me that sodium <sup>enthusiastically</sup> metal combines with water to produce hydrogen, the reaction emitting enough heat to ignite the hydrogen and ambient oxygen — explosively. It was amusing to drop a sliver of sodium in a beaker of water, see the furious bubbling, hear the ~~surprising~~ "thip!"

If a "thip!" was good a "bang!" would be better and at 5 o'clock one winter evening, as the day's last classes were emptying from Bagley, I lugged a large glass jar full of finely-diced sodium around to the front of the building and flung it in Frosh Pond. No "bang!" nor even a "boom!" but an instantaneous "KA-POW!" Chemists and engineers ran in panic

I fell off my stool and scuttled on hands and knees to the back of the stockroom and covered, awaiting the bruising blow of high-velocity water. Only then did I realize, examining



as the yellow flame leapt a hundred feet into the night sky and molten sodium rained down all around. Resident mallards flew off quacking, not to return for a week. The blinding flare illuminated an unsuspected police car parked across the pond and as red lights flashed and siren wailed I plunged through shrubbery to escape years in prison and abandoned forever my career as a mad bomber.

Interludes of war gave respite from wranglings of Popes and Holy Roman Emperors. Weekends, though, were what I lived for. Spring-time Mondays I generally came to work with puffy red face — an endemic disease hereabouts, I noted. A suffering customer would ask where I got my awful sunburn and I'd ask where he got his and we'd talk by the hour about places in the hills we'd been, places we wanted to go. Bagley, I found, was infested with climbers.

For a number of reasons, including an ~~indecapacity~~ <sup>incapacity</sup> to converse except in a semi-shout and such gymnastic skills as being able to tie his shoelaces standing up without bending his knees, Kermit was the most conspicuous.

He loved yodeling, an art he never could master; as compensation ~~he played Swiss records in his lab loudly and incessantly~~ <sup>incessantly and loudly</sup>, giving an Alpine air to the entire Bagley basement, whether it wanted it or not. He also had been frustrated in attempts to learn enough German to justify his Prussian haircut. The dozen words and phrases he knew formed half his ordinary vocabulary: "bergshteiger" and "gletscher" and "gipfel" and "schneefeld" and the like; any very large peak he called "der meisterberg."

Someone had chalked in giant letters on his lab wall, "KERMIT THE HERMIT — FRIEND OF THE LAND," celebrating notoriety he and his buddy Dick had gained from testifying, at a 1947 Congressional hearing, in opposition to a proposed reduction in <sup>the</sup> size of ~~the~~ <sup>nine</sup>-year-old Olympic National Park. I'd never met a conservationist before.

But what mainly fascinated me was that in the single climbing season of 1947 he'd conquered all six "major" peaks of Washington — the five volcanoes plus ~~the~~ Olympus. He'd set as his grander goal for 1948 a feat never before accomplished, skiing all six majors from top to bottom. (Rock did not excite him. Hearing ironmongery exploits of the new breed of wall engineers he sneered, "Nein gletscher, nein gipfel." If it wasn't white he didn't give a damn about it.) His Faustian ambition, so vastly exceeding my humble aim to become a super-hiker, filled me with awe. He even dared talk about McKinley and boldly declared he wished he was <sup>a</sup> Englishman so he'd have a chance for a crack at Everest.

When this spectacular person invited me, in early June, to join him on an ascent of Baker, <sup>northernmost of the Cascade volcanoes,</sup> I of course declined, staggered he should think me fit to be his companion.

After the invitation, though, I began asking myself why he shouldn't see me, however mistakenly, as a potential Baker climber. At Camp Parsons, <sup>in 1940,</sup> social pressure had ~~bulldozed~~ <sup>forced</sup> me <sup>to take</sup> ~~into~~ the lifesaving class. <sup>in the waters of Hood Canal</sup> Despite being so wretched a swimmer that death was a daily risk, I bowed to the group expectation ~~to avoid humiliation,~~ somehow survived the week without drowning, and in recognition <sup>of</sup> ~~one~~ life saved — mine own <sup>1/2</sup> was

awarded the Lifesaving Merit Badge which enabled me to achieve the supreme rank of Eagle Scout.

Now, in the Climbing Course, there was a similar expectation that as an apparently eager student I was pointing toward the ~~supreme~~ <sup>climactic</sup> experience climb, Rainier. The Northwest-domineering mass absolutely and positively had been no part of my hopes since 1940, yet as long as I continued delaying my departure from The Mountaineers I must keep up the pretense. So far as any stranger, including Kermit, could tell, I was on track — graduating from the Elementary Course and attending the Intermediate, going to the Nisqually Ice Practice, and hiking to high camp on Adams; the only chance to satisfy the final Rainier requirement of first climbing some other major.

The Adams storm was a relief — being blasted from camp meant neither I nor any other beginner would be accepted for the Rainier party of 1948. I could relax. I hadn't flunked the test — it was canceled.

Honor was safe.

Honor! How long would that be my concern? A few months more, to the impossible heights of unfortunately, because ~~Huckleberry~~ <sup>to horizons inconceivable</sup> enlarged my dreams. Not ~~to the impossible~~ Rainier, but ~~tremendously beyond what I conceived possible~~ in February. Next year, super-hiker according to plan. This one summer ~~modestly~~ <sup>of my life, ↘</sup>

Betty and I signed up for the ~~3~~ <sup>three</sup>-day Fourth of July experience climb of Eldorado. I'd never heard of ~~it~~ <sup>the peak</sup> but everybody was going — all the Course leaders, all the surviving students — and there surely would be openings

to the extent possible without getting hurt, a little bit of a hero.

in the aftermath of Huckleberry I felt myself subtly infected by the climbing disease — a mild case, it would soon pass. Meanwhile, however, the fever had

to brag discreetly about Huckleberry.

July 2,

However, Friday afternoon Kermit and Dick visited me in the stockroom. Something big was up — they didn't come to the window, they entered my sanctum through the door, an unprecedented invasion. It was particularly odd for Dick to be there. As Kermit's friend he was welcome, but our sole previous encounter had been when he tried to return borrowed equipment in such poor condition I insisted he had to buy it and he got red in the face and stomped off in a huff. Otherwise I only knew of him that as an undergraduate he'd been the center on the University basketball team — no crime in itself, but my policy was to distrust persons a foot taller than me.

he was a notoriously irascible bastard, always feuding with the Powers of Bagley and Earth, and

~~the~~ proposition ~~was~~ <sup>Kermit put the</sup> ~~put~~ <sup>Last year</sup> They'd ~~been~~ <sup>scout</sup> ~~ed~~ Glacier for a ski-ascent route. Trial and error had eliminated most ways, ~~proposed~~ <sup>suggested</sup> one excellent possibility. I was invited to join the next attempt <sup>starting tomorrow</sup> on boots or skis, as I pleased. Again I felt flattered, but with Huckleberry in my bag did not consider the notion preposterous. I pondered the implications.

Unlike Eldorado, Glacier was a mountain I knew, having seen it from distant summits, most recently Huckleberry, and close up from the ridge of Sulphur in 1946 — my northernmost venture into the Cascades. The peak ~~indisputably~~ <sup>definite</sup> was a major, almost precisely <sup>two</sup> miles high, surpassed in Washington only by Rainier, Adams, and Baker.

There was no guarantee we'd make the top — the route might not go. Yet in that case I'd lose nothing but a ~~chance~~ <sup>dubious</sup> chance at obscure Eldorado.

the summit was a half-mile farther from sealevel than I'd ever climbed.  
Perhaps the route would go but not me. Well, I'd thereby ~~climbed~~ climbed.

~~my limitations~~ never in future be nagged by the thought I'd failed to push myself to full potential.

Suppose the route and I both went. Wouldn't it be wonderful to treasure a volcano through all my super-hiker ~~to~~ <sup>years</sup> to come?

However, winning or losing Glacier was not the ~~heart~~ <sup>core</sup> of the matter. <sup>Fundamentally it</sup> ~~It~~ reduced to a test of nerve. I was being offered a bonus opportunity to qualify for Rainier. Actually attempting Der Meisterberg was unthinkable, but to maintain respectability in the climbing community — at Bagley where I had to live, if not in the club I could leave any time — I was <sup>compelled</sup> ~~forced~~ to play out the game.

~~Success on Glacier~~ <sup>irrevocably</sup> wouldn't ~~necessarily~~ commit me to Rainier — I could come down with a bad cold, sprain an ankle, <sup>eat some bad oysters,</sup> ~~murder a superfluous relative to compel my attendance at a funeral and a~~ ~~gambler.~~

Examined from every standpoint, Glacier ~~couldn't be~~ ~~much~~ ~~was~~ the only honorable path. So Betty went with the mob to Eldorado and I went with the Bagley bunch.

<sup>morning</sup> Saturday brought <sup>immediate</sup> ~~quick~~ regrets. When Kermit picked me up I <sup>1939 Buick</sup> was one of six people, plus packs, stuffed in his ~~sedan~~ sedan. We couldn't move, could hardly breathe. Why hadn't he accepted my offer of the V-8 as supplementary transportation? Grumbings among fellow sardines who knew him of old gave the answer — he was thrifty. The Mountaineer rule was for each passenger to pay the car-owner a penny a mile. Was it the penny rather than my personality that led Kermit to invite me?

I learned we were not headed directly to Glacier. Kermit was applying for a professorship at the college in Bellingham and instead of making an appointment for Wednesday or Friday had thriftily arranged one for Saturday; Dick, whose mouth was as big as Kermit's, loudly wondered if he was charging us a penny a mile for the side-trip.

Our long wait in Bellingham, while Kermit ducked into a gas-station restroom to put on suit and tie, then met with the college president, made us ravenous for overdue lunch. But <sup>afterward</sup> he stonily refused to stop at a restaurant and we had to stave off pangs with ryetack and cheese, miserable fare when whizzing by hamburger stands. Dick explained his pal Kermie hadn't seen the inside of a restaurant since the price of a hamburger skyrocketed to 15¢.

Appropriately for the Fourth of July, the overloaded car popped thin-treaded tires like a string of firecrackers; after both spares blew we spent hours beside the road while Kermit fiddled with tire irons and cold patches and pump. Dick asked when he was going to stop buying tires at a wrecking yard for two bits apiece.

At 4 o'clock we reached the end of the Whitechuck River road. <sup>By then</sup> Dick had <sup>diverted</sup> ~~switched anger~~ <sup>bile</sup> from Kermit to the U. S. Forest Service. On his first hike up the Whitechuck, with the Scouts in 1940, he'd hoisted pack right by the junction with the Sauk River. In 8 years the loggers had devastated 9 miles of the valley and were continuing inexorably upstream; we parked <sup>(and thus all of us)</sup> in a raw clearcut. Already Dick had lost a whole <sup>day's worth</sup> ~~lot~~ <sup>trail.</sup> of wildland. If we

returned next year the ~~time~~<sup>hike</sup> to our planned camp wouldn't be 9 1/2 miles but 8 or 7, and in a few years more, 0. This afternoon we would walk a doomed forest. Sick with the helpless fury I'd felt staring <sup>down</sup> into the ruins of Silver Creek, I asked Dick what ~~people~~<sup>be done</sup> could ~~do~~<sup>^</sup> to stop the obscenity. "Outside of making Glacier Peak a national park," he said bitterly, "Not a goddamn thing."

At 8 o'clock, <sup>Saturday night,</sup> having rushed <sup>through the forest</sup> ~~along the trail~~ with too little leisure <sup>and huge</sup> to say proper farewells to ancient <sup>^</sup> Douglas firs and hemlocks and cedars, <sup>3300-foot</sup> we arrived at <sup>^</sup> Kennedy Hot Springs. Dick's brother and three friends had been there for hours; the group was shaping up as practically a Mountaineer mob and the invitation no longer seemed much of a compliment.

At 5 <sup>o'clock Sunday morning,</sup> ~~when we should~~<sup>we</sup> ~~have~~ been arising to climb, no sign of life came from sackbound Bagleyites, not even Everest-worthy Kermit. Why not? Because a light rain had begun; one thing you could say for The Mountaineers, it took more than a drizzle to discourage them.

Gray <sup>day</sup> ~~morning~~ drearily half-lit forest. Sky dripped, trees dripped, and the bunch settled down to cook breakfast — and cook, and cook, and cook. I walked the footlog over the river to the hot springs and watched ~~and~~ several dozen mountain goats slopping up steaming iron-red ooze — my best view ever of goats and doubtless the weekend's climax because I'd never in hell get out of the woods (with these sluggards) And it would be my luck for The Mountaineers, including Betty, to make Eldorado.

When breakfast was finished the Bagleyites commenced an elaborate lunch that obviously would continue to supertime. <sup>sullenly</sup> I packed rucksack and headed toward the trail to 5700-foot Lake Byrne, which would be snowed in and fogged in but at least would work off frustration. Kermit asked if I wouldn't rather go up the mountain ~~with him~~. What for? To see if there was a route out of the trees onto the ice. Why? So we could climb tomorrow if the weather was better. Well, now!

pulled a handful of sandwich from his mouth and

At 2 o'clock, rain having ceased, five of us climbed ~~the~~ steep trail to about 4200 feet, then struck off into untracked forest; a scattering of very old blazes showed Kermit wasn't the first to have this idea. <sup>One by one the</sup> ~~the~~ others dropped out ~~and he~~ and I continued, at 6000 feet breaking from alpine scrub onto open snowfields. Clouds were thinning below, allowing glimpses of gloomy-dark valley. Above was whiteness-grayness, no hint of a mountain. We plugged steps in snow along a series of shelf-basins, then the ridge crest, and crevasses dimly appeared ahead. At 7000 feet the ridge ran into the still-invisible mountain and doubt was resolved. In ~~excited~~ <sup>excitedly</sup> German gibberish Kermit explained that from here we easily could traverse the west side of the peak and intersect the regular south-side route, which he'd done the year before. If the weather improved, we had ourselves a major.

That evening, washing dishes in Kennedy Creek, I <sup>noted the white-rushing</sup> ~~felt a sudden~~ ~~strange radiance~~ raised eyes from pots and pans, and far above ~~white~~ ~~torrent and~~ green-black trees saw a shimmer of sunset-pink snow —  
Gletschergipfel!

water suddenly glowing strangely



Monday

Precisely at the agreed <sup>^</sup>rising hour of 2:30, not having really slept, only dozed, I made the night hideous with screams and ran about the camp harassing the four who'd decided to climb with Kermit and me. Not among them was Dick, who awoke long enough to tell me to shut up, adding that nobody but a nut would go 7000 feet up and down a mountain and hike out 9 1/2 miles and drive home all in one day. I was trembling-eager to start but Kermit <sup>^</sup>couldn't move without cooking a pot of Zoom. At 3:20 we finally set out by flashlight, stars bright in ~~the~~ treetops.

But dawn was dull and <sup>upon</sup> ~~we~~ emerged <sup>ing</sup> from forest we <sup>^</sup>~~discovered~~ <sup>SAW</sup> a thick stratum at <sup>about</sup> 12,000 feet and gray snakes coiling up every valley. In our narrow zone of clear air the wind was <sup>winter-</sup> <sup>^</sup>vicious and snow hard-frozen. We paused to strap crampons to boots.

It was a race with the weather. Rarely halting, and then only to blow for a minute, we stamped steadily up the west side of the volcano. Low clouds rose, high clouds dropped. Never had I been <sup>as far above saltwater as</sup> 8000 feet and now, gasping to keep <sup>up</sup> ~~pace~~ with ~~myself~~ Kermit, I was at 9000. Northward, where Betty and the mob probably were just hitting the Eldorado down-trail, Baker alone stood clearly above and below converging darknesses.

We rounded onto southwest slopes and through shifting holes in the cloud-muddle saw Rainier and Stuart and Chimney Rock. We gazed down on nearby summits higher than any I'd climbed. Mountains so tall should be above me, to look down upon them was disrespectful, perhaps dangerously blasphemous. One might accidentally step off the top of the world and be doomed to climb eternally into hostile clouds.

Wind was frightening-loud as we cramponed the final gully. The ominous ceiling nearly touched the summit and valley clouds overtopped every lower peak, coalescing in a bleak sea from which evil squalls were billowing and beginning to go prowling.

As we came onto flat summit snows <sup>an enormous</sup> black-hearted storm reared up, swallowed the entire western quadrant, and moved swiftly toward Glacier to chew us up and spit us out.

I called Kermit's attention to the menace <sup>through</sup> and he yelled ~~the~~ the gale, "DOWN! DOWN! DOWN!" One <sup>whirling</sup> ~~minute~~ minute at 10,541 feet, one <sup>frantic</sup> ~~survey~~ survey of the scene, and at 10:20 in the violent morning we plunged down.

The summit vanished as we ran — carefully, what with <sup>ten</sup> ~~the~~ iron daggers on each boot. The horrifying storm swerved, missed Glacier, and we relaxed a bit. When we reached Kermit's skis, which he'd cached at 9000 feet in recognition it was no fit day to ride boards from the summit, he gleefully announced, "Now the fun begins!" Yes, it did. We <sup>booters</sup> ~~skiers~~ enjoyed watching the skier chatter across ice until eyeballs were rattling in sockets and he quietly returned skis to back, crampons to boots. We descended into blowing fog, wandered confused and worried, then found our ridge and sheltering trees and at 2 o'clock sagged to sweet earth in the safe old home of Kennedy forest.

Everything had happened so fast — 10 1/2 hours from bottom to top to bottom again — that the day's immensity was an undigested lump,

, which had blizzard and frostbite and loss of route and murder written all over it,

and so remained as I packed gear <sup>into Trapper Nelson</sup> and with a meager half-hour rest headed out. Dick was right — 9 1/2 miles were more <sup>extra</sup> exercise than <sup>a Glacier climber</sup> needed. At 6:30 I ~~staggered to the car~~ <sup>by the car</sup> and fell to the ground. Here in the low valley, body utterly destroyed, I began to understand how high I had climbed.

At midnight, heavy pack on back, I slowly ascended the final pitch of the trip, the ~~three~~ <sup>two</sup> grueling flights of steep and narrow steps to our garret. There Betty told how the Climbing Course kept intact its miserable 1948 record. Minutes from camp the mob disintegrated <sup>under the punishment of</sup> fog and rain and freezing wind; ~~and~~ though a snail's-pace advance was continued for hours, nobody, not even the elite scouts, got anywhere near Eldorado and it was a miracle anyone survived the retreat.

And meanwhile I had won Gletschergipfel.

In following days I strode the campus <sup>two</sup> miles tall, a giant pitying sealevel dwarfs.

5 March 1974

92

1948

Chapter 8

### HALFWAY TO THE SKY

Master of my fate, captain of my soul — what a pile of crap! There's no such thing as free will. Granted, nobody physically forced me to pursue the logic of my doom by signing up for Rainier, but everybody conspired — Monie and The Mountaineers, Kermit and the Bagleyites, the Boy Scouts and the whole damn world.

I did what was expected of me and had a right to expect something in return — mercy. Surely the Climbing Committee would give me a reprieve if not a full pardon, taking into consideration I was a sick man and abject coward.

Admittedly I'd climbed a major, but a minor major, only 10,541 feet high, 3869 feet below Columbia Crest, and those last thousands of feet are the tough ones. Rainier rises 2 3/4 miles above the tides. Even healthy Puget Sounders ascending on a weekend from sealevel homes to thin-aired upper slopes grow listless, nauseated, dizzy, sleepy. Some have odd dreams and visions. Or even faint. And I wasn't healthy, I could die.

Monday evening, July 12, Monie called from the clubroom, where the Committee had just completed its star-chamber "ax session" to sort out certain losers from possible winners. I was among the chosen. She was

exultant — and why not, now she was to savor the final jest by killing me?

I couldn't blame Glacier; because of the Adams storm the Committee had waived the major rule and a dozen other first-year students also were accepted — probably to be obliterated in the catastrophe for which the disasters of spring had been the overture.

Friday afternoon, July 16, my 23rd birthday, I picked up my one assigned passenger, a chattering-giggling teenage idiot named Richard, and drove to 5500-foot Paradise. Past rushing before eyes, I remembered how in 1931, after Thanksgiving dinner at Longmire Inn, we hiked far up those meadows to the top of a peak. Later, in school, I bragged to the teacher that I'd climbed Rainier and she politely expressed doubts and the class laughed and I got mad. Eventually I realized my folks were kidding me.

I'd tried for the mountain once and failed. Seventeen years later, here I was again. *Déjà vu, déjà vu.*

I completed the summit-climber form at the ranger station, listing my alpine exploits and next of kin. Next of kin! The landlady would yell "Phone!" up the stairwell and Betty would run down from the garret and hear some total stranger say . . .

The ranger inspected my gear, spread out in the parking lot. I winced as he pounded the pavement with my \$12 ax, chuckling, "Last week I broke three axes in one party. Better here than on the mountain! They should have thanked me, but they didn't."

The Idiot and I loafed around the porch of Paradise Inn licking ice cream cones, watching tourists click Brownies and stuff nickels in pay

telescopes for close looks at glaciers; back in Iowa they'd spend the winter boring friends. We drove down to Longmire Campground to join the assembling party, cook supper, try to sleep.

In a bright Saturday morning I left Paradise at 7:15 with the crowd of 45, about a quarter survivors of February's beginner mob, the others veterans. Leader Ed was a former Rainier guide and Mountain Trooper; his second-in-command was Chairman Cam, whom I'd not seen since Adams.

The day's destination was 11,500-foot Camp Hazard, 6000 feet above Paradise and higher than all but two peaks in the state, Adams and Rainier itself. A dip along the route brought the total elevation gain to 6500 feet. With heavy packs. Into the zone of queer air. Monie had told me the traditional rule: if you make Hazard the summit is a cinch. By no means everybody makes Hazard.

Babbling bunches of comrades, silent loners (me), climbed snowcovered meadows past the wooded knoll of Alta Vista (was that my 1931 conquest?) to the base of Panorama Point (or that?) and glissaded to the Nisqually Glacier, the group loosening from a tight pack to a half-mile string. I didn't try to keep up with the frontrunners. This was not a day for competing but for surviving. To finish last would be satisfactory — the important thing was to finish. I maintained a steady, conservative rest step, nibbling by inches at the thousands upon thousands of feet.

From the far side of the glacier the way ascended the Nisqually Snowfinger through cliffs of volcanic rock and morainal till, then proceeded to the ridge crest and across upper slopes of the Wilson Glacier.

As early as Alta Vista I wanted to halt but denied myself, and kept denying myself, and grew constantly stronger, impelled by a building elation. Four hours I rest-stepped without pause and at 11:15 reached crumbling towers of The Castle, 9500 feet. In a single haul I'd gained 4500 feet and only 2000 remained — and the whole afternoon to grind them out. By God! I felt purely fine and tremendously confident and sat superbly content in sun-warmed rocks to eat lunch. Breezes were mild, the sky decorated by pretty fluffs of amiable cumulus and here and there a majestic cumulonimbus. I'd have enjoyed a nap but decided to wait, camp was so close.

A bit after noon I shouldered pack and happily started up the wide ridge-straddling whiteness of The Turtle. But something had gone terribly wrong. Cooled muscles wouldn't loosen. Walking didn't wake me, only deepened drowsiness. Lunch was a lump in my gut. Pack had doubled in weight. Lungs couldn't get enough air.

A few steps and I rested, resuming at a slower pace to let legs and lungs settle into easy rhythm. They refused. The 2000 feet would require maybe 5000 steps and I could scarcely take 10 without stopping to gasp.

No need to despair, not yet. An advance group had left Paradise at dawn and was far above, but many who set out with me were far below, just emerging from the Snowfinger. I passed others who had raced ahead earlier and now were humped over, sadly studying boots. As I paused to wipe sweat from goggles I saw companions collapsing face down in the snow.

. . . An attractive idea, stuffing face in snow. Sun is blistering.  
The Turtle is an oven. Strength oozes from pores.

A hurricane from the poles sweeps the oven. While broiling on a spit I drip icicles of quick-frozen sweat.

Wind drops and sun sizzles away ice and thawed meat spoils.

Now sweating, now shivering, I rest-step by pitiable wrecks sitting in the snow mourning the loss of dear friends — themselves. I cannot help. Each must make his own solitary way.

At 11,000 feet I topple into a rockpile, aware the esophagus is a two-way street and keeping mouth pointed away from body to avoid a mess.

Was that a flapping of giant wings? Or was I dreaming? Neither deep asleep nor fully awake, I am drifting through a misty mid-region where nightmares dare to prowl in daylight.

If I die nobody will notice. The survivors will come off the mountain and Betty will ask and they will say they never heard of me. I don't blame them, that's the way it is up here. Only by achieving Hazard can I be saved, can I return to sealevel and Betty.

This morning I was in the low valley breathing rich air and this afternoon I am higher than Glacier and there's not enough oxygen to clear fuzz from brain and a vertical half-mile of mountain remains above with less sustenance at each step.

The rest stabilizes lunch if not head and I again creep up, and up, and up into a realm more of sky than Earth. At 3 o'clock the ridge of



rubble and snow ends in the Kautz Ice Cliff. Camp cannot be above the cliff, must be here. But where are the people? Bodies are scattered amid the disorder of frost-wedged rocks, cold and silent bodies lying where the plague felled them. Some have not yet succumbed to contagion, are tottering about in the gale, parka hoods hiding faces. Who are they? Maybe not dying companions at all, maybe hooded Killers that lurk in crevasses and when we mortals invade their domain come out to eat our souls.

I must fall down forever at high camp, 11,500 feet, farthest I ever have climbed from the salt sea that gave birth to life, to me, closest I ever have approached the sterile sky that is the enemy of mankind, of me. Let them eat my soul . . .

Long, long I lay inert — breathing, breathing, breathing — while whine of wind gradually shivered away visions.

I found a low rock wall built by some previous sky-pioneer, protecting a soft bed of pebbles and sand, and snuggled in. I looked down the ridge to sullen cloud wisps, and down, down ice and snow to green meadows and forests, and out, out to the Goat Rocks, roots of an ancient volcano, and tall Adams and St. Helens, and cloud masses covering Oregon and the Pacific Ocean, where the sun was sliding.

In a nearby nook Chairman Cam stared over thousands of square miles of Earth, philosophizing profoundly, I supposed, until he dolefully spoke (to me, to himself, to whatever gods may be?): "Why do I keep coming up here? Why can't I learn? I'm always sick at high camp, sick all the way to the top, sick all the way down."

Leader Ed came to sit by Cam and they began planning rope teams. Some names on the roster were motionless specks far below. And the violent retching around us cut through loud wind. Anywhere else in our civilized nation such agony would bring the Red Cross rushing, ~~to render~~ ~~service~~. At Hazard, though, everybody was sick, nobody was rushing anywhere for any reason. When climbers stirred at all they moved deliberately, like aged folk with brittle bones, or corpses arisen from the grave after putrefying a month.

How could this suffering band climb 3869 more feet? The summit was a fantasy. Ed and Cam nevertheless drew up a list of three-man teams, agreeing to let ropeleaders worry in the morning, if morning ever came, about who made camp and who expired in the night.

Fourteen ropeleaders were selected but one more was needed. The effort of thinking was making Cam sicker, he obviously wanted Ed to go away and leave him alone. He glanced despairingly over the rockpile, saw me near, and said, "Oh hell, give Manning a team."

Living one breath at a time, suddenly I was promoted from the ranks! Of the hundreds who started the Course in February only a dozen were at Hazard, or struggling toward it, and only one had been chosen to lead a rope. I couldn't die now. I had responsibilities.

I tried to cram a tomorrow-sustaining supper down my throat — but what malignant deceiver seduced me into believing baby food pampers a delicate appetite? The stench of chopped beef flipped my stomach, the look of strained peas made me think I'd already thrown up. Aided by

pineapple juice I managed to swallow the chocolate custard.

I gazed out to the everywhere sky — who would have thought the old world had so much air in it? Seen from 11,500 feet the forests and rivers were disconnected absolutely from my bed on the shore of outer space.

I crawled into my bag and wrapped up in liferaft sail. And then morbidly watched neighbor Cam stuff as much super-long body in bag as would fit and cover leftover shoulders and head with sweater and parka and tarp. I forgave him for <sup>Lundin</sup> ~~Commonwealth Basin~~ sadism.

Tiny orange ball fell into ocean. Summit flame of Adams snuffed out. Sky glow lingered above, reflecting <sup>brightness of</sup> high snows — Rainier always is the last of the Northwest to go dark. The close-looming, skull-white ice cliff leaned over camp. Faint lights of cheerful Paradise sparkled in meadowland night.

. . . Paradise is not for the likes of us. Our fate lies elsewhere. Sky glow fades. Stars race through ominous swift mists. Wind assaults foundations of the mountain. Camp Hazard has neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.

A brilliance! A boom! I snap awake. Oh dear God, the Russians have pounced on Seattle and the garret is gone forever and the last war has begun. Another brilliance-boom, and another. Not The Bomb — worse. Creep deeper in bag. Hailstones batter liferaft sail. Roaring wind soon will rip stones from cliffs and roll them around the sky like billiard balls, snatch dreamers off Earth to fly through lightning and thunder. I press cells of flesh into minerals of rock.

I doze — and again awake in terror. What horrid noise is that? The shriek of a lost soul staring into the pit of Hell. By flashlight I consult watch — 3:30. It's the rising call.

Someone has blundered but not mine to reason why, not mine to make reply. Storm is the normal condition of the sky and a man who loves peace should not venture above the flowers.

Still deep in bag I open a can of fruit cocktail and shudder as a cold grape slithers down throat, sticks halfway. I gulp. Will it stay? I study a peach slice but with such reinforcement the grape surely would rise in rebellion. I stretch stocking cap farther down over ears, crawl from bag and tarp, teeth chattering, and pull on war-surplus Navy parka and frozen boots. I lash crampons and don mittens and brace against brutal wind. Lightning flashes amid rolling thunderheads, revealing doom-wild clouds swirling over ice cliff above.

I bully ropemates from sacks and we tie up and report to Leader Ed. Other teams are still partly or entirely moribund and we stand shivering while Ed and Cam perform the miracle of shouting life into climbers who seem fit only for burial. Incredibly, all 45 are on their feet.

Mingling in the wail of gale are howls and curses and whines and moans and whimpers. Ropes tangle, rocks rattle, flashlight beams aimlessly probe blackness. . .

At 4:30, as night was thinning, Ed descended rubble to the snow gully under the Kautz Ice Cliff. Cam followed with his team and I with mine. I waited on the near side of the gully as the others crossed, clearing

the way for a quick dash — <sup>two</sup>2 years before, a Mountaineer party missed by minutes being wiped out here by an avalanche of ice blocks as big as box cars.

Once over the gully we dropped around the base of a lava cliff and entered the Kautz Chute, a narrow channel of the Kautz Glacier plunging between enclosing walls. The rising sun warmed white crests of Adams and St. Helens and Hood, tamed the gale, dispelled night fears. We were two score sturdy heroes rhythmically crunching crampons into crisp snow and our leaders were wise and brave. And I was a ropeleader!

Lowlands lay hidden beneath a sun-gleaming sea of cloud, only volcanoes and the nearby Tatoosh Range riding above the swells. But the dreaded cloud cap of Rainier, which throughout the night had swept the summit with violent storm, melted as we approached, the last rainbow-rich mists ~~rolling~~ <sup>sweeping</sup> over Wapowety Cleaver.

The head of the Chute tilted too steeply for cramponing, required stepcutting. Ed struck up the right side into a jungle of ice towers, swinging ax with the easy skill of an old guide. To avoid a bottleneck, Cam cut a second line of steps in the center, where a closed crevasse provided an upward angling ramp that needed only minor improvements. He told me to cut a third route between Ed's and his.

Again a field promotion, from ropeleader to routemaker! I chopped a ladderway up a gully until it pinched out, traversed a serac ~~to~~ to another gully. But as I entered, ice rubble battered my head. Cam was crossing above me and every stroke of his ax loosed a volley. When the

gully was quiet I cut to its top, traversed a serac to another gully — and another assault by Cam's garbage.

Cam's path was the fastest and his team, followed by most of the party, emerged atop the Chute while I was still chopping. From third rope, a position earned by loyal eagerness at Hazard, I'd fallen near the rear. And not a single other team used my beautifully-crafted staircase. It wasn't fair, it made me sick.

We were above the Chute on smooth slopes of the upper Kautz, 12,500 feet high, and with the stimulation of routemaking replaced by bitterness, I was sick. Slack accumulated in the rope behind me as disrespectful Number Two walked faster than his leader. I had to yell at him to keep the rope stretched out and I'd no breath to spare for yelling. I hated Number Two but despised Number Three, Idiot Richard, for his running exchange of adolescent inanities with fellow teenagers; every giggling shout made me sicker. I called a halt.

I breathed, and breathed, and tentatively sipped grape juice. Stomach did not erupt, rather seemed grateful for the thought. Spots cleared from eyes. Grape juice raced through arteries, feeding sugar and oxygen to muscles. Onward and upward, and now I found the proper rhythm, one deep breath for each deliberate step. Though we barely moved, no teams were passing us and we were passing some.

Wind was cool-delicious, sun was life and hope and glory. The cloud-sea was rising, submerging all but the highest Tatoosh peaks, islets poking through cloud-waves. The Goat Rocks stood higher, and

Adams and St. Helens higher still; beyond the Columbia River in Oregon boldly rose Hood and Jefferson and dimly, 175 miles away, the Three Sisters.

At 13,000 feet the route left the Kautz Glacier, crossing the uppermost rocks of Wapowety Cleaver. We rested in boulders feathered with hoarfrost, fragile faery sculptures. The Tatoosh and Goat Rocks had been finally drowned and St. Helens was engulfed as we watched. Only Adams and Hood were left, and one more: now at last we saw Columbia Crest, a sharp edge dividing brightest of whites from truest of blues.

We traversed the top of the Nisqually Glacier, detouring around a frightening-huge bergschrund whose interior blue twilight deepened toward full black night of the unguessable bottom. Slowly, slowly we plodded to the 14,000-foot saddle between Point Success and Columbia Crest. One final white rise.

I was breathing not once for each step but three times and lungs were weary of pumping worthless air in and out, in and out, and at this standing-still pace the crest was forever unattainable.

Yet the sky grew. Once above, then below, now it was all around. And now no white remained, only an infinity of blue denser and cleaner than Plato dreamt of in his philosophy.

. . . And if I die this moment in the middle of the sky, leaning against the purifying gale, here in space where centrifugal force of Earth's rotation easily can fling a mote of humanity over the continents, what cause would I have for complaint?

It is 10 o'clock in the grandest morning of the world and legs are solid, heart steady, mind whirling not in fear but from the joy of belonging to the wild sky.

I am 14,410 feet, plus 5 feet 11 1/2 inches, above Puget Sound where I was born, taller than all but a handful of the millions of North Americans. My life plans once were based on the assumption I'd never make 25 but I am 23 years and 2 days old and the way things are going maybe I'll never die . . .

We signed the register book and sat on warm rocks of the crater rim, partly sheltered from the wind. The cloud-sea reached out to every horizon. The colors of reality were white snow and cloud and blue sky and brown volcanic rock, green utterly drowned. All Earth, all humankind, were gone. Rainier remained. And us.

Steam leaked from rocks — the volcano lived. And so did I.

I was alive, enormously tall, and remembering dreams abandoned for years.

As I drank grape juice, Idiot Richard opened a can of dead fish and began gobbling ~~chamandy~~.

I might be immortal but only if the stinking sardines didn't kill me on the spot. Exercising rights of ropeleadership, I called for the descent to begin.



25 March 1974

1948

Chapter <sup>9</sup>~~8~~

### BUDDY, BUDDY, WHO'S GOT A BUDDY?

Shortly after noon, joyfully breathing Hazard's rich air, I gladly said farewell forever to Number Two and goodbye for a while to Number Three, the Idiot, whom I'd later have to endure several hours in the V-8. Hard labor was over, there only remained a relaxed saunter. The last laggards reached camp and the yell went out we were free to go home. At 1 o'clock, having finished off my grape juice and even nibbled a candy bar, I began.

The rules of descent were traditional, simple. As on the ascent we'd be unroped, crevasses never having been observed in the sections of the Wilson and Nisqually Glaciers on our route. We could leave Hazard whenever we liked and set any pace we pleased, the sole restrictions being we must stick to the established track and travel in "buddy" teams of two or more. Leader Ed and Chairman Cam would rearguard, sweeping the mountain.

I didn't know or like anyone well enough to want him for a buddy; anyway, people were leaving constantly and a crowd surely was an acceptable substitute. In a single sitting glissade I swooped 2000 vertical feet, a third of the distance to Paradise, diving from bright sunshine into the cloud-sea and deepening darkness, dimness. I shot past several halted, confused-looking buddies.

Then I, too, stopped. Glissade grooves continued into fog, leading to what obviously, from the shouts and laughter, was a large group. However, my inner eye seemed to recognize the surroundings as those of The Castle. If so, the correct route didn't drop steeply right toward the (unseen) gang but veered left past (invisible) towers and sidehilled the ridge slopes.

As a first-year climber I was impressed by so many wise and happy heroes being where they were, yet as a 10-year hiker I'd learned to heed my inner eye. I tried to discuss the situation with potential buddies but the laughter was irresistible and one by one they slid down to join what hereinafter will be referred to as Splinter Group #1.

Veering left, alone, I found, or thought I did, our ascent track and was delighted to see my opinion shared when I caught up with five buddies led by a veteran named Rudy. We sidehilled together in thickening fog, then glissaded a long, fast slope. At the bottom Rudy commenced sidehilling again but after a short way my inner eye said we probably were at or near a key turn in the route, left and down into the Nisqually Snowfinger. I called a question forward. The buddies proceeded straight ahead at high speed and the girl immediately in front of me, another veteran, disdainfully answered over her shoulder, "Rudy knows where he's going." I stopped and the climbers hereinafter referred to as Splinter Group #2 instantly vanished.

Now I was alone for real in darkening gloom. And now I dared not move because if I missed the Snowfinger entrance to the left I'd stumble into the dangerously-crevassed Wilson Icefall and if I missed to the right

I'd teeter atop moraine cliffs falling precipitously to the Nisqually. Also, it was possible Rudy did know where he was going. It was even possible Splinter Group #1 knew where it was going.

Much time passed — three cigarettes worth. I explored short distances this way and that and found old bootprints — but whose boots? Obviously somebody was lost; Splinter Groups #1 and #2 couldn't both be on course. On a day when some were lost, all might be lost, no tracks could be trusted.

What mainly worried me was lack of a buddy; I was carrying a rope and two of us could tie in and get to Paradise somehow but alone I was helpless. Then, peering upward, I dimly made out a pair of climbers. I yelled and they answered.

They were awfully slow, apparently heeling down instead of glissading — why on earth would they throw away so fine a slide? Then they paused for an interminable rest and that was annoying — why didn't they join me for sociability? They sounded so friendly, too, answering my every shout.

I was disillusioned with my two buddies even before I recognized them from the ascent and realized why they were so slow. Two rocks. Two rocks and an echo.

By now I'd been a half-hour or more alone <sup>in world-consuming, bone-chilling fog.</sup> and did the only logical thing — I panicked. But as cold sweat was starting to flow, genuine voices <sup>materialized from grey nothingness and</sup> came from above and a gang of 10 solid people <sup>ripped</sup> and roared past me into the Snowfinger, which was exactly below, precisely where my inner

eye suspected.

My troubles were over with so many buddies, including Leader Ed and Chairman Cam. Not until later did I wonder about the discrepancy in numbers between the 10 "mountain-sweepers" plus Rudy's 5 and the full 45-member strength of our party.

Visibility was less than 50 feet as we galloped <sup>through premature twilight</sup> across the Nisqually Glacier and scrambled up the far moraine into snowfields a simple skate and hop from the parking lot. Ed and Cam dissolved but plenty of buddies remained. Most turned sharply right, into the valley of a little creek leading in the presumed direction of Paradise.

Once more I stopped. A month earlier, returning from the Nisqually practice, I'd learned something about this little valley that was not known, or not remembered, by Splinter Group #3, which melted into fog down the creek.

Again I was buddyless, close to (unseen) Alta Vista and only minutes from Paradise — if I could figure where Paradise was. Avoiding the tricky creek I traversed some, descended some, staring into dense grayness trying to spot the Inn, listening for sounds of automobiles.

A buddy <sup>suddenly took shape</sup> ~~materialized~~ in the mist and we discussed the options but couldn't agree. He, hereinafter referred to as Splinter Group #4, chose to traverse a bit before descending; I decided to descend a little before traversing.

Immediately after our separation the Inn <sup>crystallized from the void</sup> ~~took shape~~ below and at

6:30, 5 1/2 hours from Hazard, I conquered Paradise. Apologetically I entered the ranger station, afraid searchers might already be out looking for me.

Not at all — I was an early arrival. Mountain-sweeping rearguards Ed and Cam had checked in with two buddies but 40 of our party were still wandering somewhere in the fog — the fog and now the <sup>cold, miserable</sup> drizzle. How could this be? The expression on Cam's face reminded me of Harborview Hospital, when he'd been speculating if any bodies remained in the Lundin avalanche.

I washed up and changed clothes and had a milkshake at the Inn and settled down to wait.

Splinter Group #4 appeared, glumly trudging up the highway from Edith Creek Basin. He'd traversed too far and in descending completely missed Paradise.

Splinter Group #3 arrived by ones and twos. They had followed the little creek nearly to the Nisqually Glacier into which it drains before realizing they'd been swindled. They climbed wearily to Paradise by various routes and straggled into the parking lot from many downhill points.

Idiot Richard was among them and we piled in the V-8 and headed home. At the Nisqually River ~~Bridge~~, below the snout of the Nisqually Glacier, we saw Splinter Group #2 sitting on the railing in drenching rain, trying to hitch a ride <sup>up</sup> to Paradise. The decent thing would have been to help them but I drove on; a soaking wouldn't hurt the smart-asses.

What about Splinter Group #1, the bulk of the party and still not at Paradise when Idiot and I left? I didn't learn their fate for weeks and some questions never were answered.

It is easy to understand the side-trip glissade, a seemingly logical continuation of the 2000-foot slide. The group's being bypassed by the rearguard also is easily understood, the fog being thick and this stupid side-trip invisible and inconceivable to climbers running down the correct route.

Some members (#1-A) claimed they had so much surplus energy they took the extra glissade for fun, knowing it wasn't the right way; if so, why didn't they leave their packs at the top? (Idiot Richard was a #1-A before he became a #3 and in his case the story <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ credible. The laughter <sup>I'd heard</sup> doubtless was largely his.) Others (#1-B) admitted they were misled; at the bottom, finding the terrain unfamiliar, they climbed back up. According to unverified rumor, some (#1-C) dumbly plunged to <sup>meadows of</sup> Van Trump Park before turning around to begin a despairing 2500-foot return ascent. It was said the sharper of them (#1-D) made the best of a bad job by picking up the Van Trump trail ~~in meadows~~ and hiking it to the highway, but no one ever so confessed.

Whatever the details, at the moment I greeted Betty in our garret some of my companions hadn't yet attained Paradise.

Monie had said about the Kautz route: if you make Camp Hazard, the summit of Rainier is a cinch. Standing on Columbia Crest, I felt it must

also be true: if you make Hazard, Paradise is a cinch.

It ain't necessarily so.

30 March 1974

1949

Chapter 10

ONCE MORE UNTO THE PEAKS, DEAR FRIENDS, FOR ENGLAND AND ST. GEORGE!

Days and weeks at a time, summer and winter alike, Seattle sits beneath low (gray) clouds, sees neither sun nor stars nor horizons. Natives go grayly about gray business, immigrants from California despondently inspect armpits for moss, those from the Great Plains develop acute claustrophobia. Then the north wind blows the sky clean and blue and The Mountain emerges, the biggest damn thing in America.

Except for these moments, <sup>of miracle</sup> lowlanders ~~for the most part~~ <sup>generally</sup> ignore Rainier, <sup>treating it as</sup> ~~considering it~~ a banality, no more awesome than the sun. To hikers, though, who sweat <sup>and pant to a summit</sup> ~~at the top of the mountain~~ a mile above the sea and <sup>are confronted by</sup> ~~are confronted by~~ the stupendous white heap <sup>rising</sup> ~~standing~~ nearly two miles higher, the shining crest perfectly symbolizes the unattainable. I'd long been used to the taunting mass, had gotten over being bothered. So it was there, so what? So was the moon. If you can't hike it, screw it.

However, the death-fearing hiker who left Paradise on a Saturday descended changed from Columbia Crest on the Sunday. I returned to Seattle with the dreadful strength of Tamburlaine the Great, who, from a Scythian Shepherde, by his rare and woonderfull Conquefts, became a moft puiffant and mightye Monarque, And (for his tyranny, and terrour in Warre) was tearmed, The Scourge



of God. Within me was the power of the volcano whose hot guts might burst forth any moment in a catastrophic eruption, and the power of the largest glacier system in the 48 states, and the power of the most enormous sky any groundling ever will know. In ~~the~~ Bagley Hall ~~struckdown~~, whenever I felt merely mortal, I'd only to step out the door and look south and see how high I'd climbed and ~~(the)~~ strength was renewed.

Rainier made me a one-man barbarian horde. Constance fell easily, as did Anderson and LaCrosse, which ~~both~~ had defeated our Parsons bunch in 1939. The Graywolf Ramble now would be a relaxed saunter -- in fact, practically all my beloved Olympics were <sup>simple</sup> apple-pie. For greater challenges I looked to the new range, the Cascades. Particularly I lusted after volcanoes and soon eased my appetite with 12,276-foot Adams and 10,778-foot Baker -- the latter twice, by two routes. Famous Shuksan, one of the nation's favorite calendar mountains, went under my boots. Filling odd weekends of rest and recuperation were Denny, Tolmie, and Granite and tours high on the Nisqually Glacier to whack lines of steps up seracs. When heavy snows of early November closed the highlands I had 20 summits in my 1948 bag. Even Betty, frequently content with a hike to basecamp, had 5, including her first volcano, Adams.

So, why settle for super-hiker? Climbing wasn't that much different from ridge-running, was no more mysterious than clambering about in trees. As on trails and in trees, the basic tools were hands and feet. The ice ax ~~was~~ essentially was a device for turning an arm into a third leg. The rope ~~was~~ brought a number of hands and feet together for mutual support.

The critical added ingredient, of course -- and ~~what indeed~~ what separated climbing from hiking -- was exposure. But I found tolerance for air grows quickly. In fact, once hands and feet are trusted to maintain

secure attachment to Earth, exposure becomes exhilarating. The likes of Icarus, Leonardo, Wright Brothers, and Lucky Lindy might envy the birds and build noisy machines to war against gravity. Climbers don't ask for unnatural wings, they walk through the sky, and quietly.

There were other rewards. As a hiker I considered 10 hours on the hoof a strenuous day; as a climber 16 hours were routine and 20 or 24 not unusual. Having reached total exhaustion, I now plodded, stumbled, crept another 4 or 8 hours -- and with flesh punished so severely, often edged up to a genuine mystical experience. What climbers Byron and Shelley would have been! And what poets had they been climbers!

And as a hiker I'd stoically endured the ~~crummy~~ <sup>crummy</sup> weather of my ocean-exposed home hills but frankly preferred sunshine and starlight and whenever possible avoided storms. Now I adopted the Puget Sound climbers' rule to leave town even if the world is ending, to set out from camp except during a simultaneous hurricane and earthquake, and never to retreat until the next step forward and upward can only be into the grave. ~~If one truly loves the sky, one must accept~~

~~the storms~~  
~~the storms~~  
~~the storms~~

When <sup>low</sup>landers asked the old question ("Why do you climb?") I solemnly explained that for ecstasies of self-flagellation the sport surpassed anything tried by early Christian martyrs or the Marquis de Sade. They weren't surprised, had always suspected Mallory was covering up some <sup>perversion</sup> ~~thing~~ with his <sup>joke</sup> ~~answer~~ ("Because it is there"). The ~~point~~ <sup>point</sup> was <sup>I wasn't lying</sup> ~~it was there~~ -- never had I felt so purified as at the collapsing end of a 24-hour grind. (After great pain ~~the~~ a formal feeling comes, the nerves sit ceremonious like tombs.)

As a true lover of the sky, I gloried in its "harsh passion."

evasive

Yet climbing gave still more. Atop Shuksan I gasped at the rough and icy sprawl of the North Cascades, whose existence I'd barely suspected. From Baker I was staggered by distant white giants of the British Columbia Coast Range <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ imagination I could almost see McKinley, the summit of North America. The climber's wildland was <sup>far</sup> vaster than my hiker's dreams -- and that was damn good to know, because from Silvertip I'd looked down to ruins of Silver Creek, in Gold Creek I'd battled through bones of an ancient forest freshly vandalized, <sup>along</sup> ~~on~~ the Whitechuck River I'd <sup>witnessed</sup> ~~seen~~ Dick the doom of ~~his~~ youth and thus mine. You have to keep on the run when trees are falling all around, in loggers' country you can't go home again. It was some ~~a~~ consolation to <sup>realize</sup> ~~see~~ there was enough wilderness -- of ice and rock, if not forest -- to last my lifetime.

In 1938 the Scouts had opened the high trails. Now the Climbing Course had unlocked rocks and snows and glaciers and storms and the full potential of human flesh and spirit. One evening while browsing in The Mountaineers library I came across an <sup>idea expressed by a</sup> ~~contemporary of Mallory:~~ ~~contemporary of Mallory:~~ ~~in medieval times the greatest honor that could be conferred upon an alien was the "freedom of the city,"~~ ~~and that was the way that when a person became sufficiently wise in ways of the high country he~~ <sup>is</sup> granted by the Powers the "freedom of the hills."

For these ~~enough~~ sufficient reasons 1948 was not the end. There was another, as well. Not since Lincoln High had I belonged to a group, or wanted to. But in October Cam, who'd accepted a second year as Climbing Chairman determined to restore order to the postwar-chaotic Course, invited me to be one of the nine members of the Climbing Committee -- a premature honor, I

on Baker  
I'd seen  
bulldozers  
slashing their  
way nearly  
into the  
meadows,

while speaking little,  
listening much,

thought, but part of his strategy, he explained, to fill the war-caused leader shortage by quickly training a new crop. Every week from fall through winter I attended ~~week~~ committee meetings to plan for 1949, and ~~and~~ became <sup>member</sup> firmly a/~~part~~ of a group, the group.

In February a trembling-eager multitude set forth on the rough road traveled by Betty and me the year before. No faceless mob of threatening strangers, this, but nervous novices to be offered kind encouragement, and old pals to be boisterously greeted.

From the ~~very~~ moment of reunion ~~after~~ a special camaraderie existed among those few of us from the Class of 1948 -- no more than a dozen or so -- who returned for a second go. Huckleberry was my bond with Bill, though I wasn't sure if my affection was based on pity for his school-dropout, juvenile-delinquent youth in streets of an Eastern city, <sup>on</sup> or respect for his rapid adaptation from flatlands to mountains. Red Jim, a forestry student at the University, ~~was~~ distinguished <sup>in 1948</sup> as Betty's "human toboggan" on Lundin, was, with me, a junior member of the Climbing Committee and had become a buddy over the winter. On climbs he was impossible to ~~ignore~~ ignore amid the war-surplus khaki monotony, a ~~symphony~~ symphony in green from socks to trousers to shirt to parka to cap covering red hair.

