

**MOUNT EVEREST
AND ME**

Harvey Manning

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PART ONE

BEHIND THE RANGES

Sheepshank and bowline, semaphore flags, fire by friction, kabob and bread-on-a-stick were more fun than trying and not hitting and never catching a baseball. The uniform, the three-fingered salute, the handshake, the motto ("Be Prepared"), and the oath (" . . . keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight. . .") made me one of Troop 324, one of thousands of troops from sea to shining sea. Advancement from Tenderfoot to Second Class, First Class, Star, Life, and Eagle set demanding yet attainable goals, organized my life. So did promotion from the ranks to Assistant Patrol Leader, Patrol Leader, Senior Patrol Leader, Junior Assistant Scoutmaster.

The Law defined what I wanted to be: "A Scout is Trustworthy. . . Loyal. . . Helpful. . . Friendly . . . Courteous. . . Kind. . . Obedient. . . Cheerful. . . Thrifty. . . Brave. . ." Yes, and "A Scout is Clean. He keeps clean in body and thought, stands for clean speech, clean sport, clean habits, and travels with a clean crowd." That meant more than taking a bath every Sunday night. "A Scout is Reverent. . ." On Boy Scout Sunday all the troops of the North Shore District gathered to worship in a single church. Once a year in the middle of the night we donned uniforms to usher Easter sunrise services at Washelli Cemetery.

The weekend of Camporall we assembled Saturday morning to carry packs along country roads and forest trails to the field where Piper's Creek emptied under the railroad tracks to the beach. There in Carkeek Park we joined troops covering all the countryside from Seattle city limits to the King County line, Lake Washington to Puget Sound. At evening retreat, as the flag was lowered, the troops in formation saluted and recited in unison the Pledge of Allegiance, and we really meant it.

The entire Seattle Area Council (King, Kitsap, Clallam, and Jefferson Counties and the Territory of Alaska) took part in the Boy Scout Circus. Troop by troop we marched into the University of Washington Pavilion, drum and bugle corps banging and tooting, thousands of fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers cheering. Each troop had been practicing an assigned stunt for months. Building a bridge, Scouts pulling a cart loaded with Scouts back and forth across. Erecting a pair of signal towers, Scouts climbing to the tops and wig-wagging flags at each other. Two lines

of Scouts armed with quarterstaves facing off and whacking away like Little John and Robin Hood. Starting fire by friction, sawing with the bow to spin the spindle in the firehole and tipping the spark into tinder and holding up the flaming ball, the whole troop simultaneously, to the wonderment of the crowd.

From unorganized boy to Scout to troop to district to council, my world enlarged outward as from a stone dropped in a pool. But there was, as well, a motion inward to the heart of the matter. In the *R Book* (Records, Regulations, and Requirements) I read, "Camp Parsons is the big adventure of the Scout year." Why didn't all our guys go? The same reason we had only three Eagles until I made a fourth. None of our guys ever had gone to Parsons. I was the first.

At each week's troop meeting I bought a twenty-five cent stamp for my savings book — a quarter, two-bits, half a Saturday morning of mowing Dr. Brown's lawn and weeding Mrs. Brown's flowers, a third of my semi-weekly twelve-mile *Shopping News* route, a sixth of a ten-hour day picking raspberries for Mrs. Ellis. By summer the savings book was half-full, enough for a half-session, one week. I trained a substitute for the paper route, mowed Dr. Brown's lawn a day early and on return would mow it a day late, chopped enough wood to keep the kitchen range cooking while I was away, and entrusted my chickens and vegetable garden to Mother. I boarded the *Virginia V* on the Seattle waterfront and waved goodbye to my folks on the dock. The steamer carried us, the cream of the cream of the Seattle Area Council, north down the Sound, south up Hood Canal, west into Dabob Bay to the Mariners' dock on Jackson Cove, where the Olympic Mountains dropped steeply to the beach.

That night, after supper, Mr. Walsh, the camp director, who also was director of the Seattle Area Council, outlined our two choices for the week's central three days, the "big adventure." Months ago I'd decided to choose The Cruise. We'd pull oars on a Navy cutter up and down Hood Canal, camp on beaches, swim, catch fish and fry them on driftwood fires, and bake oysters and steam clams. It would be my first serious step toward sailing a small boat around the world.

But Mr. Walsh spoke standing beneath a cedar plank affixed high on the wall of the Mess Hall. Into it were burned these lines:

Something hidden. Go and find it.
Go and look behind the Ranges —
Something lost behind the Ranges.
Lost and waiting for you. Go!

The faces of the camp staff, the big guys who in their home troops were Senior Patrol Leaders and Junior Assistant Scoutmasters, plainly said that dodging around the Ranges in a Navy cutter would be cheating. I had to take The Hike.