Three high-school teenagers were particularly prominent. Idiot Richard, <sup>sickened</sup> who ~~was~~ me ~~in~~ in 1948, now was a ~~constant~~ constant entertainment. For major events he supplemented spontaneous clowning with planned shows, such as appearing at a trailhead wearing double-breasted suit, white shirt and tie, shined ~~oxford~~ oxfords, slicked-down hair, flower in buttonhole, and pack. Lardy Bob, frankly aiming to be the world's greatest climber, emulated the

demigods by inventing a personal "mountain yell," producing a sound he imagined <sup>was</sup> awe-inspiring, but actually remind<sup>ed</sup> ~~ed~~ of a cow with the bellyache, a poignant "MOO-OO-OO!" Spring was his purgatory: if any snowbridge over any creek was going to collapse it would be when he was crossing; in fields of rotten snow he found unsuspected holes and tottered like a dinosaur in a tar pit, <sup>whining</sup> ~~whining~~ obscenities. Tom, envying ~~the~~ artless Idiot and Lardy, often tried to put on a teenager act but convinced ~~no~~ no one, he was too mature. Once, in a bitter <sup>moment,</sup> ~~moment,~~ he complained he'd been born an old man, incapable of childhood. Maybe that was why he sometimes displayed a filthy temper.

During the spring we survivors of the Class of 1948 felt ourselves subtly accepted by the veterans -- Burge and Lloyd and Limber Jim and the others -- and also by the inbetweeners <sup>with</sup> ~~with~~ three-to-five years of <sup>hill</sup> ~~hill~~ experience, such as Vic, Wild Bull, Sherpa Doc, and Ray, the shambling beast fondly known as "the avalanche that walks like a man." For our own part, as months went by we began spotting members of the Class of 1949 who promised to survive the ordeal and become future buddies, notably <sup>quietly</sup> ~~quietly~~ witty Marsh and the teenage, hyperactive Rover Boys, Yorick and Paul.

Having so recently been a supercilious anarchist, I was amazed by my ~~bug~~ enjoyment of Mountaineer mobs. My climbing was mostly done with small parties independent of the club, yet I looked forward ~~anxiously~~ to the great ~~and~~ circus congegations, the parade of freaks: equipment nuts and food-faddists, physical-culture fanatics and sun-worshipping exhibitionists, lechers and nymphomaniacs whose tent arrangements were unailing grist for giggles,

Communists and Nazis, Christians and flying-saucer cultists, and more than one outpatient ~~XXXXXX~~ of a mental hospital.

Aside from flagrant eccentricity, the climbing community was in other ways radically dissimilar to any I'd known. For one, lowland economic-social status was irrelevant. Whatever the sociological reasons, virtually all climbers were in professions or white-collar jobs, or were students aiming at the same, yet there was no prejudice against those few of us who worked with our hands. ~~XXXXXX~~ For another, ~~Rationalism~~ sex ceased when ~~the~~ knots were tied and a female was only a "girl" when she chose to be; to so choose too often eventually brought a kind suggestion from a senior member of the Climbing Committee that hiking, too, ~~had a reward~~ <sup>was fun.</sup> Finally, except for purposes of the mating game, incessantly played on roads, trails, and in camps by both adolescents and elders, chronological age was insignificant. What mattered was climbing age and the ~~age~~ "young," <sup>whether</sup> ~~whether~~ 15 or 65, tended to stick together, and so did the "middle-aged," <sup>whether</sup> ~~whether~~ 15 or 65. (There weren't any "old" climbers, except ex-climbers.)

I sympathized with lowlanders confronting a Mountaineer gang -- a year ago I'd shared their dismay, disgust. We'd openly mock tourists whose only crime was gazing at the majesty of Rainier. We'd barge into a ~~cafe~~ restaurant and ruin the digestion of every adult in the place. We were as rude and rowdy as precipice and glacier, avalanche and blizzard, had all the social grace of <sup>a</sup> storm troopers.

But then, with the entire active climbing citizenry of Puget Sound numbering a mere several hundred, and with fewer than one in ten surviving from the hundreds who annually sought ~~us~~ to join us, we hardly could help being elitists, fascists. It wasn't our fault we were so damn superior.

Lowlanders should feel lucky we were ~~we~~ <sup>totally</sup> absorbed in mountains, because if we ever felt it worth our time we'd conquer the whole bloody world, just like that.

# # #

# → In 1948 cold clouds had continuously dumped snow halfway through May. In 1949 the sun began to win the sky war in March -- perhaps because by then, after four solid months of white deluges, and what oldtimers said were the most destructive avalanches in memory, the winter ~~was~~ wore itself out. By the middle of May I'd not only instructed at Monitor Rock, Little Si, two snow practices, Commonwealth Basin, Duwamish Piers, and the new rock practice in Tumwater ~~at~~ Canyon (where I first pounded pitons into a cliff and snapped in carabiners and rope), but had toughened legs and guts snowplowing to summits of Red, Kaleetan, ~~and~~ Kendall, and Big Si, where I led a thrilling route on the rock face of the Haystack.

Logistically, climbing was much easier this second year. In fall Betty had received her bachelor's degree in English literature and been rewarded with a job as file clerk at the University Bookstore; two paychecks helped us keep pace with galloping postwar inflation. Then, by pure dumb luck, we stumbled onto a genuine three-room brick-building apartment near the garret and ~~equally~~ <sup>equally</sup> convenient to Avenue, campus, Rainbow, and Blue Moon. Government rent-control held the cost to ~~the~~ <sup>\$40</sup> a month -- not counting the ~~the~~ <sup>overbearing</sup> \$100 cash bribe demanded by the landlord, a former fullback on the University ~~and~~ football team and a power in the Republican Party. ~~City Salt thought~~  
~~became apartments were depressing; we wanted a better home, especially~~  
~~being~~ <sup>Being</sup> a basement apartment, it was ideal for ~~us~~ tottering from car to bed late on a Sunday night or early on a Monday morning.

Best of all, my folks, flush with the postwar prosperity of the timber industry, to which Dad sold mill equipment, had celebrated the end of the Depression by giving Betty and me a stunning Christmas present -- a brandnew Jeep station wagon. Just like the mourned Model A, it had four cylinders, was square-built and tough-built, and stood ~~grandly~~ <sup>grandly</sup> high, giving plenty of clearance on rough logging roads, plus lordly views down upon Detroit's ~~big~~ big-assed sex symbols. But unlike the old A, it could carry four or five climbers and packs and even so loaded ~~barreled~~ barreled along highways at 50-55, bringing mountains closer than ever.

Our first important conquest of the year was 6800-foot Whitehorse, a very tall peak for one so low, <sup>abruptly</sup> rising 6300 feet above farms beside the North Fork Stillaguamish River. The ascent had deep personal significance for me -- this was the first mountain whose name I knew, <sup>learned on</sup> ~~from~~ a misty-remembered childhood camping trip. I vividly recalled looking in vain for the white horse.

Saturday, May 21, Betty and I, her friend Marilyn, a co-worker at the University Bookstore, and Idiot Richard drove to the end of the Mine Road and camped by old tunnels and shacks. In morning we stepped directly from road onto avalanche snow and slogged to the foot of a cliff. I went ahead to find the route and churned and chinned up a thousand vertical feet of cedar trees before emerging onto open snow again. I rested, awaiting the others, assuming Idiot was convoying the girls. Two hours I rested, wondering what the hell was happening below. Suddenly Idiot <sup>materialized</sup> ~~emerged~~ from a waterfall, alone. He said he didn't like climbing trees and had taken the wet route instead. Where were the girls? He didn't know. As I was raising my ax to commit homicide, they appeared in the cedars, dissatisfied with both Idiot and me.



We rest-stepped up steep snow, then ~~ascended~~ glacier, into dense fog, to the summit. There we met ~~Whitehorse~~, a shepherd dog, panting and laughing, and ~~Whitehorse~~ a dozen Mountaineers, including Tom and Marsh. They'd climbed by another route, hiker-simple but roundabout and intricate. Tom confessed ~~that~~ they'd never have made the top except for leadership of the dog, which lived on a farm by the <sup>Whitehorse</sup> trailhead and joined every party heading for the mountain. Thus the derivation of the generic term eventually absorbed in the Mountaineer lexicon, "dog route."

Memorial Day weekend we set out for Stuart, 9415 feet, second-highest nonvolcanic peak in the state. On Friday Betty and I, Bill, and Bagleyite Loo, a young professor, drove the North Fork Teanaway River road until stopped by snow, then plugged steps up the valley to a camp at 6200-foot Long's Pass, which to our <sup>revulsion</sup> ~~dismay~~ was crowded by a regiment of Cascadians, a Yakima club, and a division of Mazamas, a Portland club. Amiable freaks they were, but not our freaks.

Saturday we dropped to Ingalls Creek at 4800 feet and ascended a treacherous gully of granite boulders and pebbles and sand; later we were told it <sup>definitely</sup> ~~by no means~~ <sup>not</sup> was the customary "dog route." Betty wanted to quit but I kept her moving with curses and threats, ax whaps on the butt, and snowballs and rocks, to the consternation of bachelors Bill and Loo. Above the gully we were caught by Bagleyites Ted and Chuck, whom we'd expected to meet at Long's Pass; they'd gotten confused and ~~instead~~ crossed Ingalls Pass, farther up the valley, to a camp at Ingalls Lake. On top we met Mazamas, Cascadians, and the Sherpa Climbing Club of Ellensburg, which had crossed to Ingalls Creek via ~~the~~ Tunnpike Pass. I made a mental note never to climb Stuart again.

I learned something new about the Cascades on this, my first east-side summit. Cascade Crest peaks to the west were buried in black muck; the few ominous clouds that formed over Stuart evaporated harmlessly. However, the rainshadow country seemed vaguely alien -- I was subtly disturbed by the unfamiliar trees and shrubs and the more open terrain. Despite the better weather, I wasn't sure I liked it.

The next week Betty and Chuck and I climbed St. Helens, 9677 feet, the baby of the five Washington volcanoes ~~no ~~to be~~ ~~complete~~~~ ~~and ~~standing~~~~. Bored by smooth snows of the dog route up the symmetrical cone, ~~too~~ too young to be deeply dissected, we detoured to a small icefall which ~~provided very good sport~~ indeed. During a rest stop I walked a few feet from my companions to look into a crevasse -- and my boots discovered another crevasse whose existence I hadn't guessed. Betty and Chuck wept with laughter to see me up to armpits in the hole, treading air, wearing a ghastly expression. My anguish was all the more acute because, as was the accepted rule for puny little St. Helens, we weren't roped.

In mid-June the ~~moment~~ <sup>moment arrived</sup> for my first week-long ramble as a climber. The goal? No question about that. Ever since The Tooth I'd been fascinated by 7680-foot Chimney Rock, king of the Snoqualmie region. To my surprise, the summit had been reached only four or five times -- partly because of difficulty but mainly due to remoteness, the standard approach from the east side of the range requiring two rough days. Limber Jim, who'd made the second ascent, thought I probably could handle the peak, though I might want a piton or two. Well, nice as it would be to ~~attain~~ <sup>make</sup> the top, I actually was more interested

in trying an ingenious new approach, starting at Snoqualmie Pass and staying high all the way.

The problem was finding partners. I'd supposed everybody craved Chimney. Not so. At the last minute I recruited two guys of dubious credentials -- and on the very first day, endlessly sitting on my butt waiting for them to catch up, realized the expedition was doomed. After five days we were close enough to Chimney  
 ^ to see my proposed approach was feasible, but with this bunch would take another week. On the way we'd climbed Thompson, Huckleberry (a stroll this year -- how could I ever have been scared?), and Chikamin, pleasant little peaks <sup>yet</sup> ~~but~~ scarcely the sort of excitement I'd sought. When a monster storm rolled in I was glad of the excuse to cut the trip short and run down Gold Creek to the highway.

<sup>The year's</sup>  
 ^ Momentum, slowed by the Chimney fiasco, was brought to a full halt by a weekend instructing on the Nisqually practice and a snowed-out, fogged-out experience-climb attempt on Little Tahoma. ~~Not~~ Not for long. Over the Fourth of July weekend, with a jolly experience-climb party of two dozen friends and freaks, I hiked 20 miles <sup>up the Boulder River to</sup> ~~to the summit of~~ the South Peak of Three Fingers, site of an abandoned fire-lookout cabin. The Forest Service hadn't maintained the trail since before the war and wilderness had reclaimed its own -- we were two days busting through 10 miles of blowdowns and brush, then tramping 10 miles of snow. The register book on the South Peak hadn't been signed in several years; when we dropped to the glacier and climbed the 6854-foot North Peak, a lovely scramble with delightful exposure, the book there recorded only some ten previous ascents.

From the summit I gazed over my broad new domain -- far into the North Cascades, up and down the line of volcanoes -- exalted by thoughts of past and future. July had ~~just~~<sup>merely</sup> begun and already I had a dozen peaks ~~and Betty~~  
~~even~~ and months of summer and fall remained to stuff the bag full. How could I ever have considered settling for super-hiker?

1 April 1974

1949

Chapter ~~10~~<sup>11</sup>

### WANDERING IN THE DARK OF THE MOON

The Rainier ax session spilled little blood. A bumper crop of beginners had survived the ~~same~~<sup>benign</sup> spring of 1949 and the route this year was the Emmons Glacier, much less demanding than the Kautz. The Climbing Committee approved a party totaling 69 students and leaders — thought to be the largest group ever to climb The Mountain — assuming we did, and in 14 years the Course had never failed.

When Betty's name came up the Committee awaited my judgment. Her reputation was solid: she wasn't the most incompetent climber in the history of the club, just the most incompetent climber still climbing. However, Adams, St. Helens, Stuart, Whitehorse via the glacier, and seven lesser peaks were more than sufficient qualification. I didn't bother mentioning the curses and ax-whaps and snowballs and rocks.

Friday afternoon, July 15, we and Monie and Dick drove in the Jeep to 4500-foot White River Campground, registered with the ranger, and hiked 4 forest and parkland miles to Glacier Basin, 6000 feet. We were early, for a reason — Leader Cam had appointed me routefinder and my plan was to continue <sup>directly up</sup> to Steamboat Prow in order to have all Saturday for marking the way above. But chill gray waves of rain swept the meadows,

rain that was snow a bit higher, a howling blizzard at the Prow. Had I  
 tried to push the bunch  
~~suggested proceeding~~ upward Betty and Monie would <sup>ive</sup> ~~have~~ sneered and Dick  
 would <sup>ive</sup> ~~have~~ plainly told me to go to hell. Anyway, the bunkhouse of the old  
<sup>was too damn tempting.</sup>  
 Starbo Mine ~~was so damn tempting.~~ In evening the mob gradually  
 assembled, miserably rigging tents and tarps. Unnoticed in our snug  
 hideaway we were lulled to sleep by roof-drumming rain.

Saturday dawned calm and clear and the soggy crowd blinked in  
 sunlight and started drying sleeping bags and parkas. I was outside the  
 bunkhouse door cooking breakfast on a primus stove <sup>x</sup> when Cam spotted me.

"Manning!" <sup>the Maximum Leader</sup> ~~he~~ bellowed loud enough for the whole basin to hear. "I  
 thought you were at the Prow!"

Guiltily I gulped mush, <sup>wanted to appeal the decision, go to court if necessary.</sup> Dick wondered what the hurry was, <sup>I</sup>  
~~delivered a volley~~ <sup>strained</sup> that ~~did not quite destroy~~ our friendship. Before Cam  
 could get off another <sup>volley I was</sup> ~~two were~~ running from camp, Dick following, muttering.

Above green lawns and bright flowers we <sup>two</sup> climbed, through moraines  
<sup>-waterfalls</sup> by ~~meltwater torrents~~, onto snowfields and steeply up Inter <sup>glacier</sup> — unroped,  
 since the little icefield was crevasse-free.

<sup>the 9700-foot summit of giant</sup>  
 Atop Steamboat Prow, a ~~steep~~ wedge of volcanic rock, we stood  
 face to face with ~~the huge white mountain, and with~~ the biggest glacier in  
 the 48 states, flowing in a broad, ~~blinding~~ sweep of crevasse fields and  
 icefalls a vertical mile from Columbia Crest to <sup>the</sup> ~~Steamboat~~ Prow, <sup>which</sup> split ~~into~~  
<sup>the blinding-white vastness</sup> ~~into~~ into the Emmons and Winthrop tongues, each tumbling nearly  
 another vertical mile to terminal moraines.

There was our route. Where? I hadn't the vaguest notion. Cam,

everyone  
staring.

addressed  
him with  
a few  
ill-chosen  
words

Dick, never  
having  
conquered  
Rainier,  
was no  
help.

~~apparently~~, assuming I'd climbed the Emmons before or was too sharp-eyed to need clues, had volunteered no information about the proper way to attack the enormity of fractured whiteness, and as apprentice hero I'd feared asking stupid questions. ↗

We descended rotten gullies of yellow, brown, and red garbage to the 9500-foot Foc'sle, a peninsula of rubble thrusting into the ice, selected a flat spot with windbreak wall for sleeping, and ate lunch. Then I lashed to my rucksack a bundle of "willow wands" (actually, at this advanced stage of alpine history, green <sup>-dyed</sup> bamboo garden stakes with red flags attached), roped with Dick, and led off the rockpile onto the snow.

I wasn't worried. So <sup>large</sup> ~~was~~ a glacier held <sup>an infinity</sup> ~~any number~~ of routes.

Which to choose? Mindful of the multitude, I denied myself the sort of brave line Kermit and Red Jim and I had taken a week earlier on the Ingraham Glacier, when we disdained <sup>the available</sup> ~~a simple~~ bypass of the icefall and <sup>out of sheer bravado</sup> forced a passage through the middle.

<sup>^</sup> This was a different weekend, a different party, and  
Seeking the easiest path, I began with a long traverse leftward to a relatively-uncrevassed glacier ridge; later I learned it is called the "Corridor" and is the customary beginning, and in fact any other start from the Foc'sle leads into baffling and usually defeating crevasse mazes. We ascended the smooth crest, planting wands at intervals, rising high above the Prow and its growing throng of pilgrims, topping Little Tahoma, on the far side of the Emmons.

"Little T," craggy remnant of an older and larger Rainier, was a friend from <sup>last</sup> ~~the~~ week ~~before~~, when <sup>I</sup> ~~we~~ used it to measure progress up the Ingraham,

carrying <sup>a</sup> full pack to stay a night in the crater, to make a home where in 1948 I'd expected to leave Earth altogether. So far had I come in a year! I'd spent my 23rd birthday at Paradise, tensing for the attempt on Camp Hazard; today was my 24th birthday and I ~~was a two-time veteran of Rainier's~~ ~~summit~~ routefinder for what might be the largest party ever to ~~climb~~ ascend The Mountain.

I'd climbed Rainier for the second time just seven days before and now was

Near the top of the Corridor, <sup>at</sup> around 12,000 feet, I decided we'd done enough for the day. At 4 o'clock we joined the Foc'sle crowd. ~~Comment:~~ "Back already? I thought you'd go for the summit."

Cam was looking glum, feeling poorly, and recognized our valor with a single blunt

I slunk off. Dammit, we hadn't been tired and were going so fast we could ~~have~~ reached Columbia Crest in several hours and been down to camp by sunset. I'd considered it, wanted it, Dick had suggested it, but I supposed that on the eve of battle the Leader would expect to counsel with his Routefinder.

After a hasty supper, <sup>Dick and I</sup> crawled in bag, <sup>together</sup> wrapped in tarp, and forced <sup>I</sup> myself not to watch the sunset pageant of high colors and low darkness, but to sleep, to store energy for the morrow's task.

At midnight, out of the bag into blasting-freezing wind. Dick, ~~and I~~ ~~referred to~~ ~~carefully~~ ~~gradually~~ ~~from~~ ~~sleep~~ ~~but~~ ~~grumblingly~~ about goddam Mountaineers who don't know the difference between day and night, grimly submitted. As for our third man, Krup, when I yelled his name he startled <sup>us</sup> by leaping up <sup>in the darkness</sup> ready to go. Cam had impressed him with the honor, as a beginner, of being on the lead rope and sternly warned he must under no circumstances delay Manning, a notoriously fast starter and a mean son-of-a-bitch. Fearful of disgrace, he got up at 10 o'clock, donned boots

(Only later was the magical promptness explained.)





and crampons and parka and mittens, uncoiled the rope and tied in, then wrapped in a tarp and lay shivering 2 hours, awaiting my call.)

At 12:30, while the other 66 stumbled and fumbled in gale-swept blackness, we <sup>three</sup> set off at a snow-crunching lope and soon were high above the firefly cluster of the Foc'sle. Far north, lights of Seattle spoke of the warmth of a sealevel summer night, of lovers in bed, of jolly boys roistering from the Blue Moon with cases of beer under arms, heading for a party.

We climbed rapidly and steadily because to pause was to shudder ~~convulsively~~ from the arctic wind.

And from the stars. The moonless cloudless night <sup>burned with</sup> ~~held more stars~~

~~than I had~~ and we looked up to fires, all around to fires, and down to fires, and my teeth chattered.

At 2 o'clock we reached the top of the Corridor, the end of wands placed in <sup>balmy</sup> afternoon ~~am~~. In an hour and a half, 2500 feet gained, halfway to the summit — fast walking for this elevation. The firefly cluster below had strung out in a 66-flashlight snake winding a half-mile through the night, moving slowly, the head just starting up the Corridor. My people, down there. The hopes and dreams of 69 seekers and strivers rested on my alpine skills.

~~Now, no~~ more wands. And abruptly blackness was total. The sky was a solid blaze but cast no useful illumination on Earth. I could see only as far as my flashlight beam — a dozen feet clearly, another dozen vaguely.

an infinity  
of stars  
fiercer  
than any  
star but  
the Sun  
had a  
right to  
be

After the trip ~~I learned~~ <sup>the experts told me</sup> the usual procedure is to angle rightward from the Corridor ~~to~~ <sup>across</sup> the Winthrop Glacier to the saddle between Liberty Cap and Columbia Crest. But I'd never heard it called "Emmons-Winthrop route," only "Emmons route," and therefore climbed straight up from the Corridor ~~on a direct line to~~ <sup>toward</sup> Columbia Crest.

I cramponed a steep hill and ~~looked~~ <sup>shone flashlight</sup> into a bottomless crevasse. I planted a wand at the brink so others would know it was there, then followed the lip to get around. The lip descended and I lost a hundred feet before coming to the end. I planted a wand so others would know it was there.

I climbed another steep hill, looked into another black pit, again ~~descended~~ <sup>planted a wand and</sup> the lip to get around. Again a hill, a pit, <sup>a wand,</sup> a descent, <sup>a wand.</sup> And again, <sup>finding and marking a route</sup> and again, ~~planting wands~~ <sup>planting wands</sup> for the followers, still far down the Corridor.

I could comprehend, if not see, the pattern — a series of arcuate crevasses with ~~their~~ apexes pointed up the mountain and thus the crevasse middles higher than the ends.

The glacier wasn't playing fair. ~~But by~~ <sup>twice as many</sup> the law of averages a random line (mine) should intersect crevasse-ends <sup>as</sup> ~~as~~ crevasse-middles, ~~in~~ <sup>However,</sup> ~~roughly equal proportion,~~ every time I climbed a hill I hit a middle. I probed with flashlight, seeking to beat the crooked game. The beam was too short. I was a blind man fumbling with cane and boots.

More hills, holes, drops. The head of the 66-flashlight snake drew near and I was lost and thus they all were lost, every man, woman, and child, but didn't know it yet, trusting our 3-flashlight symbol of hope.

Up hills and down. At 3:30, disheartened, I called our first halt in 3 hours and we sat shivering in relentless wind. But the head of the snake

instantly arrived and Sherpa Doc, whom Cam should ~~have~~<sup>3/4</sup> appointed routefinder, yelled, "Off your fanny, Manning! It's too damn cold for goofing off!"

The bastard. What did he know? With ~~some~~ half a cigarette of rest ~~and reflection~~ I was pushed up another hill — to a crevasse so gigantic my flashlight found no far side. Stars outlined the top of a tall, invisible wall. The chances of end-running such a monster? Forget it. I had two choices: one, slump in the snow and whimper as the message went down to Leader-Chairman Cam, and thus to the whole climbing community, that Manning was a fake; the other, damn the torpedoes and forge a crossing.

There seemed to be a sunken snowbridge — to where? No leisure to speculate, not with Sherpa Doc ~~keeping me~~ rattling off smart remarks. I lowered myself from the solid edge, tremulously stepped out over the black pit — and sank to knees in fluff and retreated in panic — and collided with Krup, supposed to be belaying but instead following me onto the bridge!

He learned Cam had spoken truth. Ears glowing brilliant red in the night, he hustled <sup>back</sup> to the lip, into belay. I nerved up, returned to the bridge, feeling taut rope on waist, hearing the gaggle of the 66, waiting for the bottom to fall out so they'd be sorry for things they were saying. Closer to the wall, walking on air — close enough to see that between me and stars was a ghostly-white overhang.

I'd blown it. This was the first failure of a Rainier experience climb after 14 straight successes dating to 1935. Through the long future

history of the club the disappointed 68 would nourish their bitterness; ~~and~~ campfire conversations and lectures ~~in the Course~~ would hold up to scorn "Manning's Blunder."

It was 4 o'clock and I wished I were in the <sup>University</sup> District, where the parties were just ending, the jolly boys laughing toward bed, some alone, some with jolly girls.

As I stood irresolute ~~and disconsolate~~ in limbo, blackness shaded into grayness and the void ~~misadventuredly~~ coagulated. A few yards away I ~~was~~ <sup>SAW</sup> a genuine bridge over the great crevasse, and from its end a slanting chimney fortuitously breaking the wall. The 68 never would know I was a fraud. In a frenzy of crampon-stamping and ax-swinging I was over and up bridge and chimney, looking down my spooky path to the mob and realizing that purely by the grace of sudden dawn had I been saved. Luck to the lucky.

But I was not saved. The last stars blinked out in the bluing west, the eastern sky flamed scarlet, rose, and yellow, the glacier glowed eerie pink reflecting the fireball lifting from the Cascade Crest, and I saw I'd led the 68 into chaos. Later, experts <sup>told</sup> ~~would tell~~ me the route straight up from the Corridor rarely is possible, that there was honor in getting so high. What honor in stupidity? Only the blunder would be remembered.

I dodged artfully this way and that, gaining <sup>a</sup> bits of elevation <sup>here, a bit there,</sup> among pits and <sup>white</sup> towers, becoming ~~more~~ hopelessly entangled. At 14,000 feet the route, the climb, my reputation ended in <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ final crevasse, ~~of my~~

~~apparently the only way to the top~~ No bridge, and a vertical upper wall. To the

left, an unthinkable icefall. To the right, a cliff plunging to nowhere.

But at the end of the crevasse, where it pinched out above the cliff, sun glittered on a narrow arch of hoarfrost and icicles, a sparkle of white between blue of glacier interior and blue of sky. If a man could walk a dozen feet on sparkles he might win yet.

I took a step and sank into cake frosting, sorry to crush such delicate loveliness, sorrier still see so much air below  $\frac{1}{m}$  ↓

~~It~~ would be folly to commit life and health to frosting without thoroughly examining the cake and I chopped in search of a solid base — and found the whole bridge was half candy crystal, half air. And by now I'd chopped a good part of it away.

*I became aware of a great quiet*

~~The closer teams were watching intently, and even~~

Sherpa Doc had gone silent. How bold I surely appeared, ~~to them,~~ poised above the gulf, framed against the sky, swinging ax with fearless skill! *down there,* What they didn't know <sup>was</sup> that every stroke was destroying the route.

I abandoned testing for prayer, warned Krup to make damn sure of his belay, and hastily cat-stepped over the sky bridge. It held me — and Krup and Dick too. The next team? That was Sherpa Doc's worry, let him sweat, *the loudmouth.*

We three, at least, were home free. So narrow is the boundary between shame and glory! I was certain to be acclaimed a daring and ingenious routefinder. The slope rounded and I charged for Columbia Crest.

"Hey!" yelled Dick, "Not so fast!" He was gasping and poor Krup was staggering.

hundreds of feet of empty air, and far below, a deep blue hole waiting for my swandive.

Only now did I realize I was not sick, not languid, but breathing as if at sealevel and feeling absolutely splendid. Not like last year on the Kautz — or last weekend on the Ingraham, when my total food intake from Camp Muir Friday night to <sup>the crater Saturday morning to</sup> Paradise Sunday afternoon was two cookies, three nibbles of a candy bar, and a third of a peanut-butter-and-honey sandwich gritty with pumice, when at Muir on the descent I'd been ~~disgusted~~ <sup>nauseated</sup> watching Ted and Chuck chomp cheese and pumpernickel.

The night in the crater <sup>a week ago</sup> had acclimatized me and the air <sup>now</sup> was rich and I tugged at the rope, straining unacclimatized mates to their limits in the arrogance of knowing mine were not here, mine were higher.

Yesterday I'd hauled pack 3500 feet and gone 2500 more planting wands and could easily have continued to the top. Today I'd gained 5000 feet — ~~not counting the~~ <sup>plus</sup> 1000 or so feet of ups and downs in the dark of the moon — and from reserves in legs and lungs knew I was fit for another <sup>heroic</sup> 3000.

At 14,410 feet, halfway from the sea to the 29,002-foot summit of Earth, I'd run out of mountain. How far toward the sky could I go? Not to unclimbed Everest, even if I were an Englishman. But the 20,320-foot summit of North America, attained only a half-dozen times, rose just 5910 feet above me. If I were on McKinley today I could reach high camp by evening and the peak tomorrow. ~~Of course, before I could aspire so high I'd have to master my craft, then somehow get wealthy — ~~today proved I was living in the land of nice sleep could sleep.~~~~

At 7 o'clock we signed the register book and sacked out to await the ~~suffering of~~ the merely mortal.

It was something new to think about.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

\* \* \* \* \*

By threes they came over the crater rim, a few cheerful and jaunty, many wan and wobbling, some collapsing face-down in dirt to await stretcher-bearers or gravediggers, never mind which. The cold night wind had forced a pace unusually fast for so huge a party and by 8:30 every team (but one) was on top. There was a price for speed — the scene was reminiscent of woodcuts portraying a medieval village in final agonies of the Black Death.

~~The morning [REDACTED] me, Marilyn, and Betty [REDACTED] didn't suspect this for [REDACTED] the hour of two [REDACTED] [REDACTED]~~

In memory of Idiot Richard's sardines and in celebration of my abdominal stability I opened a can of smoked oysters, offering oil-embalmed greenish-yellowish corpses to friends, especially those who looked particularly greenish-yellowish; I entertained the ones who refused by eating with sadistic gusto, smacking lips and rolling eyes and licking fingers.

Then Cam arrived, having as leader stayed near the rear of the party, where ~~personnel~~ problems are most abundant. Out of respect for his delicate condition I hid the evidence of my gross feast. He slumped



beside me, haggard and silent, hunched over, legs spread wide apart in case of a seizure. He intended to rearguard down but had first to endure ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> summit ordeal.

Tom appeared on the rim and unroped. The year before he'd crept on hands and knees into Camp Hazard at dusk and the sounds of his ~~suffering~~ <sup>agony</sup> ~~had~~ <sup>of us</sup> made many fear he might turn himself inside out. Now he tottered toward us, stopping often to breathe, a serious set to his face, as if bringing a tragic message. The import of his news was revealed as he barfed onto Cam's boots the total remaining slimes and particulates of his interior, including what seemed to be various giblets.

My stomach smugly cuddled smoked oysters and the disaster was merely funny. But Cam mournfully lifted eyes to Heaven, rose to his feet, and said to me through tight lips, "I've got to get out of here. You rearguard."

Cam was gone, and soon Tom and all the others. Dick and I explored the warm, windless crater, then ascended into the gale sweeping the crest. We looked west to gray fog on the ocean surface, a sea atop a sea, lapping the base of the Olympic Mountains, <sup>and over the Cascade Crest</sup> east to the ~~brown~~ <sup>brown-baked</sup> semi-desert of the Columbia Plateau, and north along the Cascades to Glacier, Baker, and Canada, and south to St. Helens, Adams, and the volcanoes of Oregon. With the 66 below and Krup sound asleep, we were the only souls abroad in the sky.

\* \* \* \* \*

I visited the site of last weekend's camp, the climax of my most daring scheme to date. After the Kautz, enraptured by ~~the creative joy~~

and devoted several October days to chopping Nisqually Glacier ice, practicing technique.

creating a of building route through brilliant sculptures, I plotted an even grander line up Rainier, ~~My~~ My plan was not merely to touch Columbia Crest and instantly retreat but to spend a night 7000 feet above the upper edge of life, the last fringe of green.

Through ~~the~~ winter-spring months I nagged Rainier veterans for information about various possibilities, and at length

~~I~~ chose the rarely-climbed Ingraham <sup>Glacier</sup> ~~for my hero route~~ and recruited a band of adventurers - Ted and Chuck and Kermit from Bagley, plus Red Jim. Friday evening we left Paradise at 8 o'clock and climbed in sunset, twilight, and ~~darkness~~ <sup>night</sup> to 10,000-foot Camp Muir, arriving at 11:30. There we were ~~startled~~ <sup>shocked</sup> to find another party with identical plans, but were not too ~~dis~~ dismayed; they were, after all, ~~my~~ Mountaineer friends - Lloyd the living legend, Monie, Vic, Sherpa Doc, the Whittaker Twins, Jim and Lou, and three ~~strangers~~ <sup>semi-strangers</sup>.

was revealed to be,

The ascent, Saturday, was a disappointment. The narrow and steep Ingraham, ~~which the experts had said was~~ <sup>which the experts had said was</sup> ~~supposed to be~~ always challenging and frequently impassable, this year, ~~a~~ <sup>partially</sup> a simple snow chute; I worked off frustration ~~chopping~~ <sup>whacking</sup> a staircase up a small icefall, ~~but~~ we wouldn't be able to claim a notable conquest.

~~the~~ other teams walked around the end;

Chuck and Ted, deciding against a summit night, turned back at the ~~crater~~ <sup>rim</sup> and descended to Muir. ~~The~~ <sup>Our camp companions</sup> ~~including~~ including Red Jim, pitched tents on ~~the~~ slopes of Columbia Crest. Kermit and I went down to ~~where~~ <sup>the boundary of</sup> rubble ~~met the~~ white crater floor and fashioned a half-snow, half-gravel platform for my Army mountain tent.

\$100 worth of material and workmanship I'd bought for \$10.

In late afternoon ~~sinister~~ cloud wrack scooted over bleak rock and snow. Moan of wind rose to a howl, scraps of swift mist merged in the

world-obliterating gray of a cloup cap, and at 6 o'clock we crawled into the tent.

Our nest was amazingly cozy. No burnt-out case, this ancient ~~volcano~~ <sup>the furnace</sup> volcano. Heat from ~~the furnace~~ below seeped into the tent and despite freezing wind inches away we scarcely needed bags. Why, then, couldn't we sleep? Because that blessed damned heat melted snow of the platform, the tent floor sagged into the cavity, and we lay together too chummily ~~in~~ in an awkward hammock. And because the tent fabric was ~~not~~ waterproof and airproof and temperature and humidity rose to those of a Turkish bath. Exhalations of hot flesh and sweaty socks filled the tent, which stank like an old gymnasium. At 10 o'clock, half-stewed, half-asphyxiated, we pulled on boots and parkas and crawled out to move the tent entirely onto snow. Better to freeze than burn. <sup>It was it</sup> St. Augustine ~~who said that?~~ <sup>who said that?</sup>

The cloud <sup>cap</sup> had blown away and the sky held more stars than lowlanders dream of — not flickers on a distant ~~and in the~~ dark dome but frightening blazes close above and all around in three-dimensional space. Starlight-ghostly vapors curled from rocks of the crater rim — which Kermit ran off to circumnavigate, cracked yodels marking his progress.

I climbed the short slope to <sup>C</sup>olumbia Crest and braced feet against the push of the terrible wind of outer space. Man's place on the invisible land was clearly delineated: lone sparkles of ranches in nearby valleys, bright towns on floodplains past the mountain front, and the Milky Way

sprawl of Tacoma-Seattle. Unseen waters of Puget Sound and Lake Washington were outlined by millions of light bulbs and neon signs. Many a river had been dammed (and damned) to turn this flood of electricity into the natural night. Yet the low country was remote and its visual "noise" ~~only~~ pitiful - I stood closer to stars than cities.

\* \* \* \* \*

~~Even with the route proving easy and the night benign, the Ingraham~~

~~was a giant step toward my destiny.~~ Today on the Emmons was milder - even though ~~the~~ dark-of-the-moon climbing ironically ~~being~~ <sup>was</sup> more difficult - yet was equally full of promise. I was at home, walking and breathing as if at sealevel, eating smoked oysters - and as the ultimate <sup>gesture of</sup> insouciance, how many Puget Sounders have taken a crap at 14,390 feet?

All that was required for a perfect day was to welcome ~~Betty~~ <sup>my wife</sup> into the sky. ~~But 11 o'clock and no Betty, and little hope remaining.~~ <sup>alone of the 23 ropes, hers, led by Monic, hadn't arrived.</sup> Something ~~must have~~ <sup>had</sup> gone wrong. Time to wake Krup from his 4-hour nap and go down.

As routefinder I'd climbed virgin white snow. As rearguard I descended a trench twice pounded by 130 boots. A colorful trail it was: the last resort of the desperately ill is to sip juice to calm quivering guts, and thus the entire upper trench was decorated in ~~pastel~~ shades of orange juice, grapefruit juice, pineapple juice, apricot juice, grape juice, cranberry juice, papaya juice, tomato juice, carrot juice - pints and quarts and gallons of juice, perhaps the greatest outpouring of juice in Rainier's

A symphony pastel.

history. Was that green from limeade or bile?

<sup>Despite</sup>

~~Through~~ loitering on the summit a full 2 hours ~~there~~, almost

after departure of the last prior team,

ff Whatever its disappointments, the Ingraham had been a giant step - toward what? I couldn't guess.

immediately we caught up with invalids not cured by dropping to richer air. It was a question whether they would live to reach a hospital. As rearguard we could not pass.

The wind fell to whispers and ~~blowing~~ noon sun <sup>ignited</sup> ~~lit~~ the glacier, a sudden white inferno. Off came parkas and mittens, ~~and hats~~ Sweat poured. Goggles steamed. Dick was taking pictures to pass the time, of which we had lots, but my temper grew short when he kept me ~~gawking~~ in a single pose 20 minutes while he shuffled two camera<sup>s</sup> in and out of rucksack and changed from black-and-white to color film and back again.

It was my job to sweep the mountain not only of people but of willow wands. Temper shortened further when I saw wands atop ice hills a hundred feet above the trench. What ~~is it that~~ ~~prankster~~ had climbed these towers and wasted wands which were not toys but the official property of the Climbing Committee?

I was ~~fully~~ blistering the unknown criminal (Idiot Richard? Sherpa Doc?) when I ~~suddenly~~ realized the towers had been climbed, the wands installed, by me in the baffled hours between 2 and 4 o'clock.

In early afternoon we herded the walking dead to the Foc'sle. Betty had been sacked out there for hours and was feeling just fine, laughing and giggling. In fact, she'd dug ~~the~~ nesting buckets and ~~the~~ salt and Frizz ice-cream mix ~~and topping~~ and greeted us with pineapple sundaes.

She'd come near the summit. Why not all the way? Well, Ropeleader ~~the apologizing witch~~ Monie said she was alarmed by Betty's retching and whimpering, and

and I  
said a lot  
of dirty  
words

from my  
pack the  
"ice cream  
machine"  
(whose design  
we learned  
from the  
ingenious  
Chuck and Ted)  
engineers,

knowing that a serious childhood illness had left her with 1 1/2 lungs,  
 had worried about lasting harm in the thin air. That's what Monie said.  
~~But I was the first~~ <sup>But shit,</sup> she'd climbed Rainier the dozenth time the weekend  
 before and was bored by ~~the mob, had something to do with it~~ <sup>today's. That was the truth of the matter.</sup> I was sorry,  
 now, for my routefinder role. Had I been Betty's ropeleader I'd have  
 battered her ears with curses, hit her face with snowballs, jerked her  
 waist with climbing rope, flogged her bottom with ice ax, and thus by the  
 language of love driven her to Columbia Crest. But Monie was only a  
 friend.

As I was eating my pineapple sundae I saw a butterfly — a miracle  
 amid sterile rock and ice, reminding of flowers and trees immensely far  
 below. At Camp Muir I'd also seen a butterfly, and thought then of  
 Paradise.

I recalled that in some religion or other the butterfly is the  
 symbol of immortality.

2 April 1974

1949

Chapter 12

OPTIMUM FREQUENCY

I half-awoke to wonderful news — rain splashing the bedroom window — and sank back into dreams. How sweet a lullaby for a Saturday morning. I could hardly remember what it was like to sleep in.

The phone dragged me out of bed.

"Well," chuckled Ted, "Ready to go?"

"God!" I cried, "It's pouring!"

"Well," (chuckle) "Rain can always stop."

"Christ! You looked at the sky?"

"Well," (chuckle) "Plenty of time for a change before tomorrow."

"Jesus! A blow like this takes a couple days to clear away even after the rain quits. Anyway, it's not raining on Shuksan, it's snowing!"

"Well, I wouldn't mind just hiking to Lake Ann. We could build a hell of a big fire." (chuckle)

I'd been so pleased by the storm. Today was September 10 and not since March had I sacked out in town for a weekend. From Memorial Day to Labor Day I'd spent 46 days in the hills and so far this year had bagged 22 peaks. For the moment I was full up.

The storm meant I could honorably loaf around the Avenue, take in a show, drink some beer. Betty wouldn't mind losing her chance at Shuksan. She was always eager to crap out.

I tried to interest Ted in drinking some beer.

"Well, that sounds good." (pause) "Wrong weekend for me, though." (chuckle) "Optimum Frequency says go."

That goddamn Optimum Frequency again. How many trips had he turned down because of Optimum Frequency? Well, he would quietly explain, he was pushing as fast as he could toward the Ph.D. so he'd cease being poor as soon as possible. He couldn't go climbing whenever he felt like it — if he did, he'd be climbing all the time and never finish his research and always be poor. Periodic escapes from Bagley were essential to maintain the cutting edge of his mind but they were only permissible when dictated by the Principle of Optimum Frequency.

This weekend he was programmed for escape. Hopefully, to climb. If not, getting soaking wet and miserable and building a hell of a big fire would do.

As a mountain bum unhampered by any goal except more and bigger mountains, right this minute I didn't really need any misery. I'd been soaking wet enough for one summer. But who was I to hinder Ted's progress toward wealth? For his sake I conceded that if there were the slimmest chance of sunshine, or even fog, I'd go.

"But ~~damn~~ tall, there isn't!" I whined.

"Well, you never can tell." (chuckle)



I offered to leave the decision to the Weather Bureau and he agreed. Eyeing the steady rain, the black sky, I confidently dialed the number. A cheerful female answered.

"Hello," I said. "How do things look for tomorrow?"

"Oh my!" she bubbled. "It's going to be a gorgeous day!"

I was thunderstruck. "What about all this stuff here now?"

"Oh, that's all going away tonight! Nothing but sunshine tomorrow!"

"Okay," I said, "You're talking about the city. The mountains, though, pretty grim there, I bet?"

"Oh no, not at all! The mountains will be simply beautiful tomorrow!"

"Okay, yeah, you mean the local mountains, like ~~the~~ around Snoqualmie Pass, but how about the North Cascades — no hope there?"

"Oh no! It'll clear there even faster! This afternoon!"

I thanked the crazy lady and hung up, wondering how Ted had got to the Weather Bureau. But I'd proposed the bargain and was stuck with it.

I called Ted and he was obnoxious. I woke Betty and she was incredulous to let her know that against all reason the trip was on. but called Marilyn anyway. In late morning we four headed north in the Jeep on Highway 99, the day so dark I drove with headlights. "Flap-flap-flap" went the windshield wiper.

Up the Nooksack valley in the rain, up switchbacks through forest to Heather Meadows, ~~to Heather Meadows~~ up the rough gravel track through <sup>fog=</sup>blurred parkland to Austin Pass and the trailhead. Switch off. Time to get soaking wet. ~~Angry~~ Wind shook the Jeep, a cloudburst obliterated alpine trees. It was Ted's move, and he sat still, *chuckling*.

the end of paved highway at

Betty and Marilyn began practicing a recorder duet; ~~the~~ the sky dumped a truckload of golf balls on the tin roof $\chi$  and with that accompaniment the light-footed Renaissance music sounded remarkably like a steam calliope.

From a burst of laughter came sanity and we drove back down to Heather Meadows and dashed into Mt. Baker Lodge and ordered coffee. We were the only customers, naturally. Climbers and hikers and tourists were all snugly home in the lowlands. An alternate plan evolved: bunking at the lodge and drinking some beer and next morning taking a misery walk in local gardens. It was 3 o'clock and I sneered at the crazy Weather Bureau lady.

A blast in the lodge would be a nice change from the Blue Moon and we settled down to drink coffee until it was ~~time to drink~~ <sup>a decent hour for drinking</sup> beer. But something weird out the window - blue sky!

All four to the windows. The patch of blue was gone but the rain had stopped and the solid gray had broken into white billows rushing ~~swiftly~~ southward, pushed by a wind from the Arctic. Never in the many times I'd consulted the Weather Bureau had I heard so wildly improbable and brashly confident a forecast; that it was now coming precisely true was spooky. There was more to Optimum Frequency than met the eye.

We returned to the fog of Austin Pass and at 4 o'clock hoisted packs and descended to meadow headwaters of Swift Creek, sidehilled subalpine forests and parkland, ascended granite talus and buttresses ~~and~~ to the saddle above tiny Lake Ann, set in a rock bowl, and crossed the low

to get  
wet  
and cold  
enough to  
sharpen the  
cutting edge  
of Ted's mind  
so we could  
go home.

Exactly  
what was  
the relationship  
between chemistry  
and alchemy  
and witchcraft?

between the lake and  
ridge ~~in~~ the head of Shuksan Creek, site of the usual climbers' camp.

The mountain was invisible in gray so the crazy lady hadn't been so smart after all. But we'd satisfied Ted's minimum needs, ~~and~~ <sup>except for the</sup> misery. In heather and grass by a snowmelt creek, beside a huge greenstone boulder tumbled from unseen Shuksan Arm, we built a hell of a big fire and cooked up a hoosh. Then, enclosed by a dome of flame-lit mist, we <sup>drank tea and</sup> sang dirty old folksongs, accompanied by innocent recorders. Finally, under the liferaft sail, into the bags.

Something nagged at the edge of sleep — the tarp flapping. Now cannon cracks blasted the center of sleep -- Ted got up and took the tarp down. The wind had blown away fog and the night was alarmingly star-brilliant. That crazy lady! We were going to have to climb. So back to sleep.

At 4 o'clock, the customary Shuksan rising hour, we slept on, burrowing deep to escape freezing wind. At 5 we slept, shivering, and 6. Then, at 7, the wind fell and we crawled out to see the sun torch off the Summit Pyramid. The glow of red-brown rocks at 9127 feet warmed our hearts, if not our shadowed camp at 4800 feet. The white band of Hells Highway brightened under the clean blue sky, inviting us to promenade. High glaciers and cliffs seemed close, friendly.

At 8 o'clock, therefore, though nobody starts for Shuksan so ridiculously late, especially not on a short September day in company with the most incompetent climber still climbing, we set out up the trail, ascending the side of Shuksan Arm. Lake Ann fell away below, waters

of canned  
meatballs  
and corn  
and peas,  
topped off  
with Amazo,  
the Wonder  
Pudding, no  
cooking required,  
just add  
milk and  
stir.

of the tarn gray and cold. Beyond the broad green gulf of Swift Creek forests the shining white volcano of Baker stood tall in the sun.

We left the trail, which continues a short distance to a dead-end overlook of the Lower Curtis Glacier, and ~~climbed~~ <sup>kicked steps up</sup> scree to the base of cliffs, then <sup>climbed</sup> a slanting staircase of greenstone buttresses and heather clumps to a wide talus shelf.

Now came what once had been the major problem of the ascent — finding the Fischer Chimneys, which provide an easy scramble a system of gullies and ledges <sup>to</sup> the crest of Shuksan Arm — if you can locate the entrance. The rule used to be that if you've been there before and are a ~~g~~ <sup>canny</sup> routefinder and very lucky, you have a 50-50 chance. But in 1948 some unknown benefactor had smeared orange paint on the entry rocks; thinking to do comrade climbers a favor, <sup>he</sup> he had robbed them of the opportunity to fail.

Unroped -- though Betty would have preferred otherwise and required a few harsh words on Fat Man's Misery and other exposed ~~spots~~ <sup>passages</sup> -- we climbed quickly in stimulating shadows and at mid-morning broke out onto the 6400-foot crest. The sun remained behind Shuksan but its warmth washed all the wonderful world from brilliant Baker to sharp towers across the Nooksack valley, along the Canadian border. We'd made fair time, were respectably high for the hour, and ahead lay naught but joy.

We donned crampons in a moraine of the White Salmon Glacier and crunched spikes up crusty névé of Winnie's Slide, the steep slope that heads the glacier; here, decades earlier, a Betty-like Mountaineer earned her

niche in history.

From the top we walked between two rock pinnacles onto the Upper Curtis Glacier, just at the point where its front hangs over a cliff, frequently loosing loud-roaring avalanches to the Lower Curtis.

Now, roped in two teams, we ascended toward the Summit Pyramid, first on a tilted skating rink of bare blue ice, then winding ~~through giant~~ <sup>amid</sup> wide, ~~wide~~ <sup>deep</sup> crevasses. Near the base of the Pyramid we turned rightward onto ~~spectacular~~ Hell's Highway and ~~followed the broad avenue~~ <sup>walked spectacular to a</sup> ~~between the~~ rock wall above <sup>on our left and</sup> ~~and~~ ice brink below <sup>on our right</sup> to the Wind Cirque, where eddying storm winds perennially scoop a bowl in the glacier. At the bottom we plowed powdery drifts of yesterday's snow, then cramponed steeply to the top of the scoop and the gentle snow alley breaking <sup>through</sup> the rock ridge and connecting the Upper Curtis to the Sulphide Glacier.

A bit past noon we emerged into sunlight on the sloping plateau of the Sulphide and finally could pause without shivering. We were at 7800 feet, on top of the world except for the Pyramid, and a long, mild afternoon to take care of that.

The year before I'd run up and down the mountain. This time, linked to Betty, <sup>who</sup> ~~stumbled~~ <sup>ed</sup> along staring at her boots, I was able to admire <sup>horizons</sup> ~~views~~ at leisure, and glittering crystals of new snow, and blue glooms of crevasses, and ~~icicles~~ <sup>cliffs, night-frozen icicles now</sup> ~~on rock walls melting with day's warmth~~ <sup>into</sup> waterfalls.

At 8400 feet we stepped over the moat from the glacier onto rocks of the Pyramid. Unroping (Betty complained but I insisted) we scrambled (Betty whimpering, me speaking sternly) up the simple gully

and at 3 o'clock stood atop the 9127-foot summit, looking to the close grandeur of Baker <sup>and over</sup> the bewildering <sup>riches</sup> ~~richness~~ of the North Cascades from the Pickets to ~~Glacier~~ <sup>Glacier</sup> ~~to the~~ ~~mountains~~

We filled up on views until the <sup>polar</sup> ~~wind~~ wind started shivers, then descended to a warm nook to fill up on lunch.

I was glad Ted had been so <sup>persistent</sup> ~~nagging~~, the crazy lady so brash, even though I didn't need Shuksan, not after the harvest of peaks in the 8 mad weeks since Rainier.

Success had not been uninterrupted. We were washed out of Sibley Creek in an attempt on Eldorado, and then I had to miss the Climbers' Outing, when Vic, Tom, Idiot Richard, Avalanche Ray, and the Rover Boys bulled through jungles of Sulphur Creek and much to my envy climbed mighty Dome. However, while they were pioneering I was having another <sup>sort</sup> ~~sort~~ of fun, leading <sup>Dad</sup> ~~my father~~, whose mountain game was fishing, to the top of Anderson, his first glaciated peak.

Lardy Bob and Red Jim and I hiked up Dickerman on a foggy <sup>Sunday</sup> Saturday and in a steady, hard rain assaulted Big Four. ~~Sunday~~ Actually <sup>at 6 a.m.</sup> the only reason we set out was that no-see-ums drove us from our bags too early to go home. We got halfway to the top ~~just~~ before blundering into a cul de sac.

I joined 20 Mountaineers for a sunny-weekend experience climb of Cathedral, <sup>spectacular-looking but actually</sup> a simple bit of rock, and Daniel, the highest peak in King County (7986 feet) but a walkup. <sup>I stupefied</sup> ~~It was a~~

digging out my ice-cream machine at a rest stop and serving ~~me~~ sundaes.

many were the laughs at the big ugly boxes on our feet, until

~~friends and starting~~ <sup>the group</sup> by making ice ~~cream~~ ~~at a rest stop~~. Also as a joke, Red Jim and I wore the ~~big ugly~~ <sup>monstrous</sup> Mountain Trooper boots, we'd bought for \$2.50 a pair; <sup>ran</sup> on the descent of Daniel's glacier-polished slabs we ~~ran~~ <sup>freely and easily</sup> ~~ourselves~~ <sup>freely and easily</sup> ahead on our rubber-lugged soles, leaving the slowly-skating tricouni-booted crowd ~~far~~ <sup>far</sup> behind. <sup>Nails were doomed.</sup> The Bramani Revolution was born.

The summer climaxed in a 10-day expedition with Dick and Loo, crossing the Olympics from the Hoh River to the Quinault, climbing Olympus (thus earning my Six Majors pin), Barnes, and Christie. The ingenious part of the trip was that at the midpoint in remote Queets Basin

- by prearrangement -

<sup>Bagleyite</sup> we met ~~two other~~ <sup>two other</sup> parties, Ted and Chuck, and Dick's brother and several friends, crossing the mountains in the opposite direction; we picked up their cars at the Quinault road and drove around to the Hoh to complete the car-switching operation. <sup>most</sup> The memorable day was from Glacier Meadows over the Blue, Hoh, and Humes Glaciers, <sup>plus high</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>high</sup> two passes, to Queets Basin. From early morning to late afternoon we were continuously on ice and snow, ~~hauling~~ <sup>hauling</sup> heavy packs; this was how it would be on the <sup>trek</sup> ~~way~~ to McKinley.

Labor Day, ~~since~~ <sup>six of us</sup> on an experience climb at last attained ~~the~~ <sup>between</sup> ~~summit~~ of fabulous Eldorado, making the ninth or tenth ascent; ~~through~~ <sup>we glimpsed</sup> clouds ~~and~~ <sup>sprawling</sup> rough peaks and ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> glaciers that a year earlier I wouldn't have believed existed so near my Puget Sound home. They would serve very well indeed <sup>as training ground</sup> ~~to prepare~~ for the North.

And now, today, still another peak in the bag - and in Betty's, too,

her ninth of the year. Who would have thought, a mere 14 months ago, that I every<sup>g</sup> would consider <sup>magnificent</sup> Shuksan a restful, yawker-type hike?

Or that Betty of Lundin would climb Shuksan and feel good enough to eat olives and kippered salmon? That was funny. So were <sup>poor-boy</sup> Ted's moldy cheese sandwiches. And our mocking imitations of Kermit's cracked yodel.

So, for Ted and me, were memories of Baker the year before; looking across Swift Creek <sup>10,300 feet up</sup> we traced our route ~~20,000 feet up~~ ~~the~~ virgin forests, brush, meadows, and Boulder Glacier to the summit football field.

We spotted a black dot on the Sulphide Glacier — a bear! Where had it come from? Presumably the long ridge from Baker Lake. Where was it going? The <sup>animal</sup> ~~bear~~ shambled <sup>over</sup> ~~down~~ the smooth plateau to steeper, moth-eaten slopes <sup>on the edge</sup> — tricky terrain for an unroped bear. It slipped, and slid, and with an all-fours bear-claw self-arrest stopped at the brink of a crevasse. And cool as you please detoured around the end and vanished in an icefall tumbling to cirque walls enclosing Sulphide Lake. What business did a bear have at the lake that was worth going over the mountain? Did he (she) make it?

4 o'clock. Autumn evening <sup>was</sup> already cold in valleys. We watched a cloud of smoke rising from near Baker Lake, wondering how a forest could burn after yesterday's drenching; loggers are fantastically competent firebugs.

Awake! This is no place to be at 4 o'clock. Time to run, not walk, to the exit. Down the Pyramid, down the Sulphide, swift Ted and Marilyn disappearing ahead. In our own sweet time Betty and I turned the ~~corner~~ corner to the Wind Cirque, left bright sunshine for <sup>chill</sup> ~~some~~ shadow, slush

to the tallest  
purely-wild  
mountain slope  
in the state,



for icy crust.

We admired the daring of our companions — their glissade tracks ran straight as a shot down the frozen scoop. As for us, we lashed on crampons and walked down one step at a time. A trampled area at the bottom, and stains of spilled tomato juice, indicated a ~~leisurely~~ <sup>leisurely</sup> second lunch. Bootprints led to a crevasse edge — monkey-curious Ted peering into blue depths of a genuine "yah-er" (defined as a hole or cliff so deep or ~~high~~ <sup>high</sup> that when a climber falls into or off it his companions hear from him a ~~prolonged~~ <sup>prolonged</sup> diminishing "YAH-AH-ah-ah!")

We were ~~far~~ <sup>lagging</sup> behind and couldn't afford a rest and punched steadily across Hell's Highway. On ~~walls we passed~~ <sup>the cliffs</sup> icicles that had become waterfalls were becoming icicles again. Night was ~~drifting~~ <sup>filling</sup> valleys and ~~rising to~~ <sup>creeping up slopes of</sup> ridges. Ted and Marilyn probably were near camp by now.

But at the top of Winnie's Slide we were amazed to see the speedy walkers and daring glissaders only just approaching the bottom, — and not sliding, but walking, one step at a time. We caught them in the moraine, taking off crampons.

"Hey Ted," I jeered. "What's the matter — running out of nerve?"

"Well," he quietly ~~laughed~~ <sup>chuckled</sup>, "I guess you could say that."

No crampons for them at the Wind Cirque, <sup>he explained,</sup> They'd begun a careful standing glissade and everything went fine for the first 6 or 7 inches. Then Marilyn's feet went out from under and she rocketed down on her rear — and rolled into self-arrest and jammed in her ax pick and slowed and just about stopped. But here comes Ted a-flying, jerked off his feet by the rope!

He flips into arrest and is almost stopped — and here comes Marilyn, yanked off her stomach into the air and going like crazy! She slows — and here comes Ted! He slows — and here comes Marilyn!

Thus they yo-yoed to the runout, where Ted's glasses flew off and skittered over slick <sup>ice</sup> ~~snow~~. He followed, running, to the edge of the crevasse into which they dropped. He returned to Marilyn — who noticed his lacerated arm was bleeding all over the glacier. The long halt wasn't for lunch but bandaging.

We unroped in the moraine and Betty wasn't happy about that, but rope slows a run and sunset was coloring the west and Baker was pinkening and the valley was a black hole. Many whimpers and bellows later, in fading light we reached the trail and at 8 o'clock, in full night, the camp we'd left 12 hours before. The last 4 miles, packs on backs, went by in a flashlight stupor. At 11 o'clock we dream-walked the final switchback to Austin Pass and the Jeep. Betty and Marilyn fell instantly asleep in the rear seat. For them the trip was over. For Ted and me the hardest part remained.

We wanted to get home fast, particularly because Betty had been hired as a proofreader at the University of Washington Press and tomorrow was her first day on the job and she didn't dare be late. No matter what, at 8 a. m. Monday she had to be clean-scrubbed and smartly clothed and eager. Poor Betty! Poor me. I blasted along at <sup>a</sup> frightening <sup>rate</sup> ~~pace~~ — and looked at the speedometer and we were doing 35 miles an hour. If I tried for 40 we'd surely crash and burn.

I gripped the wheel hard and concentrated on the yellow line — by the yellow line shall ye be saved. Every turn was a crisis and brought me sharp awake, scared. But on straightaways my eyes slipped out of focus. Hard work, focusing. Easier to drive two Jeeps down two yellow lines. And who needs the whole of the eyes? Lids are heavy, no harm letting them droop a little.

Ted hunched forward in the copilot seat, not daring lean comfortably back lest he sleep and everybody die. He sat sideways, keeping close watch on my lids. When they drooped too far he erupted words, forcing me to answer, the struggle to speak also focusing my eyes.

Soon he was talking loud and constantly — a major effort for a guy who except when drunk ~~was notoriously soft-spoken and generally for long spells totally silent.~~ <sup>often went hours without saying a word.</sup> He commented on the passing scene, which he couldn't see very well, not with his glasses inside the Upper Curtis Glacier. Frequently he asked for clarification.

"Coming to a bridge, I think. Isn't that a bridge we're coming to?"

"Yeah, yeah, a bridge. Coming to a bridge."

"What's that sign say? Something about a turn?"

"Yeah, yeah, a turn. Coming to a turn."

Two green fires burned in the headlight beam. Ted pressed his nose against the windshield.

"What was that?" he cried.

"Dog," I said. "Dog running over the road."

Then a cluster of green fires.

"WHAT WAS THAT?"

"Two dogs."

Southward on interminable Highway 99, following the yellow line, ours the only car on the road, racing at a perilous 25 miles an hour.

The yellow line vanished! I jammed on ~~the~~ brakes. We skidded to a halt.

"WHERE'S THE ROAD? WHAT THEY DONE WITH THE ROAD?"

Blind Ted wailed, "We're lost! Hopelessly lost!"

Slowly I drove forward, scouting left, then right, from gravel shoulder to gravel shoulder, back and forth across trackless fresh asphalt to a resumption of the yellow line. Onward to Seattle at 20 miles an hour.

Stop the Jeep, dump Marilyn's body on the sidewalk; her problem whether she <sup>gets</sup> ~~is~~ in the house or <sup>sleeps</sup> ~~slept~~ by the curb. Then Ted. And at 4:30 switch off, fumble into the basement apartment, and fall down.

5 April 1974

1950

Chapter 13

THE WINTER THAT WOULDN'T QUIT

Cold September storms swept the hills and the climbing season seemed ended <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub>.  
But the sun came out and warmed ~~the~~ yellowing meadows, and ~~the cliffs~~. October  
snows blanketed the high country <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub>. And again the sun melted ~~the~~ <sup>cliffs</sup> ~~summits~~ dry.  
November could muster <sup>nothing worse</sup> ~~nothing worse~~ than ~~occasional~~ brief drizzle <sup>3</sup>/<sub>S</sub> between  
long spells of solid blue sky. Fall went on and on, far past normal limits,  
and we ran all over the map from Snoqualmie Pass to the top of Baker, until  
30 peaks bulged my 1949 bag. ¶ The day after Thanksgiving the natural order  
was restored -- a try for 31 was thwarted by a sudden dumping of whiteness that  
buried the heather ~~in minutes~~, and almost us as we fled to the road. Having  
~~just~~ remembered how it's done, winter proceeded to make up for lost time.  
Ski areas were operating <sup>the next weekend</sup> ~~within a week~~ and a couple weeks later we couldn't  
reach them because of avalanches. December 30 the snowline fell to shores of  
Puget Sound, canceling Dick's and my plan to ski in the new year on Blue  
Mountain in the Olympics; as a substitute we skied out the old year on  
1500-foot Cougar Mountain, closest approach of the Cascades to Seattle.  
A quick thaw left the University District bare; immediately thereafter,  
however, the thermometer dropped below freezing and stayed there.

¶

The morning of Friday, January 13, the temperature was in the mid-20s as I walked to work -- "too cold to snow," says the old Puget Sound adage. The wind was bitter from the north -- and the law of the land is our snow always comes on a south wind. But the ~~dense~~ <sup>amorphous</sup> gray ceiling sure as hell looked like a snow sky. And tiny flakes did indeed begin flinging through the air and so icy was the ground they stuck and as I entered Bagley at 8 o'clock the official word already had been received from Administration -- everybody who came by car, go home instantly. Too late. Stockroom customers ~~gloriously~~ <sup>gaily</sup> reported campus parking lots were a hopeless muddle of skidding and fender-banging and the streets were chaos, cars everywhere abandoned as panicked drivers scurried to shelter. The walk home for lunch took me 20 minutes instead of the usual 5, what with face-blasting wind and blinding white gusts, slick paths and deep drifts -- the only blizzard I ever saw in Seattle. Arriving at the apartment I discovered my ears were frozen -- the first time I ever suffered frostbite. For the return to Bagley I dressed in boots, parka, stocking cap, and mittens -- standard attire thereafter, because Saturday another storm unloaded even more snow for a total of some 2 feet, unmatched since 1919, and ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> arctic ~~air mass stagnated over~~ <sup>annexed</sup> the Northwest and the city remained white for a month, ~~as we could see from the District, Sugar Mountain only turned green.~~

Often in January and February the Jeep skated highway-rinks to tow hills at Stevens Pass and Cayuse Pass. When passes were closed by slides we skied golf courses <sup>by day, by night, half-boozed,</sup> and sledged steep streets, <sup>scaring the hell out of the</sup> ~~frivolous~~ <sup>frivolous</sup> ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> was strictly a time-killer and I was impatient to get at the serious business of the year. On March 5, therefore, I joyfully

¶ Many of my friends, notably Dick, considered skiing a worthy sport in its own right.

little kids whose sleds we borrowed.

sensed a hostility,  
~~in the atmosphere~~  
 looked around, and saw

traded awkward boards for honest boots and climbed Big Si with Chuck. The Haystack, sheathed in ice and battered by stinging sleet, was good and tricky fun. But the real excitement came ~~in~~ in Haystack Basin. We ~~found~~ ~~ourselves~~ hostile eyes watching from rocks and bushes -- a savage face here, another there. We were ringed by a dozen ferocious ~~dogs~~ <sup>beasts. Dogs!</sup> They neither barked nor snarled, just skulked, ~~obviously preparing for some drastic action~~. We stood back to back, ice axes at the ready, imagining the headline: "TERRIBLE TRAGEDY ON SI -- CLIMBERS MYSTERIOUSLY TORN TO PIECES." And abruptly they broke the circle and in a yapping pack raced down the mountain. (Do dogs laugh?)

The Wild Dog Adventure was an auspicious beginning. March 19 Chuck, Tom, Red Jim, and I decided the ~~weather~~ <sup>morning downpour</sup> was not ~~black~~ enough to keep us from ~~completing~~ <sup>slopping along</sup> Nanga Persis. We changed our minds ~~hiking~~ <sup>a tempest-drenched</sup> the Proctor Creek logging road through ~~an~~ end-of-the-world clearcut, ~~and turned for home when sufficient~~. ~~Well~~. Well, mid-March admittedly was pushing the season. Come April and we'd get the steamroller in gear.

Like hell. April 16, in fog, rain, and snow, Lardy Bob and Marsh and Avalanche Ray and I plowed to treeline on Kendall; rumbles from surrounding dimness convinced us to quit. April 30 Vic, Tom, Ron, Betty, and I trenched ~~high~~ <sup>high</sup>-deep snow to Melakwa Pass. There Vic advanced his watch to daylight-saving time, making the hour 3 o'clock, and since he was Cam's successor as Climbing Chairman we accepted the Maximum Leader's judgment it now was too late to continue toward Roosevelt. ~~Lack of~~ ~~being a success~~

~~avalanche zone~~

In May, when we should have been sallying to grander mountains, we still were fiddling around Snoqualmie Pass. On foggy-cold May 7 Vic, Lardy Bob, Idiot Richard, Marsh, and I finally bagged a peak; it was only Lundin by the East Ridge but not altogether simple -- no rock was showing and a ~~spooky~~ <sup>spooky</sup> cornice covered the ~~Boiler Plate~~ Boiler Plate. May 14, ~~on the first sunny day~~ <sup>basking in the first high-mount</sup> ~~sunshine~~ <sup>sunshine</sup> of the year, Tom, Pete, Vic, Betty, and I climbed the slippery-dripping South Face of The Tooth. So treacherous were cornices of the summit ridge we didn't descend by the customary traverse but rappelled down the face.

Three weekends in April and May various combinations of Pete, Tom, Betty, Idiot Richard, Lardy Bob, Chuck, and I said the heck with slop and storm and escaped across the Cascade Crest to sunny granite of Tumwater Canyon, getting fingers in shape, and in the process developing a fondness for the rainshadow refuge. ~~On~~ <sup>one</sup> trip we made the third ascent of Tumwater Tower; to deflate subsequent heroes in the moment of their triumph, Pete signed the register book, "Betty Manning, leader." ~~On~~ <sup>another</sup> we watched ~~as~~ <sup>open-mouthed</sup> as Pete, in Bagley Hall merely ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup> more engineer but in the hills emerging as ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> hottest of the young cragsmen, nailed a ~~rather new and~~ terrifying route up Castle Rock; if I retained any crazy notion of achieving respectability on ~~the~~ <sup>Yosemite-like</sup> walls ~~of the Yosemite~~, that was the end of that; with ~~a ton of ice and~~ a winch I couldn't follow so thin a line of holds. Fortunately my ~~important~~ <sup>central</sup> goals lay elsewhere; I subscribed to Kermit's Law, "nein gletscher, nein gipfel." When I ~~walked~~ <sup>strode nonchalantly</sup> into a high camp a couple years from now I wanted to hear the folk whisper, "The iceman cometh."

The persistence of winter was frustrating. Many months I'd been studying maps and alpine journals and guidebooks, choosing objectives for the Big Third Year, and talking up projected trips with potential companions. There would



be explorations deep in the North Cascades and a bold first step toward the Far North, yet this higher level of endeavor demanded sterner preparation than wallowing in Snoqualmie Pass muck.

We <sup>glumly</sup> joked about the New Ice Age. Kermit, now a professor of chemistry and geology at the state college in Bellingham, had established a survey station to measure the retreat of Baker's Coleman Glacier. <sup>Last</sup> ~~in~~ October, ~~after~~ after our descent from the volcano's summit, he'd visited the station and come galloping back yodeling fractured German, calling upon gletscherliebhaber in to rejoice, for the Coleman had advanced -- the first break in the ~~century~~ century-long pattern of universal dwindling of Northwest glaciers. ("Hark! What is that dreadful grinding noise in the north? The reborn Puget Glacier? Returning from Canada after 12,000 years to obliterate Seattle? Don't make any rash investments in local real ~~estate~~ estate.")

Winter at last relented a <sup>bit</sup> ~~little~~, but peaks were so mired in white the climbs of June were those we should have done in May. June 3 Tom, Ted, Lardy Bob, Betty, and I drove the South Fork Stillaguamish River <sup>road</sup> as far as snow allowed, then backpacked a mile to the 1800-foot site of Big Four Inn, which had burned to the ground last September. The lonesome caretaker of the charcoal was thrilled by unexpected company and invited us to camp in the ramshackle tourist ~~x~~ cabins, built in the days when the railroad still ran to abandoned mines of Monte Cristo and some brainless entrepreneur thought Big Four might ~~compete~~ compete with Banff and Lake Louise.

Sunday we (minus Betty) set out to try Big Four Mountain via the easterly ~~x~~ ~~route~~ route. A log jam gave an easy crossing of the river and a ramp of avalanche snow led through lower cliffs. Rapidly -- and nervously -- we

kicked steps up the side of the couloir, whose center was scored by the largest avalanche gut we'd ever seen, ~~the narrow canyon~~ <sup>a slot 3-5 feet wide and up to</sup> as much as 10 feet deep. We were ~~very~~ glad the day was overcast and cold; snow patches hung above us on the cliffs and sunshine could have been fatal. At the couloir head we clambered over blocks of a collapsed cornice to the ridge crest and scrambled bare rock, decorated by the first alpine flowers of the year, to the snow plateau of the 6120-foot summit. We looked out between roving black squalls to white peaks of the Monte Cristo group, south to Stuart and Chimney, north to Glacier, Baker, and the Pickets -- and down to brown clearcuts pocking virgin green of the valley.

On the ascent we'd scrupulously avoided the ominous gut; to descend we jumped right in and rocketed 3500 feet ~~straight~~ down the groove. At camp we were greeted by Betty -- and again by the caretaker, who in honor of our conquest had baked a cake. Delicious.

Next weekend, in bright sun, Loo and I climbed The Brothers, chief companion of Constance on Seattle's Olympic horizon. Though no more than a snow plod, the ascent satisfied an old Boy Scout ambition; fittingly, after the trip I bought a new factory-made Trapper Nelson and ~~happily~~ retired to my museum of treasures the one Dad lovingly hand-crafted in 1937.

June 17, the day before the Nisqually practice, Ted and Lardy Bob and I drove to Rainier Park and blundered around the Tatoosh Range in dense fog, eventually finding the saddle between Pinnacle and Castle and bagging both. That evening we drank beer at the Park entrance restaurant-tavern, joined by late arrivals from town -- Betty, Tom, Idiot Richard, and Marsh -- and

afterward razzed through the Longmire Campground ~~in the Jeep~~, rendering a public service ~~by~~ honking ~~the~~ horn<sup>s</sup> and yelling out windows to the hundred-odd bag-bound Mountaineers it was mid<sup>g</sup>night and they'd better sleep tight because soon they'd have to get up.

Sunday the mob marched up the Nisqually Glacier in sunshine, accompanied by two New York City photo-journalists<sup>x</sup> tagging along (tied to guides) to observe "American youth at play." Most of us had wands waving from rucksacks, part of an experiment to compare visibility of various red-to-orange hues of the newfangled fluorescent cloth. As customary on circus outings, there was a competition for the most outrageous lunch; the secret of the menu planned by me and my ~~some~~ buddies had leaked out and a score of other instructors played copycat. The Manhattan dudes were goggle-eyed at the ~~colorful~~ spectacle; readers of Life magazine subsequently were solemnly informed<sup>(with color photos as proof)</sup> that every Northwest climber carries a personal flag and the standard Mountaineer lunch is one entire watermelon per rope team.

Saturday night I laughed, and despite hangover, all day Sunday. Yet nagging at the edge of my mind was <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ glimpse of eternity Saturday afternoon, on the descent of Castle.

Drifting fog had thickened to miserable drizzle and we were hurrying to get off the peak. The rock was so simple that despite gray emptiness below we didn't rope. My glasses were blurred by mist and I was blind-clumsy.

Traversing a ledge, I took a long stride around a bulge and in passing put a hand lightly on a lichen-covered rock for touch-and-go balance. Who would've ~~been~~ suspected so big a rock, its permanence attested to by <sup>the</sup> ancient symbiosis

of alga and fungus, ought to have been tested? It was a teeterer and dipped under my hand. My lead boot, aimed for a bucket, was thrown off target. One microsecond I walked on fog before the boot caught the outermost inch of the ~~bucket~~ mountain, of Earth.

On insignificant, meaningless Castle the North-dreaming hero was damn near killed.

18 April 1974

1950

Chapter 14

THE BATTLE FOR BIG BANANA

There it stood, a bold bright sculpture in ice, the crest just 1500 feet above. But lost. The months of planning, the five-hour drive to Lake Chelan, the two-hour boat trip to Lucerne, the 10-mile bus ride up Railroad Creek to the 3200-foot mining town of Holden, the 5-mile haul of iron-heavy packs to ~~the~~ 5300-foot, solid-frozen Holden Lake, and now the slog through fresh white fluff to 8000 feet on the Mary Green Glacier -- all for nothing. Yesterday's snowfall had done us in.

This morning of Sunday, May 28, the storm over, we crawled from Mountain Trooper tents into blinding sun and looked up, up, up to the high-thrusting peak that until now had been only a mysterious mass on the horizon and a vague description in an old climbing journal. It was real. It was near. Yet as insubstantial and remote as winter dreams. Purely for exercise we climbed the glacier to a col with views north to the Stehakin valley and the January-white achtausenders and ~~neuntausenders~~ neuntausenders crowded around Cascade Pass and

Park Creek Pass -- Boston, Buckner, Logan, Goode, Black, and dozens more.

The summit was close, tantalizing. Tom, crazy, said the ~~unthinkable~~ <sup>unthinkable</sup> -- what if we made a try? My companions, insane, took him seriously. ~~Then~~ <sup>Then</sup> spoke cool reason ~~provided~~: Avalanches were certain -- we could only hope they

wouldn't be big enough to sweep us off the cliffs. There was no chance of getting down before dark -- we'd shiver on some icy ledge until dawn. And cirrus was dimming the sun -- by evening there'd be more snow. Three of us had wives at home, and two, small children. The others had mothers. Forget it.

From their meadow camp on slopes of Dome, members of the 1949 Climbers' Outing stared fascinated, morning and evening, all week long, at the huge bulk to the southeast. Throughout the fall, back in Seattle, they systematically interrogated the entire climbing community: "Hey, what do you know about Bonanza?" Nobody knew anything. Odd, very odd. Climbers have a fetish about "highest" -- the highest peak in the world, the highest in North America, the highest in the Cascades or Olympics or whatever. Stuart was renowned and popular precisely because the received ~~wisdom~~ wisdom declared it to be the highest nonvolcanic peak in the state. Strange, very strange, that maps and Fearless Fred's ~~guidebook~~ <sup>brand new</sup> guidebook, both saying Bonanza was higher, should be ignored.

Finally several oldtimers were found who knew Bonanza by reputation. "Yeah, it's high, but that doesn't mean a thing on the east side of the Cascades. Over there people ride horses to 8000 feet. Bonanza is a big yawn, a walkup."

Though none personally had done the walkup, they'd heard of many ascents. Puzzling, very puzzling, because only one climb was on record, by a Portland party in June of 1937, briefly noted in Fred's book and fully described in a Mazama article. ~~By~~ <sup>For a week</sup> ~~after~~ ~~day~~ the group probed the mountain's defenses, seeking a route. When they at last tried the Mary Green Glacier (named for the wife

of an early prospector) an avalanche flushed them off; after digging out, most of the party quit. The undaunted three who renewed the attack suffered seventeen sorts of hell, climaxed by a 100-foot precipice of flawless rock.

It certainly didn't sound like a walkup. Well, one had to consider the source. Betty's accepted excuse for clumsiness was a lack of depth perception, but I suspected the <sup>real</sup> ~~same~~ explanation was being born in Portland. Whenever Mountaineers gathered around a campfire, a favorite entertainment was telling "Mazama stories." On Stuart, for example, we'd had convulsions watching them belay down a snow slope so gentle we couldn't even glissade. Still, the Portlanders who made the first ascent weren't Mazamas; <sup>the leaders</sup> ~~and~~ despite the handicap of his place of origin, ~~the leader~~ was respected even by Seattle climbers. Curiouser and curiouser.

Eventually the research team caught Fearless Fred between wanderings and he, chief scholar of North Cascades lore, dispelled the mystery. The Portlanders weren't lying -- Bonanza was tough. Yet the Seattle oldtimers also spoke truth -- Bonanza was a walkup. Years ago, whether by a mistake in field notes or careless drafting in Washington City, U.S. Geological Survey mapmakers had switched the names of two neighboring peaks. Simple 8000-foot Bonanza became North Star; 9511-foot North Star took over the name and ~~name~~ reputation of Bonanza.

Vic and Tom were ecstatic. What a coup, this late in alpine history, to make the second ascent of one of the state's grandest peaks! Bless the blundering mappers! Bless the incurious generations of Mountaineers who scorned both Portland and the east side of the Cascades! The excitement was contagious. Idiot Richard, a Dome veteran, was recruited, and Spick and

I.  
 Jay and ~~me~~ At planning meetings Vic and Tom analyzed the Portlanders' route foot by foot, laid out a precise timetable, drew up an equipment list that included half a ton of pitons and bolts, carabiners and hangers, sling rope and rappel rope.

They refined the timetable and equipment list. And re-refined. The whole spring they fussed over petty details, ~~and we were~~ <sup>almost as if</sup> we were headed ~~North~~ North on a genuine expedition. The week ~~before~~ <sup>preceding</sup> Memorial Day the frantic intensity of last-minute preparations, the nightly barrage of phone calls, cracked my nerve. I began wondering what the hell I'd gotten into, ~~and~~ belatedly pondered the route ~~described by the Portlanders~~ -- and wished winter bravery hadn't made me so ~~soon~~ foolish-quick to accept the invitation. This was no several-pitch climb, a three-hour romp spiced by a scattering of cheap thrills. This was a thousand or more feet of continuous thin holds, a full day walking the narrow line between Here and There.

To grow, a climber must push his limits steadily higher by attempting steadily tougher peaks. Keep on doing the South Face of The Tooth and Shuksan and Rainier and that's all you'll ever do. ~~But~~ <sup>however, sanely</sup> Bonanza <sup>was</sup> no modest advance of my frontiers, it was a quantum leap. Perhaps in 1951 I'd be ready, or by the end of summer. But Memorial Day?

Christ, Bonanza wasn't so bloody important. Not to me. I hadn't stared at the bastard from Dome, I didn't hear any urgent call. It wasn't "my" climb ~~and~~ <sup>immensely increase</sup> that would ~~add~~ the difficulty. ~~Once~~ <sup>And with</sup> Once on the rocks I'd have no burning lust to get the pecker up. ~~With~~ Vic and Tom ~~were~~ the acknowledged leaders, ~~I~~ I'd just be baggage, denied the ~~up~~ up-front challenges that screw guts and will to the sticking point.



At the Blue Moon, deep in the fifth pitcher, I confided to the non-climber jolly boys I hadn't felt such numbing dread since Cruiser. A lot of sympathy I got from those fellaheen: "Well, you dumb asshole, you're not in the Army. Quit!"

I was glad when snow fell Saturday night. And sad to be glad. Ashamed. Despondent. The first ~~serious~~<sup>stern</sup> test of the Big Third Year and I flunked. The South Face of The Tooth, Shuksan, Rainier by the dog route, they were my speed.

Monday morning, ~~the~~ snow clouds slowly clearing, we stood around a smoky campfire at the lake, silent-gloomy -- the others because they'd lost Bonanza, I because I'd lost everything, would soon be driven by humiliation from the company of heroes <sup>to</sup> back where I belonged, a mere super-hiker.

Vic, the perennial Pollyanna, sought to revive party spirits: "Well, the peak'll still be there next week."

Sure, but nobody could wangle the required three-day weekend.

"Well, what about the week after?"

Again no. And twice more. Then bingo! In late June everyone except Idiot could return. Now we lifted eyes from smoldering fire to taunting tower. Now we laughed.

(What, me laugh? Yes, at being granted a second chance. The way North was not closed. As for ~~the~~ perils of Bonanza, who's afraid of the big bad wolf when he's five weeks up the road?)

We ran down the trail to Holden, drank milkshakes in the company restaurant, and explored the town, <sup>exclaiming</sup> ~~marveling~~ at the ~~mountain~~ magnificently obscene garbage dump spilling into Railroad Creek, marveling at the enormous

vile heap of reddish-yellow tailings half-damming the creek, killing trees along the banks and no ~~doubt~~ fish in the waters, a patch of Hell in a green and pleasant land. Time remaining before the bus left, we climbed stairways in the hillside-hugging, tailings-spewing concentrator plant, Vic buttonholing everyone we met and ~~with no prologue~~ asking, "Do you know anything about Bonanza?" If his tactics were blunt, they were based on solid logic. For a dozen years several hundred people had lived virtually at the foot of the peak and ~~thought it was a matter of~~ <sup>despite the</sup> local <sup>boast</sup> ~~pride~~ that official State Liquor Board records showed Holden to have the highest per capita whiskey consumption in Washington, perhaps a few folk occasionally sobered up enough to go hiking, even climbing.

After many a blank stare and not a few ugly glares from red eyeballs, the quest was rewarded. ~~An engineer gave~~ <sup>obtained</sup> Vic <sup>at the mine</sup> the address of a former engineer/who used to fool around ~~at~~ Holden Lake and may have gone up the mountain. The ~~best~~ engineer's answering letter told he had indeed made the ascent, and knew of another by Holdenites as well. He said it ~~wasn't~~ ~~anywhere~~ ~~was~~ the tiger described by the Portlanders, was so easy, in fact, he'd started up a second time with <sup>a couple</sup> ~~several~~ muckers who'd never done any climbing at all on the outside of a mountain. Unfortunately, one fell in the bergschrund, was impaled on his ice ax, and bled to death. Two conquests by nobodies cut Bonanza (and the Portlanders) down to size. That the peak was blooded didn't impress us; it was a freakish, not an "honest" kill.

In the dawn of Saturday, June 24, we again left Seattle, Idiot replaced <sup>thus</sup> by Avalanche Ray, Dome veteran and Bonanza fan; ~~and~~ Jay and Spick and I were accompanied by wives for the hike to camp. The weight of iron was much reduced

and there wasn't a tight nerve in the whole larky bunch. No daring second ascent was our goal, ~~just~~ <sup>just</sup> a fun fourth.

The drive across Stevens Pass to our springtime playground in Tumwater Canyon ~~by~~ was homey-familiar. Beyond there, though, following the Wenatchee River through apple orchards and sagebrush hills, then turning north up the ~~hood~~ gorge of the Columbia River, walled on the west by stark gneiss, on the east by stepped ramparts of naked basalt, <sup>for a second time</sup> alienation grew. On my ~~west~~ side of the Cascades the journey to highlands proceeded from green suburbs and pastures and second-growth forests ~~into~~ into the darker and denser green of virgin forests, more often than not beneath a gray and dripping sky. A desert baking under a California-weird sun was no proper approach to mountains. Granted, the Columbia drained the entire east slope of the Cascades and part of the west and belonged to the range as surely as Puget Sound, yet this arid waste outraged my instincts, ~~was~~ mocked the official motto of Washington, the "Evergreen State." Fried by hot sky I yearned for a kindly cloud, lost faith in the existence of snow. Moreover, the worst health menace of the west was chronic sinus trouble. The east was ~~was~~ poisoned country -- behind every tumbleweed I saw a coiled rattlesnake and all over my body felt ticks drilling, infecting me with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

~~Nevertheless~~ <sup>Nevertheless</sup>, ~~still~~ <sup>a</sup> there was ~~one~~ <sup>a</sup> ~~good~~ compensation for venturing into this dangerous foreign land, ~~Leaving the Columbia,~~ Leaving the Columbia, climbing a high, dry ridge, ~~and~~ dodging range cattle dumbly staring at asphalt wondering if it was good to eat, for a second time I felt a yell ~~trembling~~ in my throat as I looked down from brown-scorched crest to blue water rippled by wind -- clean water from the mountains, cool wind from the mountains. Lake

drowned channel of a Pleistocene glacier,

Chelan, though ~~stretching~~ its 55-mile-long ~~channel~~ "fiord" <sup>extended</sup> far into desert, was born of mountains and even here amid ~~mountain~~ sagebrush ~~and~~ smelled of mountains.

We drove the twisty shore road to the end a short <sup>way</sup> ~~bit~~ past Twenty Five Mile Creek and hauled packs to the dock. At 10 o'clock the boat arrived, an hour and a half from the town of Chelan at the foot of the lake. Memorial Day we'd ridden the "winter boat," the Speedway. Now we met the other vessel in the Chelan navy, the Lady of the Lake, <sup>a bit</sup> ~~some~~ larger but still a toy, poignantly reminding of the "mosquito fleet" that made a community of Puget Sound before the era of automobiles.

Of course, to the <sup>300-odd</sup> ~~several hundred~~ citizens of Holden and the 70 or so other <sup>people</sup> who lived uplake from Twenty Five Mile Creek, <sup>"the boat"</sup> (Speedway <sup>and</sup> Lady), <sup>making one round trip a day</sup> ~~making one trip daily~~ in summer, three ~~times~~ <sup>was</sup> a week in winter, ~~was~~ no toys, ~~was~~ their main connection to the "outside." (The alternatives? Mountain trails. Or when in a hurry, the float plane based at Chelan, flown by a guy <sup>for reasons unknown</sup> who ~~has some reason~~ hadn't drifted off to the Alaska bush, ~~where he belonged~~.)

But for old settlers and hungover muckers ~~returning to hard labor~~, as much as ~~for~~ us climbers on holiday, <sup>the</sup> leaving-behind <sup>of</sup> the nation's highway network was <sup>an open and obvious</sup> ~~a visible~~ declaration of ~~its~~ independence, reflected in a general smiling ~~and~~ exuberance.

The last <sup>irrigated</sup> ~~green~~ orchards fell ~~behind~~ behind, sagebrush steppe yielded to parkland of grass and Ponderosa pine, warm-fleshed hills grew taller and steepened into rugged cliffs of gneiss and granite rising 7000 feet ~~from~~ to ~~high~~ white winter. <sup>Now and then</sup> ~~Several times~~ the Lady nosed into shore to deliver mail and supplies to isolated cabins, apparently summer <sup>or retirement</sup> ~~homes~~ ~~of~~ ~~pieces~~ of ~~retirement~~, since they had no visible means of support.

everyone  
on the  
Lady,  
the two  
dozen

The wide alluvial fan of Railroad Creek was our voyage's end. At noon, together with most of the ~~several dozen~~ passengers, we debarked on the Howe Sound Mining Company dock, beside which <sup>lay</sup> ~~road~~ <sup>fug-a waiting</sup> barges laden with huge buckets of evil-gray copper concentrate. In pines across the creek were weatherbeaten buildings of Lucerne, a ramshackle resort whose name recalled early years of the century, the golden age of Lake Chelan tourism, when the Great Northern Railway was vigorously publicizing the "Switzerland of America."

The Lady continued <sup>up the narrow blue lane</sup> toward the lake head, ~~about~~ a half-hour ~~time~~ distant. From other climbers I'd heard a settlement of 40 or 50 year-round inhabitants was up there where the ~~St.~~ Stehekin River entered the lake. What sort of people chose to live so deep in the mountains, so far in the past? Someday I'd have to go see. ~~But~~ <sup>Having</sup> ~~you~~ ~~had~~ discovered this new way to the ~~Willamette~~ Cascades I'd <sup>certainly</sup> ~~return~~ <sup>and often.</sup> ~~many~~ ~~times.~~ The water road was strange as a dream, yet instantly felt <sup>homelike,</sup> ~~more~~ <sup>than strips of sterile concrete designed for</sup> ~~natural,~~ ~~impelled~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~explosion~~ ~~of~~ ~~a~~ ~~hundred~~ ~~gasoline~~ ~~bombs~~ ~~a~~ ~~mile.~~ ~~Surely~~ ~~no~~ ~~greater~~ ~~entry~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~hills~~ ~~is~~ ~~conceivable.~~ <sup>Lake Chelan was the</sup> <sup>mob</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>machin</sup>

<sup>grandest conceivable entry</sup> <sup>to the hills</sup>

Again the bus carried us ~~up the steep road~~ to Holden, and again, packs on <sup>muckers'</sup> <sup>row of</sup> backs, we hiked by the commissary-restaurant, ~~dormitories,~~ ~~and~~ ~~family~~ ~~houses~~ to the baseball diamond, where road narrowed to trail. Two kids who'd jeered our ropes and axes in May were playing the same games in the same place. They ~~shouted~~ yelled, amazed, "What the heck brought you back?"

The bus had transported us miles from <sup>Ponderosa</sup> pines and rattlesnakes, close to clouds above the Cascade Crest, yet not quite all the way "home." Summer-lush alder and willow and maple were familiar but not the <sup>profusion</sup> ~~beilderment~~ of aromatic shrubs -- sun country reeks of perfume. Strange trees grew here too. <sup>Ascending</sup> ~~stimulating~~

the side-trail into the hanging valley of Holden Lake, we passed groves of aspen, white bark shining in ~~the~~ shadows of breeze-quaking leaves. ~~They~~ scattered among ~~the~~ firs <sup>of the basin</sup> were groups of spidery black trees that a month ago were bare-limbed, ~~victim~~ <sup>victims of a</sup> blight ~~victim~~, I supposed; <sup>they</sup> now were mysteriously sprouting fresh green needles. <sup>Incredible! rumors</sup> I'd heard of the larch, a conifer that loses needles in winter, an evergreen that is not. The rainshadow was eerie. I could understand, though, how a person might come to like it as well as soaking-wet west-side jungle.

Ethereal green glow of larches said the long winter was ending, and so did blue leads of meltwater streaking lake ice. Our Memorial Day fire had melted a four-foot pit in the snow; now the ashes crowned a three-foot pillar. From a <sup>cozy</sup> ~~comfortable~~ camp on an island of <sup>bare</sup> ~~snow-free~~ ground, in calm evening we ~~gazed~~ <sup>gazed</sup> up the cirque wall to glacier and peak and out over the air gap of Railroad Creek to other neuntausers -- Copper, Fernow, Seven-Fingered Jack.

Sunday at 4:30 we left camp, wisps of pink cirrus flecking blue sky, climbed a snow gully to the glacier and continued up simple slopes to the bergschrund, 8500 feet.

8:30 and a mere thousand ~~+~~ more feet of mountain. Mere? Looking up -- straight up -- I felt the spouting of the old cold sweat. The engineer called this a ~~scramble~~ scramble. Doubtless it was when he made his ascent -- in summer. Never mind the hot sun on Lake Chelan, ~~the~~ larches needling at Holden Lake -- our season, up here, was winter. The thousand feet was ~~+~~ all cliff and virtually all white.

~~These~~ Teams ~~hadn't~~ hadn't previously been discussed, As ropes were uncoiled it became apparent Vic and Tom, naturally enough, would form the lead rope and Spick and Jay, close friends, the second. That left Ray and me for the third

rope, which was okay by us. However, during a piss break Tom got me aside and apologized. (Apologize? For what?) He was sure I could handle the situation. (Situation? What situation?) That day on Dome <sup>well,</sup> Ray probably was just off his form, that was why they had the trouble. (Trouble? ) This was the first I'd heard of any trouble.) Those two ~~other~~ times he came home in a basket stretcher (What? What?) could've been plain bad luck. (Yeah?) All the same I'd better keep an eye peeled. (Peeled! It'll  bulge!)

As we tied in I suspiciously studied Ray, and the white wall, and Ray again. Avalanche Ray we called him, thinking it a joke, only now I learned he had a lousy habit of falling off mountains. And now I was tied to him for the grimmest thousand feet of my life. Ray was a buddy, but no true friend if he killed me. A week ago on Castle I'd nearly killed myself with no help at all.

The  bergschrund was easily passed with an end run. Messy-wet  gneissic granite,  downslab as slippery as greased shingles, forced us rightward to a long slope of steep snow. Giggling Vic boosted morale by announcing, "Here's where the Portlanders avalanched!" The slabs pushed us still farther right, until the runout of a slide would not be the friendly bergschrund but a rock cliff plunging to a lower bay of the glacier. If we avalanched now we'd rocket over the brink singing our last song: "YAH-AH-AH!"

Forget the avalanche -- there wasn't enough substance to the slope.  Boot toes kept bumping ice-coated rock. The snow was a loose winter veneer, too thin for thank-God steps, too thin for the ax pick to dig in for self-arrest. We must not fall. Yet every several seconds the rope tightened on my waist,

I teetered backward, as Ray slipped. Lord, if he pulled me off I'd fly through the air with the greatest of ease, the daring young man who forgot his trapeze. I should belay him -- from what? The ax shaft is no anchor in a foot of slop.

After three harrowing ropelengths the snow deepened. Now we could <sup>securely</sup> bury boots and ax shafts. Exhale. But not relax. Because now an avalanche was possible. And now we were standing more than climbing, listening to Vic and Tom, far above, shout back and forth. A friendship seemed to be disintegrating up there. Tom's language was normal for him in a time of <sup>trial</sup> ~~frustration~~ but to hear such words from clean Vic was frightening. Close above, Spick and Jay further contributed to rubberizing my knees: "Holy cow, this sure doesn't look to me like it'll go!" and "It's ~~even~~ a lot worse than the Portlanders said!"

Often I glanced down to Ray, trying not to look past him to the far-below glacier bay into which we'd dive if he had an attack of "Dome trouble." He was smiling. Of course. He was always smiling. Ray's delight with Earth was totally indiscriminate, he found joy in the rottenest moments of life, the cruddiest corners of creation, that's why we <sup>were so fond of</sup> ~~loved~~ him. He'd probably smile, if not laugh out loud, during ~~through~~ his final trouble. Pray God I'd not share it today.

Leaders aren't the true heroes; fully occupied by solving problems, they've no ~~leisure~~ leisure for brooding. Followers suffer most, especially on the third rope, hundreds of feet from the action, waiting and worrying. I couldn't see any passage through those <sup>awful</sup> ~~terrific~~ icy cliffs Tom was cursing, not with any amount of iron. Which raised a question -- why wasn't he pounding iron?

Because it wasn't necessary. He ~~skipped~~ dodged around a ~~rib~~ rib corner and found a rock wall with a more southerly exposure and thus mainly snowfree. Were



we out of the woods? Not to hear Spick and Jay. They battered my nerves with a punning exchange of warnings and wails: "Watch out -- bad spot here!" and "How the heck did you get up this?" and "Keep your belay tight, I might go on the rope!"

They must have been playing private games, ~~perhaps~~ because once I gulped my panic the wall resolved into a staircase. I'd scramble a 20-foot pitch offering an embarrassing abundance of holds, find a dandy ledge precisely where I'd have put one if I'd designed the mountain, belay Ray, scampering like a goat, and run up the next pitch to the next <sup>broad</sup> ledge. The sole problem was the Spick-Jay roadblock; Ray and I began sharing chuckles at their moans.

The staircase led to a snow-and-gravel gully <sup>which</sup> ~~was~~ just-like-that took us to the summit ridge. Tom and Vic disappeared, followed by huffing-puffing Spick and Jay. Number Three rope decided to wait for the track to clear and meanwhile <sup>enjoy</sup> ~~luncheon~~ the first comfortable sit-down since the schrund.

Enjoy but not rejoice. We'd done much, were very high, surrounded by sky. Yet the summit was not in sight. The Portlanders' flawless hundred-foot precipice remained. Tom and Vic must be working on it now -- or perhaps staring in despair.

A distant howl! Oh Lord, who's fallen? How badly hurt? We'll be two days, maybe three, getting a rescue party from Seattle.

We flipped away fags and jumped up a ridge step that had given Spick and Jay fits and dashed along easy felsenmeer. Yelling ~~was~~ continued, closer. Topping a rise I stared, bewildered -- where was the rest of the mountain? There wasn't any more! And the yelling was Vic's triumphant bray, repeated over and over, "Bo-NAN-za!"

For all the months, days, hours required  
to get here, we'd not be able  
to stay long —

At 1:30, five hours from the bergschrund, we gathered on the summit, ~~and~~  
~~no~~ ~~see~~ ~~the~~ ~~top~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mountain~~, ~~gap~~ ~~filled~~. Though we'd paid scant attention  
while concerned with matters at hand and foot, dawn cirrus had ~~it~~ thickened  
~~into~~ ~~a~~ solid overcast, black squalls were roaming.

Hastily we scanned the register book -- and were stunned, then overcome by  
hysterical laughter. We expected the names of the Portlanders, and of the  
~~engineer's~~ engineer's party, and a third entry too. But ~~not~~ ~~page~~  
after page. No 4th ascent ours, ~~but~~ ~~not~~ ~~10th~~. For God's sake, it was a 16th!  
strangers? Mainly, a close reading showed, a single fanatic ~~mountain~~ mucker  
who during ~~several~~ several summers at the end of the 1930s, start of the 1940s,  
climbed the peak repeatedly, by three routes, often alone. Dammit, why  
couldn't he have developed a taste for whiskey instead?

~~We~~ ~~sure~~ ~~wouldn't~~ ~~go~~ ~~home~~ ~~and~~ ~~brag~~ ~~about~~ ~~a~~ ~~16th~~. However, ~~still~~ we had some  
claims on history. Since most of the ascents were by the solitary freak, fewer  
than 20 people had ~~previously~~ preceded us to the top, and none at all for a decade.  
And ours was only the second "mainstream" ~~ascent~~ (non-Holden) ascent. Most  
important, we'd rescued Bonanza from limbo, assured the peak ~~of~~ long-overdue  
recognition  
~~as~~ as a Cascades classic.

At 2:30 we started down. Cold sweat instantly resumed -- the stuff we'd  
climbed would be twice as treacherous to descend. Ray and I, bringing up the  
rear, again were terrorized on the staircase by Spick and Jay. But when I'd  
belay Ray down one of their scenes of <sup>protracted</sup> anguish he'd calm my nerves by taking it  
at a run, laughing, "This is nothing!" <sup>in heck</sup> the <sup>alluded to?</sup> "problem" Tom ~~talked~~  
Maybe the problem was Tom's. Though  
<sup>though</sup> Ray's grizzled beard suggested he was very ancient (35? 40? 50?) and  
<sup>^</sup> he certainly looked like a war-surplus avalanche, ~~and~~ he flowed liquid-easy over  
difficulties. We dispensed with belays and moved in unison, hard-put to  
conceal our amusement at the ~~agonies~~ agonies of Spick and Jay.

hostile mutterings  
about "no place to  
be reckless."

So we were Number Three rope? On the steep (deep and secure) snow, where Number Two and sometimes even Number One slowly backed down, facing in, jamming ax shafts to the hilt, we quickly ~~plunged~~ plunge-stepped, facing out, trying not to smirk at <sup>glowering</sup> ~~muttering hostile glances~~ from below, ↓

Ray and I could've been off the mountain hours earlier -- perhaps in an avalanche, but in high style. However, dinnertime was long past when we ~~we~~ assembled at the top of the veneer pitch. Number Three <sup>declared</sup> ~~said~~ that with proper ~~plan~~ <sup>outvoted us</sup> we could heel down the tricky snow in five minutes flat. Numbers One and Two <sup>ing</sup> ~~seemingly~~ agreed we must shun the slop and rappel the <sup>solid</sup> ~~solid~~ rock slabs.