Four years later, a senior in high school, I came in my reading on a term new to me, "mystical experience." I knew instantly what it was. Kipling, Mr. Walsh, and the faces of the big guys had sent me there. Or as close as I ever would get.

We piled out of the Big Red Truck at Bark Shanty Shelter, where the forest road ended. We hoisted Trapper Nelsons or string packs or dish racks, tied Ten Cans on the outside to measure ("clank clank clank") the six miles of trail through virgin forest along the Big Quilcene River, six miles farther from a road than I'd ever been. Then, up, up, up, up two more miles, up out of cool shadows and green moss where the river ran, into sun-scorched, parched scree of the dreaded Poop Out Drag. At Camp Mystery, a mile closer to the sky than Camp Parsons, I spit out the stone I'd been sucking in penance for my thirst, stuck my redhot sunburnt face in icewater jetting from beneath a boulder, the veritable Source of the Big Quilcene, and was purged of sweat and most everything else, was more purely Clean than ever in the thirteen years and one month of my life.

To be further cleansed would only have been possible by being set on fire and going up in a puff of smoke. Muscles had been destroyed by the Poop Out Drag. Some other power propelled me an after-supper mile, alone. I less walked than floated upward through Christmas trees and a rainbow of meadow. Lowland flowers ceaselessly demanded to be weeded, as the lawns nagged to be mowed. Here the lawns took care of themselves

and even the weeds were flowers. The sunset gave permission, even encouragement, to enjoy that beauty which was dangerously near Unclean — to be One with Beauty, though that phrase, too, lay in my future reading.

Marmot Pass was 6000 feet above the waves I'd heard last night and this morning in my bunk at Camp Parsons, waves of the sea which wrapped around the world, the salt sea which in this moment ceased to be my life's goal. Black against the sunset were the Ranges. Go look behind them and what would you find? Darkest Africa, jungles of the Amazon, the polar wastes, the Roof of the World. The gaudiness of the western sky was also in the flowers, in the lawns, in the rocks, in the snowfields — *snow*, and in *summer*! The colors dyed my bare legs and arms, sank through skin to belly and heart and brain and soul. I was closer to the sky than I'd hoped for this side of Heaven, was more Reverent than ever in my life.

Two mornings later at Home Lake, a droplet of snowmelt, icebergs afloat, in the darkness before dawn we shivered from bags to boots. The black of night thinned to a gray mist that swallowed up the lake, the Dungeness valley, the cliffs of Mt. Constance, the meadows beside the trail, and all the Scouts except the two or three just ahead of me in line. The cloud exploded in blinding incandescence. A wind stripped us naked to the sun on a rock islet adrift in a cloudsea vaster than the oceans of my old ambitions.

Returned home from Del Monte Ridge, first summit of my life, I made straight for the Seattle Public Library to return the books on how to build and navigate a ketch and check out books on mountains. Big mountains. The biggest. High mountains. The highest. I read the official expedition accounts by their leaders: *Mount Everest, the Reconnaissance, 1921*, by Colonel Charles Howard-Bury, *The Assault on Everest, 1922*, by General Charles Bruce; and *The Fight for Everest, 1924*, by Colonel Edward Norton. The three trips and their prelude were summarized in *The Story of Everest*, by Captain John Noel, published in 1927.

"One day in 1852 the Bengali Chief Computer rushed into the room of the Surveyor General, Sir Andrew Waugh, breathlessly saying, 'Sir, I have discovered the highest mountain in the world!'"

A recheck of the observations, which had been made by the Trigonometrical Survey three years earlier, from stations on the plains of India, arrived at a mean height of 29,002 feet. The policy of the Survey was to assign native names to features whenever they could be determined, but this mountain was so remote on the border of Nepal and Tibet, so jealously guarded against foreigners by the two peoples, that not for nearly three-quarters of a century was the Tibetan name learned — Chomo Lungma, "Goddess Mother of the World." The British scarcely could continue referring to such an eminence by its catalog number, Peak XV. Sir Andrew named it for his predecessor as Surveyor General of India, Sir George Everest.

Early explorations toward the mountain were moves in the Great Game celebrated by Rudyard Kipling and, later, by such movies as *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. The British and Russian Empires were pressing into the heartland of Asia, maneuvering for control. Sven Hedin, the renowned Swedish explorer, was suspected of doubling as a secret agent for Russia. The equally famous Sir Francis Younghusband did much of his geographing by methods that stretched rules of the Game to the breaking point: in 1904 he faced down the fierce Tibetan soldiery with his fierce Gurka soldiery and forced his way into the Forbidden City, Lhasa. Before — and particularly after — that rash feat the British were more discreet. Their "Pundit Explorers," natives trained in mapmaking, posed as pilgrims or traders while taking readings from compasses disguised as amulets worn around their necks and from boiling-point thermometers concealed in hollow walking sticks, and making notes on rolls of paper hidden in prayer wheels. In 1913 Captain Noel darkened his skin and hair enough to pass as a Moslem and in company of several hillmen reached within forty miles of Everest before being turned back by Tibetan soldiers.