Tom searched for an anchor point, found ~~no~~ no piton cracks, and therefore pulled bolt kit from rucksack and began drilling. <sup>A burst</sup> ~~Announcement~~ of obscenity announced his drills were dull from our last picnic in Tumwater Canyon, an eruption of blasphemy that he'd forgotten to bring a sharpener. Nearly an hour he pounded tough granite, making a pretty melody resembling the ♣ Anvil Chorus; the lyrics, though, were shockingly depraved for a teenager.

A snow squall rattled my bones; had I not been laughing so hard at Tom's Song I might've frozen to death. I ran out of cigarettes and borrowed from Ray. Then we both ran out of matches and borrowed from Jay. Twilight was thickening and another squall was approaching and we were soaking wet and half-killed. I loved Ray, the dirty old animal, and Spick and Jay, the ~~two~~ terrorists, and Vic and Tom, semi-efficient leaders. Here we were, crowded on a ledge, night near and <sup>a storm and</sup> maybe eternity. <sup>worry</sup> <sup>and</sup> a band of brothers.

I should ~~worry~~ <sup>worry</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> fret, death and I will coquette, there's a dance in the old cat yet, toujours gai, toujours gai. I've passed the test, have done the Big Banana, ~~and~~ am on my way North.

The hole was deep enough, the bolt driven, two 120-foot climbing ropes and the 240-foot retrieving rope tied together and thrown down slippery slabs. Jay, descending first, was a half-hour unsnarling the two lines, but at 7:45 we'd all completed the 240-foot creep, the longest and slowest dulfersitz in the annals of Northwest mountaineering, and were at the schrund we'd left 11 hours earlier. Glissading and skating and plunging ~~down~~ glacier and snow gully, at 8:45 we galloped into the wife-full camp shouting "Bo-NAN-za!"

a week. Worse, the others, though properly somber for the hour and the weather, accepted the ~~idiotic~~<sup>lunatic</sup> cheerfulness as a call to awake.

Vic was standing over me saying, "Everybody's ready to go. Aren't you going to get up?"

My eight comrades of the 1950 Climbers' Outing were fed, booted, packed, and hot to walk — and it wasn't yet 7 o'clock, the best sleep still ahead.

I addressed not Vic specifically but rather the entire gloomy, dripping Chilliwack valley and anyone within it who might care to hear: "Goddam<sup>m</sup><sub>it</sub>, it's too damn early to get up! We're just hiking today. On a trail. There's no damn need to get up so damn early!"

"Well, everybody's ready to go."

"Then GO goddam<sup>m</sup><sub>it</sub>! I'll be along later."

Seven left. Vic stayed.

"Go ahead!" I urged. "I'll catch up!"

"Rough country. Shouldn't hike alone. I don't mind waiting."

The trip was doomed. I'd felt it the day before, when those of us in the first car waited 3 hours at the Ruth Creek road-end for the second car, whose driver had stupidly taken a wrong turn and proceeded straight into the bloody ~~Creek~~. And when I weighed my pack and the scale registered 68 pounds. And when the second car finally arrived and we took up crushing burdens in late afternoon and climbed into dark fog blowing through 5066-foot Hannegan Pass. The sun never would shine again.

I hadn't wanted to come at all. Last winter, yes. This past week, no.

In winter, when I proposed that we schedule the Climbers' Outing for the Northern Pickets, the Climbing Committee looked blank. Some had heard of Challenger, Fury, Luna — several months earlier the American Alpine Club had published Fearless Fred's Bible and this first guidebook to the Cascades revealed secrets formerly known only to a handful of initiates. But the committee wanted a more famous area — Dutch Miller Gap, say, within ~~familiar~~ sight of Snoqualmie Pass summits. My enthusiasm derived only secondarily from the guidebook. Last summer Kermit had climbed Challenger and in raving about the glaciers ran completely out of German. His companion-leader was a new professor of geology at the University, none other than Peter Misch of the prewar Nanga Parbat Expedition, who said Luna Cirque reminded him of the Himalaya.

My eloquence won the day. But when time came for the Pickets I didn't want to go. Anywhere. I was pooped.

The week after Bonanza, over a 4-day Fourth of July holiday, I'd

I, as planner of the year's schedule,  
had

gone on an experience climb plucked directly from Fearless Fred,  
~~and~~ Betty and I and a ~~large~~ gang of yawker-full buddies rode the Toonerville  
Trolley-like train up the Skagit Gorge from Newhalem to Diablo Dam,  
crashed brush from Thunder Creek to a meadow camp atop Pyramid Ridge,  
and made the third ascent of 8350-foot Snowfield and perhaps the second of  
7800-foot Colonial. Never had I had a better grandstand for viewing the  
wild heartland of the North Cascades — north to the Pickets across the  
Skagit River, partly drowned in the 1930s by Diablo Lake and more of it now  
being flooded by Ross Lake; south to the array of neuntausers and  
achtausenders from Eldorado to Boston to Goode.

The following weekend Tom and I were defeated in an attempt on  
*bad weather, a confusion of trails, and*  
Boston by <sup>A</sup> the mile-wide jackstraw dumped by the forest-ripping Forbidden  
avalanche, ~~the mile-wide jackstraw dumped by the forest-ripping Forbidden~~ — actually, we didn't  
even make Cascade Pass.

Rainier, on my 25th birthday, was a disaster. Familiarity with the  
big heap having bred contempt, Friday night I helped the jolly boys close the  
Blue Moon. Saturday, leadenly on the way to Camp Muir, I almost  
disgorged the lunch unwisely eaten at Paradise Lodge: gristly roast beef  
and cold and lumpy mashed potatoes and greasy gravy and soggy string beans.  
At midnight, when Leader Vic gave the rising call, I plainly informed him  
I wasn't going to climb. Lardy Bob, who had cavalierly arrived at 10  
o'clock, boisterously eaten supper at 11, and humbly barfed ~~at~~ at 12, decided  
he, too, would sack out. But in herding his 40-odd sheep onto the Cowlitz  
Glacier, tricky Vic left a girl in camp, telling her Bob and I were her

ropeleaders. She shivered and whined as we lay in our bags telling her she wouldn't like Rainier. She persisted. With dire warnings we got up. The intended route was the Ingraham, which I'd described to the Climbing Committee as a cinch; this year it was the challenge I'd sought in 1949, in fact was impassable, and we had to make a long detour onto the Emmons. Our girl slowed, became disenchanted; vengeful Bob and I refused to let her quit; when she finally collapsed we yoked the rope over our shoulders and dragged her, moaning, on her belly, ~~the last few hundred yards~~. We were 12 hours from Muir to the crater rim and I ran out of sun~~burn~~ lotion; Monday my face swelled up like a balloon, nearly closing my eyes, and all week I exuded disgusting yellow liquid and shed leprous skin, layer after layer.

I stayed home the weekend after Rainier — my first weekend in town since last December. A month away was our departure for the glory of the North and I was burnt out. I didn't know if I even liked mountains anymore. I certainly hated climbing. It was a rational sport for a Ted, who by obeying Optimum Frequency kept the mania under control. But for me it was all or nothing and no real choice and by the all I was totally consumed.

What sort of life does your true-blue gung-ho climber live? He doesn't read Jane Austen and ~~Plato~~ <sup>Dostoevsky</sup> anymore, only climbing journals and maps; he doesn't go to ~~concerts~~ <sup>chamber music</sup> recitals and Shakespeare plays, only interminable slide shows. All winter ~~he's~~ <sup>he's</sup> researching peaks and organizing parties. Then he starts getting legs in shape trenching spring snow and fingers in shape on lowland rocks. Then begins a months-long succession of 18-24-hour Sundays, bending the body so badly out of shape that Monday



is walking death, Tuesday trembling resurrection — and Wednesday the start of telephoning around to get the next trip on the road Friday night or early Saturday. Every day of vacation is programed months in advance — and not an hour wasted on such frivolity as walking barefoot in sands beside ocean surf. There's no energy to waste on the work of the world, except that necessary to fake out the employer, who if smart soon cans the mountain bum off the payroll. There's hardly time for love, and never enough to drink a decent amount of beer.

The Pickets had been there a long while and could wait another year. I had to save something of what little I had left, had to try to retain the gleam for the North.

The problem was, the Picket adventure no more excited the top climbers than it had the Climbing Committee. I'd envisioned a magnificent cream-of-the-crop mob of 15 or 20; and five <sup>or</sup> ~~of~~ six ascents a day by small attack groups. A regular jamboree. Insane campfires. Yet as July 29 neared, only seven besides <sup>Climbing Chairman</sup> Vic had signed up. One was a new club member, along solely for the hike. Silent Don and Rover Bob were beginners, abilities unknown. Rovers Yorick and Paul were in their second year and very promising, but untested. Roy and Avalanche Ray were experienced ~~and steady~~, but not leaders for the pitches expected in the Pickets. At a planning meeting called by Vic I assessed the group, and that was another reason I didn't want to go.

Vic, the bastard (and he was a bastard, and up and down Rainier, whenever close enough, I told him so), appealed to my sense of responsibility. The Pickets had been my idea. And the party had only one

trustworthy leader — Vic. Surely I wouldn't send the Climbing Chairman out alone on a mission like this?

So, on this 30th day of July I was deep in the bag in the ruins of the Hannegan Pass shelter and several feet away on the trail was Vic, sitting patiently, munching a first instalment of lunch. How could a man sleep with that goddam munching? At 7:30 I was driven from the sack.

Clouds were low and thick and ~~was~~ were tall and ~~drippy~~ <sup>sodden</sup> and the Chilliwack trail fell toward nowhere. At a creek we caught the crowd, and still too early for rational hikers to be awake, stopped to rest. I slipped free from shoulder straps and the rucksack atop the Trapper Nelson slipped free from lashings and tumbled a hundred feet down a waterfall. If a Rover had so much as <sup>grinned</sup> ~~smirked~~ I'd have skulled him with my ax. Down mossy slabs and mud and thorns to the plunge basin. The jam jar had busted; crampons and pitons and carabiners and slings were strawberry-slimy. Worse, the toilet roll was water-saturated. A wet toilet roll never dries, every morning all week I'd be facing (so to speak) the soggy mess. The trip was doomed.

At the 2500-foot Chilliwack crossing, via footlog, we met a fisherman. He turned out to be camp cook for a U. S. Geological Survey party running a ground-control line for a contour map. <sup>That was surprising!</sup> Good news! The Forest Service hadn't sent a crew within miles of the Pickets since before the war and I expected a <sup>crummy</sup> ~~lousy~~ alder-busting windfall-crawling afternoon; however, the surveyors, to make way for their horses, had in crude fashion reopened the trail from the Skagit to the Chilliwack. Other <sup>intriguing</sup> ~~fascinating~~ news: while

the Douglas firs and hemlocks and western redcedars

Creek

fishing ~~the~~ Little Beaver <sup>^</sup> several days ago the cook saw a grizzly bear. ~~That's~~

~~whatsoever~~ Grizzlies were supposed to be long gone from the Cascades, but who knew the secrets of the Pickets?

Because of the horses Brush Creek was much less miserable than Kermit had described and in late afternoon we reached Tapto Shelter. After 11 miles and 8 hours, to drop the 68-pound stone was to turn into a bird. In evening I flew up the trail alone, away from Rover racket, through <sup>subalpine</sup> forest <sup>^</sup> to a field of glacier lilies yellow-blooming by the frothing creek. Clouds were breaking into billows, then wisps. A sunset-red peak emerged, rough cliffs draped with glaciers. And this was merely 7574-foot Whatcom, humble outrider of the Pickets. Thank God Vic was a bastard.

Next dawn I routinely cursed the Rovers for hollering around the woods but at 7:15 was on the trail <sup>^</sup> and not glum. The shadowed valley was <sup>briskly</sup> chill, sky clear blue. In a mile,, at 5206-foot Whatcom Pass, between the avalanche-torn valleys of Brush Creek flowing to the Chilliwack and the Little Beaver flowing to the Skagit, we entered sunlight. And sensed an enormous brilliance around the corner and ran up a heather knoll — and were blinded by the white explosion of the Challenger Glacier, <sup>dazzling as the sun</sup> <sup>^</sup> Kermit's sputtering was understandable — not even a German would have enough German.

The traverse around the east side of Whatcom Peak reminded me of last year's arctic day <sup>^</sup> the Blue and Hoh and Humes <sup>Glaciers.</sup> Snow all the way, with occasional holes that meant we were on the East Whatcom Glacier and

What magic had transported to my home hills a segment of the Greenland Icecap?

traveling from Olympus to Queets Basin over

maybe ought to be roped. Periodically avalanches roared down a Challenger icefall, over a cliff. At 2 o'clock we came to perfectly-named Perfect Pass, 6300 feet. On one side a cornice overhung the Challenger Glacier. On the other, cliffs fell to a meadowy headwater of the Baker River, <sup>draining west to the Skagit.</sup> Between lay a narrow fairyland of dwarf hemlock and fir, ice-scratched buttresses and lichen-covered boulders, and heather and snowmelt pools. Southward the ~~glaciating~~ <sup>gleaming</sup> glacier rose to 8236-foot Challenger.

But northward was a closer goal and at 3 o'clock I started kicking steps up steep snow. This was what the 3 days had been for, this was what Kermit's ravings had led me to dream upon in winter. The gang followed and at 4 o'clock we were atop Whatcom.

Challenger's bulk hid all the Pickets except outrigger Luna, but we looked south to nearby Triumph, Despair, and Blum, and to Glacier Peak on the far horizon and Three Fingers and Whitehorse standing over Puget Sound lowlands. Close to the west was Shuksan, from whose summit I'd first seen the Pickets 2 years earlier, and towering behind, <sup>Baker</sup> ~~Komo Kulehon~~, whitest volcano of them all. North were massive thrusts of Bear, Redoubt, Glacier (the other Glacier), and Twin Spires. East, range on range beyond the Skagit.

That evening I became one of the party. Together we watched the only living creatures we were to see in the harsh Pickets: a mamma ptarmigan trying to decoy us out of camp, away from her solitary chick. But pinfeather-sprouting chicky was too old and bold to freeze in heather at mamma's warning cluck. Indeed, as mamma screamed, chicky dove off

a cliff, flapping spindly wings and dropping like a rock. Mamma was disconsolate (was this how she'd lost the rest of her brood?) until chicky reappeared, walking up the hill.

From a nest under a clump of tight-limbed midget firs I watched the sun dip behind Shuksan, glaciers of Baker glow pink. Now 20 walking miles and 3 days deep in wildness, mankind (except us) nowhere to be seen or heard, I slept, content.

A moment later I awoke to see Shuksan and Baker glowing again, from eastern light — in one ~~moment~~<sup>instant</sup> of sleep the Earth had turned half around on its axis. Today nobody had to irritate me out of the bag. (Laugh, Rovers! Manning laughs with you!) At 6:30 we were crunching boots in night-frozen snow, weaving through crevasses, asea on suncup waves of the Challenger. In 2 miles we gained the glacier divide between Little Beaver and Luna Creeks and dropped loads on a rock island at 6800 feet. Stunned by first glimpses of Luna Cirque, we made a lengthy second breakfast (first lunch), then packed rucksacks and plugged up simple snow, wondering where was the challenge of Challenger.

At 7800 feet the bergschrund answered the question — the upper lip varied from 20 to 150 feet higher than the lower lip. I scouted leftward to where ice overhung a rock cliff — no flaw there. Then rightward to where the schrund pinched out — but on a super-steep snow slope whose runout was an ice cliff.

That was it. Put up or shut up. Vic and I studied the super-steep slope — and covertly, each other. Personally, I felt that with his being twice

as experienced and Climbing Chairman as well, he deserved the lead. Why the hell did he offer it to me? I was astounded, but couldn't refuse the honor.

Ropemate Roy and I were wearing Bramanis and since rubber lugs wouldn't stick to so steep a slope began strapping on irons. I wasn't happy, because within the past week a storm had covered the underlying crust with 4 inches of slop that was sure to ball up in our crampons — which were 10-pointers, lacking front-thrusting horns — and that wall was no proper place to be walking on snowballs.

Vic had been pacing up and down — impatient for me to start, I supposed. Abruptly he blurted, "Say, I'd like to lead this."

"Great!" said I, agreeing with all my heart that for the particular situation his old-fashioned tricouni nails were far superior.

Belayed by Rover Bob, he crossed the schrund on an airy bridge, chopped toeholds and fingerholds up a 10-foot face at the pinching-out point, then threw a leg over the corner and committed himself to the super-steep slope. Jamming ax shaft deep, kicking boots through slush to punch toe tricounis into the crust, standing carefully vertical, moving slowly, smoothly, he ran out the rope — and was still 30 feet from the top. Bob was forced to abandon his belay and follow. A slip by either and both were lost. A few more hard-swinging kicks and Vic was on the flat and he and Bob and the whole party were safe. Exhale.

Above a wind-scoop <sup>and bowl</sup> and a snow ridge was the foot of the summit tower, a ~~thin~~ splinter of fractured gneiss. Vic felt no qualms about

*chortling*  
~~happily saying~~, "Your turn!"

I walked up for a preliminary look, leaving rucksack behind; the jumble was so simple a staircase I was nearly to the summit in a couple minutes. Not quite — a vertical 10 feet with small holds and a striking view straight down to a distant glacier would be more comfortable if I were connected to the mountain. My rucksack was far below so I retreated to Roy's belay, borrowed his hammer and pitons, drove a solid peg, and squirmed up and over. My 10 pounds of strawberry-sticky iron, laboriously hauled 22 miles on trail and glacier, remained virgin.

Soon all (except the hiker, waiting with the packs) were on top. The register was fascinating. In 1936 three Mountaineer heroes of Monie's epics made the first ascent. In 1940 two parties signed in — three members of the legendary, short-lived Ptarmigan Climbing Club, and Fearless Fred and his brother. In 1949, Kermit and Misch and a companion. We were fifth, our 8 preceded by just 11 other people.

The view included everything we'd seen from Whatcom plus the complete line of the Northern Pickets — Crooked Thumb and Phantom and Fury — and the entirety of Luna Cirque.

We'd have gasped at greater leisure but had to get down. A rappel made quick work of the summit tower. The schrund? Unthinkable to descend the super-steep wall. Fortunately, Vic recently had observed a demonstration of bollard-building — stamping a circle in snow and laying sling rope in the trench. Thus anchored we rappelled ~~to a~~ <sup>solid</sup> bridge.

directly off the upper  
lip of the schrund

From Challenger to 8292-foot Fury  
the 2-mile crest of the Northern Pickets was a continuous series  
of sharp teeth.

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Though Challenger was only a two-pitch climb, four teams eat up hours moving through bottlenecks one man at a time and not until 6 o'clock, blistered and dehydrated from hours in hot sun, did we return to our packs. We'd planned to camp at Luna Lake, on the far side of Luna Cirque, but at 7, skating snow to heather benches at 5500 feet on Challenger Arm, were satisfied. Our home was in shadow, evening wind blowing cold and hard; any gear not anchored was flung off and away and down, down, down.

~~Sharp teeth and deep notches were continuous 2 miles from Challenger to 8292-foot Fury.~~ ↓  
~~plummeted~~ 4000 feet to wasteland of the cirque floor, where a terminal moraine dammed mud-gray waters of Lousy Lake. This was the wall, the cirque, that reminded Misch of the Himalaya. Me too.

I remembered the South Pole entry in Scott's journal: "Good God, what an awful place." We were 6 miles of glacier and snow from the trail, 23 walking miles from the cars. Scott didn't make it back from his trip. In case of trouble, how long to fetch help? At least 4 days, I reckoned. We nine were on our own near the "pole of remoteness" of the Cascades.

No shrub, no flower grew on the cold wall, yet it lived.

At sound of a rumble, whirl to see the spectacle, scan plaques of fractured ice inert as death — and spot rubble fanning over an avalanche cone below. To turn your back is to miss the show. Therefore sit and stare. Now it starts! A lump breaks from an ice cliff, disintegrates in a white torrent pouring silently through air, smashing a lower glacier, spewing over another cliff, and down and down — and finally comes the roar.



Fury held western light longest. Then the whole ragged summit line was black-etched in sunset pink. Cozily wrapped in bag and liferaft sail, snuggled in heather nook, I lay eating a Mars bar and smoking a cigarette. Summits dissolved in night; the moon, red as a dying sun, sank behind the blackness; stars sparkled out one by one, cluster by cluster. Sleep. And in dreams hear the living wall.

The party voted to recuperate before trying Fury. Our rest-day objective was Luna — a walkup. Rovers slept in, their first chatterings at 7 o'clock. I was long awake by then — who could sleep with dawnlight flooding the wall, stirring it to more violent life?

Rovers and I had ~~become friends~~ <sup>made peace.</sup> I'd learned to tolerate their abnormal morning happiness and they'd learned not to come within 25 feet of me until I finished my Grape Nuts and cocoa. Much later Yorick told me he didn't fully appreciate the wall until he watched me watching it.

In warm sun, who could call this an "awful place"? The vivid wall, noiser than ever, was strength and joy. <sup>enough to travel far there'd</sup> Were I rich ~~there would~~ be places in the Himalaya I could so live, places I could so love.

At 11 o'clock in softly-cloudy morning we began the rest-day romp, traversing a mile closer to the cirque headwall over snow and scree and meadow ledges, by waterfalls splashing gneiss slabs, then skating down avalanche fans, losing 1500 feet — a poor way to start a climb.

The cirque floor quieted holiday glee. Up, down, up, down loose moraine. Summits were messy with clouds but the sun was hot for gravel-staggering. Beyond the garbage we climbed 1000 feet of honest snow to

Luna Lake, a white flat streaked with blue leads. A close view, here, of an icefall and a horrid couloir — the Fury route.

That was tomorrow's problem. Today's was 3500 more feet up snow sloppy in scorching sun, then a gneiss felsenmeer radiating heat like a stovetid. Where were clouds now we needed them? Picturesque billows towered in the west but no umbrella cooled our rest-day hell.

All was forgiven on the summit of 8285-foot Luna. There, Luna Cirque and the Northern Pickets — the Fury Group. And there, McMillan Cirque and the Southern Pickets — the Terror Group. Were we really in the Cascades? Such violence would be respectable even in the North.

Again an interesting register. A dozen years ago, in 1938, two Ptarmigans had been first, followed in 1940 by the same two parties which had done Challenger. We were fourth. Ours was the sixth party to penetrate the Northern Pickets — 12 people before us, and now our 9-man population explosion. Just 7 people had previously walked the floor of Luna Cirque, and none for 10 years.

Reflections on history failed to ameliorate the return — the endless upsy-downsy of the moraine, the grueling haul in shivering shadows to Challenger Arm. Gaining and losing 6000 feet is a routine task, but not for a "rest" day. At 8 o'clock we flopped on heather beds and I drank a gallon of Kool Aid. Ray, whose turn it was to cook, somehow got water hot enough <sup>with hemlock twigs</sup> to rehydrate a pot of sticky potatoes flavored with salami that had left the butcher shop a week ago, the sort of meal one remembers through the night.

Next morning, Fury. Only there wasn't any morning. At the hour

when Rovers should have been blaspheming dawn ~~peace~~<sup>the</sup>, a low ceiling of swift clouds swept the peaks. Separate camps stirred. I drank cocoa and watched the dull, dreadful wall. No bird sang. Fury was out of the question, yet today was just Thursday and heroism demanded we tough out the storm in this awful place. 'Tis cold, 'tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart.

A sudden blizzard made cowards of us all and at 11 we were in full retreat, humbly aware how far it was, how very very far, to shelter. Stinging flurries of snow and sleet and slashing rain yielded to a general grim menace of clouds, but we plodded on. The Pickets didn't want us.

At 4:30 we walked off snow into heather and down to Whatcom Pass. Lord, what a marvel are trees! The lushness of green was a shock to eyes accustomed these 4 days to austerity of white and gray. What huge, tall vegetables! A greater mystery than glaciers.

The umbilical cord of trail led securely homeward. Deep in Chilliwack forests the exposed ledges of Awful Camp, the living wall of Luna Cirque, seemed a memory of another life in another world.

Saturday we ran loose-legged to the Ruth Creek road. On the way the hospitable USGS cook served us candy and coffee. We listened to his radio, with news of the debacle in Korea. Strange after the Pickets there could be a war in Korea. Stranger after Luna Cirque that a box could speak. Strangest of all to sit in a machine and watch trees whiz by at a dizzy 10 miles an hour.

18 April 1974

1950

Chapter <sup>16</sup> ~~17~~

NORDGIPFEL

We hadn't taken Sloan seriously and had been punished. We were late getting up, late to the summit, late to the road, and late getting home. I was half-asleep in the stockroom Monday and right after dinner flopped on the couch.

Betty shook me from deep sleep. The ritual <sup>post-weekend</sup> call-around had begun and Pete was on the phone to find out how my climb had gone and to tell about his. He and Fearless Fred had made the first traverse of the three peaks of Index, including a first ascent of the Middle Peak, where they'd bivouacked Saturday night. They'd had some rough work. He was amused, though, by the North Peak.

"What a joke!" he laughed. "They talk about how tough it is but you hardly take your hands out of your pockets. We didn't even rope up! You're in trees practically the whole way and couldn't go anyplace if you did fall. You ought to climb it sometime."

I laughed. Even discounting the fact Pete was a pistol, and certain to gain a big reputation before long, he knew my abilities and if he recommended North Peak for me it must really be a fraud. Conversation

ended, I conked out again.

Not for long. Deep sleep. Phone. Vic on the line. As Climbing Chairman he'd felt compelled to help out on an experience climb of minor interest. The Sloan fiasco was quickly wrapped up. So, little knowing what I was doing, I passed along news of Pete's triumph, and his scorn for the reputation of the North Peak, and his suggestion I should climb it sometime. I laughed. Vic didn't.

"I've been trying to get up a North Peak party for 3 years," he said earnestly. "Why don't we do it?"

"Great," I said, yearning for the couch. "Something to keep in mind."

"How about this weekend?"

"Can't — we're leaving for the Selkirks Saturday. Maybe after we get back."

Vic knew our plans and said, "But you won't be back until Labor Day and September days are too short. You need all the daylight you can get on North Peak. It's either this weekend or next year."

"Well, next year then." I'd found my out.

"Couldn't you wait until Monday to leave?"

"Well, Tom is all set to go Saturday."

"If he's willing, are you?"

"Well, I don't know. Guess so." The hell I was, but anything to get off the phone and on the couch.

Not for long. Vic again. Tom was willing — nay, Tom was eager, hot, ~~and~~ fanatical. I'd forgotten he'd started up North Peak last year with

Lardy Bob and Idiot Richard and been wounded by a falling rock and forced to retreat to Lake Serene while they made the climb — the sixth ascent.

Back to the couch. But my nap was troubled and I walked up the street to the Blue Moon and stared at bubbles rising in amber beer and traced the sequence of freakish events which got me into such an awful fix.

Never, not for one instant, had I ever had the slightest twinge of interest in ~~the~~ North Peak. Granted, it rises terrible and tall nearly a vertical mile above the Skykomish River and is a majestic chunk of scenery and much admired by tourists and famous from millions of postcards. But it doesn't have a glacier and ~~in this case at least~~ I supported Kermit's Law: "Nein gletscher, nein gipfel."

From neutrality my attitude had shifted to hostility during the past spring. Every time we headed ~~our~~ <sup>toward</sup> Stevens Pass <sup>bound</sup> for Tumwater Canyon, and came in view of North Peak, Lardy Bob and Idiot Richard insisted I stop the Jeep. They ~~then~~ left out, fell to their knees, and salaamed, gibbering.

Tom always seemed to share my distaste for these disgusting displays and I thought I was safe leaving the decision to him. Dammit, he wasn't disdainful of Lardy and Idiot, he was jealous.

A lot of climbers were making noises about North Peak, gathering nerve to give it a try. I'd discussed the mountain with Limber Jim, who'd followed its lurid history for a dozen years and once had scouted the cliffs searching for a respectable rock route.

"It's a hoax," he said. "Mass hysteria. There isn't any honest climbing. A Forest Service crew could swamp out a horse trail to the summit

if there was any call for it. Guys go up there and get lost in the brush and come back raving and the fever spreads. All you can say for North Peak is it's the tallest, steepest pile of crap in the Cascades. Strictly for sick people."

Nothing <sup>I'd</sup> ~~had~~ seen, nothing <sup>I'd</sup> ~~had~~ heard gave me the slightest inclination to climb North Peak. Why was the damn thing pursuing me like the Hound of Heaven? Perhaps my hubris deserved punishment<sup>x</sup> but the gods had chosen a most illogical instrument. This was no proper Greek tragedy, this was getting run over by a truck.

Vic and Tom agreed we couldn't go without a <sup>u</sup>forth man, for the sake of two-man teams, but were stumped for a possible victim — until somebody thought of Ted. Tuesday morning, hungover, I looked him up in his lab, confidently expecting ~~my~~ salvation ~~from him~~ because his taste in mountains ran to yawkers and anyway Optimum Frequency doubtless would dictate that he stay in Bagley and do research.

"How you feel about the North Peak of Index?" I laughed.

"Well," he chuckled, "I've always sort of wanted to get it out of the way. Sounds like a yawker."

I couldn't believe it. I was betrayed by every trusted friend. In ~~two~~ <sup>two-and-a-half</sup> seasons as a Mountaineer I'd conquered ~~some~~ 70 summits and become captain of my soul, master of my fate, and there were thousands of peaks I wanted to climb — and yet because of the Sloan fiasco and the evil web of Monday-night calls I was doomed to attempt the one mountain in all the world I specifically wanted nothing to do with.

All week the clock spun in double-time, racing toward the wicked Sabbath, and I couldn't forget, not with Vic and Tom calling nightly to thrill me with new bits of data gathered about intricacies of the route.

I stayed longer than I should have at the Blue Moon Friday night, trying to explain to fellow Avenue Creeps what a stupid thing was happening, how I was battle-weary from 17 summits and 5 defeats and 56 mountaineering days in 7 months, how the Selkirk adventure had been planned since winter as the climax of my ~~climbing~~ season, the supreme effort of my career to date, and how this stupid North Peak was fouling me up. They agreed it was stupid, I was stupid, climbing <sup>was</sup> stupid, so shut up and drink your beer. Lost between two worlds, I did.

Saturday morning, August 19, offered no hope of bad weather. The North Pacific Summertime High was sitting on the Northwest heavy and solid and the forecast was for a heat wave and the probability of fractured temperature records.

We drove north in the Jeep, stopping for lunch in Monroe. A milkshake settled my stomach and cleared my eyes but couldn't touch the central problem. My sometime friends bounced around like high school kids going to a football game. They decided we needed a summit flag and ran to a dry goods shop and bought polka dot calico and a box of crayons. Ted inscribed upon the banner the legend: "NORTH TOWER. Longest Mung Climb in the State." I could never be a member of this party.

We turned off the highway and jounced along a logging-mining road



to the end, close under the object of our various dreams and dreads. ~~At~~ At  
 1 o'clock <sup>we</sup> hoisted packs and <sup>set forth on</sup> ~~the~~ the boot-built  
 path, a ladderway of rocks and tree roots <sup>ascending a forested cliff</sup> to the cirque of Lake Serene,  
 2500 feet, a cool jewel at the foot of the evil leap of the east face of North  
 Peak. The afternoon air scorched our throats and we drank deep.

A comfortable, delightful camp <sup>was available</sup> amid flowers and square-cut boulders  
 beside the luscious lake ~~was available~~; the fanatics, however, said it was  
 essential to save every possible minute of daylight for tomorrow so we  
 continued up talus to a ~~scrambled~~ miserable ridge of scrub alder and biting  
 flies and dumped packs 3200 feet above Puget Sound and almost half a  
 vertical mile beneath the 5357-foot summit of North Peak, whose walls rose  
 so abruptly we could see nothing except the nearest thicket of cedar.

It was necessary, <sup>Tom</sup> ~~they~~ said, to scout the lower portion of the route,  
 so we floundered upward in steep, stifling-hot brush. Maybe Tom was  
 enlightened; I was brutalized.

A strange encounter. Three lads appeared in the cedar, swinging  
 through the jungle like wild-eyed, beaten-up, raving Tarzans. They paused  
 to tell us they'd been to the top, <sup>inspired</sup> ~~inspired~~ by the newspaper article  
 announcing the feat of Pete and Fred. The shocking thing was they weren't  
 climbers <sup>at all, just</sup> ~~but~~ simple-minded ~~hikers~~ hikers. An odd chapter in  
 the history of ~~the~~ an odd peak.

Returned from the scouting trip, we dropped down the talus a few  
 yards from camp to a remnant of snow, filled cups and ~~Ten~~ ~~Cans~~ cans from drips,  
 and cooked supper on primus stoves. The lunatics were bubbling yawkers

and I pretended to laugh, wondering what my chances were of acute appendicitis.

Our ascent would be the 10th and would bring the total summit visitors to some two dozen. If we made it. Rather diluted heroism but sufficient to turn three good friends into strangers, almost enemies.

From snowpatch drips we filled canteens for tomorrow; no water could be expected on the peak and thirst is a major problem of the climb and in the heat wave would be that much worse. I had two canteens, a big quart and a little pint.

At 9 o'clock I retreated gladly into security of the bag, <sup>expecting an interlude of total escape.</sup> But my inner clock ticked off the minutes of the night, <sup>one by one</sup> and I never really slept, only counted down, heartbeat by heartbeat, toward the beginning of what was sure to be the worst day of my life.

Why couldn't I just say no? Why hadn't I laughed off Vic's proposition last Monday? The jolly boys at the Blue Moon would never understand. Nor would I.

Too soon the night was boisterous and I was out of my bag, sitting on the ground mourning the death of kings, <sup>lacing tennis shoes,</sup> listening to Vic crunch breakfast. ~~Eastward~~ <sup>ed eastward</sup> the sky ~~was~~ shaded from star-speckled black of the ~~zenith, into~~ <sup>dark blue,</sup> ~~in~~ to pale blue, ~~in~~ to a band of yellow edging the rim of Earth. Around us darkness still obscured trees and rocks. The three bustled. I sat, smoking a cigarette. Vic flashed a light in my face.

"You look terrible."

"I am terrible." This was the first time I'd ever had two hangovers

from a single night at the Blue Moon.

"Better eat something. Make you feel better," he said, crunching. I never knew anybody to crunch like Vic. He could crunch bananas.

"Not hungry."

Precisely at 5:37 ~~the~~ the night thinned enough for trees to take individual shapes and we shouldered rucksacks and ropes. And began.

The ascent started with no hiking preliminaries to loosen muscles, circulate blood, focus mind. From camp we scrambled up cedar thickets, following ledges, seeking gaps in cliffs and greenery to attain higher ledges. There was no artistry, simply crude brush-bulling. Even in half-night the sweat ran free, thirst grew.

In full daylight we emerged onto bare rock. Tom tied to Ted and immediately proceeded upward. With night only just gone we were in a race against the coming night. Lardy ~~was~~ and Idiot ~~had~~ had descended helter skelter by flashlight, risking their necks, and <sup>most</sup> other parties had been forced to bivouac.

I took a swallow from my canteen, wishing for a gulp. Vic peered intently at my face and inquired after my health, then started up the scabby rock, <sup>↓</sup> not steep but utterly lacking good holds, all rough edges eaten away by organic acids - dirty rock, rotten, weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable rock.

An awkward jumble of boulders, more brush, more hideous rock. Sometimes we moved simultaneously, sometimes Vic belayed me. Tom and Ted were far ahead. I was dragging, legs rubbery. Vic tried to be patient

some sort  
of  
misbegotten  
metamorphic  
garbage,

but in his nervousness constantly strained on the rope, tugging at my waist. I had no idea where we were or where we were going. I numbly followed up blurred nastiness.

We came to the foot of a cliff, 50 feet straight up and no rock in sight, only a tangle of cedar trees. Like a deranged ape Vic lept upward and vanished, his progress through the vertical jungle marked by a furious thrashing. Now, my turn.

Reach up, grab a horizontal cedar the thickness of an arm, pull up, chin, shoulder other cedars aside, throw an arm over, hang by armpits, swing a leg over, straddle. Reach for another cedar above, stand up, bouncing on the limber tree, and repeat. Grunt and wheeze and spit cedar needles from teeth and blink cedar bark from eyes. Sweat and gasp and climb a 50-foot cliff never closer than 5 feet to the rock. Where, here, is the classic ballet of alpinism?

At the top I sagged in a heap. The cedar wall had exhausted my reserves. Another pitch like it and I was done. I drank, and noted my big canteen was alarmingly light. But Vic was cheerful.

"Almost in the Bowl," he said, crunching. "Making good time."

We walked (Lord, how lovely to walk!) a broad, almost-alpine ledge of grassy plants, traversing the toe of a rock-and-cedar rib, and entered the Bowl, excavated during the Pleistocene by a hanging glacier and prominent from the highway because it usually retains a snowpatch until ~~the~~ July. For the first time since the sleeping bag I knew where I was.

The snow was long gone, the entire mountain fire-dry, and the

my now being  
here rather  
than in  
Canada.

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sun high and the air stagnant, the hottest day in the world since Hiroshima. I could ~~have~~<sup>ve</sup> finished off both canteens in a single swill. Instead, take a mouthful of warm liquid, swirl around tongue, gargle over pallate, then swallow, closing eyes in the brief ecstasy of the moist wash through gullet. Cap the canteen and begin anticipating the next mouthful.

Now we had views — north to Gunn and Baring and the Monte Cristo peaks — including Sloan (Green!), responsible for ~~the~~ More interesting was the straight-down look to the Stevens Pass highway, the Great Northern Railway <sup>tracks</sup> — and the Skykomish River, a 3500-foot swandive below. Music sweeter than a Vivaldi concerto, that delightful wet roar — how marvelous it would be by the river, drinking water, dabbling feet in water, dousing head in water, sitting in damp-cool shade of a maple watching water tumble through dripping boulders.

The Bowl was steep but brushless, mainly grassy ledges with a few bits of simple rock, generally a walk — except that to stumble was to tumble and roll down and down, over bottom cliffs into cedars and ultimately, so it seemed, the river — and in no condition to enjoy the water. The worst pitches were the ticklish clamberings over ancient logs. Peculiar it was to belay below timberline, to be amid such exposure in grass and logs. Limber Jim was right, but personally I wouldn't care to ride a horse on that Forest Service summit trail.

The higher and hotter the sun, the lower my strength. Vic charged onward trying to catch Tom and Ted. The rope dragged me. In a rock cup shadowed from blazing sun I found a treasure — half a mouthful of dew, the drippings from leaves of a small plant. I sucked it up greedily

and spit out sand and bugs.

A last scramble and suddenly we were with Tom and Ted, ~~there~~  
~~where they were resting~~, sprawled in dirt atop a little buttress, the first spacious flatness since Lake Serene. Pitiful ashes of twig fires spoke of bad nights spent here.

Tom was ecstatic: "We're 2 hours ahead of Lardy and Idiot!"

So we could afford the luxury of a sackout, being now more than halfway up the peak and above most of the problems. I took a long drink, feeling I might live.

Tom led off the buttress to the left, up a steep, nondescript slope of rotten rock and pockets of soil and clumps of grass and sprigs of huckleberry. Crumbling off a dust cloud, he disappeared over a bulge. The rope moved slow. We heard mumbles and curses and vile denunciations of the terrain. Every depression that would be a bucket on an honest peak was stuffed up with fertile soil busy growing weeds. No good holds. And no piton cracks — all full of dirt. The rope ran out. Tom was a hundred feet up and could find no possible belay. Ted would have to abandon his stance and both would be on the mess at once, trusting their joint life to huckleberry sprigs and blades of grass. Tom had a message for Vic and me.

"This is shitty. Not sure it'll go. Why don't you try something else? Might be easier to the right."

I began coiling the rope, preparing to belay.

"Look!" long-suffering Vic exploded. "I've made ~~every~~<sup>every</sup> lead. How about you doing one?"

I dropped the rope, shocked. I was a sick man and it was his fault I was here. But his voice was so edged with bitterness I couldn't argue.

From <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ buttress a chimney led upward in the angle between the wall and a slender pillar. Quickly I was atop the pillar — and suddenly wasn't tired, felt strong and nimble, happy and eager, a member of the party. After hours of being tugged at and protected, of dumbly obeying decisions made above, I was an equal partner. Smugly I noted that Tom and Ted, off to the left, were yelling back and forth, stirring up a dust storm. Maybe they'd ~~be~~ have to retreat and follow me.

What a splendid chimney! And what a magnificent pillar! About 2 feet square, the outer edge tastefully embellished with a pretty little cedar that screened the awesome exposure into the Bowl, the Skykomish. I loved the pillar and the tree — the first pieces of North Peak that were truly mine.

Now, upward from the pillar, A dozen feet above was a fringe of cedar branches drooping from a ledge, ~~the end of difficulties~~. The rock was steep but well-broken, a kindergarten of buckets and ~~doorknobs~~.

Confidently, smoothly I <sup>ascended half the pitch</sup> ~~moved up from the pillar one sequence of~~ ~~steps~~ — and was stuck. The buckets all were upside down. The branches were beyond my outstretched hand. I tried this, tried that. No way, no how, could I get higher.

"What you doing up there?" cried critical Vic.

The son of a bitch! Down there on the buttress, what did he know?

"Well, dammit, come up and see."

In seconds he arrived, saw welcoming cedars above, snapped, "Well,

that's not much!" and rapidly ascended <sup>half the pitch</sup> ~~one sequence of holds~~ — and was stuck. He tried this, tried that.

"Not as easy as it looks," he giggled, apologizing. Then, cheerily, "Well, this is what shoulder stands are for!"

I <sup>dropped my</sup> ~~came out of~~ belay and braced feet on the pillar and hands on the wall. Vic stepped off the rock onto my shoulders, boots against my ears, and tottered. My legs trembled and I realized my charming little cedar was pure decoration and if Vic fell he'd backflip over the spindly shrub and we'd plunge together into the river.

Vic grunted ~~higher~~, tried to step from me to the rock. "Old piton here," he said. "Real antique. Somebody's been here, long time ago."

What did that prove? We'd been tripping over old pitons the whole way up. North Peak was so full of iron some company should start a mine.

He strained toward the cedars, fingers touching the tips. "Can't get a handful. Need another few inches."

Well, I didn't have them and he couldn't find them and retreated down my body to the pillar. The three of us — Vic, me, and the cedar — crowded ~~intimately~~ together.

Two choices. We could pound ~~some~~ <sup>attach</sup> pitons, ~~rig some~~ slings, and reach the trees by direct aid. But that would take the best part of an hour and erode the lead we'd built over Lardy and Idiot, making a partial night descent probable, a bivouac possible. Meanwhile, as we deduced from croaked yodels, Tom and Ted had escaped their dust storm into easy grass. The time-saving choice was to call for help.



We yelled and were answered; somebody was coming with a rope. We waited, cramped between rock wall and companion cedar. Vic and I were good friends but never had spent this much time in such intimacy. I smoked, and Vic didn't approve. He dug food from his rucksack and crunched, and I couldn't stand his crunching.

We yelled again and were answered by a very close yell. Not long now. We were sick of the pillar. An hour we'd been standing. My exhilaration from leading the chimney was submerging in the overall sickness of the Blue Moon and Sloan and being where I never wanted to be. My knees were starting to do the sewing machine.

We yelled and were answered by a distant yell. Distant! What about that close yell? We hollered, we screamed, we shrieked, cursing Tom and Ted and their unborn children and all their generations to the end of time, amen.

A smile materialized in cedar branches.

"What's keeping you guys?" asked jocular Ted.

The smile froze as he learned of our devout wish that devils might eternally gnaw his entrails.

The explanation was no comfort. He'd started down at our first yell and been near us at our second yell — which he interpreted as saying we didn't need help. Thus he'd returned to the Notch and waited — until our final outburst.

He dropped a line and the pull from above brought us quickly into the trees. I staggered the few yards up a gully of grass and scree to the

Notch, a prominent break in the northwest ridge, and with space for a lay-down sackout.

Tom was twitching. On the bivouac buttress we'd been 2 hours ahead of Lardy and Idiot. Now it was past noon and we'd fallen behind their pace. Tom and Ted vanished up the ridge, a dinosaur spine cleaving the sky. I drowsed in heavy sun, killed my big canteen, and considered what lay above — and what below. I gave Vic the bad news.

"I got to save strength to get down. Got to stay here and rest."

He'd seen it coming — since 5:37 a.m. But the confirmation was shattering. His hand, fumbling in foodsack, momentarily went dead still. "Well, okay," he said, recovering magnificently, stuffing food in mouth and crunching. "You're right. Only safe thing to do."

I relaxed. No disgrace to be whipped by a peak I never wanted anyway, not on the hottest day since Lucifer fell into the fiery pit. From within the wreckage of my flesh I gazed into immense sky -- not pure blue, a milky blue, skimmed milk. Vic stood up and paced back and forth, crunching.

"Great views! Almost as good as from the top." Pacing, crunching. "Not many people ever been even this far. Next time we'll make the top."

Like hell. I'd never be trapped twice.

I dozed. Vic paced, crunched.

"How you feel now?" he asked, wistfully. The quaver in his voice broke my heart.

"Okay," I lied. "Much better. Great."

In a way I really did. To go on was to accept disaster but I was doing the noble thing, giving Vic the mountain he desperately wanted even if it killed me, and I wouldn't be surprised.

Comfortable as in a good dream I flowed up the dinosaur spine to a knife/blade, observing with detachment the pleasure hands and feet found on superb rock, the only virtuous rock on the mountain, <sup>↓</sup> For the second time I was fond of North Peak, ~~the~~ small but solid holds, neatly spaced.

An enormous amount of air surrounded the knife/blade — down the east face to sun-glinting Lake Serene, down the west face to Anderson Creek forests. With muscles weary beyond pain I moved easily, artistically, along the crest, swimming in air.

. . . . Sky to the right, sky to the left, sky above, sky below. I am entirely in sky but for feet and fingers touching the razor edge of sky-washed rock. The sides of the blade dive left and right down into sky, and these two great lower skies arch upward into the vaulting upper sky, all the skies joined in the one sky that remains while the many change and pass. I stand erect on the edge of the blade and my destroyed body is connected to Earth only by boot soles. I am ready, now, to leap away from mountain and body into sky and fly unafraid into miracles . . . .

~~But~~ The nearly, nearly mystic experience <sup>was cut off</sup> ~~was over~~ before climax and we <sup>trudged</sup> ~~walked~~ wearily up ledges and rolls of baking heather and firs and hemlocks, heat swelling my brain. At 1:45 we reached the summit.

Ted exuberantly greeted us, waving the damn flag. We joined in the ritual photographs featuring the banner, then cached it for the delight

of future heroes. As the three aliens danced and giggled, I fell down. What I knew, they soon would learn — we were in trouble. I just about drained my little canteen, too greedy to gargle, taking the shot directly down the throat. And shook the canteen, sadly hearing the meager swish of one last swallow and feeling the blast of sun desiccating my blood.

Tom was twitching. We'd stayed too long on top — my fault. At 2:45 the rope untimely ripped me from the womb. The ordeal had begun, the race against night. We'd left camp 9 hours before and only 6 hours of daylight remained.

We paused briefly at the Notch, watching the sun sink<sub>X</sub> lower, valleys slip into shadow. I gulped my final mouthful of water and was still parched.

Now, out of sun into darkening Bowl. Rig a rappel from cedars and slide past pillar and <sup>Friend</sup>shrub (no time for lingering farewells) to Bivouac Buttress. Hastily rig a rappel from a tiny rock horn and walk down the line ever so carefully not to flip the rope loose.

My throat was closing, breath coming in painful gasps. Vic handed me his canteen, the taste of liquid drove me mad, he snatched it away: "That's all there is! Got to make it last!" Thereafter when my breathing grew raspy he gave me a sip to keep my throat open. There wasn't enough for two so he quit drinking. *Despite his crunching he really was a nice guy.*

Another rappel, a nasty one requiring a crabwise traverse to the endpoint. And another concluding in a free drop, sliding down the rope out there in the middle of the air.

From a vertical mile below came the tantalizing roar of the Skykomish

River rushing to dump water in Puget Sound, which was already full of water. The injustice! Water, water everywhere down there and nary a drop up here. Don't talk to me of a wise and merciful God.

Down the Bowl in twilight, clambering over logs, delicately descending grassy ledges. Lights of cars on the highway, of a passenger train gliding beside the river. There in the club car, sitting in plush seats, smoking big cigars, cool drinks in hand, do they know there is in the world such a thing as True Danger? Danger, Despair, and Death?

At 8 o'clock we approached the lower lip of the Bowl. Night was complete on the river and thickening around us. I sat on a <sup>6</sup>-inch ledge for a short rest — and jolted awake sagging into space. <sup>I'd been asleep!</sup> The instant I stopped moving <sup>I'd gone</sup> ~~to~~ to sleep! Slurring words around thick tongue I warned Vic to belay me even during rests.

We traversed rightward out of the Bowl and at 8:30 were only an hour of daylight travel from camp — but darkness was now absolute and the intricate route a hopeless confusion.

I drifted in and out of sleep while Tom pounded a piton for a rappel and descended, followed by Ted. Vic inspected the anchor and was dissatisfied. ~~Saying~~ <sup>he said, driving</sup> "Pitons are cheap!" ~~he drove~~ two more, contributing our share to the North Peak iron mine. <sup>He</sup> ~~He~~ woke me and I slid down the line. It was incredible how competent I was when I had something to do. At the bottom I greeted Ted and fell asleep.

<sup>And awoke to see a</sup> ~~A~~ flashlight beam on cliffs below, probing here, there, <sup>amid a storm</sup> ~~amid a storm~~ ~~of~~ of obscenities. Terrible-tempered, ~~fitting~~ Tom was

~~looking~~ <sup>searching</sup> for the way. Ted was ~~belaying his~~ ~~and simultaneously~~ climbing beside me, pointing out holds with flashlight, ~~and~~ <sup>As</sup> on the epic drive home from Shuksan, ~~providing running commentary on~~ <sup>we discussed</sup> the passing scene. ("What's that?" I'd ask. He'd answer, "That's two dogs.") This, and the mind-tightening effort of placing feet and hands, kept me awake. But whenever we ~~stopped~~ <sup>paused</sup> ~~belayed~~ <sup>belayed.</sup> I instantly slept. Above, lonesome Vic ~~held~~

~~was constantly belayed.~~

On a little shelf we assembled for the first long rest since the summit. ~~As helpless victim being rescued I belonged to the party, and was~~ ~~completely~~ ~~than I had as~~ ~~baggage being hauled up the mountain.~~ ~~was~~ ~~belayed~~ ~~because~~ We'd lost the race and haste was pointless. We were in no danger. Camp was close and the remainder of the route was easy — if Tom could find it. If not, the night was so calm and warm we could bivouac anywhere with no misery except thirst.

Stars sparkled in Lake Serene. One jump and I could fill my mouth, my throat, my belly, and bathe scalp and eyes, and moisten dusty blood scratching through arteries and veins. (All day I've faced the barren waste without the taste of water — cool, clear water.)

I mingled in star-sparkle of the lake. And suddenly came full awake in excitement of a revelation.

Reading tales of alpine and Arctic tragedies, of explorers lying down in storm or cold to die, I'd been puzzled that strong men could accept death without complaint. Now I knew, because I was near, how it is when to move arms and legs, focus eyes, demands such ~~effort~~ <sup>exertions</sup> of willpower that the will

As helpless victim being rescued I belonged to the party more completely than I had as baggage being hauled up the mountain and felt I should share my discovery, ~~with my party~~ Clearing glue from throat, ~~organizing floppy tongue~~ I

becomes weary. One doesn't think of it as dying, one expects to awake from the sleep, as always before in life one has. ~~I think speech I announced my discovery,~~ ~~made my announcement.~~

"It would be easy to die here."

Vic had a convulsion: "Don't talk like that!"

Inside, I ~~chuckled~~ <sup>smiled. Good old</sup> Vic misunderstood. He thought I was planning

to die. Hell no. Nobody plans it. ~~Too~~ Too hard to explain, obstructed by swollen tongue. Sometimes it's easier to die than live. To live is to work, to die is simply to sleep. Nothing bad happens to you in sleep, snuggled in your crib, hugging your teddy bear.

spend the rest of his life burning

I roused to follow no teddy bear, but Ted. He wasn't belying anymore because Tom had unroped, enraged at the night and blaspheming and <sup>and was</sup> ~~was~~ thrashing around in cedar, vowing to return with a torch and ~~North~~ North Peak to naked rock. At midnight he found the camp we'd left 18 1/2 hours earlier.

Tom and Vic packed up and descended to the lake <sup>to</sup> ~~to~~ drink their fill, sleep a bit, then hike to the Jeep and drive to Index and call home to keep the rescue party from leaving Seattle.

Ted shambled down to the dwindling remnant of our supper snowpatch and far into the night rehydrated from drips. I drank the last dregs from a spare canteen left in camp and slept.

At 6 o'clock I awoke, amazed to feel so well-rested after the exhaustion of midnight. Mind and muscles were languid but filled with dreadful new power. Ted and I dropped to the lake and for 3 hours drank

cool, clear water and basked in morning sun on dewy green grass and looked up and up the horrid east face.

Ted remarked that never in his life had he seen so gaudy a display of Northern Lights, the entire sky flaring columns and sheets of wondrous green and red and blue, *a very rare show for our latitude.*

Northern Lights? News to me. I hadn't seen them.

From the night descent Ted remembered the miraculous sky. I remembered the club car gliding by the wet river and the star-sparkle in the lake and the ease of death.



19 April 1974

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## INNOCENTS ABROAD

Time had come for the first step beyond home hills, a step closer to — who could say what? In some dim future of wealth I might venture to Tierra del Fuego, the Southern Alps of New Zealand, the Mountains of the Moon, or even the Himalaya.

Such ranges were for dreaming, not planning. *The arena of practice* ambition was my home continent. And the direction? Inevitably north — north to bigger, icier, wilder mountains than the Cascades — north to the British Columbia Coast Range, whose super-Alpine summits I'd seen sharp and clear from Baker <sup>one</sup> ~~that~~ crystalline October day — north to subarctic ranges of the Yukon and Alaska. With more experience and more money these <sup>could come</sup> ~~would be~~ within my reach.

For now, also north, there were the Canadian Rockies, the Purcells, the Caribou<sup>s</sup>, the Monashees, and the Selkirks. Where to begin? How to choose a goal that was more than I'd ever tried yet not more than I could hope to achieve? I wanted to be <sup>tested</sup> ~~scared~~ but not humbled.

The problem was connecting home hills to foreign ranges. Journal articles were no help; they were written by strangers of unknown or — as in the case of Fearless Fred — supernatural ability. Among people whose

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skills I could compare to mine, few had visited distant peaks; Mountaineers were mostly poor folk and non-travelers, unlike rich and wide-roaming Easterners, the Ivy League bunch.

However, several years before I joined the club a local gang had saved up pennies and journeyed to the Selkirks. Memories were vivid; Burge, one of the elder statesmen I most respected, never lectured on any subject without some reference to Sir Donald. From my first months in the Course that knighted mountain symbolized the challenge of the faraway — but not, as with St. Elias or McKinley, too faraway. During the 1949-50 winter, plotting the summer of glory, bewildered by riches of Canada, I read about the clean lines of quartzite ridges and faces rising to a classic horn 10,818 feet high.

At Climbing Committee meetings and practices and experience climbs I propagandized Sir D, but nobody was interested in far travels — unless to the Tetons, which were east, not north, and therefore bored me. Tom was the sole convert. Well then, he and Betty and I were the group. Good enough.

Through spring and summer we read and re-read Thorington's Climbers' Guide to the Interior Ranges of British Columbia and back issues of the Canadian Alpine Journal, Thorington was cryptic, narratives of ascents were antique and thus largely irrelevant, ~~and~~ photographs were few and fuzzy. For all our research the peak remained mysterious, exciting.

As added intrigue, the climb began from Glacier, once the site of famous Glacier House and principal tourist center of the Canadian West, but early in the century replaced in favor by Lake Louise and Banff and now

studying every scrap of information about Sir Donald we could find.

merely a railroad station. Glacier was accessible only by train — no highway, no tyranny of automobiles, no mobs of park-decal collectors chasing beggar bears and clicking Brownies. Captivated by the novelty, we decided to travel entirely by rail. Saturday, August 19, we'd take the <sup>American</sup> train north to Vancouver, transfer to the Canadian Pacific, and after an overnight coach ride arrive at Glacier Sunday, ready to climb Monday and a dozen days thereafter. Some simple things first, maybe Uto and Tupper, to get the feel of the terrain. When ready, Sir Donald. Then across the high white sea <sup>of</sup> the Illecillewaet Névé to Dawson.

We didn't catch the train Saturday because we went to North Peak instead. Returning to the apartment Monday afternoon to plan a fresh start, <sup>Tom and I</sup> heard the news from Betty:

"Canadian railroads stopped running yesterday. Everybody is on strike."

Had Vic been handy I'd have strangled him with an old sling rope.

Tuesday we called the local Canadian Pacific office and were told a settlement was expected momentarily. Wednesday, same story. The northern land we still desired, but were developing hostility toward the northern people. (Confound their politics! Frustrate their knavish tricks!) Thursday, no change.

Friday morning, August 25, Tom and Betty and I surveyed the wreckage. Nearly half the planned 2-week vacation gone and nothing to show for it but damnable North Peak. The end of the Glory Summer near and

Sir Donald forever lost and no step taken toward McKinley. Hardy was right — the typical human tragedy doesn't come from character flaws but from getting run over by a ~~train~~ train. *In this case, a train that wasn't even running.*

One thing was sure — another day in town and we'd go berserk. In a frenzy of sudden resolution we tossed gear in the Jeep, ran through ~~the~~ ~~supermarket~~ a supermarket buying groceries at random, and were off and away across the Cascades and the Columbia Plateau and over the border into a foreign nation. Late that night, 500 miles from home, we pulled to the side of the highway and slept in a field, listening to cows moo and coyotes (which Tom and I convinced Betty were wolves) bark under Canadian stars.

We'd no idea where we were going — someplace in the Rockies -- all unfamiliar, our research having been concentrated on the Selkirks. As we continued north Saturday morning *me at the wheel,* Tom unfolded maps and flipped through Thorington's Climbers' Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada. The bare-<sup>(</sup>bones prose stirred no enthusiasm in our hearts, still committed to Sir D. Nor did the first looks at brown heaps of parched rubble. We drove by Columbia Lake, the beginning of the great river draining east slopes of our home Cascades, but this was not our home. We turned east over Sinclair Pass, up the Kootenay River, and over Vermilion Pass to the Banff-Jasper Highway. Above the junction rose Eisenhower, more than 9000 feet high yet unappealing.

Not only were the mountains alien but the whole nation was cockeyed. I bought gas and the gallons had 5 quarts. In change I received gaudy-colored

paper with French words and pictures of English kings — the entire currency was counterfeit. At a restaurant I ordered a strawberry milkshake and the waitress poured milk in a glass, added syrup, stirred with a spoon, and that was it. I was too dumbfounded to ask if they'd ever heard of ice cream.

We turned north at the junction, <sup>ascending</sup> ~~following~~ the Bow River. The flat-lying stratified sediments made trashy mountains, exceptionally-steep and obviously-rotten cliffs almost submerged in enormous aprons of talus.

Then we came to the foot of a huge block with a hanging glacier gleaming on the hazy-remote summit roof — Temple — and the white ice contrasted so joyously with blistering brown we decided to climb something. What? More flipping of guidebook pages, rustling of maps. There was a place we'd heard of, Abbot Pass, with big peaks around. It might be a decent spot for a high overview.

In early afternoon, packs on backs, we walked neatly-clipped lawns beside 5044-foot Lake Louise, past the Chateau, which our hero Frank Smythe in one of his books called "The Penitentiary." On benches were dummies in tweed suits and white mustaches, holding walking sticks, perfect caricatures of retired English <sup>colonels.</sup> ~~majors.~~ The dummies lived! Waxen faces screwed up in distaste, nostrils sniffing, mustaches <sup>+</sup> ~~tw~~itching. We were recognized as a raffish colonial militia. Well, our American boys were catching hell from gooks in Korea and damned if we were going to take any crap from these gooks, with their 5-quart gallons and Monopoly money and ice cream-less milkshakes and trains that didn't run.

From the Penitentiary compound we hiked a highway-wide trail upward in forest, stepping aside repeatedly to let horses pass, walking very carefully to avoid <sup>steaming -</sup> fresh piles. We met a genuine Swiss guide with several customers, ~~and~~ <sup>^</sup> Also a coolie with a shovel; he was too weary to throw very far and the trail was a trench through horse flop.

Late in hot, asphyxiating afternoon we reached the Plain of Six Glaciers Tea House, at 6900 feet on a wooded shelf above the white "plain." A short bit beyond were a lovely meadow and waterfall, a delightful, home-<sup>(</sup> like alpine camp — except the meadow was solid flop and the stream hopelessly filthied. Obviously we were going to have to send in troops, proclaim the whole country a National Park, and ship the gooks to penal colonies in Australia.

The only clean ground was in front of the tea house and there <sup>^</sup> we belligerently cooked supper on a primus stove, every move closely observed by an elderly lady and gentleman sitting regally in easy chairs on the porch. When we unrolled <sup>our</sup> ~~the~~ bags the lady gasped, leaned forward, and in that queer accent characteristic of the English speaking English said:

"Surely you are not intending to sleep out. You will have your death."

Conversation was unavoidable and we discovered she was a nice lady, ~~and~~ a refugee from the Penitentiary, which she called the "orphan asylum," <sup>and</sup> a lover of wildness even though gentility permitted <sup>her</sup> no closer approach than a tea house. We politely assured her there was no danger <sup>^</sup> ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> knew better and declared she would not rest knowing three human beings were suffering a few feet from her bed. Seconded by a nod from the tweedy

old gentleman, she summoned the houseboy, discreetly hovering in the background, and insisted we be given shelter from the elements. He ducked his head and, deferring to the only paying guests, invited us to sleep on the rug by the fireplace, under the protection of the Empire.

He asked if we wished breakfast. So that was the game! Free rug as a come-on, then sting us for food. We declined with thanks, saying we were leaving very early. But "breakfast is served whenever you desire, sir." And the price? Incredible. The poverty of the coolies was appalling, embarrassing. At 4:30 a.m. we sahibs, sacked out luxuriously on the rug, heard the cook start to work in the kitchen below. At 6 o'clock the houseboy summoned us to a table groaning under orange juice, bacon, eggs, toast, marmalade, and coffee — for just one buck a head, in Monopoly money at that.

From cozy unreal tea house we hauled packs into grim familiar reality of gray dawn under low, swift sky, descended moraines to the Victoria Glacier, clean and cold as American ice, and ascended the narrow slot between rubbish walls of Victoria and Lefroy, both over 11,000 feet. Rain began, grew to a deluge, <sup>turned to snow.</sup> Lightning flared, thunder clapped. In black-as-night blizzard we crossed the bergschrund to 9598-foot Abbot Pass and hurried into the hut.

Strange to be in tomb-cold stillness while storm raged around. At 11 a.m., soaking wet and shivering, we stripped off clothes and hung them from rafters to drip and burrowed into ~~heaps of~~ <sup>bunks heaped high with</sup> Hudson's Bay blankets. At 2 p.m. we crawled from bunks, donned sleeping bags, and ate lunch



listening to roaring winds. Obviously we would climb nothing here. At 3, with sleep the only available entertainment, back to bunks. Up at 7:30 p.m. to cook supper on the primus. At 9, back to bunks. We were higher than the summit of Bonanza and sleeping under piles of blankets in a stone mansion built by Swiss guides imported by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Odd. Not quite the Alps because there was no peasant to keep a fire going and sell us <sup>wine and</sup> hot soup, but certainly a world away from our Cascades.

At 7 o'clock Monday morning a bright light woke us. Sunshine! Wind was blasting and the temperature was below freezing but we'd exhausted our capacity to sleep and anyway body chemistry was compelling.

Once on feet we'd no choice. To retreat in blue-sky morning was to deliberately flunk. Tom and I shuddered into pants and shirts pulled from rafters. They were frozen solid, and boots and socks too. The transfer of sleep-sluggish bodies from warm bags to ice-hard clothes was a horror.

Which way to go? Shivering allowed no leisurely discussion. Lefroy shot straight up from one side of the pass, white-bleak and terrible after the night's snowfall. On the other side was Victoria, 11,365 feet, no challenge but the sole rational option.

Climbing began at the hut, frozen clothes only partly thawed and legs and heads still awkward from hibernation. The route was a scramble, a hike — except the staircase of rock walls and scree shelves was coated with slippery verglas topped by loose powder; we couldn't wear crampons because they'd ball up and Bramani lugs were like skates. And below was the eternal drop to the Victoria Glacier. Not a comfortable hold anywhere,

not a single artistic move; we felt clumsy, incompetent, but nevertheless soon stood in fierce wind atop the 11,000-foot South Summit of Victoria.

Close by were frightful Lefroy and Hungabee. Down east lay the Plain of Six Glaciers, Lake Louise, and the Bow valley. Down west was Lake O'Hara, and beyond rotten brown cliffs of miscellaneous peaks, the wide air gap of the Columbia valley, <sup>across</sup> ~~beyond~~ which rose the Selkirks of our frustrated dreams. Somewhere in that hazy gathering stood the lost Sir Donald.

A mile north and a bit higher we saw the Main Summit — apparently a simple stroll along the ridge crest. Walking ended as the crest thinned to a knife-edge of snow dropping steeply to a saddle. So we'd have a bit of genuine climbing after all. I belayed Tom as he cut steps downward, first scooping away powder, then hacking at the ice. <sup>However, it wasn't</sup> ~~not~~ honest blue ice breaking out in chunks but laminated verglas splitting off in plates, leaving no good steps. The rope ran out and Tom was nowhere near any possibility of a belay. To continue, I'd have to abandon <sup>g</sup> my stance and for minutes we'd both be poised above the long glissade down hanging ice, over cliffs, to the Victoria Glacier.

It's stupid to risk death on ~~such~~ a simpleton ~~one~~ peak. We returned to the hut defeated and glum and there met an Englishman and a Swede equipped with hobnailed boots and walking sticks and a short length of clothesline; they were blithely lunching before starting up Lefroy. We descended, suspecting these brave alpine walkers would make tough Lefroy while we chicken climbers had failed on easy Victoria. That's the difference between

Old World and New. We Americans have the Bomb but when it comes to mountains are still bush league.

Humble and hostile we drove north from Lake Louise to 6878-foot Bow Pass, down the Mistaya River past Waterfowl Lakes to a somber evening at Mosquito Creek Campground. We hardly paused to view the succession of lofty peaks which any average gook could handle with no sweat but to us were so baffling we couldn't see how to get off the ground. Impossible mountains. Titan gooks.

Tuesday morning we continued up the trench, now ascending the North Saskatchewan River, the peaks less rugged, the valley a vast arctic meadow, the river first braided in wide gravel flats and then flowing in solution channels through limestone. We envied those who hiked this magnificence a few years earlier, before the highway was built. But we were seeing it from a ~~car~~<sup>machine</sup>, like sitting in a theater watching a travelogue. Our great adventure had dwindled to a car-camping tour. All we lacked were decals.

At noon we entered the wasteland of 6678-foot Sunwapta Pass, evacuated by ice only within the past dozen years, and joined the horde walking to the edge of the Athabaska tongue of the Columbia Icefield. We gained a degree of solitude, marred only by the tourist icemobile, hiking several miles up bare ice, on the way amusing ourselves with an ice-ax engineering project, diverting surface streams into a single channel. The icemobile driver must have been puzzled as the afternoon went along and on each trip he was forced to ford a steadily larger creek.

¶ Wednesday Tom and I climbed the elementary snows of Athabaska, 11,452 feet, and saw such giants as Alberta and Robson, and the long, wide Saskatchewan Glacier, and the massive dome of the Columbia Icefield, the hydrographic apex of North America, waters draining from various tongues to the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans. Impressive, but not Sir D. ~~I heard no urgent call here.~~

The summit gave one thrill. We knew the first ascent had been made by the fabulous Norman Collie and that the great Smythe had visited the top. Now, on a scrap of paper in a wine bottle, we found the record of an ascent several days earlier — and one of the party was the very Odell who was the last man to see Mallory and Irvine as they disappeared forever into a cloud on Everest. This close we'd come to the virgin summit of Earth.

To celebrate we decided to give the primus a rest. While waiting for supper to be served at the Icefield Chalet we fell into conversation with the park warden, originally from Australia; he told of lone journeys deep in Canadian wildlands and of the time he was mauled by a grizzly and staggered 20 miles, fording large rivers, before reaching a road and fainting; scars on face and neck testified to the fury of the claws. After eating we drove south to camp again at Mosquito Creek; there we met Joe, a young Scottish hillwalker and cragsman in a state of perfect bliss, having just come over the seas and climbed his first real mountain, Edith Cavell. The Rockies were cosmopolitan, the Cascades strictly provincial. As were we.

Thursday we headed home. Tom was scheduled to lead an experience climb of Boston on Labor Day weekend, and though as part of the North Peak deal Vic had agreed to substitute if we were late returning, we had our fill of alien hills. At Cascade Pass we'd salvage what was left of the vacation. No Glory Summer, this.

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SIR DONALD FOREVER

We wouldn't bother with Seattle, we'd drive direct to the Cascade River and hike to Cascade Pass Friday, do Mixup or Magic Saturday, then join the experience-climb party for the Sunday ascent of Sahale and Boston. Lord, how good it would be to see home hills again, and friends.

Descending from Kicking Horse Pass to the Columbia, passing the yards at Field, we noted <sup>a</sup> locomotives<sup>e</sup> with steam up, cars being shuffled. Apparently the strike was over, too late to help us; the stagnant railroad doubtless would be days getting rolling again. I saw no reason to stop in Golden but Tom thought we should check, just so nobody could say we used the strike as an excuse to chicken out.

The station master, busy shuffling papers, ignored me. Feeling stupid I asked when the next train west was due. (Would it be Saturday? Monday? On to Cascade Pass!)

Not looking up, he curtly said, "On time. All trains on time."

We stood dazed. In a couple hours would arrive the train stranded at Field. This was Thursday. We didn't have to be home until Monday. We could have Friday and Saturday in the Selkirks. With plans based on 2 weeks, what could we do ~~with~~<sup>in</sup> 2 days? Nothing much. We'd never considered trying

Sir Donald without warmup climbs. Yet if we didn't take that train the might-have-been would haunt us the rest of our lives.

We walked all the way from Golden to Glacier, up and down the cars; as the only passengers we were free to sample views from every window. The rail line left the Columbia River for a slow ascent of the Beaver River. Peaks appeared, not repulsive heaps of brown sedimentary rubble but gray metamorphic mountains, wet green waterfall-and-brush-jungle mountains. After degradation abroad we were coming home — and in high style on our own private train.

Into the Connaught Tunnel, burrowing 5 miles under Rogers Pass, out to daylight — and there it was. Not a blurred photo nor hazy dream-image but sharp and stark Sir Donald in person, a ~~gray~~<sup>gray</sup> horn ripping blue sky.

A sudden chill. This was a <sup>truly</sup> giant step. How dared I?

At Glacier we felt like celebrities, welcomed by the entire population, the whole 20-odd. Of course, they may have greeted us incidentally while picking up the first mail and supplies in a dozen days. There was, however, nothing perfunctory about the hospitality of the park warden, Noel. We expected to camp out but he insisted on driving us a mile in his Land Rover to the Wheeler Hut, 4096 feet, local headquarters of the Alpine Club of Canada. Not members? No matter. Ice ax and rope are the admission ticket.

Noel was a climber, as was everyone at Glacier, whether visiting or working on railroad or trail crew or running the store. Glacier maybe

was the one place in North America that belonged exclusively to climbers.

Noel was full of surprises. From the train we'd noted a smoke column and supposed he had a big crew chopping firelines.

"Well," he chuckled, "It's not what you'd call a big crew. I do have a man camped in the meadows watching it."

Smokey Bear would throw a fit. Where was the frantic rabble of "forest managers" shoveling and hacking in the American Way, strenuously, bravely, fruitlessly? Canadian forests manage their own affairs, including lightning and fire, as they always have. Man watches, admires.

We mentioned finding Odell's name atop Athabaska. Noel was a buddy of Odell! More, he was a buddy of none other than Frank Smythe. We were awed — we were now friends of a friend of a friend of Mallory, moved in the same mountain circles as the great Smythe.

Or would if we passed the initiation. Sir Donald, there was the ~~rb,~~  
~~question~~

Noel dropped us at Wheeler Hut, deep in woods, rustic-luxurious, and almost empty. A Harvard boy was awaiting return of a rescue party from Glacier Circle, on the far side of the Illecillewaet Névé, where one of his companions had developed a hangnail; the boy himself had been too enfeebled by dyspepsia to assist in the rescue and barely made it back ~~over~~ <sup>over</sup> the Névé without belching.

There also was a Canadian family. Not gooks — none of the Canadians at Glacier were gooks. The husband knew Sir D well and we inquired about our planned line of ascent, the Vaux Route up the Southwest Face.



"Why bother with the Vaux?" he asked. "It's all right, you know, but rather a shag. Now the Northwest Ridge, there's the proper way to do the Donald."

Northwest Ridge! The Mountaineers whose tales had impelled us here had climbed the Vaux and thought it plenty good enough. They spoke respectfully, wistfully, of the razor edge leaping 2600 feet from the Uto-Donald Col.

He went on: "Never a nasty moment. Everything neat and tidy. Not so much cragging as bouldering. Hours and hours of fun."

Winter-spring plans were junked, ambition escalated to a giant step and a half. We'd ~~probably~~ be the first from Seattle to try the Northwest Ridge — assuming weather permitted us to try anything, unlikely with afternoon cirrus followed by evening altostratus.

At 2 o'clock Friday morning Tom and I arose quietly, lit a kerosene lamp in the chill kitchen, and ate corn flakes shivering, listening to pitter-patter on the roof. In minutes we'd be soaking wet, trudging sippy trail by flashlight toward our objective 6700 feet above. A sudden drumming on the roof. No guts. Back to cozy bunks.

The Harvard, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> his ~~partners~~ <sup>companions</sup> newly arrived from Glacier Circle, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> the Canadians left early to catch the train east, the first since the strike. We three were alone in the Selkirks, sitting on the cabin porch drinking coffee, watching drizzle. So, months of planning lead to a weekend in Canadian ~~Gray~~. Sir Donald, lost and found, lost again. And Magic or Mixup and Boston and Sahale as well. Perfidious gookland! The Glory

Summer was ending not with a bang but a whimper.

Drizzle dwindled to mist. The fact penetrated lethargy. Calculations began. We had to leave Sunday morning but could stay over Saturday. By pushing to a high camp this afternoon we'd be in position to take quick advantage of any break in the weather. ~~The~~ Vaux didn't demand perfection, was possible in anything short of a downpour and/or thick fog. Abruptly Tom and I were on the trail.

If conditions were too grim for the Northwest Ridge,

With boots actually pounding Selkirk earth, we realized how little we knew about where we were going. The Glacier Park map was on a scale of 2 miles to an inch and the contour interval was 200 feet; our entire hiking and climbing route lay within a single square inch of the sheet.

Thorington didn't believe in pampering ~~strangers~~ <sup>foreigners</sup>. His total information was: "Trail from Glacier to watercourse below Overlook. Cross snowfield and reach Uto-Sir Donald col from whence the ascent is made, following the N. W. arete closely. The rock is very firm, rubber-soles useful, and the climb one of the finest and most favored in the Selkirks."

Our Canadian advisor, though eloquent about the ridge, had only said of getting there: "Take the trail toward the Névé as far as the Vaux Torrent and leave it and follow your nose to the col."

Simple. Except that as we climbed from trees into huckleberry bushes solid blue with tons of fruit (and freshly stomped by a bear — a grizzly? Where was it now?) we crossed a succession of torrents, any of which might be the Vaux as far as we could tell, the map being so skimpy and low clouds hiding Overlook and every other reference point. We'd

probably walk right past Sir Donald and end up on the Névé. Well, the dense clouds would allow no climb tomorrow anyway and the Névé was better than nothing.

Why did I feel so kindly toward these clouds? Was I a fake, in love not with the reality of Sir D but merely the idea of Sir D? Was I using the clouds to ~~hide~~ me from myself?

A movie recently had been made of Ullman's novel, The White Tower, and the innocent local distributor had invited Climbing Course leaders to a studio preview. The show was even funnier than the book and the startled distributor kept asking, "What's wrong? What are they laughing at?" Glenn Ford, symbolizing Hero America, was such a spastic he'd need a derrick to get up Little Si. Lloyd Bridges, playing Villain Germany, moved beautifully and was the only member of the cast having any business on a mountain. The moral we drew was not the one Ullman had in mind. On subsequent climbs whenever a sackout lasted a minute too long someone was sure to burst out with Bridges' wonderfully arrogant line: "To rest is not to conquer!"

The Nazi was right. And it was also true that to be discouraged by weather is not to conquer. The first symptom of being over the hill is a preoccupation with menace of the sky, an ill-disguised fondness for clouds.

Was my gloom at the strike, at the rain, caused not by the loss of Sir Donald but the ~~understanding~~ <sup>realization</sup> I lacked the nerve to live my dreams?

The cloud base slowly lifted. A large moraine materialized above, then a snout of bare ice, then a mist-vague wall. Was that ice the Vaux

Glacier? That wall the foot of Sir Donald? The trail crossed still another torrent, apparently from the glacier, and if that was the right glacier this must be the right torrent. We left the path and scrambled up the bouldery avenue of waterfalls.

As we rose, so did clouds. Atop the moraine we decided the gray wall looming in gray fog belonged to Sir D. Off to the left the wall seemed to shade abruptly to a lighter, more sky-like gray — presumably the col. Nobody had seen fit to mention it was guarded by a naked cliff. Damn the titan gooks! American stumblebums would be lucky to handle the despicable Vaux. We dropped packs in a tiny meadow among moraines at 7000 feet. A pretty camp, some consolation. If the weather cleared we would, at most, attempt the shag.

However, we had the afternoon to kill and might as well look at the col. Rope and iron in rucksacks, we climbed moraines and talus. A possible route emerged — a horizontal crack leading from the talus across the cliff to chimneys that conceivably could be stemmed to the crest. As we ascended, the crack expanded to a ledge. And as boots made contact we found the "ledge" was so wide and smooth it needed only a yellow stripe down the center to be one of the better gookland highways. Canadians shrank from titansto supermen.

On the 8200-foot Uto-Donald Col we looked down to the Uto Glacier, the Beaver River, and over the valley to meadow ridges. And we looked up: northward to the steep spine of 9620-foot Uto, the summit hidden; southward to appalling overhangs of the Northwest Ridge and flawless slabs of the

North Face.

We sat, our bottoms on the bottom of Sir Donald, and stared. If clouds continued to lift we'd climb tomorrow. The Vaux? A piece of cake, no giant step at all, hardly worth the trip. The Northwest Ridge? Plainly not our definition of bouldering, yet what choice was there for friends of a friend of a friend of Mallory? We laboriously fetched packs from the pretty meadow, found a patch of dirt flat enough for ~~sleeping~~<sup>g</sup>, and collected water from snow drips at the glacier margin.

Half the afternoon remained and Uto now <sup>was</sup> cloudfree, the summit 1400 feet up and seeming closer; almost we yielded to a mad urge to run to the top. But no, we'd better save energy, forego the warmup, take Sir D cold turkey. It would be prudent, though, to feel out the start of tomorrow's ridge.

No longer buffered from reality by months and miles, with hard rock in hand, I was a quivering incompetent and soon stopped. Tom, more eager or more nervous, scouted to the first overhang, returning to report it could be passed by a detour onto the North Face, which wasn't completely flawless.

Encouraging — but myriad more overhangs required detours and the face might truly be flawless up there in blowing fog, lying in ambush. Our Wheeler Hut friend might be the sort who boulders where we would need pitons and slings.

We set the primus in a sheltered nook and repeatedly relit the wind-deviled flame and eventually warmed a hoosh of soup, corned beef, and canned potatoes. Dark clouds rolled on, rising but not thinning. The

entire Northwest Ridge was revealed — half a vertical mile of cold gray quartzite, swift clouds giving away their motion to the peak, making me dizzy. Dear God, the summit was terribly far. Smythe had come closer to the top of Everest.

We'd never done a pure rock route with more than several ropelengths of climbing, as contrasted to scrambling. We'd gained 2200 tough feet on North Peak but that was garbage and cedars. Here, starting from a col higher than all but a handful of Cascade peaks, we faced 2600 feet of continuous difficulty and exposure, ending at an elevation higher than Baker.

No storm would save us. When the sun touched the horizon the clouds exploded in flame and shriveled to wisps of smoke. Wind stopped. In eerie red brilliance and spooky silence we looked west to peaks and glaciers from Dawson to Bonney to Grizzly. Two lonesome Americans at 8200 feet in Canada as blackness surged from the east and a billion fires pulsed.

We snuggled into bags — and immediately were attacked by a "snafflehound," a rat said to be peculiar to the Selkirks above timberline, perhaps a mutation since the coming of climbers in the late 19th century. The creature concentrated on my pack the first half of the night, then switched to Tom, who repelled assaults with obscenities newly invented for the occasion.

Of true sleep we had none. In darkness we gave up the battle and ~~swallowed~~ <sup>masticated</sup> a ~~rat~~ pulp of cornflakes and lumps of powdered milk <sup>and icewater</sup> and waited for the ridge to crystallize. At 6 o'clock rocks took dim shape, the time had come.

In halflight we fumbled over frost-wedged boulders of the col. All those brave plans, all those dreams of glory — and now, sick to my stomach, I trembled with cold, shuddered with fear. Well and good to snap carabiners and talk big in winter. The oral history of American mountaineering is filled with heroes who every December sign up for expeditions and every June are kept home by appendicitis.

We roped at the foot of the ridge and Tom led the first pitch and set a belay. A deep breath, and follow. It has begun. The quartzite was well-broken yet solid, not a loose hold anywhere. And when I reached Tom he was sitting on a broad ledge — and I realized he so far hadn't said a single dirty word. My stomach steadied. He led again, and I followed, and the Uto Glacier was falling below and the surrounding emptiness was expanding. Now, the first overhang — we must go onto the awful North Face.

A sling at the top of the overhang was frightening — if a party must rappel, the North Face detour could be no cinch. But it was! Tom retrieved the sling — nothing less than \$4 worth of 7/16-inch nylon! Harvard boys, no doubt, of the sort constantly traveling to famous ranges and crapping out, then filibustering in journals. And they rappelled here! We Cascades provincials might not measure up to Canadians but we weren't the worst hillwalkers in the world. Where wealthy Harvards rappelled from expensive nylon, we were bouldering tied to poor-man's manila.

The laughter loosened us. Tom offered me a lead and the fretting of a waiting Number Two was dispelled by the concentration of a probing Number One. I became a full partner and that was the end of trembles.

Cold wind honed our skill as we climbed leapfrog, alternating leads and belays, a smooth-working two-man machine. Dawn lightened into morning and we passed more rappel slings. Clumsy Harvards! The rope, scarcely needed but worn for form's sake, impeded our pace; to reduce line-hauling we re-rope, wrapping coils around waists and shortening the interval between us to 30 feet — no pitch of the Donald was longer.

Morning sun brightened Uto. Still in freezing shadow, we here and there kicked steps up pockets of powder snow lingering from the storm we'd slept through at Abbot Hut. (Noel had told us the storm had put all peaks "out of shape," completely halting climbing by those who knew the country; retreating on Victoria was no disgrace.) To pause was to shiver but the sun glorified Selkirk summits blossoming north and west and south, and Rockies east, infinite horizons of sky-high peaks and sprawling icefields. We would climb many in summers to come, and others in equally exciting faraway lands. We drew even with the top of Uto and were halfway to the goal and moving free and glad.

Our upward rush was slowed by a few pitches exceeding bouldering, welcome tests. Often we cat-stepped the knife<sup>e</sup>/blade crest, exulting in tremendous exposure to Beaver Valley left, Asulkan Valley right. We savored quartzite with eyes and fingers and (through tennis shoes) toes — the clean edges, the layered, variegated tones of gray — the loveliest rock we'd ever caressed. Some was pearly white and in a more convenient location would have been quarried to build palaces.

Uto sank far below. We decided belays were a nuisance and climbed



simultaneously. Yet tension mounted because horrid surprises might be lurking and the nearer the summit the more crushing the defeat.

But if Sir Donald had a fault it was in prematurely conceding. The ridge gentled and we walked, and as we walked remembered — remembered months of anticipation and hours of self-doubt, the Pyrrhic victory on North Peak, the unlucky chance of the strike, the humiliation on Victoria, the lucky chance of the last-minute settlement, the lucky meeting with the Canadian at Wheeler Hut, the unlucky rain, the lucky sunshine — hours and days and months and years compressed in the triumphant minutes walking onto the 10,818-foot summit of Sir Donald at 11 o'clock in the finest morning of our lives.

We photographed horizons — there wasn't time to exhaustively soak them up with eyes; later we'd study snapshots and maps and fully comprehend where we'd been.

From our tennis shoes the eastern scarp plummeted 7000 feet to the Beaver River, a silver thread meandering parkland and forest of a fault-line valley dead-straight for 35 miles. Beyond stood the green plateau of Bald Mountain, the modest but ice-scooped Dogtooth Mountains, hazy emptiness of the Columbia trench, and then the Rockies from southern foothills to gigantic Robson, highest peak in the range.

Steeply below to the south spread the high white sea, some 15 square miles, of the Illecillewaet Névé, and across the deep hole of Glacier Circle on its far margin, the even larger Deville Névé and cold mysteries of the rarely-visited Dawson Range, Bishops Range, Purity Range, Battle Range. And farther south the Purcell Mountains and the shocking aiguilles of the

Bugaboos. We'd have to spend much time there.

Northward from Rogers Pass the super-wild Northern Selkirks climaxed in the Sir Sanford and Adamant Ranges. We definitely had to have a whack at that.

For the first time we belonged in Canada, and Canada belonged to us.

Restless eyes roving the great circle, we ate lunch. The larder was nearly bare; we had nothing left for the climb but Sailor Boy pilot bread and slabs of milk chocolate, which we made into "Sir Donald sandwiches" ~~and~~ washed down with orange-like juice.

The entire afternoon would not have sufficed for this place, this moment. Too quickly we recalled how far we must go in the short September day. We'd climbed on morning's strength. What was left for afternoon? Descent is harder — we'd met less than half the challenge of the Northwest Ridge. We inspected the Southwest Face, the line of the Vaux Route; one could run around and play h<sup>o</sup>pscotch there. Noel wouldn't blame us for taking this quick escape — most Northwest Ridge climbers did. But our axes were at the col and crawling down the Vaux Glacier, pitons in hand, would be messy and graceless. By the ridge we had come and by the ridge we would return.

At 11:45 we confronted the downward plunge. Uto was far, far below — and when level with its summit we'd be only halfway to the security of the col. The ridge looked altogether new, strange, intimidating. Several false moves led into traps and we got as jittery as at dawn.

Yet with a pause or two for deep breathing and recollecting the

Harvards we adjusted to the new perspective, to the new posture facing not rock but air. The ridge was sun-warm, washed by cool breezes and exhilarating gusts. To take the Vaux escape would have been to throw away the best of the fun.

High in enormous Selkirk sky we flowed down the narrow crest in the stream of gravity. I was lighter than ever in my life, no lump of solid flesh, rather a bubble bouncing down exquisite quartzite. A flick of the feet and I could soar over the gulf to Uto, and kick again and fly to Eagle, then Avalanche, Tupper, Sir Sanford, and on, on, on.

Down, down, down, and I was sad to see Uto above because that meant the death of this day's life was near. Heaven would be to float forever down the Northwest Ridge of Sir Donald.

At 5 o'clock we flopped in the col. Ah, for another day, a week, to do it all again tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow. But night was coming, and the morning train. Packing, we noted our camp companion had eaten the leather wristloops of our ice axes. We held no grudge.

In the darkness of 8 o'clock we burst into Wheeler Hut. Betty had boiled up our total remaining provisions and served us the result — a slurry of noodles and <sup>canned</sup> tomatoes. But good! She, too, would leave Canada happy, having spent the day hiking to the Asulkan Glacier with Raymond, a young Swiss working on the trail crew.

During after-dinner tea Raymond arrived in person, a volcano of glee, chattering non-stop as fast as words could spill out: He'd gone to Glacier Circle to help rescue the Harvard (he despised wealthy Eastern Americans)

and while there had stolen a day to make the third ascent of Wheeler in the Puritys — worth putting up with Harvards! On returning he'd found Betty at the hut and learned we were on Sir D and proposed that he and she run up the Vaux to greet us on the summit (he loved Betty and Tom and me and all poor Western Americans) but settled for the Asulkan gambol. He mourned the civilizing of the Alps that had driven him to emigrate and rejoiced in his first summer roaming wilderness mountains.

Raymond, our new Swiss friend, enlarged the day and trip, as had the English gentlewoman at the Plain of Six Glaciers Tea House, and the Australian warden at the Columbia Icefield, and Joe the Scot at Mosquito Creek, and Warden Noel at Glacier, and our Canadian advisor at the Wheeler Hut — and Odell and Smythe and Mallory.

Standing from the table, full of noodles and tea, I sought a handhold before walking across the room — and laughed at the reflex — and remembered the wholeness of the 10 hours moving always with hands as well as feet, a unity of man and mountain.

I'd have to build new dreams. Sir Sanford, highest of the Selkirks? A good next step toward McKinley. Too soon to plan, though. Just back from Heaven I was depleted, serene.

If 1951 brought as long a leap beyond 1950 as that of 1950 was beyond 1949, it was going to be a hell of a year. I could not imagine 10 finer hours than the Northwest Ridge. If bigger peaks gave commensurately grander days, I must surely outgrow humanity and become a god.

20 April 1974

1951

Chapter <sup>19</sup>~~20~~

THE LONG MARCH FROM THE BLUE TO THE BLUE

Fleeting patches of blue appeared over the city Sunday morning, January 28, and by afternoon ~~the~~ <sup>the ceiling was</sup> clouds ~~were~~ breaking into white billows, slow-drifting, shrinking, only enough <sup>flaming rags</sup> left at evening for a gaudy sunset, disturbing after <sup>long</sup> ~~comfortable~~ weeks of <sup>snug</sup> ~~uniform~~ gray. The Olympics <sup>came</sup> ~~stood~~ ~~fully~~ <sup>out of hiding</sup> ~~in the way~~ for the first time in the new year, ~~flaming rags~~ <sup>lingering</sup> ~~on Constance~~. I wondered why Pete didn't call.

I didn't call Pete. Nowhere did the Plan mention me calling Pete. Chuck and I were supposed to stand by, the whole winter if need be, ready to go on 4 hours' notice whenever in Pete's judgment a clear spell was developing. He was the trigger man.

I dreaded the call, the brutalizing of flesh and the stringing taut of nerves. Why, then, had I signed up? To be jolted from the torpor I couldn't shake of my own will. Returned from Sir Donald, I'd been to the hills only once in September and twice in October, not <sup>at</sup> all in November and December, accepting a 23-peak season when a <sup>a minor effort</sup> ~~bit of initiative~~ easily could <sup>we</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>after Sir D the</sup> pushed the total to 30. But <sup>local mountains</sup> weren't worth the trouble.

accessible on a weekend, climbable on short fall days,

~~For~~ For a dozen straight weeks I didn't even leave town, my longest

civic industry and pride centered on

wildland hiatus since 1945.

These past 3 years climbing had organized my life, which otherwise would ~~have~~ been a directionless drift ~~in~~ <sup>through</sup> the meaningless muddle of New Rome, where ~~dragging~~ <sup>airplanes</sup> ~~fellaheen~~ <sup>built by mindless</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> unaware that history was ending and no place worth flying to anymore. As a mountain bum with goals complete in themselves I was apart and content, yet deep within <sup>felt</sup> an uneasiness ~~was~~ stirring. After McKinley, what? Everest was impossible and I apparently wasn't going to die young. The spectral, empty future began to loom. Suddenly I couldn't tolerate the chemical stench of Bagley Hall. The old gang mostly had finished degrees and vanished in workaday dreariness; the new students were a bunch of children; ~~and~~ the fun was over. When the University changed its retirement policy, permitting employees who quit to withdraw ~~the full amount~~ <sup>accumulated</sup> of their pension funds, I took the money and ran.

To Betty I explained I needed time to think, and I did some of that, but there was less thinking than drinking <sup>1/2</sup>/<sub>M</sub> About 10 o'clock I'd briskly walk to the Blue Moon and start whooping it up with the jolly boys. At 1 o'clock the barmaid would screech, "You don't have to go home but you can't stay here!" and we'd roister through the District to join the <sup>other</sup> Avenue Creeps at the Pink Palace and drink coffee and play pinball far into the night. The organizing force in my life now was the routine of Blue Moon and Pink Palace and sleeping till afternoon.

But if I was frightened by the picture of being still framed in the stockroom window a dozen years from now, I was terrified by the vision of

Seattle branch,

to make up for the long dry summer, to slake that persistent Nordqipfel thirst.

an ancient of 30 playing pinball at 4 o'clock in the morning. Never mind the afterward of McKinley, hazy in distance; the immediate problem was 1951 and my only prospect of salvation was a Second Glory Summer, a hope steadily dimming in schooners and pitchers of beer, cups and urns of coffee, clackings and clangings of pinball machines. I needed to be electrified<sub>x</sub> and Pete certainly was the right guy for the job. However, which would be worse — the stagnation of the Moon or the trauma of the jolt?

Well, there was little danger we'd actually leave town. Meanwhile, boots and pack and ice ax and snowshoes in apartment entryway somewhat eased pangs of conscience. It wasn't my fault ~~the~~ the weather forbade adventure, forced me to keep chaos at bay with the only means at hand. <sup>Then</sup> The scarlet sky above the ~~ice-white~~ Olympic horizon ended the gray peace of January.

The story began <sup>just</sup> after the war<sub>x</sub> when the climbing community <sup>suddenly</sup> was infected by a <sup>notion</sup> great ~~idea~~ the first ascent of Olympus in winter. Kermit and Dick started it on a miraculous January week skiing in sunshine on the High Divide, constantly admiring the Alaskan look of Olympus<sub>x</sub> rising more than 7000 feet above the broad<sub>x</sub> green gulf of the Hoh River.

From this and other tours <sup>↓</sup> they developed an abiding faith in the "midwinter clear," a prolonged spell of blue sky and crisp air they believed to be an inevitable annual feature of the period between late January and early February. Twice they marched up the Hoh in horrid

during the years when undernourished glaciers were shrinking catastrophically

weather sustained by a pathetic trust the Clear would come by and by. Once the road to the trailhead at Jackson Guard Station was blocked by snow, the other time by a washout. Senile hemlocks and spruces were toppled across the trail at intervals of several yards, awful obstacles for soaking-wet ~~skiers~~ <sup>reeling</sup> skiers ~~staggering~~ under heavy packs. One attempt was pushed as far as Hoh Bridge, 12 miles from Jackson.

The other stalled at Olympus Guard Station, 10 miles. And it never stopped snowing ~~except to rain~~ <sup>reeling</sup> Only bitter dregs remained of the sweet faith in the Clear.

Various Mountaineers, catching the fever, bettered the record. In December, before the onset of tree-toppling storms and deep snows, a party made Elk Lake, 15 miles. ~~Another group led by Bagleyite Ralph,~~ <sup>protégés</sup> one of Fearless Fred's ~~protégés~~ <sup>genuine if</sup>, lucked out into a momentary Clear and skied a mile above the lake to the start of the forested cliff ~~traversed by the trail to Glacier Meadows; Ralph returned to declare the~~ trail route was insanity, formidably steep and exposed and menaced by avalanche chutes.

In January of 1950 Pete was thrown back from the Hoh, battered and humiliated — but Olympus now was confronted by a new breed of antagonist. His first step beyond home hills, planned for the summer of 1951, was to be Saugstad, among the finest virgin summits in the British Columbia Coast Range and financially possible, just barely, for an impoverished Puget Sounder. After Saugstad? The likes of us couldn't select objectives by tossing darts at a spinning globe, in the manner of

The climate  
had changed  
and ~~glaciers were~~  
~~healthiest in~~ their  
a century and



wealthy Easterners, but we who ~~had~~<sup>d</sup> climbed with Pete felt he had the drive to go all the way to "world class," given a break. Such ventures as Saugstad could do the job — the rich guys, when organizing an expedition, generally found it necessary to beef up Eastern money with Western muscle. It was the only way peasants could hope to travel abroad.

To prepare for Saugstad ~~and his team~~<sup>and his team</sup>, Pete attacked the Olympus problem. In summer the peak was a trail hike, glacier walk, and rock scramble, but in winter was arctic, tough, and unsolved, a true semi-expedition — yet within a poor boy's range of time and cash.

In October he hiked to the Blue Glacier, pondered the terrain, and formulated the Plan.

Traditional strategy had been as straightforward as trench warfare. A party set a week for the campaign ~~well~~<sup>a month or more</sup> in advance and started on schedule no matter what the weather, bulling up the valley as long as food and strength and morale held out, waiting for the Clear.

The Pete Plan was as revolutionary as the blitzkrieg. It was based on the illusionless proposition that extended Clears were <sup>(nowadays)</sup> exceptions to the rule, that in January and February Olympus might have at most a half-dozen days of climbable weather, parceled out a day here, ~~7~~<sup>a couple</sup> days there.

Recognizing the folly of a rigid departure date, Pete stipulated a small group with every member prepared to go on short notice, swearing an oath to remain mobilized all winter awaiting a favorable forecast.

The second axiom of the Plan was that precious sunshine must

not be wasted staggering heavy-loaded through forest. To expedite a lightning-swift assault, over New Year's Pete and Chuck hauled a cache of food, tent, and sleeping bags to the Elk Lake Shelter.

A flaw in the excellent Plan became apparent. Among those who'd ~~been~~ been passionately interested in the problem and had traveled the Hoh in winter, not a one could be found with an inclination to return. Any number of people were willing to serve in the Seattle-based support party, to be called to action in case of disaster, and the Olympic National Park ranger at Jackson Guard Station was keen to cooperate by keeping communication lines open to the city, but to satisfy Park Service regulations Pete and Chuck needed another body. That's where I came in. Unemployed, a wastrel, conscience-haunted, I couldn't refuse.

Pete stopped by the apartment frequently in December to talk route. Ralph's opinion, and our ~~own summer knowledge~~ <sup>own observations</sup>, argued against the line of the trail above Elk Lake. We considered going up the river to its source in the Hoh Glacier, but ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> trackless part of the valley <sup>Hoh</sup> <sub>is</sub> was unknown to everyone in our acquaintance and maps and photos suggested very rough travel. Pete obtained an aerial photo that showed an ingenious approach, leaving the trail at Elk Lake, ascending a tributary of Glacier Creek almost to the snout of the White Glacier, then striking up a rock rib to the Snow Dome of the Blue Glacier. The rib was long and steep and the rock would ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> icy, requiring much iron, and we'd have to haul packs up the rib to a final camp, but the way appeared free of avalanches.

I felt like an impostor. The rib was immensely more difficult

beyond the trail turnoff to Elk Lake

My days were a basic betrayal of the Puritan ethic — which, of course, 252 my nights totally fractured. She liked a bit of fun herself (on the optimum frequency principle) but I seemed

than anything I'd ever climbed, indeed was obviously tougher than any portion of the dog route on McKinley. If appalled I was also excited; what Pete could lead I might follow — with a pull from above.

It was a disappointment when Pete and Chuck returned from the New Year's reconnaissance to report the mildness of the winter ruled out the approach by not providing deep enough snow to bury horrendous brush — and also made the detour unnecessary by minimizing the chance of avalanche. We'd take the trail after all. Or try.

Monday morning dawned cold and sparkling bright, as I noted through the bedroom window when Betty got up to go to work. At noon I was slept out, since with Washington's Sunday-closure law there'd been no previous night's gathering of the jolly boys. I was drinking coffee, wondering what had gone wrong with the Plan, thinking (comfortably, sadly) that tonight I'd again close the Moon and again riot onward to the Palace. After dry Sundays, Monday was always a big night. The phone rang.

Said Pete, "Darned if I know what ~~was~~ the matter <sup>was</sup> with me yesterday. Guess the sun's been gone so long I just didn't recognize it."

I phoned Betty to say dinner wouldn't be ready when she got home.

Her voice was cool. ~~Best I could do was to say~~ As long as I was in town there was the myth I was looking, or would start any day. ~~Running away to the winter Olympics wasn't playing the game.~~ In a sort of half-stifled sob indicated parting, though, she ~~expressed~~ some degree of affection; she was fond

of Pete and Chuck and if I wasn't working, or trying, she'd rather I was

beat on personally bringing about the Decline of the West.

In recent weeks she'd begun hinting that since my thinking seemed to be leading only to drinking, maybe I should get a job, like everybody else, including her.

risking my neck with them on the Blue Glacier than destroying my soul with the jolly boys at the Blue Moon.

At 5 o'clock in chill twilight Pete and Chuck arrived <sup>at the apartment.</sup> ~~like a~~ miraculously, raised me from cataleptic ~~trance~~ <sup>trance</sup> into full maniacal life. We were really going! What a yawker!

Pete veered from the direct route through town to a certain little bakery famed for the best pumpernickel in Seattle. It was, of course, suicide to undertake an important expedition lacking proper pumpernickel.