As early as 1893 Bruce and Younghusband discussed an approach to Everest. Nepal, the obvious route, was one of the Native States the British supported as independent buffers; the British kept their own people from entering in exchange for the Native States refusing ingress to foreigners from the other side. Tibet lay behind the Ranges and to find what was lost

and waiting there would require an open clash, which neither empire wanted while European business was pending. The Great Game put the summit of the world out of bounds.

In 1919, postwar Russia distracted, Noel presented an account of his 1913 exploit to the Royal Geographical Society. Younghusband urged the Society to revive the Everest project. Captain Farrar, president of the Alpine Club, promised to recruit climbers. "I have two," he said, meaning Mallory and Finch, "Who will get to the top, I'll guarantee." The Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, pledged support. The indispensable man was Sir Charles Bell, Political Resident in Sikkim and Political Officer for Tibetan Affairs. He won the confidence of the Dalai Lama in 1920, was invited to visit the Sacred City, stayed a year, and returned with permission for an expedition to enter Tibet.

Noel notes a reason for the permission other than friendship. The Tibetans "had just emerged from a bloody war against the Chinese and had beheaded every Chinaman in Tibet, and the country was now their own; but they did not know when the Chinese might return. . ."

The Reconnaissance, the spring of 1921, would have been a magnificent success had it done no more than find Everest amid the bewilderment of Ranges. Ascending the Valley of Hermits to the Sacred Monastery of the Rongbuk Lama, living reincarnation of a god who dwelt in the snows, party members were the first Europeans to gaze upon the mountain from base to top. But there was more: the one and only summit route feasible for the state of the mountaineering art was found, via the East Rongbuk Glacier and the Ice Cliff. From the North Col, 23,000 feet, Mallory defined the final leg.

The following year General the Hon. C.G. Bruce, C.B., led the First Climbing Expedition, 400 animals and 100 men, over 350 miles of difficult country from India to Everest. Captain Noel, the official photographer, characterized the climbers: Mallory was "a lithe, catlike, speedy man on a mountain. . . Somervell represented the more solid type. . . G.I. Finch was an Australian who as a guideless climber had mastered every important climb of the Alps."

The strategy was the "polar method" elaborated by Longstaff. "We were to advance by stages, laying and stocking depots each one day's march apart. . . Each camp would have to be stocked with provisions and

provided a permanent party of porters, with one of General Bruce's Gurka soldiers as camp master." Ten days were spent fixing depots: at the snout of the East Rongbuk Glacier, 17,500 feet; Frozen Lake Camp, 19,500 feet; Snowfield Camp, 21,000 feet, at the head of the glacier basin. Surmounting the Ice Cliff required cutting 2000 steps and fixing 300 feet of handlines to wooden pegs driven in the ice.

The first group of climbers and porters set out May 20 from Ice Cliff Depot, 23,000 feet. At 24,600 feet they broke the world's altitude record set by the Duke of Abruzzi on Bride Peak, and at 25,000 feet found a ledge large enough for two tents. At 8 o'clock next morning Mallory, Somervell, and Norton set out — creakily, altitude-wracked. By 2:15 they reached 26,800 feet and could have continued but obviously not, at an elevation gain of 300 feet an hour, to the summit. Another camp was needed.

Descending the Ice Cliff they met Finch and Geoffrey Bruce, cousin of the General, carrying oxygen cylinders. This second team raised the altitude record to 27,100 feet and could have gone higher had not the oxygen apparatus failed. Before a third attempt could be mounted an avalanche in the Ice Cliff killed seven porters, ending thoughts of the summit.

In early March of 1924 the Second Climbing Expedition assembled in Darjeeling. General Bruce caught a chill which roused his malaria, compelling him to hand over the command to Colonel Norton. The approach was completed early in the spring. Too early. Depots laboriously established in bitter cold had to be abandoned as new snow piled impossibly deep. A renewed push attained the top of the Ice Cliff and on June 1 Mallory and young Bruce and eight porters carried to 25,000 feet. A storm stopped them. Storm followed storm. The assault became a rescue, stretching Norton, Mallory, and Somervell to their limits to bring down the porters.

Noel said of Mallory, after the effort, "He looked ill and in my opinion was an 'unfit man' when he some days later started for the mountain. . . It is my opinion. . . that Mallory's end commenced *from this time. He made his last climb on his nerves.*"

Norton and Somervell led off, not using oxygen because they distrusted the apparatus. From the highest camp yet, 26,500 feet, they toiled to 28,000 feet, where Somervell collapsed. Had they been at the

altitude of the Alps, the summit could not have been more than an hour or two distant but in an hour Norton climbed just 80 feet more. The new record was 28,100 feet.