In Aberdeen, famished, we stopped for a late supper of hamburgers — buns toasty-warm, meat steaming, lettuce crisp, relish sweet, cheese tangy. We couldn't help thinking how vividly this meal would be remembered in days ahead. The waitress didn't know what the joke was (we were off to Olympus, for God's sake!) but joined the giggling.

Deep in shivering night — the heater on Pete's old beast of a car couldn't cope — we paused <sup>at a "general store"</sup> to buy flashlight batteries and <sup>somehow</sup> got into a learned discussion with the white lady storekeeper about the Shaker religion of local Indians. She said she was a Baptist herself but there might be something to it, you never could tell, they seemed to get a lot of good out of it. We agreed, shaking from cold and glee.

Long after midnight our dim headlights violated black peace of the Hoh road-end, 578 feet above sealevel. The friendly ranger, in pajamas and parka, said he'd been expecting us since Friday, when the weather cleared.

(Friday? That's when the latest in the ~~unbroken~~ <sup>back-to-back</sup> procession of

December-January storms blustered through Seattle.)

He was sure we'd come Saturday, when the temperature plunged

far below freezing.

(Saturday? That's when a nondescript grayness was squatting on Seattle.)

By Sunday he'd given us up.

Pete apologized — to the ranger, and again to Chuck and me, for being slow on the trigger.

We were offered the total hospitality of Olympic National Park, including space in the <sup>vacant</sup> bunkhouse, unheated but much superior to frozen ground. At 1:30 in the morning of Tuesday, January 30, we crawled into thin, worn-out, war-surplus feather bags for a quivering semi-sleep.

At 7 o'clock we were out and pounding, the dawn sky vigorous blue, the temperature in the teens. The first couple miles were mostly bare trail; then we entered continuous snow and found the 3 freezing days had not been entirely wasted. The rain crust had frozen hard as concrete and we walked on top, carrying war-surplus beavertails, the only problem being to avoid pits stomped by elk during last week's thaw.

Because of the cache <sup>awaiting</sup> at Elk Lake our packs averaged less than 20 pounds, including the webs, and we made good speed — as we damn well had to, miserably equipped as we were to camp short of the cache.

Except for a couple recent ~~days~~ <sup>Sundays</sup> of yo-yo skiing at Snoqualmie Pass I hadn't been in the mountains since October; it was much too long to stay away. Low sun backlighted leafless, moss-swollen maples. Huge hemlock and spruce and firs thrust tall from our shadowed path toward high blue. We glimpsed the river frothing through snow-capped boulders between

white banks, and green forest slopes rising to the High Divide, and chiseled-ice crags of the Bailey Range. Now and then we surprised (quite a bit) bands of elk.

At noon we emerged from trees and shadows onto a brilliant snow plain, sunlight spilling gloriously over the mass of unseen Olympus. ~~We~~ We ate lunch on the porch of the old Olympus Guard Station, 10 1/2 miles, elevation 1000 feet, observing that the slab-board and shake-roof building, tumbledown the last time we'd seen it, had been made weather-tight <sup>by the Park Service,</sup> ~~and~~

and the door left with the latch-string out, stocked <sup>inside</sup> with dry wood, ✓ Good to keep in mind, since the new guard station, a half-mile back in the woods, was locked.

Despite glaring sun the air held no warmth and we soon were hiking again. Leaving the open plain, re-entering forest, I glanced a final time to the ridge hiding our goal and was pleased by the frozen clarity of a wisp of cirrus floating from behind the mountain bulk into dense blue.

Homecoming joy became mixed in afternoon. I paid the price for 5 months of sloth. The flat trail began to climb. My Bramanis <sup>being</sup> ~~were~~ in desperate need of repair, <sup>beaten</sup> ~~pounded~~ nearly to death by half-a-hundred peaks, to do this trip I'd borrowed Loo's "bastards," boots with rubber-lug foresoles and tricouni-nail heels, an attempt to combine the virtues <sup>of</sup> lugs and nails that in practice combined their vices. As the way grew steep and icy and grew weary, it became harder and harder to remember to walk uphill on nailed heels; frequently I fell to my knees.

~~The~~ ~~light~~ ~~and~~ ~~shadow~~ ~~disappeared~~ ~~in~~ ~~solid~~ ~~gloom~~ ~~to~~ ~~pause~~ ~~for~~  
 We were abandoned by the sun, merged into

rest was to feel the cold instantly ~~seeping into~~ <sup>attacking</sup> bones. There was no rest. At 12 miles we crossed the slot canyon of the Hoh on the new <sup>log</sup> bridge. A man had been killed during construction; <sup>I</sup> looking <sup>ed</sup> down to the fury of the constricted river ~~I thought of him~~. We were in a place of death and a long, long way from the ranger at Jackson, our "support party" in Seattle.

that had  
pounded  
the life  
from him.

Afternoon darkened toward night and Pete pulled ahead. In twilight Chuck and I paused to admire <sup>an enormous</sup> cascade of icicles <sup>on a trail-side cliff</sup>. While gazing, we caught a whiff of smoke and at 5 o'clock, trees blurring, stumbled into the shelter beside the white circle of Elk Lake, 2600 feet, 15 miles. The snow was only 3 feet deep, not much compared to pile-ups of the last several ~~glaciers~~ <sup>glacier - powering</sup> winters. The blazing fire warmed the ~~small~~ little shelter, cast rays of cheer into black wilderness. A hot hoosh was quickly eaten, and so to bunks, bags, sleep.

We should <sup>ve</sup> ~~have~~ made a predawn start Wednesday; Pete was <sup>rustling</sup> ~~rustling~~ around at the proper hour but my abused body refused to entertain any such notion and with me in the sack Chuck saw no reason to be a hero. When Pete served us breakfast <sup>mush and cocoa</sup> ~~in bed~~, though, we had no alternative, and at 10 o'clock were in motion. The sky was blue and somewhere the sun was shining; along about April it would <sup>touch</sup> ~~reach~~ Elk Lake.

Now the cached gear was on our backs and now the way turned steeply upward and now we rose above the level of last week's rain and lost the concrete crust and the <sup>sport</sup> ~~glace~~ turned grim. We strapped on beavertails to climb an open <sup>field of bottomless fluff</sup> ~~slope~~ <sup>At the top we</sup> ~~took them off at the top~~. Here began the ascending traverse of the forested cliff, where Ralph had stopped.

and maybe some did.

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We were at grips with the mountain. In mild winters of the late 1930s and early 1940s wanderers often could ~~have~~<sup>ve</sup> walked bare ground nearly to Glacier Meadows and climbed Olympus as easily as in summer, We, however, probably were the first to make a Class Three and Four ascent of the trail. The rope was a comfort; in a fall it would ~~quickly~~ wrap around trees and therefore the exposure was more apparent than real.

The climbing was simple enough. Pete led, sometimes stomping pits <sup>along ledges of</sup> soft snow, elsewhere chopping steps in thick ice coating rocks. Trees and bushes provided handholds to supplement the ax. The crux was the Big Gully, with a dropoff just below our crossing. Pete kicked and cut steps to the center, established a stance, and belayed us over. The terrain gentled and on snowshoes we plodded ~~in~~ powder through subalpine forest, at 3 o'clock reaching 4500-foot Glacier Meadow<sup>s</sup>, 18 miles and 2 days ~~and~~<sup>plus</sup> a night from the nearest other humans.

While we were intent on the route our plans were changed for us. A translucent veil had drawn over the sky from the south, advancing slowly, inexorably, the pearly blue contrasting with the diminishing heaven of hard blue that yesterday had seemed eternal. By the time we crossed the Big Gully the veil had dimmed the entire sky and was darkening and lowering. When we entered Glacier Meadows ~~clouds~~<sup>the gray stratum</sup> had ~~settled~~<sup>clipped off the</sup> summits of Olympus and the sun was lost beyond finding and afternoon was fading into premature twilight.

With a Sunday departure from Seattle or a predawn start from Elk Lake we'd now be ~~at~~<sup>descending from</sup> the high plateau of the Snow Dome, perhaps even the



summit of Olympus. But who could spare a moment for regret? To stand where possibly no one ever had been in winter, to see Glacier Meadows under 8 feet of snow, alpine trees in fairyland groupings ~~and~~ <sup>amid</sup> glittering billions of crystals — to demand more would have been monstrous ingratitude. Two ~~huts~~ <sup>open-fronted shelters</sup> recently had been built <sup>by the Park Service,</sup> we chose one as our ~~home~~ <sup>home</sup> and ~~excavated~~ <sup>dug</sup> a tunnel-stairway down to the ~~interior~~ <sup>mouth</sup> cave, ~~the~~ <sup>the mouth blocked by a</sup> white wall, ~~blocked the open front and~~ <sup>dirt</sup> The floor was a foot deep in snow and cedar boards of bunks were layered in ice. To live here would require work — and immediately, with night coming and the storm.

We illegally and criminally gathered boughs <sup>↓</sup> — sorry to mistreat the National Park, belatedly realizing we ~~could have~~ <sup>should've</sup> carried air mattresses. ~~to make~~ <sup>to make</sup> the bunks sleepable We foraged for dry wood, found none, and hauled armloads of dead underbranches, ice-crusting but conceivably flammable.

Housework complete, day ending, we wandered up white lanes through snowhung Christmas trees, admiring the pretty pattern of beavertail tracks.

On a gentle rise we stepped from powder ~~away~~ onto a hard, boardlike surface which cracked under our weight with a sharp pop. Intrigued, we made vertical sections and read the record of recent weather. Beneath the surface slab, varying from 1-4 inches thick, was a fraction of an inch of loose, dry powder, a thinner slab up to 2 inches thick, and more loose powder smoothing irregularities of a rain crust. So, ~~there'd~~ <sup>there'd</sup> been rain, then a freeze and ~~old snow~~ <sup>a snowfall</sup>, then wind blowing powder onto this lee

another snowfall  
and more

259  
leading to the Hoh  
Glacier, the way  
Dick and Lou and I  
had  
walked  
in 1949.

slope and compacting it in a windslab, then ~~more snow and wind and~~  
~~thus~~ another slab. And now, ~~a storm~~ <sup>arriving</sup>

Over the crest of the rise lay the Blue Glacier, soft clean snow filling crevasses and rounding angularities of icefalls, wind blasting down the arctic avenue. The cloud base had dropped nearly to the glacier but ~~hadn't~~ <sup>hadn't</sup> yet swallowed white-plastered cliffs astride ~~Hoh Blue~~ <sup>Glacier</sup> Pass, A solemn time and place, a moment for worship in a cathedral of wildness. We giggled.

It was <sup>i</sup>idocy to be on the Blue Glacier in the twilight of January 31, in the coming of a storm, 18 miles from hope of help, possibly soon to be trapped for many days. Absolutely free from constraints of law, convention, and sanity we were bursting with unreasoning joy.

We escaped the full ~~blast~~ <sup>punishment</sup> of the wind behind a rock wall and looked through blue light of evening over the glacier, into dark clouds.

Under laughter were private thoughts. I hadn't chosen the summer's giant step — Sir Sanford or the Adamants, perhaps the Bugaboos? Cam was propagandizing for Robson. Being unemployed, the end of my "pension" in sight and goodwife's paycheck insufficient to support my hobbies, I might well be asked by a person like Betty <sup>are you</sup> what the hell ~~was~~ doing considering a vacation when you don't have a job?

Well, I was fairly competent at planning peaks but high finance wasn't my sport. If it were, I wouldn't now be frittering away the only ~~hoard~~ <sup>help</sup> of cash in sight to pay, in 1952 or 1953, for McKinley. Of course, maybe I wasn't up to McKinley anyhow. My skills certainly were mediocre

Daddy - given  
pour ~~empty~~ your allowances  
into a treasury big enough  
to overwhelm a mountain,

and ~~Denali~~ Denali by the dog route probably was at — perhaps above —  
the upper margin of my abilities. But to be a climber is to search for  
limits, to press closer and closer to the edge, and I might never complete  
my quest without attempting the summit of the continent. Would circum-  
stances give me a try? ~~Christ,~~ if I were a Harvard I could <sup>'ve</sup> ~~been~~ been on  
McKinley in ~~1949~~ <sup>1949</sup>. The technique is simple. You and fellow preppies print  
up a letterhead for your expedition, invite Fearless Fred as a "guest,"  
and he makes you great.

Western Poor-Boy  
Strategy  
that in the 1930s was  
successful  
for Petzoldt,  
who made his  
way from the  
Tetons to the  
slopes of K-2,  
and was tried  
by Delmar

Pete had the talent required for the ~~Petzoldt~~  
~~strategy, also adopted by Puget Sounder Fadden, who died on Rainier descend-~~  
ing from a solo winter climb he hoped would establish his credentials for  
the Himalaya. Pete would go expeditioning someday. He'd make a reputation  
on ~~insuperable~~ challenges and eventually the Easterners would offer him a  
free ride, his strength needed to attain their objectives so they could run  
off at the mouth in the journals. I wondered how I, with no money or talent,  
ever would probe my personal unknown farther than Sir Donald.

In darkness we returned over the rise to calm air of the lee slope,  
to our shelter home. We built a fire against the white backwall, put on  
~~Ten Cans~~ of snow to melt, and giggled. At 6 o'clock snowflakes began drift-  
ing into ~~the~~ glare of flames.

Thursday morning we saw no good reason for any more trips into  
the blizzard than were physiologically mandatory. We labored to sustain  
a chain reaction in the heap of soggy branches and by noon had melted a coup-  
cubic yards of snow from the backwall. On our side we got mostly smoke,

furious gusts blowing straight down into the cave, hazing the interior with a strangling blue.

When not gasping and coughing and wiping eyes, we ate away at a pot of oatmeal, raisins, and prunes homogenized into a gluey gruel, flavored to taste with Eagle Brand condensed sweetened milk, or "bullfuck" as it was called in the Forest Service, where Pete, during a summer on a trail crew, learned the recipe.

With all this sugar surging through blood and all the smoke filling lungs, at noon we were ready for serious exercise and pulled on mittens and Army mook parkas, donned beavertails, and shortly were leaning into the blizzard out in the middle of the Blue. I could scarcely see Chuck, ahead of me in the middle of the rope, even when I opened my eyes. Most of the walk I spent trying to light a cigarette. Halfway through a box of war-surplus waterproof-and-fireproof matches I bumped into Pete and Chuck, who ~~had~~ stopped. Having been apart a couple hours we enjoyed passing the time of day, shouting guesses back and forth about where we were. Probably close to <sup>Glacier</sup> ~~the Blue~~ Pass — or maybe the South Pole. Pete asked if either of us had any idea where we were going, and how we'd know when we got there. Hell, we thought he had some destination in mind. By dusk we were back in our cave melting snow and making smoke.

In evening I made <sup>an</sup> ~~an~~ <sup>interesting</sup> ~~interesting~~ discovery. Together with Vilhjalmur Stefansson and thousands of mountaineers I long had wondered why the Army produced such enormous quantities of the fruit-nut confection it incorrectly labeled "pemmican." The price was so ridiculous that I,

the ~~Army~~ ~~produced~~ ~~such~~ ~~enormous~~ ~~quantities~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~fruit-nut~~ ~~confection~~ ~~it~~ ~~incorrectly~~ ~~labeled~~ ~~"pemmican."~~ ~~The~~ ~~price~~ ~~was~~ ~~so~~ ~~ridiculous~~ ~~that~~ ~~I,~~  
 at ~~the~~ ~~price~~ ~~of~~ ~~one~~ ~~cent~~ ~~per~~ ~~ounce~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~confection.~~

, with something akin  
to pleasure,

like many climbers, ~~hought~~ <sup>stocked up on</sup> the little khaki tins, carried them on scores of trips, and never was able to gag down more than a bite of the ~~crap.~~ <sup>nutriment</sup> But now, ~~short~~ and winter hunger fierce, I actually consumed the contents of one entire can. ~~had~~ had to applaud the dieticians who devised a perfect emergency food — one that could be eaten at the edge of death but under no other circumstances.

So far as  
anyone knew,  
it was a  
first. I

Friday morning we melted another yard of snow before deciding the situation demanded re-evaluation. It was a happy little home in the under-  
ground and we had considerable oatmeal and bullfuck, a fair amount of pumpernickel, and another several days before we absolutely had to leave. On the negative side were the 2 feet of snow piled up overnight, a total of 3 or more since the storm began, and a heavy fall continuing. Further, the temperature had risen to the high 20s and the flakes were ~~no longer~~ <sup>no longer</sup> light and powdery but heavy, wet. And between us and Elk Lake ~~use~~ <sup>were</sup> the ~~succession~~ of gullies, down which avalanches might already be running, unheard in howl of wind. At noon we decided to get the hell out while we could, if we could.

Deep soft snow complicated the passage but hadn't yet begun to slough, as it surely would within hours, or minutes. We emerged from the forested cliff onto the open ~~slip~~ <sup>field</sup> above Elk Lake, tension relieved, and strapped on beavertails for a merry romp home. However, at Elk Lake we dropped below the frost line. Floating crystals became slapping slush, then cold pounding rain. The sturdy crust had sickened and died. The cascade of icicles we'd admired on the brisk Tuesday lay, this sodden Friday.

in a heap of shattered fragments.

I was now carrying an extra 10 pounds of water and moved heavily, awkwardly. On sidehills Pete and Chuck managed to maneuver over the slippery slush but my snowshoes were wider than theirs and wouldn't track; I kept tangling and tumbling, <sup>getting</sup> pinned down in bathtubs by my <sup>oppressive</sup> pack. Each recovery took as much energy as walking hundreds of feet, and I fell hundreds of times. Wielding clumsy webs strained muscles I didn't know I had and legs came unstrung; even after we gained the level valley floor I continued to fall, and fall. Chuck disappeared but Pete stayed close, by a ~~suppressed~~ <sup>Christ-like</sup> effort ~~preventing~~ <sup>stifling</sup> hysterics.

Lying in the ~~bathtub~~ <sup>ultimate</sup> bathtub, night complete, rain flooding face, I reflected that all we lacked were Cossacks harrying our flanks. We'd come down 7 miles from Glacier Meadows and shelter was barely a half-mile distant but enough was enough. I unstrapped the damn beavertails.

"Hey!" laughed Pete, "What you up to?"

"Shit!" said I, going on to describe the Byzantine morals of the mothers of web-makers, "It's post holes for me."

"Hey, that's a great idea! I thought you maybe had a beavertail fire in mind."

So Pete took off his snowshoes, despite strenuous assurances I was in no peril whatsoever and there was no damn reason for him to share my extra cruddy hour in the bloody blackness. He insisted he wanted nothing else from life right now except the fun of digging a row of post holes. He made fast work of it and at 5:30 in rain-bleary night we entered the old

as relaxed as if we were on a stroll through a city park,

Olympus Guard Station.

Chuck had a hell of a big fire going, the stockpiled wood explosive as gunpowder. We stripped naked and draped the cabin with dripping clothes ~~and~~ lewdly danced around ~~and~~ the potbelly stove, thrilling to the hot wash of radiation evaporating rain from hair, turning blue skin a flushed pink, melting ice from bones.

Supper was another fantastic Forest Service menu: chicken-noodle soup thickened with chunks of Tin Willy (corned beef); the last of the pumpernickel (time to go home); and steaming cocoa enriched by marshmallows and bullfuck.

Chuck ~~with~~ observed that civilization was near and we (meaning Pete and I) ought to think about getting our language back in shape for tender ears. He proposed a "no-slang contest" requiring the abandonment not only of obscenities but even his own maximum expletives, "darn" and "heck!"

Bunks were heaped deep with fragrant rain-forest moss and swiftly we sank into sweet softness and sleep.

Saturday we were warmly dry-dressed and underway at 7:30, cold-soaked again by 7:45. Who cared? The snowshoe plod was one long giggle. Each stream was a giddy joy, offering a choice between beavertailing through cold water over gravel or teetering across an airy, snowcovered footlog.

Surplus food had been cached at Elk Lake for the next assault and we were sustained on the down-valley march solely by a single package of

the most  
mild-mannered  
lunatic in the  
bunch, ~~and~~  
~~in some ways~~  
~~and~~  
~~and~~  
~~and~~  
now  
quietly

Bayley

Pete and I  
accepted the  
challenge, and  
the reproof —  
there was no  
question our  
language had been  
getting saltier by  
the day, to the  
point where even  
Chaucer might've  
been offended.

Lifesavers. At the first rest Chuck recalled the Aberdeen hamburgers, never far from our thoughts, and vowed to have two for lunch. At the second stop he decided he needed three. Pete and I offered to buy all the hamburgers beyond two he could eat, and thus encouraged he upped ambitions to four, *maybe five,* and spent the last miles considering aloud exactly what ingredients he'd have on each, the precise combinations of lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, cheese, *butter,* relish, <sup>^</sup>mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, salt, pepper.

The 10 1/2 miles passed too fast. Monday I'd dreaded leaving the womb of the Blue Moon; this Saturday, as on Sir Donald I'd wanted the Northwest Ridge to continue forever, I wished there were no end to the Hoh. Soaked and starved, I was eager for our return to giant trees hung in moss, bands of elk chomping around in snowy forest, and the free lonesome madness of the Blue Glacier, guarded *(by a great, simple wilderness)* from the complicated city *↓*

Out here no sophisticated Avenue Creep wit was necessary for a laugh. Watching bullfuck drip on oatmeal could set off an explosion. Or trying to go 5 minutes without a "shit!" Or fording a creek on beavertails, icewater boiling knee-high. Or listening to Chuck's solemn deliberations about whether to have onions on his third hamburger. Or just the knowledge that of all the millions of people in the nation, only we three were doing anything so purely crazy and useless and beautiful.

Shortly after noon we greeted our friend, the hospitable ranger, changed to dry clothes, and drove hungrily to the restaurant at Queets, beside roaring surf of storm-whipped Pacific Ocean. As *things* ~~we~~ turned out,



Chuck could handle only one hamburger. <sup>It was the</sup> ~~bullfuck~~ <sup>I guess.</sup>

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

20 April 1974

1951

Chapter <sup>20</sup> ~~21~~

HOW TO FALL DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

Odd to be on the road at 2:30 a. m. headed for Thompson, and odder that 140 other Mountaineers were underway or soon would be, aimed at four peaks in the Snoqualmie Pass area. But the weird thing was it was Wednesday, for Godsake.

Frank's proposed schedule of 1951 experience climbs by and large received warm approval from the Climbing Committee. <sup>Dis-ast-er-ous</sup> <sup>Each year since</sup> ~~since~~ 1948, when a dozen peaks comprised the entire season, we'd been ~~attempting to reduce~~ ~~providing~~ offering a climb a week from May to October and two on holidays. Frank's plan was a logical advance, envisioning numerous two-climb weekends and a three-pronged assault on Rainier rather than the traditional ~~mass~~ <sup>mass</sup> pilgrimage. But four climbs on a Wednesday? That was a jaw-dropper.

steadily increasing the number of offerings in order to reduce party sizes; in 1950 we'd run

"Well," said Frank, "What else can you do with a Memorial Day that falls on Wednesday? Loaf around town?"

He was right. Nevertheless, it was weird.

And weirdest of all was a snow-slogging marathon to far-as-the-stars Thompson, generally considered a 2-day trip. At the preceding week's

lecture I'd counseled students that McClellan's Butte was the easiest of the climbs, the North Ridge of The Tooth next, then the Lundin Traverse. I'd warned them not to try Thompson unless in top condition and prepared for an ordeal. Naturally, therefore, the maniacs signed up for Thompson. It was going to be a wild party.

A wild party, that was for me in this wildest of springs. Thompson would be my 10th summit of the year, and achieved weeks earlier than in 30-peak 1949; with 1951 shaping up as disastrous for glaciers but glorious for peakbaggers, I might very well hit 40 by winter. Once released from the spell by Blue Glacier I ran to the hills every weekend, and despite many days occupied by practices still found time for the 10, all small but all pure crazy joy.

February 25 Tom, Yorick, Betty, and I invented a new winter sport, "Blobbering." In a single day we climbed Fuller Mountain, featuring the terrific Moss Wall, and Herpicide Spire (formerly known as Whiskers Butte because of snags on the <sup>logged-off</sup> summit), requiring the hazardous and felonious crossing of the barbed-wire fence into the sacrosanct City of Seattle watershed. Having already often done Little Si, we were the first climbers in history to conquer the three North Bend Blobs and thus qualify for ~~the~~ Blob Peak Pins, fashioned by Tom from war-surplus blanket pins and unlike the Six Majors Pin and other decorations for valor <sup>helpful</sup> ~~having utilitarian value~~ in repairing packs and holding up pants.

March 11 Pete, two hiker friends of his, Tom, and I climbed a

different <sup>Big</sup> Si than any we'd every known. The ground at North Bend was a foot deep in snow, the trail solid white, and in Haystack Basin chest-high drifts of powder resisted our thrusting bodies like loose cotton. On the summit ridge, while traversing a 4-inch-wide, ice-slick, exposed ledge, Tom was betrayed by brandnew boots, beautifully handmade but ~~designed~~ ~~designed~~ for a logger; he fell to his knees on the ledge and I gripped the rope hard, certain he would slip off into a bruising, gashing, skull-cracking pendulum swing. He somehow rose from knees and proceeded but was foul-mouthed and irritable the rest of the day and for months thereafter was quick to use iron on similar pitches. Pete took off mittens to belay his hiker friends up and down the glazed summit knob, the temperature below freezing and wind gusting 50 miles an hour; down in the basin he screamed as we restored circulation to his blue-white hands.

March 25, Pete having heard rumors of a range of virgin lowland towers, he and I and Vic, Tom, Yorick, Red Jim, and Betty unlocked the gate on a logging road with a rock and toured the wasteland of ~~the~~ <sup>a</sup> Weyerhaeuser "tree farm," better described as a stump-and-fireweed farm, and eventually stumbled upon the Enumclaw Crag. We made 16 first ascents; several of the towers were as tall as 20 feet. Other climbers, intrigued by our tales, which were not precisely accurate in every detail, <sup>afterward</sup> set out to do the crags but none ever was able to find them; our first ascents were also the last and the Enumclaw Crag faded into legend with the Lost Dutchman Mine.

April 7 Tom and I completed the Class Six portion of the route up a

large Douglas fir near Little Si; having reached solid branches we didn't bother with the simple Class Three remainder. Since we were unable to remove the vertical pitons from the tree, when it ultimately was hauled to a mill and broke some saws the oldtimers doubtless thought the Wobblies were back in the woods.

April 8 Tom, Chuck, Yorick, and I traversed Lundin <sup>from west to east,</sup> a superb icy scramble on a wintry day. This was the final summit of my \$2.50 Bramanis, demolished past repair; luckily, though good war surplus was getting scarce, a week later I located a pair for \$5 and was set for several more years.

May 5-6 Betty, Rovers Paul and Yorick, and I enjoyed the prettiest spring tour of our lives. Saturday we climbed from Lake Keechelus through a fresh clearcut into virgin forest and ~~to~~ <sup>onward</sup> to the crest of Keechelus Ridge, then ~~traversed~~ <sup>sidehilled around and beyond</sup> Margaret to a snow camp at frozen Lake Lillian. In evening we wandered to the 5900-foot summit of Rampart Ridge and a magical sunset, Rainier seeming an oil painting by one of those frontier artists who splashed on ~~the~~ orange and crimson to impress the folks back East. Sunday, in an oasis of sunshine surrounded by doom-dark squalls, we followed goat tracks over sparkling snow to the shining white plain of Rampart Lakes and continued to the top of 6300-foot Alta.

May 20 brought a surprising victory. The night before I received a message that the designated leader of the Persis experience climb had wrecked a leg scouting the route. There was no alternative but to lead the peak myself, though I'd previously been defeated three times by Nanga

Persis — most recently April 15, when we left town carelessly late, blunderingly started up the wrong side of the mountain and bumped noses against cliffs we were too languid to climb on so warm a spring day, and descended to Proctor Creek for an afternoon-long water fight. Despite being a three-time loser, I successfully conducted a party of 38, 25 of them girls, to the summit. Chuck, a two-time loser, came along to keep me company and I tried to fix him up with one or more of the teenage lovelies, feeling it was high time for him to get married. After all, Ted was engaged, that being why we rarely saw him nowadays.

May 26 Tom, Lardy Bob, and I made the fifth ascent of Slippery Slab Tower, a delightful ~~prick~~ <sup>prick</sup> of granite sticking out of bright snow. We celebrated too vigorously in Leavenworth and next day, at the Tumwater practice, did our teaching from the ground, stricken by dizziness whenever we got so much as 3 feet up a cliff. If we climbed little we sure saw lots more rattlesnakes than anyone else.

In the fanatic wildland aftermath of the Blue Glacier I didn't totally abandon the Blue Moon. Certain matters needed pondering in the Moon's special atmosphere of Dionysiac desperation.

While touring the Canadian Rockies in August we'd heard about a baby disappearing from the campground at Maligne Lake in Jasper National Park — very sad, yet a tragedy remote from our lives and travels and soon forgotten. Then on an afternoon in September Betty was summoned by her boss, who said, white-faced, an FBI agent wanted to talk to her.

in the state legislature  
and the downtown newspapers; 272

The University was besieged by witch-hunters ↓ the FBI did its part to further the reign of terror by never calling upon a "suspect" at home, or discreetly arranging a neutral meeting site, but always boldly going direct to the top man, flashing the badge, and gaining formal permission to interrogate an underling — whose employment status after that was his or her problem.

The agent startled Betty by asking if she liked children. Having once belonged briefly to the American Youth for Democracy, innocently ignorant it was the front-group successor to the Young Communist League, this wasn't her first visit from the J. Edgars; formerly, though, they'd sought such information as who attended what meetings and where were they now. How did children and politics get tangled up? She was not enlightened by the agent's proceeding to ask if she'd ever had a miscarriage or abortion, put an illegitimate child out for adoption, or tried to get pregnant and couldn't. She came home in tears.

As weeks passed and we weren't dragged off to prison kicking and screaming, shamefaced neighbors came forth to inform us everyone in the building had been badge-flashed and questioned. ("Have you ever heard a baby crying in the Manning apartment? Do they buy an abnormal amount of milk? Do they show unusual interest in children?") The landlord, a varsity fullback in his youth and as fervent an advocate of civil liberties as Ivan the Terrible, had been observed <sup>in our absence</sup> searching our apartment.

The masters of imperial America knew what was up, by golly: study politics at 18 and the poison spreads through your brain and at 25 you

kidnap babies.

Most shocking, in a way, was that I was the only one who signed the <sup>park</sup> register at Sunwapta Pass. When the Mounties requested the FBI to investigate American visitors to Jasper Park it was my name cranked into the Big Machine in Washington City. The machine had nothing on me, I'd attended meetings — of Republicans and Democrats as well as Stalinists and Trotskyites — but never had joined any group except the Boy Scouts and The Mountaineers. However, there were no secrets from the machine.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ I'd married into a criminal record that would pursue <sup>us both</sup> ~~me~~ to the grave.

The shock dulled and Betty and I began amusing companions (and scaring Tom, who in a couple years would get his engineering degree, substantially worthless in this day and age without a security clearance) by referring to our Sir Donald trip as "the time we kidnapped the Canadian baby."

Laugh as we might, the firing of Communist professors from the University, a step in which my alma mater led the nation, the loss of jobs by friends denied clearances and any right of appeal, the storming around the state by our legislature's "little Nixon committee," and the ineffable Senator Nixon himself, these were no jokes. The country had gone stark staring mad. We comrades of the Moon reflected on these symptoms and the underlying disease and saw no place to take a fighting stand. Hating cynical Communist manipulators as only back-stabbed leftists can, appalled by the indiscriminate rightist repression, dismayed by the free consent of



the abject fellaheen to cancellation of the Bill of Rights, what choice had we? None but to retreat into Spenglerian nihilism, mock the posturings of "the blues and the greens," keep our noses clean and order another pitcher.

That was the end of it for the jolly boys. I, though, had an out — falling down the rabbit hole.

For the sake of wildlands, soon after the Blue Glacier I made the ultimate sacrifice of re-entering the American System, repairing Black and Decker electric tools. It was an "executive training" program, all-same as pushing a handtruck in the Ernst Hardware warehouse. Fraudulently "on board" for a very short ride, a cheat cheating the cheaters, I was amused by the hypocrisy — nary a salesman or executive knew aught of the workbench and most were shirt-tail relatives of the Blacks or the Deckers. Good work being easier than bad, I quickly became the best repairman in the shop, but was not deluded; I hadn't been born into the sort of world where honest craftsmanship was honored.

I'd never suffer the degradation of a Black and Decker white collar. In my rabbit-hole world, however, I'd risen in just 3 years to the very top — what one would call a true American success story were it not so profoundly un-American, so total a rejection of lowland values.

I didn't seek the position. Nobody ever does. The Climbing Chairman, stuck with the responsibility until he can pass the buck, broods all year about his successor. By fall everyone knows who the candidates are, including the candidates, some of whom panic and commit desperate acts to disqualify themselves.

After an October meeting of the Climbing Committee, Vic, the outgoing (he hoped) chairman and Cam, his predecessor and thus chief counselor, casually suggested Frank and I join them for coffee. Casual, hell.

No preamble necessary, Cam said, "Well, it's between the two of you. Who's it going to be?"

Frank launched into a panegyric on my intelligence and climbing skills and leadership qualities and vast background in mountaineering.

In my answering campaign speech I told how Frank was known near and far for his wisdom and imagination and judgment and dedication. Also, the crux of my pitch, he'd been in the Course several years longer and was more mature — I was barely 25 and there'd never been a Climbing Chairman that young.

Frank rebutted that I was mature beyond my years.

I replied that people were constantly asking when I was going to grow up.

Frank pled pressure<sup>s</sup> of career, explaining he was being promoted and would be laboring long hours mastering new responsibilities.

That was a low blow. Everybody knew I was out of work and not looking. So, he wanted to play dirty?

I said I was unhappy with the way things were going in the United States, the neofascism and bomb-waving and imperialism, the general Decline of the West, and was thinking of emigrating. I couldn't take the chairmanship because by spring I'd probably be making a new life in Patagonia, where the peaks are grand and sheep and men run free and lamb

chops are cheaper than hell.

I wasn't asked how in the name of Christ, <sup>Betty and</sup> I planned to raise the price of a ticket<sup>s</sup> to Patagonia. Frank was whipped. As a last-ditch effort to stave off total defeat he made acceptance contingent on my agreeing to be vice-chairman. Well, I'd give him that.

Frank proved me right: during fall-winter months he was the principal shaper of the next year's school, proposing imaginative innovations in experience climbs, practice trips, and lectures. However, 4 months of 100-hour weeks on two demanding jobs took their toll<sup>†</sup>; he lost his voice from exhaustion and when the lecture series began I had to assume the traditional chairman's role as master of ceremonies. Then, on doctor's advice, he asked me to replace him altogether and having failed to make a getaway to South America I couldn't refuse.

Old anarchist outsider become Maximum Leader! The responsibility entailed the sort of deep involvement with <sup>masses of</sup> people I'd deliberately shunned since my term as Senior Patrol Leader of Troop 324. Attending every lecture and every practice, I knew the students better by far than other members of the faculty. To me they were not a faceless mob of strangers but 150-odd hoping and fearing, daring and dreading, struggling and striving friends. I took pleasure in coaxing the timid and counseling the self-doubtful, watching talent develop and spotting leaders of the future. They were "my group" and I mourned their defeats and celebrated their victories.

Though to novices I was the symbol of supreme authority, my constituency was not unanimous in admiration. I wouldn't have worn a suit

if I'd owned one and as master of ceremonies appeared in college-boy costume of dirty cords and wool shirt and moccasins. I was looked upon somewhat askance by most folk in their 30s and 40s, particularly after the Tumwater fiasco, when Climbing Chairman and cronies arrived in camp three sheets to the wind and organized a howling descent on the village of Leavenworth.

Some elders forgave my tender years and juvenile ways. Mustache Jack, fisherman and backpacker and iconoclast, brashly moved into the Course as if he owned it and with mischievous eye and twitching mustache and wicked tongue spared no hallowed institution, not even the wunderkind El Supremo. Well, he'd get his comeuppance because I'd damn well see he was on the Climbing Committee next year, tabbed as a prospective future Climbing Chairman.

Johnny and Polly, transplanted Californians, introduced themselves to Tom and me after a lecture. We asked what climbing they'd done and Johnny, a mild-mannered chap, diffidently mentioned a number of peaks. At the name of one Tom and I opened eyes wide. SHIPROCK? In the late 1930s the Saturday Evening Post had published an article, "A Piece of Bent Iron," describing this steep and rotten volcanic neck in the Southwest desert and an attempt<sup>d ascent</sup> cut short when the leader, in falling, was held by a piton which bent almost double. Man never would attain the summit, declared the author. But shortly a second article, "It Couldn't Be Climbed," by David Brower, told how a group of Sierra Clubbers had done the impossible. Shiprock was a legend and Johnny had led the key pitches, was one of the

heroes who pioneered modern rock climbing in America, provided the foundations for the fantastic performances of the current generation on granite walls of Yosemite Valley.

He and Polly became our good friends and I learned they were more than climbers, they were, except for Kermit and Dick, the first conservationists I'd ever known. I explained my gloomy strategy of retreating steadily farther into the North Cascades, trusting the diminishing wilderness to last my lifetime; if not, I'd escape to Canada. However, these gutsy Sierra Clubbers weren't about to concede defeat. Down south they were giving land-rapers a tussle and they intended to do the same up here. Well, thought I, thanks for trying, I'll cheer you on.

If few elders were fully respectful, I was a big hit with teenagers. Some scared the hell out of me — for one, a lithe and ripely-round sweetheart with soft brown eyes that intently followed wherever I went, *with* a body somehow never beyond the corners of my vision. Reach out and she'd fall in my hand. God knows what would ~~have~~<sup>ye</sup> happened had I been free to accept this and other opportunities to compensate for an adolescence devoid of fooling around. Of course, Betty was all the woman I wanted or could handle, yet the knowledge I was a sex object, at least among children, added impetus to this wildest of my climbing springs.

At 4:30 in the gray between night and morning 24 ~~climbers~~ groggy Mountaineers, vanguard of the 140, assembled at Snoqualmie Pass. The presence of certain nubile girls had attracted Tom and the Rovers and Lardy

Bob to the Lundin party, just now leaving Seattle, but among my companions of the weird Wednesday were <sup>Also along were</sup> the maddest of the beginners, including Mustache Jack and wife Nell, as well as some of the dumbest, who failed to heed my warning, ~~and~~ Betty, Chuck, Cam, Avalanche Ray, and Red Jim.

We plodded up Commonwealth Basin and climbed to Red Notch, slowed by a foot of fresh snow fallen night before last, then walked the white ridge crest. The sky was mainly blue, a few clouds scattered here and there.

The peak was very far and therefore the pace was steady, though not too fast for supplementary entertainment. Jack, having heard oblique references to Red Jim's affair with a beautiful and well-traveled female, amused nearby walkers by systematically probing tent arrangements on various experience climbs. I was kept busy by the consequences of a great mistake; finding the new snow packed just perfect in the hand I lobbed a snowball at a yappy kid who was identifying with me too closely and he was overjoyed by the invitation for a free shot at the Climbing Chairman and that set off a universal snowball war. Every time I looked around a missile was zinging my way — the price of high office.

We rested at Ridge Lake, a frozen pond in subalpine forest atop the divide between the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Gold Creek, then contoured the sidehill to Bumblebee Pass. Now for the first time this day we saw our objective, an imposing but simple pile of junk. We glissaded to the basin, triggering myriad fast-running sunballs, and after 7 hours of slogging put boots on the mountain.

A couloir led to the ridge and a stop for first lunch ~~before~~<sup>and</sup> roping. Jack pressed Jim for details of who gave him what kind of massage to relieve which muscle cramps on a certain climb and the goings-on in the back seat of Manning's Jeep returning from another climb. Thus Jim learned the identity of his betrayer and as Jack twitched mustache bawdily I erred by laughing too heartily and Jim tackled me and washed my face in the snow — so vigorously he ~~broke~~<sup>busted</sup> my glasses.

That was Disaster #1 and though merely the nose-piece of the frame actually was broken and a bit of tape sufficed for repairs my whole attitude toward the day abruptly changed. Friends and students were laughing at my blind floundering and I didn't see what was funny and Betty loudly accused me of being a bum sport. Damn wife, feeling so smart now she wasn't the worst climber climbing, she should still be in Lundin Chute with an ax in her chest. As we ascended slop-covered slabs under a sky turning messy, somebody kicked loose a boulder which cracked me in the shin and that was #2. Wincing, I dislodged a boulder which smashed my other shin and that was #3. At the base of the summit chimney I got better acquainted with the girl and boy on my rope and they were Disasters #4 and #5.

The girl had been climbing, to overstate the case, since 1949 and therefore merited no fatherly protectiveness. So clumsy as to make Betty seem a ballerina, she was here solely because she wouldn't let her husband out of her sight and he was too desperate-eager to settle for McClellan's Butte. One thing could be said for her — being a complacent veteran of

special handling~~x~~ she gave me no trouble as I hoisted her up the chimney like a sack of potatoes.

The boy, "one of mine," was the problem. I yelled "Belay on!" and nothing happened. I left my stance and looked down the chimney, ~~looking~~ a dozen feet high with zero exposure, and politely asked, "Why don't you come up?"

He said shyly, "I don't know if I can."

"Believe me," said I gently, "It's very easy and perfectly safe. You couldn't go anywhere if you fainted."

Another team asked permission to climb through and when they were up I asked, "Are you ready now?"

"I'm not sure."

The sky was solid gray, darkening, lowering. Quick little winds signaled an incipient commotion.

"That's okay," I soothed. "If you don't feel right about it forget it. Just untie and make yourself comfortable and wait for us."

No action. "But I want to climb Thompson."

"Okay, great, come on up."

"I'm not sure I can."

More teams climbed through as the identical exchange was repeated over and over. Somebody, in passing, told me he was a very sweet Christian boy, soon to go overseas as a missionary to the pagans. Friends, observing my purple face, made smart remarks about temper, temper. Glasses slipped off nose. Shins ached. The bastard wouldn't climb and



wouldn't unrope — until I lost control and shriveled his saintly ears. I hoped the pagans were cannibals.

In a rage I rushed to the 6500-foot summit, dragging Potatoes behind, arriving at 1:30. I ate second lunch mumbling as Betty, taking dangerous license, gaily babbled to all and sundry how hugely I enjoyed a joke. — except when it was on me. Jack risked our blossoming friendship by asking with exaggerated respect if I'd favor him with a brief exposition of my theories on leadership. Glasses kept falling apart, shins throbbed, and as I looked over the Middle Fork to white-painted cliffs of Overcoat and Chimney they vanished in a black squall and a minute later we were swallowed by ~~(a swirling mass of)~~ snowflakes and hailstones. And just then who should walk onto the summit but the simpering Christian, cajoled up the chimney by a meddlesome fool! I was furious.

The squall terminated the sackout and slowly the mob squeezed down the bottleneck chimney. Below, on snowcovered slabs, Christian and Potatoes inchwormed. I repeatedly informed them my stance was bombproof, they could move with total abandon in perfect safety, but they quivered, they shivered, Potatoes moaning, Christian whimpering. Friends passed in a steady stream. Jim offered to pry my butt loose from the mountain to which it apparently had frozen. Chuck promised to wait for me at Snoqualmie Pass. Avalanche Ray wheezed. Tears rolled from Betty's eyes. Cam sagely advised me to proceed with caution. Jack confidentially asked if I thought such language seemly for a person of my eminence. The whole world conspired to make sport of me.

Potatoes spent a year and a half creeping 50 feet down to a ledge. Christian used up most of my remaining span of life. Something snapped. Brain boiling, lips flapping, I arose from belay, squatted in the approved outward-facing, four-point, down-climbing position — and a boot, hastily placed in slop and finding no purchase on underlying rock, slipped and just like that I was on my ass in the approved one-point sitting-glissade position.

Events of the next half-minute could be foreseen in precise detail: I would slide down sloppy slabs, accelerating, knock ropemates off the ledge like tenpins, and the three of us would fly over the brink and bounce from ledge to ledge to the final cliff.

Shit! I was going to die! Friends would say, "Poor Harvey, what a way to go." But at the funeral they'd have to stifle chuckles. "Harvey" is a joke name and if you're born with it you grow up either a fighter or a clown. My place in history was assured as the most absurd Climbing Chairman in the 17 years of the Course. "That Harvey — anything for a laugh."

So now at last I'm to learn how it is — the shock of bones breaking, the warm flood of my own personal blood. Climbers in the Alps, questioned after falls that should have killed them, say that in the final moments of a long drop you feel no pain or fear or regret, only a sense of wonder.

I bumped down rough slabs on my bottom, ax spike stirring a white spray and clattering on rock. Faster. The ledge. Awe-stricken faces of Christian and Potatoes, who'd enraged me to suicide <sup>and murder.</sup> No sense of wonder here, I'd enter eternity screaming obscenities.

Bramanis hit ledge with a thud, momentum brought me upright to begin the swan dive — and box toes of Mountain Trooper boots jammed against rocks. I teetered on the brink, staring to far-below forests of Burnt Boot Creek. And knew I wasn't going.

Still teetering I howled at the two, "Well goddamit don't ~~just~~ stand there with your ice ax up your nose — let's move it!"

They tangled legs and rope in haste to escape my wrath. Smugly I realized they did not see a fall, the opening seconds of an alpine tragedy. They saw a premeditated sitting glissade down a cliff. Potatoes and Christian did not witness a stupid blunder but a display of godlike skill and daring.

That made me so happy that when we joined the gang at the unroping place I answered ridicule with cheerful profanity and a dozen snowballs and the gaiety resumed. Sleet had ceased, the sky was not immediately threatening. I noted our morning tracks had been obliterated by an avalanche; a bit different timing and half the damn party could <sup>have</sup> ~~have~~ been wiped out. Serve the bastards right.

Now we were plugging not toward remote Thompson but toward remote Snoqualmie Pass and muscles grew limp and ~~some~~ <sup>too,</sup> minds awake so long in the sleepless Wednesday dream playing hooky from reality.

At Bumblebee Pass somebody splatted Chuck with a snowball and he, previously an amused noncombatant, revealed what old companions knew well enough — he was a smoke artist who could clip the buttons off your shirt and would <sup>have</sup> ~~have~~ been a sensation in the big leagues. Bare hint of

from the routines he'd learned  
as a teenage fan of the  
Rivoli Theater, Seattle's burlesque  
house.

smile at corners of mouth, he cut down one warrior after another, smack between the eyes. Hostilities ended. Everybody was dead.

At Ridge Lake Cam asked Jim, who'd been snorting pretty hard on his benzedrine inhaler, <sup>to do a few steps</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>On the stage of the frozen pond</sup> he warmed up with the flea hop, proceeded to struts and bumps and grinds, and climaxed with the fabulous East Coast Shimmy and the incredible Backbreaker. The sex of a climber often is unclear under baggy pants, loose parka, goggles, and white smear of sunburn cream. Some members of the audience, male and female both, were deeply stirred.

We were rest-stepping up the final bitter hill <sup>leading to</sup> ~~the~~ the ridge-top approach to Red Notch, party humor at a low ebb in darkening afternoon, when I recalled how last summer, climbing from Luna Cirque to Challenger Arm, I'd revenged myself on the Rovers for their ghastly dawn joy. Now, as then, I was in front, ~~mechanically~~ followed by robots. The only sound along the line was Jack grilling Jim about ~~who taught him~~ the Rivoli <sup>girls.</sup> ~~routine.~~

The proper route was directly to the crest but I stealthily bent the angle over <sup>to</sup> a contour. No question from the rear. I bent the angle more, into a moderate descent. No question — the 23 were the tail on my kite. I gave the tail the ultimate twist, suddenly plunging straight downhill, then turning and passing through a gap in the line. Having completed the loop I resumed the ascent.

Still no question, though a puzzled look from the novice who had to pause as I and my immediate follower shot the gap. Plodding students, weary-stupid and pathetically trusting, looped the loop, expressions of

to clear  
his sinuses,  
he said —

bewilderment growing — until Jack, engrossed in Jim's sex life, found himself made a fool and violent<sup>ly</sup> denounced the morals of the Maximum Leader. Laugh at me, would they!

In dusk we reached Red Notch, the journey home now all downhill, starting with a slide to the valley. Cam and Jim decided the only way to make speed in the sticky slop was to lock together in a tandem glissade, a technique rarely used since a bunch of fun-loving Mountaineers on Rainier hit a hole and the ton of human flesh broke both legs of the front man.

I'd had my glissade for the day and volunteered to pioneer a track. At the bottom I watched the twosome come a-flying — so fast they rode out of my track, gouging a new, swift chute. They sailed around a blind corner and ~~smashed~~<sup>smashed</sup> against a hidden rock and separately took to the air, tumbling to rest at my feet and lying in the snow laughing.

From on high came a small voice, "Is this track safe?"

"Oh, it's a beauty!" screamed Jim, tears flowing.

"You'll never forget it!" yelled Cam.

The innocent student roared around the blind corner to the rock and we cheered his gymnastics. Another small voice, more lusty encouragement, and another birdman came winging through evening shadows. Each of the party in turn was beguiled into the trap and joined the company of sadists to applaud the form of the next victim. A few didn't think it was funny but the pretty little girl who broke her ankle was a good sport; hobbling down Commonwealth Basin she was laughing as much as crying.

Small mountains can offer a pleasant day. You can bruise shins

and break glasses and ankles and damn near get killed. The last thing I remember is collapsing in Chuck's car at 8:30 p.m. Twelve hours later I was repairing a Black and Decker 1/4-inch drill.

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Chapter ~~2~~

AT SEA ON THE ILLECILLEWAET

June 23-24

Cam having drawn Vic, Tom, and me into his Robson scheme, he suggested we prepare by doing some ice. The Adams Glacier on the west side of the 12,276-foot volcano, tumbling 3500 feet in a continuous ~~icefall~~ <sup>jumble,</sup> seemed to offer suitable exercise. We knew of only one ascent since the first by Fearless Fred in 1945. Marsh, Avalanche Ray, and Rovers Paul and Yorick joined us.

At 2:40 Sunday morning we left our camp in lava boulders and flowers and wind-dwarfed pines and strolled moonlit lower slopes of the glacier. After ~~an unbroken~~ <sup>a solid</sup> month as schoolteacher — experience climbs of Thompson and Constance and two practices — walking with a mere seven companions was like soloing. Free of Maximum Leader responsibilities I burst into song, ~~singing~~ <sup>shouting</sup> the "One Ball Reilly" and "The Preacher's Daughter" to wild predawn applause.

We roped at 8500 feet and began the serious work, cramponing 1000 very steep feet up narrow, twisting alleys through ice cliffs. The angle eased a bit and we dodged this way and that in a maze of crevasses and at last were trapped. Every glacier party should include a 7-footer;

long-legged Cam cleared the broad gap between us and a clear route and his far-side belay gave shorter mortals latitude for error — and that was good, because several of our group had to be reeled in from the pit.

Nearing the summit plateau I thought I was back in Bagley Hall, the sulfur stench so overpowering I expected to barf. But on top a cold wind cleared away poison gas and I ate kippered salmon with gusto.

#### June 30-July 1

Forbidden is the classic of the Cascade Pass achtausenders, three sharp aretes and three steep faces culminating in a perfect granite horn. Six parties had made the summit, three by the west ridge, including the 1940 first ascent by Lloyd, Fearless Fred, and Limber Jim. It was a peak Tom and I had to have; as partner we enlisted Shiprock Johnny, Polly coming along for the hike.

The uranium rush of the dawning atomic age had stirred manias of old-style gold and copper lunatics; uptrail from the road-end at the Johnsbury Mine the woods were full of tents and crawling with sullen, suspicious prospectors, pistols at hips, lips leaking drool, no pupils in their eyes.

We were alone, though, at our 6000-foot camp in moraines and torrents of Boston Basin. So calm was the evening I told the California immigrants, "There aren't many nights in the Cascades when you can be sure of a perfect morning, but this is one of them."

At 7 o'clock Sunday morning, below sky-blurring cirrus of a cold front (and so much for the weather-wily native) we ascended green meadows



bright with lilies and loud with marmot whistles. Amid wreckage of a glacier sadly dwindled from days of glory but still full of holes we roped.

I led a detour around the bergschrund via snowbridge and slush-covered rock into the couloir and kicked steps up snow steadily steepening. Awaiting <sup>below,</sup> always, was the schrund. An outlander party, under-fearing our North Cascades, had ridden the couloir to death there. And last summer Lardy Bob and Idiot Richard slid near the brink before arresting. The snow demanded <sup>two or three</sup> a solid kick<sup>s</sup> every time and no faking<sup>d</sup> and I'd gladly have shared the labor, but it seemed better to get the job done fast than fiddle around swapping rope positions. On gaining the 8400-foot crest of the west ridge, where we changed to tennis shoes, I was happy to whistle the <sup>c</sup>Third Man Theme<sup>g</sup> and let my buddies go to work.

The ridge was a walk to the Gendarme, but how the first-ascent party got up that holdless wall I'd never understand. Fortunately the northwest face offered a way around and Tom and Johnny quickly traversed out of sight. They didn't call for me. What were they up to? Well, their worry. I was comfortable, sitting on a ridge-top slab just wide enough for my fanny, <sup>my</sup> leaning back against the Gendarme, <sup>labors</sup> Drowsy from warm sun and ~~the~~ couloir I waited.

. . . WHERE WAS I? Sky ~~to~~ right, sky ~~to~~ left, no wings to fly. Which way was up? Which down? Frantically I clutched the slab to halt the spin.

Awaking from deep sleep into vertigo I was shaky ~~a~~ on the unsteady northwest face. Again atop the ridge, however, both rock and I

several thousand kicks in all,

stopped trembling. The <sup>gneissic</sup> granite was as true-blue and built-in as Sir Donald's quartzite and the skyway exposure equally thrilling. My favorite pitch was one I'd heard Lloyd fondly recall. Northwest face and south face met at the crest in an absolute knife and we gripped the blade <sup>with fingers</sup> and leaned back into space to give tennis shoes friction on the gray south face, looking between legs to distant green meadows.

At 1:30 we reached Verbotengipfel's 8815-foot summit. The register said fewer than 20 people had been here before and all but a couple were friends. Across the North Fork Cascade valley stood the mile-high nordwand of Johannesburg. Below <sup>+</sup> the northeast sprawled the Boston Glacier, rimmed by walls of Boston and Buckner; beyond them rose Logan and Goode. At the bottom of the northwest face lay the end of the world, a gray-green, berg-flecked lake <sup>in</sup> ~~and~~ raw moraines and fans of avalanche snow; above the ~~dark~~ desolation shone the Inspiration Glacier and Eldorado. We looked past neighboring achtausenders north to Snowfield, Baker, Shuksan, Slesse, Pickets, Hozomeen, and Jack, and south to Bonanza, Dome, Glacier, Sloan, and Whitehorse. Cumulus piles floated through blue sky, their shadows drifting over peaks and glaciers.

But a friendly white billow suddenly turned black at heart and diffuse at edges and consumed Shuksan. And abruptly a filmy cloud materialized close above our heads and grew larger and thicker. Vivid in our memories were the Sierra Clubbers on Bugaboo Spire; just before the death strike one laughed, "Who ever heard of anybody getting killed by lightning?"

We scampered along the ridge. The black storm broke loose from

Shuksan and sailed swiftly south to eat Snowfield, then Logan and Buckner. We were next. At the top of the Gendarme <sup>horrid-</sup> big drops of rain splatted faces. A bolt could explode any second. We'd no time for the slow way around and went straight down the wall, me first. I ran out of holds and slipped off the rock and was lowered like a sack of meal, unable to lean out for a downward view, praying I was in a fall line from Johnny's belay to the fanny-wide slab and not a couple feet to the left, over the northwest face, or a couple feet to the right, over the south face. Feet touched slab and I was safe. <sup>Impressed</sup>

Tom and Johnny took the time to rig a rappel for their descent.

~~was~~ by my comments, ~~the others rappelled.~~

Meanwhile, what about the sky? Those few splats of rain and some rumbles, that was all. Our overhead cloud dissolved. The black storm veered and we watched it gobble Big Banana.

was ~~just~~ another ~~peak~~ superb North Cascades peak long ignored by climbers because it was on the east side of the range. ~~The first ascent was by Avalanche Ray in 1949, via a circuitous and messy and thoroughly uninteresting route.~~

July 14-15

Buck ~~Mountain~~, 8600 feet, ~~had frustrated a couple attempts by a circuitous approach before Avalanche Ray made the top in 1949, presumably the first ascent.~~ Last year Frank had found a more direct and attractive route above 6000-foot King Lake that sounded worth repeating.

Saturday Vic and Betty and I left the Buck Creek Pass trail several miles from the abandoned mining town of Trinity, 2800 feet, walked a footlog over Buck Creek, and busted brush up steep forest to heather meadows and the tiny, frozen cirque lake, arriving at 8 o'clock. Next morning we climbed snowfields to the glacier and skirted an icefall on mineralized red ledges of schist, leaving Betty there to enjoy a day of lazing in the sun.

Instead of Frank's route up the righthand skyline ridge we took a couloir to the left he'd suggested might be easier. No<sup>†</sup> so. The couloir proper, though very long, steep, and narrow, was a simple matter of carefully kicking solid steps in firm snow. However, the culmination was a treacherous rubble-filled gully leading to a 100-foot chimney true heroes perhaps could stem but not us.

Vic having done all the work getting us into the cul de sac he bluntly requested me to seek an escape. I tried the gully's right side, which soon went blank, traversed rightward to an edge and peered over — straight down a precipice to couloir and <sup>glacier and</sup> King Lake. Plastered against the precipice, how solidly only boots could tell, was an evil-looking pillar a foot square on top. A loathsome pillar it was, small and frightfully exposed, reddish and fractured, ~~perhaps lying here in ambush for many millenia~~, yet it seemed to give access to a resumption of the route. Anchored by a piton I took the long step around the corner onto the top, where nobody ever before had stood. I stood as light as I could.

An 8-foot overhanging ~~rock~~ was the immediate problem. To protect myself on the pull-up I banged in an angle piton and prepared to snap a carabiner to its ring — and began sweating as I saw that in my haste I'd jammed the ring in the crack. A knowledge the pillar wasn't going to stick on the precipice forever <sup>set</sup> off an attack of sewing-machine knee. And when I removed and redrove the piton I was horrified to find it going in farther this time — I was splitting the damn mountain apart! Impatient queries came from Vic and I told him to shut up. Trusting nor rock nor

dizzily-  
vertical

that the  
wasted minutes  
might well  
be the last  
of its  
ordained term  
as a  
Buck  
portion

located a ledge just big enough for my boot heels,

slithered

dangling

iron I ~~was~~ up the overhang on adrenalin, pounded a peg to anchor a ~~hanging~~ my overhang, he apologized for his impatience, then climbed on through and ~~with that lead~~ completed the nervous part. A couple ropelengths of scrambling led to the ridge and an unroped walk to the summit.

a few yards above my head found the start of a staircase.

The clear-day view filled a blank spot on my mental map of the North Cascades. Familiar peaks stood out boldly - Gletschergipfel close west, Big Banana north - but ~~most of the array of rock and ice I'd never before seen unobscured by clouds.~~

Many mountains as splendid as Bock were equally unknown to our parochial west-side bunch. Lord, despite nearly a hundred summits, how vast was my ignorance of the range!

We spotted a Betty-like inertness far below. Our yells triggered a frenzy. Later she confided <sup>to me</sup> she'd been working on an all-over tan and wasn't sure if Vic had binoculars and didn't want to offend his bachelor's sensibilities.

July 20-21-22

Frank's plan for a Rainier Jamboree was fulfilled. The newspapers called it "the largest mass climb in the history of the state's highest mountain." Dumb papers! We put 81 people on Columbia Crest but there was no "mass" climb, rather three separate ascents.

easy - Winthrop

I led a party of 40 up the Emmons Glacier<sup>s</sup>; a three-quarters moon making flashlights unnecessary, the windless air so balmy we climbed in shirtsleeves ~~and~~ and were accompanied to the summit by butterflies and bumblebees. My young routefinder, Silent Don, <sup>attained</sup> ~~made~~ the top at 6:15. Loitering near the rear ~~to do my duty~~, enjoying a sociable walk with ropemates Nell and

Burge's teenage daughter Nancy and ropeleaders Mustache Jack, Shiprock Johnny, Chuck, and my anointed successor as Climbing Chairman (though he didn't yet know it) Ward, I reached the crest at 9 o'clock.

Cam arrived simultaneously as routefinder for our 28-man Gibraltar party, co-led by Spick and Red Jim. By prearrangement, Cam traded teams with Silent Don, each thus traversing the mountain. With Robson only several weeks away Cam for the first time felt good on Rainier; he even accepted the smoked oysters offered by smirking Jim.

At 11:30, as I started ~~re~~rearguarding my ~~party~~ <sup>gang down</sup>, Spick rearguarded the Gibraltar group onto Columbia Crest. ~~As~~ <sup>I later learned that as</sup> he was leaving the top at 12:30, Ron's 13-man Kautz party arrived.

In Glacier Basin we were met by a ~~strong~~ fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, waiting to congratulate young bergsteigers all sunburned and starry-eyed. Burge won honors as champion parent; a heavy load of dry ice he'd hauled up 4 miles of trail to issue each of us, in passing, an ice cream bar.

### July 28-29

Magic was Idiot Richard's first lead of an experience climb and belatedly, sadly, I realized he wasn't ready. I needed a lonesome weekend but his nervousness was ~~disturbing~~ <sup>upsetting</sup> support by the Climbing Chairman was essential. Rover Paul and I hiked to Cascade Pass Saturday afternoon and sacked out in sunny meadows, greeting the other 15 as they arrived by ones and threes.

After dark we exchanged flashlight signals with Tom and Yerupaja Dave, bivouacked on the north face of Johannesburg, attempting a new route. I felt no envy — today they'd battled up vertical cedar jungles, a repeat of Nordgipfel, and tomorrow faced unknown ~~perils of~~ ice cliff<sup>s</sup> and ~~virgin~~ rocks — yet I ~~sensed~~ the weekend foreshadowed a parting of the ways. Tom and I had come this far together and doubtless would share many more peaks; however, he was outgrowing me and increasingly would need such partners as Dave to find his limits.

was somewhat melancholy, sensing

And my limits? Wherever they lay, I wasn't pressing toward them with the vigor of 1950, ~~was~~ more consolidating than advancing. Too much psychic energy was being burned up caring for others; 5 months as El Supremo and I was yearning for a return to private life.

At dawn Lardy Bob thundered through camp, marathoning from town for a day climb of Mixup. Idiot should <sup>long since have been</sup> ~~be~~ up and shouting — Magic, climbed <sup>still</sup> only three times, would be no cinch for so large a group — but he giggled in the sack, I should <sup>ive</sup> ~~be~~ counseled him, goaded him, helped him — that's what I was there for — but couldn't. He was too good a friend.

overcome by the responsibility, crushed back into childhood.

Idiot arose at 6 o'clock, the last of the party. Sharing his day-long anguish and perhaps disgrace would ~~be~~ ~~be~~ too painful. I asked Paul and Avalanche Ray to <sup>help</sup> ~~help~~ our buddy — unobstrusively — and stayed in camp.

And I empathized with him too much, similarly oppressed by adulthood.

I was not alone. Burge had seen the warning signals and over the years had done his duty full often enough. At 8:30 he and Nancy and I set out for a walk, ascending to the crest of Sahale Arm, wandering meadows

I'd be bound to ~~be~~ hurt him,

to the moraine, and climbing glacier and rotten red rock to the top of 8715-foot Sahale.

Trucks rumbled <sup>up and down the Stehekin River</sup> ~~to and from~~ <sup>directly</sup> the new mine below in Horseshoe Basin, a hideous violation of the <sup>Cascades</sup> wilderness, which after all might not last my lifetime; intent on loggers <sup>invading</sup> ~~moving inward~~ from edges, I hadn't given ~~much~~ thought to dirty miners striking directly at the center. I gazed around horizons to scenes of the past 4 years: Glacier, my first volcano; Eldorado, ~~where I'd~~ <sup>my</sup> first experience <sup>of</sup> the quintessential North Cascades; Bonanza, my first <sup>big climb</sup> ~~venture into the unknown~~; the Pickets, my first penetration of the heart of wildness; Forbidden, barely a month in the past but seeming ancient history; and more. I looked to Johannesburg and wished Tom well, and to Magic and hoped for the best.

#### August 10-22

I didn't go to Robson. It had been at my <sup>nagging</sup> ~~urging~~ the Climbers' Outing was scheduled for the Selkirks and when Burge, the leader, bitterly complained not a single member of the Climbing Committee had signed up and he was being sent to Canada with a party of 25 that included only three or four proven leaders, my duty was unavoidable. Silent Don replaced me on Robson.

Saturday evening, August 11, rain steady and hard, the mob assembled in the brandnew campground near the site of the old Glacier House. Suddenly I was <sup>absolutely</sup> ~~completely~~ antisocial, scarcely able to tolerate even such friends as Burge, Avalanche Ray, and the Rovers. Robson would <sup>ve</sup> ~~have~~ given meaning



despite my objection that the idea was to scatter the bunch all over the country in parties of one or two teams each,

to 1951, there I'd be progressing toward McKinlay; here the supreme challenge was Sir D, a giant step last year but now offering nothing more than fun.

Drizzly Monday morning the entire blessed lock-stepping crowd set out for the south ridge of Uto. If that weren't bad enough, ~~glory-hound~~ Yerupaja Dave talked Yorick and Paul into joining him on the west face of Uto and thus stripped the party of nearly every topnotch ropeleader. I said the hell with it and as the mob marched to the <sup>Uto - Donald</sup> col remained behind with Betty.

<sup>Moodily we</sup> ~~meandered~~ <sup>ed</sup> through lonesome gray of mist and moraine, and

<sup>wet</sup> In dark night the rabble straggled into camp. Burge was speechless at how different this slippery Uto was from the lighthearted <sup>dry-day</sup> scramble he recalled. The pace had been desperately slow. On some pitches all ropeleaders but one required an upper belay; the hero of the day was Rebel, who swaggered around camp inviting adulation. The Confederacy lives — bah! I'd learned to despise this loudmouthed novice in June when I was tied to him on Constance and after boring me all day bragging about conquests of granite tits in the fashionable Cashmere Crag he stole half the beer <sup>I'd</sup> ~~was~~ stashed in Constance Creek — and subsequently bragged about that.

Dreary Tuesday afternoon a dozen climbers left for a high camp under Sir Donald, most planning to do the Vaux Route, Yorick and Paul the Northwest Ridge. Wednesday evening they came down out of the fog successful. However, two were missing — and one was Rebel. The Rovers reported being surprised to see him following them up the Northwest Ridge. Ray said <sup>that</sup> he'd claimed to have Burge's permission to do the ridge and to pick a suitable partner. The bloody liar! He'd specifically been instructed to

at last wandered up the easy north ridge of Uto nearly to the summit. We didn't go to the top because the last bit required the rope and the uncoiling and tying in and belaying didn't seem worth the trouble.

sick of revealing, ~~to~~ private shrines ~~to~~ strangers  
who proved unworthy, ~~At the time~~ <sup>side of myself for feeling</sup>  
~~them~~ they were unworthy, 299

Ray and  
stay with the Vaux party. He'd deliberately stolen a climb that didn't  
belong to him. At midnight Burge and I were by the campfire planning the  
search, to begin at dawn, when the two arrived, Rebel strutting-eager to accept  
congratulations; his conceited smile was extinguished by items in my  
vocabulary reserved for ~~special~~ <sup>extraordinary</sup> occasions.

Why had I fouled my Selkirk nest with ~~this mob~~? The thought of  
~~Rebel~~ Rebel, braggart and beer-thief, <sup>putting his hands on</sup> pure quartzite of the Northwest  
Ridge turned my stomach. It was rape. ~~And not even the Rovers~~  
~~in that glow of exaltation~~ which on last year's drive home from Canada  
held Tom and me a hundred feet above the highway. ~~After us, for the~~  
~~stage~~ was no more mysterious and exciting than the South Face of The Tooth.

Maximum Leader! I was sick of it ~~for hating~~ <sup>really</sup> Rebel, who ~~probably~~ was no more obnoxious than ~~had been, several years~~  
ago, the likes of Tom, Lardy Bob, Idiot Richard, ~~and~~  
~~dispassionately, as wise~~ Burge was able to do but not, ~~his main fault,~~  
~~really,~~ <sup>and I had been a couple years ago.</sup>

The Climbing Course was the only institution I'd found ~~in a quarter~~  
~~century as a nominal member of the human race~~ that was intrinsically  
worth a damn. Everything else on the planet was hooked to everything else  
and when any part went rotten the whole mess quickly spoiled — and it had.  
The Course was free of contagion, dedicated to a self-quarantined activity  
(sport, art, religion, revolution) totally disentangled from the real world.  
Yet as Climbing Chairman I was a fraud. Gather a hundred of the saintliest  
folk ever to walk Earth, each meriting my love, and ~~together~~ <sup>as an assembled mob</sup> I'd hate them

But worse,  
far worse,  
my friends  
the Rovers  
showed no  
symptoms of  
the

~~The~~  
~~of~~  
Because of  
our ascent,  
for the Rovers  
the  
Ridge

Destroy Hitler, destroy the Pope, destroy me, destroy anybody  
who gets to the top because once there they  
are creatures of the mob and no longer human.

300

one and all, God damn their eyes. Attempting to play the role of Numero  
Uno distorted me into a person I did not like, could not live with. ↓ The  
masquerade must end. ↓ ~~His followers, including his leader, were~~

Anarchy  
must  
prevail.

I couldn't run away immediately, had to endure the remainder of this  
gray week of sky and soul. Small groups ~~gathered~~<sup>sorted</sup> into fog and drizzle for  
hikes and climbs. I slept late, searing the ears of friends who sought to stir  
me from the bag, spending days in the picnic shelter drinking coffee and  
playing hearts with Betty and the Rovers.

The sole positive good of the week was discovering that behind his  
philosopher's posturings Dave was a decent sort. After Uto he stayed close  
to camp, in discomfort ~~and~~<sup>and</sup> pain, ↓ A year ago he'd left his toes in a Peruvian  
hospital, the price of personally willing the first ascent of Yerupaja despite  
the near-fatal drag of wealthy, incompetent Easterners. As for me, I  
couldn't understand a Puget Sounder going to Peru for adventure, or  
anywhere south, unless so far south — Patagonia, New Zealand, Antarctica —  
it was the same as North. Conversation revealed Tom and I, last summer,  
had unjustly ridiculed the Harvards; those slings on the Northwest Ridge of  
Sir D were left by Dave while retreating in a vicious storm, and he was  
no Harvard, he was a Yale.

gradually  
coming to the  
conclusion  
his climbing  
was ended.

Friday the sun returned and Betty and I hiked the trail to high meadow  
views of her Asulkan Glacier and my ~~10,000-foot glacier~~<sup>Sir D.</sup> I walked the ridge  
alone to the summit of 8091-foot Abbott and stared over the valley to the  
finest morning of my life,

That night the Robson party arrived, defeated by ~~weather~~<sup>storms</sup> and an impossible icefall but not disgraced; in recent years the glaciers had changed so radically that Robson hadn't been climbed since before the war. Even an attempt was a giant step.

Though the <sup>official</sup> Climbers' Outing was over, the weather was blue-sky serene and with the dread prospect of Seattle looming, ~~saddening~~ I was in no rush to go home. Others also had spare time. Tom and I shared one major goal, to traverse the Illecillewaet Névé to Glacier Circle and climb 11,123-foot Dawson, highest of the Southern Selkirks. Joined by Yorick and Paul for a 3-day lightning assault, Saturday morning we ascended trail 4000 feet to the edge of ice. The 5-mile crossing of the nearly-flat, 8400-foot Névé was very slow — enormous suncups held us to a stumbling, slipping pace. Who wanted speed? Suncup waves rolled shining miles in every direction; exactly as described by the ~~pioneers~~ we were "at sea on the Illecillewaet." So would it often be in the Far North.

Sir Donald fell away behind, Dawson grew ahead, and the Deville Névé and the Bishops and Purities. Late in ~~Afternoon~~ we looked down, down to the deep ~~hole~~<sup>rough</sup> of 6000-foot Glacier Circle, peaceful greenery ringed by cliffs of rock and ice. A blundering descent of moraines and buttresses and brush led to subalpine forest of the cirque floor and at dusk we camped in ~~woods~~ woods enclosing the ~~area~~.

Sunday we climbed talus and polished slabs to the foot of the Fox Glacier, much shrunken (as were all glaciers in the Selkirks and Rockies) from dimensions shown on the map, now terminating in a crumbling ice

19th century explorers who found this place,

log cabin built decades ago by Swiss hirelings of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

cliff, certain suicide on a hot day. Dawson was lost. Well, we knew before starting that Asulkan Pass was the surefire approach but had wanted the Névé more than the peak. So fizzled out 1951, a skipped year in the march toward McKinley.

Who could mourn? Tomorrow we again would navigate the high white sea. ~~and~~ Today <sup>we</sup> were at the edge of country wilder than any remaining in the Cascades, ~~guarded~~ <sup>protected</sup> by the great Névé from the world.

The world would be too much with me all too soon. I'd quit Black and Decker to come North and back in Seattle ~~again~~ <sup>once more</sup> would prowl the fringes of the American System seeking a ~~warehouse~~ warehouse, workbench, or whatever — an aging mountain bum getting his nose rubbed in it. Would I actually look, or again retreat to Blue Moon and Pink Palace? How would that strike Betty? Our wildland-secure marriage was not so firm in the city.

Certain days ~~see~~ <sup>turn into</sup> poignant memories even as we live them, ~~and~~ <sup>every</sup> ~~seeing each~~ <sup>seeing each</sup> ~~moment~~ <sup>the coming</sup> ~~in the dark frame of winter.~~ <sup>of the Fox,</sup>

Eating lunch below the ice cliff <sup>on a buttress</sup> between loud-splashing creeks, we ~~had~~ a water fight, the perfect antidote for scorching sun. Eventually, though, a groan above stimulated an awareness that not too long ago these lumps of ice melting around us had been part of the cliff; there were safer places to sack out on a hot day.

We descended to the Deville Glacier, fed by an icefall from the Deville Névé, and as last year on the Columbia Icefield labored ~~mightily~~ with axes diverting surface-running meltwater streams into one grand

~~spontaneously,~~  
fell into

torrent.

We roamed the ice to meadows beside the huge ~~old~~ terminal moraine

Deposited by the Deville in its more prosperous past, the gravel ridge now

~~blocking the outlet of Glacier Circle,~~ perched high above the

thunderal

long drop to the Beaver River, ~~Boulders~~ pried loose from the ~~crest~~ ~~bounded~~ ~~end~~

hundreds of feet, dislodging more rocks, exploding clouds of dust,

rumbling down into forest.

Behind the ~~moraine~~ ~~deposited~~ were ~~shallow ponds~~ ~~set amid~~ ~~green grass~~ and clumps

of alpine trees. The warm ~~water was~~ ~~pools were~~ black with wiggling polliwogs, ~~and~~

~~we stood on the shores~~ ~~the water~~ ~~was~~ ~~black~~ ~~with~~ ~~wiggling~~ ~~polliwogs~~ ~~and~~ competing to see who could splash

the most polliwogs in companions' faces.

We positioned ourselves around the shore and threw rocks in the water,

22 April 1974

1952

22  
Chapter 22

IDYLLS OF COUGAR MOUNTAIN

Outer blackness pushed through windows. Silence rang in ears.

Betty and I huddled close <sup>evening of</sup> on this spooky ~~night~~ January 19, listening for  
of  
footfalls long-leggity beasties, recalling country childhoods and terrors.

After 10 University District years with ~~blare~~ of electricity flooding every  
street and ~~spilling into alleys~~ and <sup>smearing</sup> ~~fouling~~ the sky, racket of infernal-com-  
bustion machines rising to a roar and dwindling to a nag but never ceasing,  
we'd forgotten the night could be dark and quiet, peaceful and fearful, in a  
place of permanent human habitation.

Last spring, when the notion arose of running away to the woods,  
our first exploration was the nearest rise of the Cascades, ever in view  
across Lake Washington during the District decade. From the 1500-foot  
summit of Cougar Mountain we looked ~~out to the high Cascades and down to~~  
~~Lake Sammamish and~~ north 85 miles ~~over rolling lowland forests~~ to Baker  
and Shuksan. This was the place! But the only available <sup>property</sup> ~~land~~ was in vast  
tracts untouched since loggers stripped off the virgin forest a half-century  
ago. A "small lot" of 100 acres would cost \$15,000 or so. Drilling a  
well might take \$3000. And what about some kind of shelter? So much for  
dreams. *Pioneering was for the wealthy.*

along the  
line of  
the high  
Cascades

The pressure to escape basement apartment and District was relieved during June, July, and August by 33 mountain days. September, too, was tolerable. On a Labor Day experience climb we returned to Canada and in the Lucky Four Range, an outpost of the North Cascades standing high above the Fraser River, valleys and peaks being grossly butchered by loggers and miners (and there go hopes for a wilderness future in Canada), climbed 7200-foot Foley.

Two weeks later I succeeded in not climbing Shuksan. Dick wanted to climb Shuksan and was a bad sport and threw me in Lake Ann but got no support from Ted, Chuck, and Betty, who agreed the day was too nice to waste on glaciers. We did bag a peak, wandering meadows to the summit of little Ann. The ascent marked the interruption, for golly knew how many years, of Ted's Optimum Frequency; <sup>and bride in hand</sup> doctorate in pocket he soon would be ~~many Dollars~~ reward <sup>ed</sup> for 8 years in reeking Bagley Hall <sup>by being</sup> exiled to some stinking ~~chemistry~~ <sup>stinking</sup> lab in the East; <sup>^</sup>

there was virtually zero demand in the West for so highly-educated a chemical engineer.

Mid-October brought the grandest scheme of the year. As Climbing Chairman, Numero Uno of the Alpine Northwest, I'd been ~~called~~ <sup>telephoned</sup> by a prospector who told a thrilling tale. A friend of his long ago had discovered a cave on Phelps gleaming with wire gold in quartz. Sad to say, the effort of packing out the riches killed him. The prospector searched for years and eventually found the cave and though the gold was all gone he spotted similar caves nearby. However, reaching them would demand rope and iron and that's why he was willing to cut me in. Thus was organized the Great Phelps Wire Gold Cave Expedition. Vic and <sup>Tom and</sup> others signed up because they



its distinctive haystack ~~is~~ one of  
~~the~~ the most prominent  
summits on Seattle's eastern  
horizon.

wanted to climb Phelps anyway, ↓ Pete planned to bring a rifle in case we  
chanced on a deer. Some ~~people~~ were purely greedy <sup>for gold.</sup> Unfortunately the  
expedition never left town, wiped out by a series of monster storms.

The most harrowing climb of the year began at 3 a. m. in a booth  
at the Pink Palace. Limber Jim, as always cold-sober and drinking  
coffee, was pencil-sketching Goode from memory on a table top, a master-  
piece the <sup>robot</sup> waitress <sup>later</sup> would <sup>blindly</sup> obliterate with a damp rag. He was amused by  
my beery mourning of lost dreams. His own years of glory having led only  
to war and the disillusion of a Mountain Trooper, he advised me to face up  
to being over the hill. I refused to concede anything of the sort. He  
asked if my wicked ways were those of a true hero and I said I was just  
resting and he laughed I'd probably climbed my last mountain. Nonsense,  
cried I. "Well then," demanded the cruelest alpine humorist of the age,  
"Why don't you go climb a mountain — right now?" The bastard. I left  
the Palace, picked up gear at the apartment — quietly, not to wake Betty —  
and woozily drove to Snoqualmie Pass, arriving in a cold dawn sobering and  
shaking but resolute. I hiked the Commonwealth Basin trail and scrambled  
up Red — a frightening ordeal, boots skidding on slabs, loose rocks  
breaking away under feet and fingers, the mountain leaning this way and  
that, the summit swaying so violently I couldn't stand and had to hang on with  
both hands not to be thrown off into the Middle Fork. But I shoved the lie  
down Jim's throat. And if 1951 wasn't the 40-peaker I <sup>projected</sup> ~~completed~~ in May,  
Red made a respectable 20.

Yet that was the end. And, as dreaded, <sup>regular</sup> rounds of Moon and Palace

mostly stump-rancher shacks  
and clusters of hillbilly  
hovels and a scattering  
of hermits' cabins.

resumed, not in joy. Jolly boys were quarreling over jolly girls and smashing each other in the face with fists. Creeps were passing out on sidewalks and vomiting in alleys and crashing cars into lamp posts. Girls desperate at loss of bloom were getting knocked up while careless-drunk and trying to find husbands or abortions. Bill, my partner on long-ago Huckleberry, tied into a climbing rope by the neck and jumped out a window. Through blur of beer and coffee and pinball I saw many an Avenue Creep still creeping next year, and the year after, and years past any excuse of youth. Dear Lord, not me! Another <sup>such</sup> winter and I'd lose more than a wife.

Gloomy Sunday afternoons Betty and I went in search of a home — and returned in deeper gloom. Once, just once, we toured north of Seattle, where I grew up in ~~country~~ <sup>clearcut desolation</sup> so sparsely settled ~~only 175 houses lay along~~

that in bicycling

<sup>I passed only 175 houses,</sup> my 12-mile paper route. Now subdivisions were solid halfway to Everett.

over which the famous floating bridge had been built at war's end, connecting Seattle to a vast new hinterland,

Where in God's name had all the people come from? Squalid suburbs would be no improvement on raucous city; it was country <sup>we</sup> ~~our souls~~ craved.

East of Lake Washington, ~~Bellevue~~ <sup>was</sup> convulsed by a building boom and raging with a fever of speculation. However, ~~glowing~~ real estate agents <sup>heavy</sup> ~~trading~~ with \$12,000 houses on 1/6-acre lots ~~glowered~~

changed faces from glow to glower

when we asked what they had for half the money and a dozen times the land. One eager woman, a beginner in the business and thus assigned nothing but her agency's garbage, made a valiant attempt. For \$9,000 we could have a ramshackle house at the edge of a Bellevue Shopping Square parking lot, a terrific investment property. (No, we don't want an investment, but a home.) For \$7,000 we could have a swamp and a tarpaper-roofed

concrete-block basement to live in while building a house <sup>stop</sup> ~~it~~. (The basement okay, but sorry, we can't put down roots in a swamp.) For \$5,000 we could have an abandoned elementary school complete with play-field, a potential mansion or apartment house once fixed up. (Thank you, we're not that handy.) For \$2500 — all cash, unfortunately — we could have a one-room log cabin, lighting by kerosene lamp, water carried from a spring by bucket, and the road a quarter-mile hike away. (Exciting, but we don't have that kind of cash and anyway can do nearly as well rigging a tarp in a National Forest campground.) I felt sorry for the lady; she tried.

We couldn't find a home and I, honestly if sporadically looking, couldn't find a job. Boeing was hiring hordes of barefoot backwoodsmen fresh off the bus from Arkansas but wanted no truck with ~~people~~ <sup>Reds</sup> who kidnapped Canadian babies. Union halls turned stonyfaced when I failed to cite a blood relative who <sup>d</sup> carried a card ~~thus~~ <sup>qualifying</sup> ~~me~~ for a trade by right of birth. The Washington State Employment Service exhaustively reviewed my detailed life history and offered me a chance to sell dishes door to door.

Well then, as the last refuge of a scoundrel I'd become a teacher. Having 4 1/2 years of college (magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa) surely I could give teenagers the word about Silas Marner and Vachel Lindsay. No. Not without 2 years of fulltime indoctrination

I prowled industrial areas, hitting up foremen of scab warehouses and scuttling as they gruffly told me to get the hell out of the way. I even returned to the railroad freight sheds, where I'd worked <sup>during the war</sup> ~~while in school~~, and at 7 o'clock found a hundred winos waiting for the 8 o'clock shape-up,

to build airplanes and missiles

since the era of Samuel Gompers,

in teaching methods.

when a dozen would be chosen for the day, to be paid off in hard cash ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ at 5 o'clock and then vanish into the Skidroad, a not-so-giant step  
 beyond the Avenue. The Post Office gave a welcome 2 weeks' wages for  
 delivering Christmas packages through rain and sleet and dark of night —  
 the glad memory spoiled when postal inspectors accused me of stealing a  
 parcel and said the matter would be dropped if I made restitution. I  
 considered confessing to kidnapping the baby but instead merely suggested  
 they go ahead and throw me in jail.

There is magic in the Winter Solstice for true believers. On the  
 darkest day of 1951 came a miracle — we tried one more real estate office  
 and found a home on Cougar Mountain. The price was \$6250; our folks  
 gave us the \$1500 down payment and mortgage payments ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ <sup>the monthly</sup> was no bigger than ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ apartment rent; We hadn't achieved the 1500-foot summit,  
 only the 650-foot slopes, yet that was a long jump from the 100 feet of the  
 apartment. And it was country, for sure.

if Betty's  
 paycheck  
 could handle  
 one it  
 could handle  
 the other

and nothing  
 else but a small  
 drugstore and  
 a forlorn  
 real estate office.

once a  
 center of  
 coal-mining,  
 long since solely  
 supported by  
 dairy farms,  
 stumperland,  
 and gravel  
 pits gnawing at  
 a glacier moraine.

Cougar Mountain was safe miles beyond suburbs. Even in commuter  
 rush hours US 10 was empty past the Bellevue turnoff on the east shore of  
 Lake Washington. There, at Factoria, a city platted in the 1890s but never  
 built, was the last "supermarket," pocket-size, <sup>empty logged-off land</sup> The highway, constructed  
 through here a dozen years ago, rose to a 300-foot divide at Eastgate, a  
 failed, too-far-out "shopping center" consisting of a mom-pop grocery,  
 hardware store, and truck-service garage, then dropped steeply to Lake  
 Sammamish and the village of Issaquah, The only traffic we heard was

<sup>long-haul</sup> - <sup>up US 10</sup>  
occasional trucks grinding to the divide.

Newport Road, the original wagon route from Lake Washington to Lake Sammamish, skirted the north base of the mountain, roughly paralleling US 10. Newcastle Road, also dating back to wagon days, switchbacked south from Newport Road to the 850-foot Pass and wound around and down, at 6 miles reaching decayed remnants of the 19th century mining town of Newcastle. From the Pass the Cougar Mountain Road climbed 2 miles to near the summit. On all the mountain's 15 miles of county roads there were only some 70 houses, in all its 16 square miles only some 200 people. One could walk from our home to the crest of the Cascades, 40 air miles distant, and be in forest the whole way, crossing just two paved highways and several logging roads.

(or rather, bust brush)

The house was cozy: a small living room and smaller kitchen and minute bathroom; a half-basement; two tiny sloping-wall garret bedrooms reached via ladder-stairway. Heat was from an electric floor furnace, water from a dug well and electric pump. Any wind greater than a breeze <sup>inevitably</sup> took down the power lines <sup>at one or more of a hundred points</sup> ~~somewhere~~ between Cougar Mountain and Renton and we lost light, heat, ~~and~~ water, and cooked meals.

cooking done on a little electric stove

We owned a partial view of Lake Sammamish and the Cascades. Our true wealth, however, was ~~the~~ 3 acres of land ~~and~~ green with dozens of ~~the~~ Douglas firs, many western red cedars, several western hemlocks, and one western white pine. Everywhere were alder and maple and willow and wild cherry and dogwood, and in wet spots cottonwood and on a dry hill madrona. ~~and~~ under trees were wild currant, mock orange, Scotch

broom; salal, Oregon grape, sword fern, bracken fern, kinnikinnick; goatsbeard, snowberry, wild rose, nettle, thistle, trillium; ~~and~~ blackberry, black cap, salmonberry, thimbleberry, red huckleberry, elderberry.

And more.

No cougar had been sighted on Cougar Mountain for a dozen years but deer walked through our yard and fresh sign told of ~~a~~ bear close around. We shared <sup>our acres</sup> ~~space~~ with mountain beaver, rabbit, raccoon, porcupine, skunk, squirrel, chipmunk, mole, shrew, and mouse. Coyotes barked in a nearby field. Birds were few but in spring would be more.

We owned a creek! The flow would cease in April or so but now after a heavy rain waterfalls roared, the best of lullabies. The pond feeding the creek would last until summer; we'd have frog music when the weather turned warm.

The rock was fascinating. I'd grown up on moraines of the Puget Glacier — clay, sand, gravel, till, and erratics <sup>exported</sup> ~~imported~~ from Canada. Glacial drift was scattered in pockets over the mountain but the foundation of our house was sandstone containing fossil clams. A serendipity: Cougar Mountain first had risen high during the ancient uplift of the Pre-Olympic Range and thus we lived simultaneously in the Cascades and the Olympics. Or so I claimed; Lardy Bob, majoring in geology at the University, felt I was stretching a point.

Weekdays I looked for a job. Weekends I explored my wildland. On the steep hillside above the creek I discovered an overgrown spur of the logging railroad and with ax and saw began cutting a passage, heaping slash

and building huge fires in winter rains. Working on the trail, as soaking wet and scratched and bruised and exhausted as ever in a mountain valley, I could neither see nor hear any evidence of civilization. At night a few lights from neighbors' houses glimmered through forest but the sky was free from megalopolitan glow and when clouds opened the stars were bright as they never are in the city.

Life fell into the rhythm of hard labor and the sleep of peaceful weariness, of waterfall-splash and tree-rustle, <sup>of love.</sup> In the apartment, District noise steadily reminded of excitement minutes away at Moon or Palace. Here the call was too distant. When Betty and I felt like a bit of ~~wild~~ revelry we drove <sup>the Jeep</sup> 5 miles to the nearest tavern, a comfortably rundown old ~~summer resort~~ <sup>shack</sup> on shores of Lake Sammamish.

What the Blue Glacier had done in 1951, Cougar Mountain did in 1952. Climbing, supplemented by ~~pleasures~~ of muscling around ~~in~~ 3 acres of brush, again took my winter-chaotic parts and organized them, gave direction.

Last fall my final act as Climbing Chairman had been to call a meeting of Cam, Vic, Frank, and Ward to devise a more formal and efficient organization of the Climbing Committee. The foundation of the plan we developed was three semi-autonomous Assistant Chairmen responsible for lectures, practices, and experience climbs. Ward, taking office as Chairman, appointed me his assistant for practices. In January the Climbing Committee bought my radical proposals for improving field instruction and from February on I was busy helping the leaders scout trip locations. We

toured Green River Gorge and Carbon River Canyon and the Enumclaw Crags ~~vicinity~~ looking for a spot to practice dynamic belaying, and Icicle Creek for rainshadow granite to replace Tumwater Canyon, where Mountain-eer rockfall was endangering cars on the highway, and Little Si to do the first thorough inventory of ~~some~~ teaching terrain.

Betty and I skied a little, too, when Dick came by ~~weekend~~ <sup>Sunday</sup> mornings and dragged us to Snoqualmie Pass. The art of blobbing was advanced; Tom, Yorick, and Lardy Bob descended on the "200-meter hut," as Tom called it, and carried me off for another criminal trespass into the City of Seattle watershed ~~near~~ <sup>south of</sup> North Bend. Intending to climb Rattlesnake Ledge, among alders at its base we encountered an astounding group of "towlders" (Tom's portmanteau word for tower-boulders), some as tall as 50 feet, and made numerous first ascents. The largest rock was unclimbable by legitimate means, overhanging on three sides and a 70-degree slab on the fourth, so we threw a line over the top and went up on prusik knots, then rappelled down.

April 20 the high-country season began, Tom, Betty, and I climbing smooth rolls of sun-glistening fresh snow to a corniced ridge and following the bright crest to the summit of Denny. By God, I'd not settle for less than 30 peaks this year.

Nor would conscience be uneasy as I filled my 1952 bag because at the Spring Equinox, a lucky time for true believers, ~~I got~~ a genuine paycheck-every-week job as a high-class errand boy for Hearst Advertising Service, a department of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Sadly, with the

upon once again entering humbly into the presence of a prospective boss, I was amazed to see a Climbing Course student, and he was equally confounded and gave me



paycheck came corruption of principles. I'd vowed never to sell my brain to the System — but hell, there was no market for my brawn. And I'd sworn never to wear the uniform — well, I could take pride in holding out nearly to the age of 27, longer than most.

A 30-peak year, 3 acres of Cougar Mountain ~~with~~, were worth a suit and tie.

22 April 1974

315

1952

Chapter <sup>23</sup>~~22~~

### THE TERRIFIC PERSDEX TRAVERSE

On clear winter days I inspected my Cougar Mountain horizon with comfortable feelings of proprietorship. There was Whitehorse, the first mountain whose name I knew, and the Tolt River valley, where I first went hiking with Troop 324, and Glacier, my first volcano. Standing squarely in the center and prominently in front was the long ridge anchored at either end by Persis and Index. I smiled. I had plans for that ridge.

While still a hiker reading the shape of the land on U. S. Geological Survey maps, seeking weaknesses in mountain defenses, I made an exciting discovery. Though contour lines on north and east sides of Persis and Index merged in masses of solid brown ink, portraying the fierce cliffs seen from the Stevens Pass highway, on the west side of Persis the lines were quite wide apart; the Sultan Quadrangle, surveyed in 1919-21, actually showed a trail to the summit. Moreover, even the brute Index seemed to have a flaw — a white lane along the crest of the ridge from Persis. I might conquer brown ink by dodging it, might sneak to the top through the back door

In June 1947, alone, I <sup>sought to</sup> ~~tested~~ the hypothesis. The Sultan Quad was far behind the times, the trail up Proctor Creek obliterated by logging roads the whole valley skinned, not a tree left. Persis forests, though, too steep

and  
Pitlchuck,  
my first  
summit, and  
also with the  
troop

for heavy equipment, were unmolested. Wiping rain from glasses I gazed into black clouds a while and by early afternoon was back with my bride in the garret.

After 1948 I'd no need for easy back doors. Yet simple peaks can be interesting enough during the pre-season and in March 1950 Tom and I and friends walked the Proctor Creek logging road to the foot of the west, or trail ridge; by then we were sufficiently drenched to go honorably home.

Nordgipfel gave Persis new appeal as a close viewpoint of those wicked walls and in April 1951 Tom and I and a group set out in sunshine to relive the memories and take pictures. We foolishly tried the northwest ridge, ran into more trouble than was appropriate for a sackout day, and quit.

Three defeats made me wonder if Persis were not defended by forces more sinister than ~~mere~~ <sup>g</sup> topography. However, impelled by status as El Supremo and sex object, in May 1951 I led 25 girls (and 13 others) to the summit with not one problem. Nothing remained of the trail except scraps of fading ~~thread~~ <sup>l</sup> but the forest was virtually brushfree and the angle moderate.

The view exceeded even my high expectations. The enclosing ridge of Anderson Creek's enormous north-facing cirque was a giant horseshoe, Persis and Nordgipfel on the horns, their precipices plummeting 4000 feet. More thrilling was to see my hiker's hypothesis confirmed: the horseshoe crest was a snowy avenue, Index a 2-hour stroll away.

<sup>hearing my news,</sup>  
Tom <sup>A</sup> christened the route the Persdex Traverse and in summer and fall our plot intrigued the entire Climbing Committee and half the faculty.

Everybody wanted a part in subverting Index, though all understood we'd give the peak a sporting chance by doing the trip very early, before it was of interest purely to hikers.

Along with other yawkers and most everything else, I forgot Persdex in the dreamless, schemeless, dying months of 1951. But on Cougar Mountain the ridge stared me in the face every clear day. I could not live here without walking there.

When Tom and I <sup>set out</sup> ~~left Seattle~~ Saturday afternoon, May 3, so many friends were committed to the year's first batch of experience climbs the party was not the planned human wave. Our companions were loud-mouthed, joy-bubbling Krup, Rover Paul, and taciturn Franz, a stranger recently come from the East for graduate work in physics at the University.

We <sup>deposited</sup> ~~left~~ Paul's car at the Lake Serene trail, the traverse exit, and drove the Jeep around to the head of logging-road navigation up Proctor Creek, 1000 feet. On this fifth visit I was amazingly fond of the valley's bleakness, perhaps because here I saw how Cougar Mountain had looked 50 years ago, in the wake of the loggers. Life systems of Puget Sound lowlands are too exuberant to be crushed by man — except through covering them over with houses and highways. Of course, not for 500 years would another such forest grow in Proctor Creek as was traveled by surveyors of the Sultan Quad.

At the agreed rising hour of 4 o'clock the sky was starless, showing not a single watery flicker. Back to sleep. In dawn, heavy clouds rode low against Persis. The traverse was lost. The Nordgipfel view was lost.

But we couldn't go home so early, ~~besides~~ besides, I was the only one who'd conquered Nanga Persis. At 6 o'clock we hoisted rucksacks.

We walked the logging road to the foot of the west ridge, battled slash and brush between clearcut and virgin timber, and ascended open forest, here and there taking a few steps on vanishing trail for old times' sake. At 3000 feet we entered clouds and left bare ground for snow, rain-hardened at first, then new and sticky-powdery, sloppy soft. Continuous trees gave way to scattered clumps and in fog-dimmed parkland we dipped into the tiny white basin where I'd planned to camp on my <sup>aborted</sup> solo assault of 1947. At 10:30 we were atop Persis, 5452 feet, shivering in cold-driving gray.

Suddenly wind blew open a hole and from swirling mists emerged violent Index, footed far below in spring-greening brush, plastered on high with fresh snow. There was our old antagonist, Nordgipfel, and the Middle Peak, climbed just once, by Pete and Fearless Fred in 1950, and the Main, or South Peak, 5979 feet, 2 miles distant for a crow, perhaps twice that for us.

The traverse was on!

We'd broken the back of it in gaining 4700 feet (gross, a bit more than the net) from camp, and now faced naught but fun, romping around the horseshoe. The new snow would require more time than my estimate, we might not reach the top of Index until 2 o'clock or even 3, yet that would leave 6 hours of daylight, more than plenty for the quick run down to Lake Serene and Paul's car.

At 11 o'clock, sunflashes igniting white cliffs of Index, snow

underfoot a brilliance of crystals a-flame, we began the grand tour, pausing often to click cameras at alpine trees erupting green from fields of clean white, cornices jutting over the cirque void, and ever-changing perspectives of the Index Aiguilles.

The ridge dropped gradually to a 4800-foot saddle and a particularly fine view. From there, to round a 5300-foot secondary summit, we plowed benches that would be ponds and heather meadows come summer. Progress was slow, boots sinking deep. A spur from the secondary summit blocked our way and we plugged 400 feet to the top, expecting to return to the horseshoe crest and resume ridge-walking. Wrong. The crest was serrate. No ridge-walking today.

We plunged to a cozy nook to begin sidehilling. Wrong. Beyond was a minor spur and when we climbed that, another nook, another spur. No sidehilling today.

On the ~~10000~~ flats we sank merely to the calf. On the ~~constant~~ ups and downs the stepkicker (pit-wallower) was buried to thighs, could advance only by shoving and grunting. Even descending was hard labor. We changed the lead frequently, the exhausted front man falling to the rear to follow the trench.

Hours passed. The snow seemed to be getting softer; legs and guts certainly were. No more brilliance of <sup>sun-bursting</sup> crystals, no more blueness in thickening sky.

We hadn't seen the aiguilles since the 4800-foot saddle. Our views were strictly south over headwaters of the Tolt to Phelps, whose wire-gold caves awaited, and <sup>Big</sup> ~~Si~~ Si. Out in cloudless lowlands shone Lake Washington

and Lake Sammamish; ~~and~~ above the <sup>m</sup> ~~mountain~~ <sup>stood</sup> Cougar Mountain. With a telescope I might almost have spotted the 200-meter hut. Was Betty, now, looking from the mountain toward us? How was she feeling? Had she vomited again this morn<sup>n</sup>ing? As close as I could figure, the night I brought home my first suit-and-tie paycheck she got pregnant.

I felt tenderness for the little mother of Cougar Mountain — and damn well wished I were with her. At 2 o'clock, when we should <sup>ve</sup> ~~have~~ been approaching the summit of Index, we didn't know where the hell we were and flopped in mush to eat lunch. Soaked to waists yet thirsty, here our canteens went dry, henceforth only snow to moisten mouths. And wind blew <sup>available</sup> and clouds lowered and snowflakes slapped faces. Shit! This was no fun.

The squall passed but clouds hung heavy, ready any moment to coagulate into pure concentrated meanness. Ahead rose a 5200-foot summit, too steep to go over. However, unless the planet had swung out of orbit and 1 plus 1 no longer equalled 2, once beyond it we'd surely be on Index. Powered by hope we plugged upward to a final spur and at 3 o'clock gasped onto the crest, dashed-staggered through a patch of trees, and for true, for sure, again saw Index. Dear God!

We'd been sweating and straining 4 hours from Persis, gaining a gross (not net) of perhaps 1500 feet, for a day's total of 6200 feet — not what a rational person undertakes for an early-spring conditioning walk. And where were we? At 4800 feet, lower than Persis. And still a crow-flying 3/4 mile from Index. Silent, we looked <sup>over</sup> ~~down to~~ a cold basin — doubtless a charming retreat in July, creeks babbling, flowers waving — and up up up

the 1500 steep feet of white morass between basin and summit.

It was not an hour to sit upon the ground and sing sad songs. One chorus of groans and we flung weary bodies upward. The certain knowledge the mountain had run out of evil surprises, this was positively the last hill, the end of cruel and unusual punishment, gave strength and cheer. And the merciful Lord granted time off for good behavior. Rounding onto gentle slopes of the summit ridge we walked from deep swamp into thin, light powder and naked rocks.

We walked in wonder. Scattered alpine shrubs were fretworks of hoarfrost. Giant cornices overhung fluted snow walls of the east face. Clouds had mostly melted, sky was mainly blue, low sun bright. At 5 o'clock there was no more up and we looked down to white crags of Middle Peak and Nordgipfel, and far far down to the Skykomish River.

✓ In the valley, as on Cougar Mountain, alders and maples bare-limbed a few weeks ago now were interlacing canopies of new-green leaves, dogwoods wore great white flowers, wild currants were radiant with red blossoms, and on the forest floor yellow violets and trillium were blooming, ferns uncurling fresh fronds. From hoarfrost, powder, cornices, fluted snow walls, and freezing wind we looked down to springtime.

We'd done the Terrific Persdex Traverse and deserved a celebration sackout and badly needed one after 11 hours on the hoof, gaining 7700 very gross feet. But though the way home was easy, a simple matter of following Paul down the dog route he'd climbed last summer, we were pooped to the verge of collapse and still 6000 feet high in winter with night 4 hours away. At 5:30, between-clouds horizontal shafts marking the sun's approach to the

We know  
(if only in  
imagination  
could we see)  
that

sword

^



western horizon, we backtracked the summit ridge to the head of the descent couloir. And stared.

"My gosh!" said Paul ~~saying~~. "It sure didn't look like that last summer."

A cold-shadowed, cliff-walled chute of incredibly steep snow, that was our easy way home. We'd feel a shudder underfoot, hear a groan of mountain coming apart, and be engulfed in a roar.

"There's another gully along the ridge a way," said Paul. "Shorter."

Hope!

~~Hope~~ "A lot steeper, though." No hope.

A classic trap, the more perfectly admirable because we walked into it unsuspecting. The book says an experienced climber always can sense danger in time to turn back; either the book needed revision or we did. Our choices were two. Forward into the chute — an avalanche. And retreat? Somewhere on the horseshoe we'd be caught by night. Exhausted, soaked, no chance of building a fire, we'd huddle together in the snow, praying dawn came before shivering stopped.

Without discussion I took frantic action. I tied into the rope <sup>120-foot</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>with</sup> Paul ~~and~~ Krup <sup>and they</sup> jammed axes deep for a stout double belay and I stepped downward onto the precipice, kicking and wallowing, daring the slope to avalanche. One ropelength was enough — the new snow was inert muck solidly glued to a raincrust. (What if we'd had the bad luck of good weather, basking all day in hot sun?)

We unroped and joyously sat down to glissade — and asses stuck in bathtubs. So we plunged — and the crust under the slop was not strong

enough to hold body weight but was sharp enough to bruise shins as we struggled thigh-deep in garbage.

The couloir debouched onto an open, sloping shelf and we descended leftward in chill shadows of Index walls, warmed within by sunset-glowing Skykomish forests. A five-throated yell! There, 1500 feet below, was the end of sorrow, the start of trail — the white plain of frozen Lake Serene, so close we could spit on it.

Tom was twitching with impatience. He surveyed steep forest leading to the basin and said, "A cinch — we can go straight to the lake."

"NO!" cried Paul. "Don't even think of it!"

During a fall storm in 1946 two hikers had disappeared on Index. Last summer their skeletons had been found below tree-hidden cliffs on Tom's proposed line of descent. Paul, having helped evacuate the bones, was convincing.

The regular climbing route wasn't much longer anyway. We plunged <sup>the shelf</sup> down onto the ridge separating the lake cirque from the cirque of <sup>eastward-draining</sup> Index Creek. The gentle crest abruptly dove into vertical forest. The others waited while Tom and I went ahead. He now was ~~thoroughly~~ angered by the obstinacy of Persdex and when I stopped, doubtful, ~~he~~ continued over the brink, out of sight.

No sound. "How's it look?" I yelled.

No filthy language — a bad sign. "Uh, well, actually, not too good."

"Okay," I yelled, "Let's look for a way around."

No splutters of rage — "Uh, well, actually, I'd just as soon not have

to climb back up."

In shouts we discussed the situation. The forest scramble of summer was now a snow cliff. However, trees were closely spaced and Tom had the 60-foot nylon (the "Sir Donald rope," we called it; after that climb we'd bought a 120-footer and cut it in two lengths ideal for such routes as the Northwest Ridge) and felt he could tree-crawl and rappel safely to the pass, only 400 feet down. But we agreed five people blind-staggering clumsy would get dangerously tangled. Tom, anyway not sure he could up-climb what he'd down-slid, would take the quick way. I'd seek another.

In parting I yelled, "You be damn careful!"

"I will! I will!"

Wearily I returned upward and reported. Paul and Krup moaned. Franz was indignant.

"We've got a 120-foot rope. Why can't we follow Tom?"

I was indignant at a new boy questioning my decision. I gave a curt answer ("Because I say so!") and walked off to find a route from the ridge onto the shelf — and was stopped by a short cliff belt. Shit! I started up our descent trough. Paul and Krup fell in behind. Franz stood thinking. Tom was too far below to be caught. <sup>I</sup> had the rope. He followed, glum.

Franz struck me as a typical ~~wealthy, hearty~~ Easterner. Why the hell had Tom invited so complete an outsider to share Persdex? Presumably to study him as a possible partner for future big climbs. That was okay, I didn't envy friends their moves toward greatness. But damned if I wanted strangers fouling up my fun. Moreover, a disturbing suspicion nagged. At

camp in Proctor Creek, when we were drinking Krup's beer and three of us were laughing like idiot children at thoughts of crazy tomorrow, and Franz was uneasily slumming, obviously considering Tom the only true gentleman in this gang of Western barbarians, Tom had been exceptionally sedate and his language uncommonly clean. Franz was a wrecker.

Up, up the ridge 400 feet to the end of the cliff belt, off onto the shelf, and immediately down, down to the bottom. Shit! We couldn't drop directly to Index Creek. Between shelf-brink fringe of cedar trees and valley-floor snows was an airiness — we didn't have to see the cirque headwall to know it was there. We'd have to march directly away from our goal, Lake Serene, traversing the shelf to a break in the headwall, if any.

Discussion unnecessary, three barbarians commenced the traverse. The Easterner's civilized facade fractured. "Why," asked furious Franz, "Can't we go straight down?"

"Because it's a goddamn cliff!"

"Can't be much. The valley isn't that far."

"You're right. One jump will do it."

I had no time to fiddle with Eastern fools. We'd blundered by dropping to the deeply-dissected bottom of the shelf, a succession of plunges into gullies, struggles out of gullies. Sun was gone from the world, night near, and

The gullies were killing us and I turned toward the smoothness far above. Immersed in steep slop I swam upward — and every few yards slid down the trench and bumped against Paul, A small fir, the only solid object in the white swamp, was my goal, my hope. Closer, slowly closer,

both hands and boots loose from the slope and I

back

was was

nearly dislodging him.

fearing I'd slip at the last second and carry away <sup>both</sup> Paul and Krup. I couldn't do the swim again. Nor could they. Paul, the ever-cheerful Rover Boy, was dull of eye. Krup, whose mouth never before <sup>had</sup> stopped flapping in the 3 years I'd known him, was dumb. I lunged for a branch, pulled myself hand over hand to the trunk, climbed to the top, and leapt out onto gentle <sup>smooth</sup> slopes of the upper shelf.

Press hot face into cold crystals, a marvelous soft pillow, and fill burning mouth with sweet ice. Krup and Paul fell beside me on the ~~rough white~~ white bed.

After a while I asked, "Where's Franz?"

While I'd been busy <sup>swimming</sup> ~~barrowing~~, they'd watched him disappear through the fringe of cedars, over the brink of the headwall.

"Oh God!"

I should <sup>ive</sup> ~~have~~ overcome weariness and dislike and patiently explained <sup>lower</sup> the structure of a double cirque and why we didn't need to see the headwall <sup>was there.</sup> to know it ~~was there.~~ He would descend from cedar to cedar and if very lucky would find continuous greenery and be waiting with Tom when we arrived. But almost certainly there would be a gap. He'd clear it with a jump — and thus cut off retreat. Farther down would be another gap and he'd hang from a cedar, steadily weakening, one option left. A desperate leap to a tree a dozen feet below, branches slipping through fingers. This time, no picked-clean skeleton. We'd know where to search for the cold flesh.

Thus the denouement of the Terrific Persdex, of the months gazing

from Cougar Mountain. And thus the denouement of the dreaming years, the glory years. I remembered the scree island in the Graywolf, the rope pulling me toward a swandive from Huckleberry, the crevasse on St. Helens, the step through space on Castle, the cliff glissade on Thompson. And comrades falling from walls, sliding out of control down snowfields, tumbling in avalanches, disappearing in clouds of rockfall. None of us had been badly hurt and we enjoyed telling lowlanders more people are killed in bathtubs than on peaks, the most dangerous part of a climb is the highway.

And all along we knew. Shun the ~~company~~<sup>close companionship</sup> of death and it's not a climb, it's a hike. We celebrated life on the exciting edge, flaunting our victory over fear. Yet for many to win, some must lose. No sport, this, but a rite, empty of meaning without human sacrifice. Franz was paying for my hundred peaks.

"He thought we were gutless," I said. "Every time we came to a tough spot we turned chicken. That's how he saw it."

"I don't care how brave anybody thinks I am," said Paul. "All I want is to come home alive from every peak I ever climb."

We plodded-tottered-trenched across the shelf. In the valley we'd search until dark, then bivouac — 8 hours to dawn, fighting to avoid becoming ourselves, sacrifices. As dread was growing <sup>that</sup> there was no way down ~~to the~~ valley we spotted a gully breaching the headwall and plunged to the entry. And suddenly saw far behind us, low on the shelf, a human figure approaching. Tom's route had failed; thank God he'd managed to get back up. No! It was Franz!

The snotty Eastern son of a bitch! He had a lot of nerve not dying!

We didn't wait but dropped to Index Creek and again faced a climb — to the pass and Tom — dear God, we hoped Tom.

With benefit of trench Franz caught up. I greeted him brusquely. "Why don't you kick a few?"

"Guess I have that coming," he gasped, "After the stunt I pulled."

What? No attempt to brazen it out? Was the haughty bastard apologizing? That didn't fit the pattern.

He wallowed a track — slowly, tangle-legged. All day he'd been the strongest of us and now was stumbling. He couldn't even hold the lead. Falling in the snow <sup>for a</sup> ~~resting~~, he told the story. The critical deviation from our scenario was that when he came to the first gap he pondered, and pondered, and refused the irrevocable leap.

"Doing pull-ups in the cedars, didn't think I'd make it <sup>back up.</sup> Arms giving out. Fingers still trembling — hardly can hold the ax."

No longer a stranger. Tom's instincts had been sound. Franz would be a friend.

At 9 o'clock we crept to the 3000-foot pass, day utterly gone but night not complete, snow reinforcing the fading light of sky. Tom materialized from darkness with smart remarks about hikers who aren't satisfied with two summits and a dozen miles of snowplowing and have to wipe out the whole countryside. We commented on his ancestry and sex habits.

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Our elevation gain now totalled nearly 9000 feet, an incredible labor on the 4th of May, so early in the months'-long process of hardening bodies for summer's challenges. It certainly wasn't what Tom and I had in mind.

No leisure to marvel at godlike strength. We plunged toward the lake 500 feet below — and with the first step every muscle in my left leg knotted in cramps and with the next step every muscle in my right leg followed suit and I fell, helpless, writhing and laughing. There was no water to wash down salt pills, hadn't been for 7 hours, so hysterical Tom grabbed my feet and dragged me to the lakeshore, where I squirmed on my stomach to a lead of water cupped in blue ice, gulped pills, and was instantly cured.

We ran across the dimming white plain, ghostly walls of Index looming thousands of feet above in night, the enormous fan of avalanche snow sprawling over the plain halfway to the outlet — what awful thunderings sometimes shook this place now silent, solemn, holy.

Breathlessly to the edge of forest, walking from slop onto good brown dirt. We weren't home yet. Failure to find the boot-built trail, a ladderway of roots and rocks threading through cliffs, would still force a bivouac. We fanned out five abreast, searching dark woods for tread.

At 9:30 a shout. "I got it!" By flashlight we clambered down the ladderway and began the absolutely final ascent of Terrific Persdex, up a bulldozer track through a clearcut.

I was walking alone, the others having paused. So near a day of winter and danger, the spring night was poignant with perfume of flowers and pollens and new leaves, music of frogs and waterfalls. I buried face in

a creek and cold liquid flowed not into mouth but into me. I remembered  
*times past;* being so hungry and dry blueberries exploded like tart bombs inside my  
 brain, being so sun-blasted a sudden breeze blew right through flesh. The  
 body must be tortured to the point of destruction for the spirit to <sup>directly</sup> know ~~the~~  
 aromas and tastes and feel of Earth. Life is never lived so intensely as  
 on the border of death.

At 10:30, <sup>beside</sup> ~~by~~ Paul's car, <sup>I</sup> ~~and~~ lay on my back and stared into stars,  
 beyond stars.

22 April 1974

1952

Chapter ~~23~~<sup>24</sup>

KILLJOY

I'd spent the morning on my favorite project, clearing brush from the railroad spur; next spring, when the kid was big enough to be wheeled around, it would be his or her first wilderness trail. Now, sweat drying in afternoon sun, I sprawled in grass by the 200<sup>y</sup>-meter hut, tracing our skyline route from Persis to Index. Cumulonimbus billows were sprouting all along the Cascades — some of the guys ~~might be~~<sup>were</sup> catching a bit of rain.

I should be too. August 10 and not climbing! Blasphemy. Well, if it weren't for the forest fire we'd be on American Border. Actually, according to the master plan, I should be crashing through a Canadian jungle toward Sir Sanford or the Adamants, or plodding over glaciers of the Bugaboos, but I'd started at the Post-Intelligencer too late to earn a vacation. Next year a week, and two the year after. McKinley? He was a president of the United States who got shot.

Nobody could say I hadn't grown up. Though still wearing dirty cords and wool shirt on the inside, the outside uniform wasn't too painful. The System kindly relented and didn't require my brain; the most demanding hour of the workday was playing cutthroat pinochle at lunchtime with two fellow errand boys. However, I'd donned all the customary shackles: suit-and-tie

and try  
to save  
the nation  
from General  
Eisenhower  
and  
Mad Dog  
Nixon.

job, a house and 3 acres and a mortgage. I'd even entered the feuds of "the greens and the blues," joining the American Civil Liberties Union and for the first time in my life registering to vote, in order, come fall, to support Adlai. A friend gave us a kitten which Betty, old proofreader, named Etaoin Shrdlu. At the <sup>Humane Society</sup> pound we bought a compromise puppy that satisfied Betty's desire for a fuzzy little doggy and shortly would satisfy my desire for a great tawny beast. His name? Tamburlaine, the Scourge of God. Breed? Scythian Shepherd. By Christmas we'd have a baby. Scratch one mountain bum.

Yet if tamed 40 hours a week, I'd still have a hundred days a year to go wild. Betty always had been glad to stay home a certain proportion of weekends while I went walking. Nor would she, either, be trapped; my folks were slathering to babysit their ~~for~~ grandchild. Come 1953 and I'd implement a revised master plan. The disaster that was 1952 — well, we could never forget but we'd swallow it and go on.

The May 17-18 experience climb of Pugh was a romp. Morning sickness gave Betty a welcome new excuse to poop out. The leader, Mustache Jack, and such other friends as Rebel and Tom and Chairman Ward sustained <sup>the</sup> hilarity. Weather was <sup>splendid</sup> ~~glorious~~ and North Cascades views magnificent, marred only by fresh clearcutting <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ the Whitechuck valley.

But home that night, the radio, the news. Art was in a crevasse on St. Helens. As we were giggling atop Pugh a hole opened under his boots and he fell — unroped and carrying the party's only rope. Last Wednesday

evening, at the Climbing Course lecture, I'd been kidding him and his two buddies about the plaid tam o' shanter<sup>s</sup> they'd bought on a Boy Scout trip to Canada, and the glissade patches of bright-colored awning canvas they'd sewn to their pants. They were "my boys," beginners during my term as Climbing Chairman and now being groomed for leadership. (In 1949, my own second year, I also had stepped into a hidden crevasse on St. Helens, also unroped. Betty and Chuck laughed; they'd never before seen the ludicrous expression on the face of a dying man.)

The investigation conducted by Cam as Safety Chairman compounded our shock: the death was not "clean." Seeking help, Art's buddies were lucky, they thought, to encounter another party of Mountaineers led by a fellow whose exploits in the Alps they'd often heard directly from his own big mouth. As the most experienced climber on the scene, Alpine Hero took charge of the rescue, quickly botched it, and ran down the mountain wailing all hope was lost. Later medical examination revealed Art lived many hours after being abandoned.

We could not merely mourn Art; the basic law that binds the climbing community had been broken. The Board of Trustees met in a series of special sessions to consider the outraged Climbing Committee's demand that Alpine Hero be expelled from the club. He denied any wrongdoing and threatened to sue, an idle bluster ignored by the Board until, queerly, ~~the~~ a certain Elder Statesman emerged as his ally.

For Godsake how could ~~the president~~ <sup>Elder Statesman</sup> — who, more important, was a former Climbing Chairman — take sides with so despicable a criminal? To be sure, ~~this president~~ <sup>he'd</sup> always ~~had~~ been ~~so~~ <sup>current</sup> hostile toward the Climbing

I didn't know him personally, had only ~~talked~~ talked to him once, in the spring of 1949, when I was pestering everyone for information about Chimney Rock. 334 He brushed me aside, saying he'd climbed the peak, it was nothing special. But as I learned, he'd not climbed the peak. Why should he lie?

Committee — that was irrelevant now, we thought. Old companions spoke vaguely of his "many disappointments" during climbing years, as if these somehow were an explanation, an excuse. <sup>Elder statesman</sup> The mind of ~~the president~~ was a mystery; we only knew the issue of a climber's responsibility was submerged by his vendetta. At the final Board meeting, where the "trial" fizzled and Alpine Hero escaped scotfree, <sup>smirking Elder Statesman</sup> ~~the smirking president~~ gave canary-eating evidence of precisely knowing the prosecution strategy adopted by the Climbing Committee. Afterward, Cam and Ward and I walked in a daze from clubrooms to coffeeshop.

, leading the parliamentary maneuvering to overwhelm justice by a mass of procedural quibbles,

Cam said, "Well, we've got a fink on the committee."

Somberly we discussed each member and reduced the candidates to two first-timers. And just then one of them said hello with a phony air of "what a coincidence" and sat in the next booth, ears flapping. And Ward recalled seeing <sup>Elder statesman</sup> ~~the president~~ and Fink in close consultation at the place they all three worked.

Art was dead. Alpine Hero infested our mountains and club. A former Climbing Chairman had gone sour. One of our supposed own had turned informer. I guessed that next spring, on receiving a notice to renew club dues, I'd find a better way to spend the money.

Memorial Day, <sup>enthusiasm</sup> spirit lacking to plan any grander venture, Betty, Yorick, and I hauled packs from the North Fork Skykomish to a camp in snow and dense fog on a wooded ridgetop knoll. He and I set out to mark a way to Lake Blanca to expedite tomorrow's ascent of Goblin. Sidehilling snow, we were surprised to intersect a line of fresh ice-ax holes and

bootprints. Two climbers, and they were wearing Bramanis and thus obviously were <sup>our</sup> friends, since oldtimers and outsiders and neophytes remained enslaved by tricounis. Who were they? We hurried to catch up and found the track joined by two more climbers, also in Bramanis. A lot of our buddies had the same idea, sadness was going to be dispelled by a jolly reunion. Then entered prints of two more Bramani-booted climbers — and Yorick and I stopped, stared at each other, and returned to camp, where Betty, <sup>for the last hour</sup> hearing our voices <sup>n</sup> now here, now there, now here again, had been wondering why we were marching around and around the knoll. The laughter was as good medicine as climbing Goblin would <sup>ve</sup> ~~have~~ been. The hills had taken one of us, the hills would be our cure.

However, June, when momentum should <sup>ve</sup> ~~have~~ developed, was a stand-still month. The only two weekends of decent weather I was, as boss of the practices, busy teaching. One free weekend Lardy Bob and I started off with Red Jim, whom we didn't see much anymore because he'd finished his forestry degree and was working in the woods south of Rainier, to climb Triumph, in the North Cascades. Clouds being ominous, we shifted to Little Tahoma, and rain beginning, to the Goat Rocks. In the Saturday night deluge we sacked out in the Paradise guide hut with the Whittaker twins, who had the <sup>Rainier guide-service</sup> concession for the summer, and drank beer and applauded <sup>Jim's</sup> ~~the~~ Rivoli routine.

June 28 Tom and Betty and I gathered at Lardy Bob's house for a new start, American Border the goal. Sky was black, the forecast catastrophic. Why drive and hike hours for misery? Cougar Mountain

brush was closer.

The 3-day Fourth of July holiday belatedly got the season rolling. Yorick (furthering forestry studies by spending the summer working for the Forest Service out of Darrington, but having the holiday open) and I joined Tom, leading an experience climb of Spire Point, and with a half-dozen others powered through Sulphur Creek brush and up steep forest to a camp in 6000-foot heather meadows. Snow began Friday night and pinned us under a liferaft sail until <sup>a</sup>Sturday evening, when clouds parted and Spire and <sup>^</sup>mighty Dome majestically emerged, sunset-glowing. Sunday we left camp at 3:30 in freezing wind, powder hissing over ice-hard crust, watched dawn pinken Gletschergipfel, and in bright sun crossed the ridge onto the Dana Glacier and scrambled up the granite splinter of 8264-foot Spire, climbed only several times before. Gazing north to Eldorado and Forbidden and the Pickets, east to Big Banana, which Lardy Bob was doing this weekend, I rejoiced. The wilderness here would last a few years, the great peaks would keep me content if I never went North again.

Next Sunday, home from a practice trip, once more the damn radio. Tom and Fearless Fred and Dick Berge, descending in darkness from a weather-defeated attempt on the unclimbed Baring nordwand, were halted by a dropoff. Dick yelled he was checking a possible way down. Then silence. In the morning Tom and Fred found him at the base of the cliff. (In that last moment, treading air, did he feel the same surprise as I on Castle?)

Dick was new to our bunch and most of us barely were getting to know him, yet he was the sort one recognizes at first meeting as an instant



friend, to be ~~explored and~~ treasured over years to come; the loss was the more poignant because of memories we now would ~~never~~ <sup>never</sup> have. He left a young widow, and a baby. (A baby. Ours was due Christmas.)

A second sacrifice in 8 weeks numbed wills. However, the Course must go on and Lardy Bob was committed to lead Rainier. Saturday, July 26, Betty and I hiked with the crowd to Camp Muir; at this age of minus-6 months our kid made 10,000 feet. Aside from that, though, my 100th summit since joining the Mountaineers did nothing to restore joy. The route passed under slag and corruption of Gibraltar's hellish cliffs. Twice I was hit by falling rocks. A stupendous icicle collapsed above and a barrage of water-melon-sized chunks of ice nearly wiped out me and my whole team.

Nevertheless, Bob and I agreed at Muir to take another shot at American Border, in 2 weeks. Staying home, regrouping, the weekend after Rainier, I felt the old excitement stirring. Added to Spire and Persdex, the remote and rarely-climbed peak would give my 1952 bag a bit of respectability. We didn't call Tom; for him it was too soon.

The North Pacific High moved over the Northwest hot and dry and loggers began torching off timber. Monday, August 4, I read in the papers about the fire up Swamp Creek, our approach to American Border, but paid scant attention. Friday night I called Bob to fix a morning departure time.

He'd checked with the Forest Service and the Swamp Creek road was definitely closed and he was amazed I hadn't wised up to the fact. He'd already switched his ambition to the West Ridge of Stuart, 2500 feet of clean granite, and lined up a terrific party. Rover Paul, who because of a

job hadn't climbed in months, was free and eager. Dusty, companion of our beginner days until caught in the Korean draft, was freshly sprung from the Army and hungry for hills. A great group. But the peak?

"Christ!" I said. "Stuart? In August? The east side of the mountains is too bloody hot, especially in this heat wave."

"Where the heck you think you'll find a cool climb? Anyway, it's not so bad over there if you get an early start and carry lots of water."

"You'll scorch your fingers. You'll melt your tennis shoes. You'll shrivel up like raisins."

Lardy Bob and Rover Paul and Dusty went to Stuart without me. Recruiting a party for an interesting climb was impossible this late; instead of some dull scramble with a Mountaineer mob I'd sooner mess around on the logging railroad.

Sunday afternoon I lay in the grass teetering between contentment and restlessness. Despite 31 mountain days this year there'd been so many compulsory site-scouting and practice trips I'd climbed only 7 peaks, disgraceful after successive seasons of 20, 30, 23, and 20. Well, dammit, 10 or so weekends and maybe 6 or 7 peaks remained before winter and in 1953 I'd cut loose from the club and reach a new level of freedom. And to look <sup>at</sup> matters another way, in addition to the 31 high-mountain days of 1952 we'd had 171 Cougar Mountain days.

Cumulonimbus billows swelled higher and I saw they were not actually growing, rather were pushing from the east. Three times the height of the mountains themselves, the towering white rank, gleaming

in afternoon sun against blue sky, continuous north and south as far as I could see, advanced to the edge of the range and hung stationary above Si and Phelps and Index and Persis and ~~Whitcomb~~ <sup>Pitchuck.</sup> I'd never witnessed such a spectacle.

Monday noon I was called to the phone at the P-I. It was one of the rescue alerters. A message had come from Dusty. Sunday morning he'd stayed in camp at Long's Pass. This morning Bob and Paul hadn't returned so he hiked out and drove to a phone. The word was: stand by.

In late afternoon, another call. Still no sign. Get ready, we're going.

Cam picked me up on Cougar Mountain and we drove over Snoqualmie Pass to the Cle Elum Ranger Station. A couple dozen people were there, half Mountaineers, half strangers from golly knew where. Ome, who'd been dragging the wounded off peaks since the 1930s, and Otto, a doctor and superb climber with years of experience in Alps and Cascades, were in charge. Only Wolf, third member of the triumvirate heading the recently-organized Mountain Rescue Council, was missing, away on a business trip.

The ranger said there'd been a hell of a thunderstorm yesterday. The scenario was <sup>obvious</sup> ~~clear~~: hard rain, a rush to get down, wet rock, ~~precipitation~~ a slip.

Somebody wondered about lightning — it wasn't in the picture. We'd all been scared by the flash and bang and some had known the stiffening of

feeling  
too out  
of condition  
for the  
climb,

ropes, hair standing on end, sparks leaping from ice axes, the "buzzing of the bees," but the Cascades aren't a lightning range, not like the Tetons, and a person always has plenty of warning. The Sierra Clubbers killed on Bugaboo? One could understand their taking risks on a famous peak to which they could ~~not~~<sup>it</sup> soon return. Stuart, though, was close to home and nothing to brag about and Bob and Paul would start down at the first rumble. Perhaps not quick enough to escape the cloudburst.

We bounced along ruts of the North Fork Teanaway road, ~~which~~ at 4200 feet, below the little step into the headwaters basin, <sup>it</sup> deteriorated to a jeep track. Packs on backs we hurried upward in forest by flashlight, until, at 1 o'clock Tuesday morning, Ome decided we'd better sleep a while. Tom and several others continued to Long's Pass, 6200 feet, to watch for flashlights or a fire.

I didn't sleep, despite having unrolled my bag on a sponge-soft rotten log. The rising call took me from the fury of sharp-jawed red ants into groggy ascent of the miners' jeep-bulldozer track. Night thinned, flashlights blinked out. I'd been here Memorial Day of 1949, plugging steps in clean snow; these arid rainshadow slopes of serpentine scree <sup>s</sup>parcely dotted with parched alpine trees and browning grass were foreign, hateful. A damn athlete was setting the pace and I gasped and wheezed.

Shouts from the pass. The cruel pace accelerated. I staggered onto the crest, morning sky fresh blue, sun warming the world, saw serene Stuart across the gulf of Ingalls Creek, and knew nothing awful could have happened. A stumble, a disabling minor injury.

Confusion at the pass. Tom gone. People scurrying. Shouts from below. What's happening? Cam gone.

Somebody says Tom got a signal from somewhere. Everybody is dashing down to Ingalls Creek.

From below I hear the groan of a cow with the bellyache — Bob's patented mountain yell. Thank God! They're in the valley. Possibly with a broken leg. Couldn't be anything much worse. I'll have a few comments when we meet.

George, a top climber of a decade ago, was stationed at the pass with one of the two walkie-talkies borrowed from the police; he'd be our relay to the Coast Guard communications truck soon to be arriving at the Teanaway road to connect us to the outside.

Everybody else was <sup>excitedly</sup> joyously running down, leaving packs, which would interfere with stretcher duty; we'd not be gone long anyway. However, the hasty group forgot an important detail. Someone had taken the head-and-shoulders half of the ingenious two-piece aluminum-tube carrying-straps-attached stretcher invented to replace the traditional steel-tube-and-mesh Stokes, but no one the longer and more cumbersome hips-legs half. Ome asked if I'd mind. Certainly not. What I did mind was that to share the labor he assigned me as partner none other than unspeakable Fink, suddenly attached to Ome like a barnacle. Ome was too sweet a guy to believe evil of any man; he'd have to learn for himself. Realizing he was washed up on the Climbing Committee and, discovering ~~the president~~ <sup>Elder Statesman</sup> was a loser, Fink obviously had transferred hopes for fame and respect and power from climbing

to rescuing.

We started down and Ome, needed on the scene and unhindered, left me behind. After about 10 seconds, so did Fink. Though no trail led to the valley the slopes were easy and open — except every damn boulder and every damn tree and every damn log grasped tubing and dangling straps of the damn stretcher. I fell, and rose to fall again, and again.

Smoke rose from the forest beside Ingalls Creek. If Bob and Paul had a fire they couldn't be in bad shape. A sprained ankle would explain the bivouac. Which of the idiots would get a free ride home in the stretcher? I'd make sure it wasn't purely free, I'd burn their stupid ears, I'd remind how I warned against Stuart.

The stretcher and a tree lovingly embraced and I yanked viciously to part them — and dove off a cliff and smashed on a slab and skidded headfirst into banging boulders and clawing thorns. Jesus H. Christ! What's busted? Nothing. Pulsing lump on head. Blood on cheeks. Scraped hands and elbows. All-over bruises and contusions. Alone, abandoned. Dammit, I'm mortal too! And maybe hurt worse than Bob or Paul.

I smelled smoke and hollered. No answer. I hadn't seen anybody for a half-hour, didn't know which way they'd gone through the forest. I boulder-hopped Ingalls Creek and the goddamn stretcher grabbed a snag and threw me in the water. I crawled to the bank and shoved through brush, cussing the whole shithead bunch enjoying the reunion with Paul and Bob while I shrieked and bled alone.

Above murmur of water, a babble of voices. The bastards were

having a party. I lurched from tree to tangling tree, in tears from pain and rage and self-pity. I was squirming over a log when Cam, once my friend, came walking toward me cool and nonchalant.

I was struggling, eyes full of sweat, heart full of hate.

He said, "Paul's dead."

Bob was in the center, Otto dripping a bottle of plasma into his arm, friends offering bits of food from pockets, ghouls clicking cameras.

I wandered away, sick, into a patch of shade, and fell down. Cam followed and I asked details.

What happened?

Struck by lightning on the summit.

How did he get down?

By himself, that's all we know. ~~He doesn't feel like talking~~

How is he?

Dehydrated, in shock. Legs paralyzed. Terribly burned around the waist, where electricity ran along the rope from Paul. Ghastly hole where the knot was. Feet no doubt badly burned too — they'll have to cut the boots off in the hospital.

What are we waiting for? Why don't we get him out of here?

In the stampede from town a critical portion of the newfangled stretcher, had been forgotten, the device that held the two halves together, ↓

No worry, ~~thanks to the MRC syndicate, to which everybody belonged~~

None other than the U.S. Air Force would deliver the missing part.

Sure enough a Flying Fortress appeared in the stratosphere. Above a distant ridge we spotted a midair flash, as of sun reflecting from a scrap of falling aluminum. The Fortress went away. "Pilot to base. Mission accomplished. Stretcher unit successfully dropped on the Cascade Range of Washington State." So much for pinpoint bombing.

George, up at the pass, told us a Coast guard helicopter was en route from Port Angeles. The stretcher was ~~blacked out~~ haywired together, Bob loaded aboard, and we carried him downvalley in forest to a meadow judged by the experts suitable for a landing.

Ome's thoughts now turned to Paul and in scorching noon he led 20-odd unquestioning folk, with the stretcher, from the 5000-foot valley up sunbaked slopes toward the summit of Stuart, 9415 feet. Madness. Paul was in no hurry.

Tom and Dusty and I stayed. The MRC was a noble idea whose time had come and it was swell for climbers to be coordinated with the police and the military and their marvelous machines but we'd feel better ~~actually~~ <sup>personally</sup> seeing Lardy safely home. We gathered branches for a <sup>signal</sup> fire and hid from punishing sun to wait. Wounds concealed by clothing, Bob seemed normal — except for vague eyes, slow speech, general lassitude. Mainly he slept.

At sound of chop-chop-chop we lit dry branches, heaped on the green, and thick smoke rose to show our position and the direction of ground winds.

A toy it was, high in the sky, then bigger and louder, then a



roaring mass of dangerous metal swooping above treetops, circling and returning lower, and lower. The flailing monster dropped below treetops and crazily hurtled down a lane between tall firs, rotor blades inches from branches on either side, and slipped over tips of trees beyond the meadow.

Three plunges down the narrow alley, and one more — but now it went into a convulsion and stopped dead in midair, the hurricane from invisible blades driving ~~wilderness~~ grass and trees and smoke to a frenzy. One second only the enormous shuddering machine hovered, teetering from side to side, threatening to crush us four cowering in forest, then blasted off drunkenly and disappeared over a ridge. Bob, minutes from hospital, remained at the foot of Stuart.

Tom called George who called the Coast Guard Com Truck which called the helicopter — so close a minute earlier but not on our frequency. George relayed back the bad news. This meadow wouldn't work. The chopper could get in but not out. The pilot wanted us to move down the valley to another meadow. He'd try again in morning when the air was colder and thicker and not so cruddy with thermal ~~air~~ winds.

A third night for Bob without hospital care — and without sleeping bag and without food, all our gear at the pass.

Which meadow did the pilot have in mind? The sole description reached us through the miracle of modern electronics was "down the valley on the side of the ridge." There couldn't be more than a thousand meadows to choose from. Well, better worry about the destination later and meanwhile get started.

How? A travois was just the ticket. We'd never made one but had seen drawings in the manuals. With pocket knives we whittled off two creekside willows <sup>and found</sup> they were too limber to support a body. We selected the two smallest dead firs available <sup>and found that being</sup> sharp-tapered and thick-butted at this elevation, even unloaded they were too heavy to drag. Where in the mountain world exist ~~the correct~~ materials for building the famous ~~do~~ travois?

We pondered the prospect of the three of us, between now and tomorrow morning, hand-carrying the Lardy lump a mile, 2 miles, golly knew how many miles to the meadow of the pilot's heart's desire. Ome's bunch didn't have a walkie-talkie, we couldn't tell them to get their stupid asses down here.

Tuesday afternoon. We'd not slept in 32 hours, not eaten since last night's supper. The valley was an oven, baking enfeebled brains. We stared at the lump. The lump slept.

Voices woke us from a fugue. Three kids dashed into the meadow, a trail crew knowing there dang sure had to be a special reason for a helicopter performance like that. Now we were six and the pictures in the manuals were not totally unrealistic.

One of the crew, hearing our plans and looking at the sleeping lump, hesitantly suggested there might be a better way. Their employer, a Wenatchee Valley rancher and packer with a sideline as trail-maintenance contractor, had supplied them with a burro for carrying tools.

Tom and Dusty and I cheered.

The other kids were dubious. The animal never had been ridden,

though some had tried and maybe that was why he had the habit of glowering at people and grinding his teeth. Actually, he was no bargain as a cargo carrier — trouble every morning, trouble all day long. In the last month they'd had many occasions to recall the twinkling eye of their boss as he gave them the burro and told his name — Killjoy.

Tom and Dusty and I hoped. The three kids discussed. Killjoy was cantankerous, Killjoy was tricky, Killjoy was proud. But Killjoy wasn't mean. They agreed that for all the agony they sort of liked the surly beast.

They fetched the burro. At the sight of four strangers, Killjoy stopped. Flapped ears. He'd been forced to tolerate three — now seven? Perhaps discouraged by sheer numbers, he stood still, trembling, as one of Them was lifted onto his back. Eyes were wild, snout snorting steam. We held Bob tight, expecting Killjoy to buck.

What transpired in burro brain and soul? Was this the first time he'd been treated as "one of us"? The kids marveled. Killjoy accepted Bob.

Slowly down the trail moved the caravan. One kid scouted ahead to warn of rough spots. Another led Killjoy. Atop the little burro towered half-awake Lardy Bob, grasping horns of the pack saddle. On each side walked ~~two~~ of us, steadying Bob and guarding him from buffets by trees and brush. In a mile we passed the large meadow where the crew was camped — tempting, but in the valley bottom, not "on the side of the ridge."

At the edge of a black morass Killjoy balked. The kids explained he was mortally afraid of muck, they doubted he could be made to cross. Yet with friendly whisperings in ear he consented to try. In the middle of

the passage all four legs stuck. Up to calves ourselves we gripped Bob, expecting a panic. No. Eyes wide with fright, muscles quivering, the noble creature sank to belly, stoic in the moment of ultimate terror. We carried Bob over and gently extricated Hero Killjoy, expressing our gratitude and respect and love.

Down the valley into solid forest. Where, or where, was the meadow seen by that alien from outer space? The kids had been shyly insisting their camp was in the last large meadow they knew anything about. Afternoon was going fast. Bob was as brave as Killjoy but winces spoke of pain; he couldn't ride forever. We returned to the trail-crew camp. A huge meadow. Surely the Coast Guard could get in and out. Tom told George.

Tenderly the kids bedded Bob down in ~~the sleeping~~<sup>the</sup> tent, all their mattresses and blankets under and over him. Suppertime embarrassed them. The boss was a couple days overdue with supplies; food was mighty low. For Bob they dug out secret personal goodies — a can of peaches, a chocolate bar, a can of sardines. For the rest, including themselves, they emptied the pantry, filling a big pot with <sup>and</sup> Number Ten cans of stewed tomatoes ~~and~~ loaves of stale bread. The watery hoosh was much better than the nothing we'd brought.

In twilight the hoosh pot found other customers, drawn by campfire smoke. Singly they straggled in from above, having learned Stuart was no ~~simple~~ stroll on an August afternoon. Most were total strangers and I was astounded and dismayed to discover few were climbers, mainly they were hikers and fishermen. One was virtually barefoot, boots tied together with

string; he said he hadn't been in the mountains for years but reading about Art and Dick in the papers made him feel so bad he ~~joined~~<sup>enlisted in</sup> the MRC. That the likes of him should be on a rescue was discouraging. There are those who run after fire engines. And now, apparently, those who run after alpine corpses. Wolf and Ome and Otto had their work cut out eliminating thrillseekers and nuts and ghouls and bleeding hearts and Finks from a group they properly envisioned as the elite of Northwest climbers. Nearly half the summit party ~~joined us~~<sup>arrived</sup> by nightfall; I wondered how many more were scattered over the mountain, how many with sprained ankles, broken legs, fractured skulls. I wondered if we'd ever escape the valley, if we might be here until winter on a perpetual self-renewing rescue.

In darkness I found a cozy nook under a tree and ~~gladly~~ curled up to sleep. I shivered awake, oven day followed by refrigerator night, and joined the trail crew by the campfire. Again shivering, a body blocking radiation; squirm to a new position. Again awake shivering as the entire gang crept from cold nooks to form a snakelike coil around the flames, writhing and wiggling, briefly dozing.

Dawn. Instant heat of another lung-blistering day. Up to await the chopper. Wednesday, was it? Lightning Sunday. Phone call Monday. Killjoy Tuesday. Yes, Wednesday. At least we'd had some naps, if not real sleep. No breakfast, though — the kids had shot their wad.

Two hikers burst onto the scene, a reporter and photographer from the P-I (not that I knew them, nor they me) come 15 miles up Ingalls Creek in the night. Sickening to learn we were front-page news — why couldn't

the bloody damn city stay out of our private life? The happy young cub reporter acted like the whole affair had been staged to earn ~~his~~<sup>him</sup> his first byline. We'd not pressed Bob for details of Sunday and Monday. The P-I necrophiliacs had no qualms, brazenly pushed into the tent. Dumbly I followed, too groggy to obey my instinct to give them a Bramani in tender places. Bob didn't know what was happening and answered questions freely, if slowly, from some great distance.

The two-man team leapfrogged rapidly on delightful granite until mid-morning, barely noticing the streamers and curdles of weird cirrus. Then a darkening, bright lights and loud crackles and booms, and they huddled under an overhang to escape the burst of rain and hail. The strikes were close~~x~~ and they considered retreating. But flashes and crashes moved off, clouds thinned, blue appeared, sun shone. Wet rock slowed progress. Sky again was thickening. Should they turn back? Slippery pitches<sup>below</sup> would take a lot of time, maybe even rappels. The summit was near. No noise yet. The quickest, safest way to the valley was over the top and down the dog route.

Bob, in the lead, clambered up the final wall -- and thrilled with horror.

Unseen by them on the West Ridge, from the Columbia Plateau to the east had rolled a black-as-death world-swallowing cloud and the edge was yards away and closing. Bob half-hauled Paul to the summit and ran from the crest -- until rope drew taut on waist.

"Just a second!" yelled Paul. "Got to sign the register!"

He unlatched the big metal box beside the big metal plaque memorializing a long-ago death. A large mass of metal. He scribbled, dropped book in box, secured latches, and stood to follow Bob, a hundred feet off.

Precisely then the bolt struck.

Bob awoke in a deluge of rain and hail. Another bolt exploded, ground currents knocked him out. Awake, another blinding bolt, unconscious again. Another, and another, and another.

He crawled to Paul, poor weeping Paul, who'd taken the bolt direct and was sobbing about the girl he loved and never again would hold in his arms, about how his mother never would get over it, she'd always worried from the time he left for a climb until he walked in the door. He wanted to get back to girl, to mother, but couldn't, he was too tired, he hurt too much, he couldn't hang on. Bob begged him not to give up. Paul slept, And so did Bob.

He opened eyes under brilliant stars, lying on naked granite at 9415 feet, soaked clothing stiff with ice. And closed eyes.

Warm Monday dawn. He was alive. Dusty soon would be sending the alarm to Seattle, friends would arrive tonight, reach the summit Tuesday. But he couldn't last another summit night.

He crawled to Paul, dead Paul. He was worried about Paul's expensive new camera. Paul was proud of that, he'd worked hard and given up a lot of climbing weekends this spring and summer to earn the money, he wouldn't want to lose that. Bob put it in his rucksack. But didn't think

to take any of Paul's food or water and his own were gone. The last time forever he unroped from Paul and dragged paralyzed legs over frost-cracked granite blocks toward the false summit, the way of the dog route. He couldn't pull himself up to the false summit.

He knew nothing about Stuart's steep south slopes but had no choice and began lowering himself down a gully. He came to pitches whose bottoms he couldn't see and descended anyway. If stopped that was the end. So what? Another night on the mountain also would be the end.

All the hot Monday on the hazy edge of fainting he lowered himself by his arms and at last emerged from cliffs — and the beginning of the worst, slopes too gentle for gravity to do most of the work. Down talus and ~~brush~~<sup>grass</sup> on stomach. At dark he reached Ingalls Creek and drank, and drank trying to slake the fierce thirst of flesh dehydrated by electricity and sun, and lay by the stream and slept.

Tuesday dawn. Shouts. He summoned a feeble "MOO!" Tom answered with the loud imitation I heard. Tom was there, building a fire.

The summit party stumbled into camp. Haggard Cam, long legs tangling, fell by the creek, drank deep, and sprawled in the shade. I joined him and heard the story.

At dusk the survivors reached the top, and Paul. The first bolt certainly killed him instantaneously, if not the strike itself then the resulting fall that broke his neck. Bob had hallucinated the conversation in the storm; his still believing it happened meant he wasn't yet right in the head.



They strapped Paul to the haywired stretcher and started down the gully of Bob's descent, the easiest route for lowering a body. Stretcher and sloppy boots of exhausted rescuers triggered volleys of rocks. The night was loud with ~~tearful~~ warning yells and cries of pain. Cam was pulling the lower end of the stretcher when weary hands on the top end lost grip and weight of stretcher and Paul shoved him outward in airy darkness and he tumbled and slid to a ledge. Looking over the brink, he saw a bad bounce would have been the last he ever knew. He asked Ome how many more had to be sacrificed. The group stopped and shivered <sup>g</sup> out the long hours of cold stars and at dawn was too weak and sane for further risks and left Paul on the mountain. He was in no hurry.

Cam stared into space. Paul and Bob and Dusty and Tom and I, novices when he was Climbing Chairman, were "his boys." At home he had two other boys who in a few years would be old enough for the Course.

"I've got to get the hell out of this country," he said. "I don't want my sons growing up looking at mountains."

A year ago Cam was hauling to high camp on Robson, the biggest peak he'd every <sup>g</sup> attempted, and here on Stuart was renouncing mountains altogether. In May I'd seen <sup>another</sup> former Climbing Chairman permanently embittered, frustrated dreams turned to rancid hate.

The essence is going to the closest possible examination of whatever lies beyond the edge. If you haven't climbed to your limits, or tried, you haven't climbed at all. And if you don't come close enough the

reward for years of striving may be poisoned memories -- or a poisoned life. ~~And even if you do~~

For a limit-seeker there's <sup>is</sup> no standing still. It's up or out. Once not reaching toward limits you're not climbing, you're hiking. How many years can one press constantly to the edge?

Perhaps I'd come as close as I dared and wanted. I seemed, now, merely to be repeating myself. After Forbidden in 1951, Spire in 1952 was a hike and so too would <sup>have</sup> ~~have~~ been American Border and Triumph. After Sir Donald in 1950, the Southern Selkirks in 1951 were ~~walking~~ hills. Only the first time was Rainier an adventure halfway to the sky. You can't do the same climb twice. ~~Any more than you can drink twice from the same river, as that old Greek said.~~

I'd no stomach to do much of anything the rest of 1952. I was scheduled to lead Three Fingers over Labor Day and likely would let that wrap up an 8-peak season. In 1953 I'd hike eagerly, yet with son or daughter at the 200<sup>0</sup> meter hut undoubtedly would step very cautiously when limits loomed distantly in view. Had I come close enough to live happy? Or was the end of it <sup>all</sup> to be worse than if I'd never tried?

Friends would proceed to greater glories than we'd dared hope for when we began. It was an exciting era. With the French having made the first climb of an achtausender, Annapurna, in 1950, and the English currently scouting a new approach to Everest, the American Alpine Club was organizing an expedition to K-2 and Pete was a strong candidate. Tom had been talking about the Yukon and after recovering from the sacrifices

probably would resume the march north. Without me. Yorick had been invited on an expedition to Greenland and though he couldn't afford to go there'd be other opportunities. Kermit, Naval Reservist yanked back onto active duty in Korea, during various leaves had climbed Fujiyama in Japan and Hecla in Iceland and now was angling for a berth with the Navy expedition to Antarctica.

As for Lardy Bob, even if he quit climbing he might do better than any of us; in a couple years, geology degree in pocket, he'd not visit, he'd live in our home hills — and in ranges of Alaska and Canada, possibly Africa, Australlia, Tierra del Fuego. I could be on the same road had I not switched to English literature. But hell, fossil worms were absolute boredom and squinting into a microscope at thin sections drove me crazy. I was no more a scientist than a scholar or intellectual, was a plain dilettante. A mountain bum with no excuse.

Guided by our smoke column the helicopter flopped in the meadow, rotors coasting to a stop. The pilot and two crewmen jumped down.

"Well," said the smiling pilot, "I got in. You're going to have to do some logging to get me out."

He pointed to his downvalley exit lane and the trees blocking the way. He explained the meadow he'd wanted was above the trail, on a bench he could drop off rather than in a hole he'd have to climb out of.

The trail-crew kids took axes and began beavering at subalpine firs, which though only 25 feet tall were ~~some~~ <sup>a couple</sup> feet thick at the butt, and

close-grained and tough.

The long-overdue boss rode up the Ingalls Creek trail leading two loaded horses.

"I had a bunch of fishermen at Stuart Lake, on the other side of the mountain," he said. "Sunday morning, back at my spread, I took a look at the sky and knew I was going to have some wet and unhappy customers so I headed up there with my string. Got them out in the first squall. We were down in the woods when the main show started. Been quite a spell since old Stuart's taken a pounding like that."

He was kind enough to offer only a few mild comments on dumbfool Westsiders who didn't know Eastside weather. He wondered why they brought in the dumbfool Coast Guard — if they'd called him he'd have had Bob home in his own bed yesterday. He saw the beavering, expressed an opinion of the dumbfool kids you get nowadays for a trail crew. He went down to show how it's done and trees began falling like he was swinging a giant scythe.

At length the pilot said, "Well, I'd as soon see the whole valley <sup>clean</sup> mowed <sup>^</sup> but maybe we can make it now. I want to be out before the air gets any lighter and thermals start. At this elevation my cushion is awful thin."

Gently we loaded Bob aboard, the damn P-I photographer underfoot. So we'd make the front page and more nuts would rush to the smell of blood, mucking up our mountains.

The engine fluttered to life, the rotor hurricane blasted us, the big machine rose unsteadily on a slippery cushion of air, abruptly leaned forward and roared downvalley, skimming treetops, and was gone.

At Long's Pass we hoisted packs. Wednesday afternoon. Not since Monday morning, arising to don suit and tie, had I known true sleep. The job done, muscles wilted. Slow was the descent to the Teanaway road.

Paul's folks were there. I was <sup>dismayed</sup> ~~horrified~~ to see they'd brought a picnic feast. In 2 days I'd eaten only a bowl of stewed tomatoes but wasn't hungry.

I remembered lying in the snow beside Paul on Persdex, and his words: "All I want is to come home alive from every peak I ever climb."

I remembered the final entry in Scott's <sup>j</sup>ournal, written at Death Camp on the return from the South Pole: "I do not regret this journey . . . We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for complaint . . . For God's sake look after our people."

I went to Paul's mother, a quiet <sup>shy</sup> woman. Many a time, leaving for a climb, I'd seen her standing in the <sup>doorway</sup> ~~door~~, worrying, as her only child drove off in the Jeep. I tried to say something, couldn't.

She patted my arm. "Go eat," she said.

I went to Paul's father, extroverted, ~~introverted~~, Paul-like. I couldn't say anything, stood dumb.

"Have a beer," he said, opening a bottle, pressing it in my hand.

Into Cam's car, silently home to Cougar Mountain.

Beginnings were ending, endings were beginning.

for those  
who'd  
come to  
help  
their boy.