Mallory followed. The only person to participate in all three expeditions, he was the heart and soul of the campaign for Everest. His logical partner was Noel Odell, a veteran climber and the best-acclimatized of the group. Mallory chose, instead, Andrew Irvine, who had rowed Number Three in the winning Varsity crew and done so well on two Oxford University Arctic Expeditions that everybody said, "Send him to Everest." He was very young, very inexperienced, but had made himself the party expert on oxygen, and oxygen was Mallory's trump card.

Noel quotes Odell: "On the day Mallory and Irvine were to make the attempt on the summit, I went up to the 25,000-foot depot to be in close support. . . At about half-past twelve there was a sudden clearing of the atmosphere; and the entire summit of Everest was unveiled. . . Suddenly I noticed high up in the most perpendicular wilderness a moving black speck silhouetted. . . then I saw another speck move up to join the first. It was none other than Mallory and Irvine, within 600 feet of the summit. . . That was all I saw. They were going strong. . . I think that it is quite possible and even likely that Mallory and Irvine reached the top and were overtaken by the night in the descent, exhausted and frozen to death."

That's where I came in. Whatever happened after 1924 was unknown to the Seattle Public Library. For me in 1938, Everest was Mallory and Irvine 600 feet from the summit of the earth, going strong.

GOING TO HUCKLEBERRY

Across Boylston Street from the family home was Shedd Park, a wildland of oaks and hickories, woods violets and sweetferns, brooks for wading and ponds for swimming and ice-skating. Dad and his partner, Tubber, hunted gray squirrel in the square mile of park and the boondocks beyond, sharing a single-action Winchester .22. They ran a line of Victor traps, muskrat size, shipping skins to a St. Louis buyer whose name they found in *Hunter, Trader, and Trapper*. In a swamp out toward Wamesit they tapped maples, boiling a gallon of sap down to a fraction of a pint of syrup, periodically dribbling some in the snow to see if it would sugar. It never did. They fished Marshall's Brook from Tewksbury to the Concord River, catching trout on grasshoppers and worms. In the clean stretch of the Concord upstream from Lowell they caught kibbies and pickerel, baiting hooks with small frogs. Downstream a mile from the swimming hole at Indian Rock, next to the Lowell Rendering Works, they put on a show for passengers on the main line of the Boston & Maine, jumping from the six-arch bridge and splashing about in the river, starkers. Close downstream was a "dizzy bridge" also good for diving, but here they swam only the west bank because on the east bank was the outfall of a trunk sewer. A quarter-mile farther down were a dam and flashboards which diverted the Concord into a canal that furnished waterpower to the Bunting Works, U.S. Cartridge, and a tannery. In pools of the diminished river the business partners caught "backhouse perch," grossly fat suckers they sold, two bits a bucket, to French-Canadians. Their main headquarters was the Secret Camp, a giant glacial erratic split in two, the cleft readily roofed with branches and bark. Depending on the season, the feasting there featured hickory nuts and blueberries, potatoes baked in coals, ears of corn roasted in the husk, apples roasted on sticks, and whatever else farmers might donate when they weren't looking — occasionally a chicken, stewed in a pot all day with carrots and tomatoes and spuds.

Meanwhile, on the opposite edge of the continent, Mother was hiking beaches of Puget Sound, surrounded by acres of clams, and voyaging water roads of the inland sea by ferry and mosquito-fleet steamer and naphtha launch and rowboat and canoe. On a mad paddle from the Government Locks in Ballard across choppy waters to Bainbridge Island, she and a boy

friend dodged tugboats and lumber schooners and steamships and U.S. Navy warships. A brother-in-law, Uncle Bill, taught her to fish for king salmon, rowing a skiff out in Possession Sound off Mukilteo, tying up to boom sticks, and returning to shore by walking the log boom of Crown Lumber Company, where Uncle Bill filed the gang mill.

All this was in my blood, or genes, or wherever, when I was introduced to World-Outside-City on fishing trips to rivers of the Cascades and Olympics. Uncle Bill and family usually were along. Having summured as a boy on a stumpranch by Hood Canal when that was a last survivor of the frontier, he learned woodcraft from the brushapes who'd hunted, fished, trapped, prospected, logged, and stumpranched from the Northwest to the Klondike. He even knew how to bake beans on (or rather, under) a campfire, a three-day job. We also often camped with Uncle Mort and family. He belonged to The Mountaineers, one of the groups founded throughout the West on the pattern set by John Muir's Sierra Club in 1892. Uncle Mort even knew how to ski.

The lowering of my folks' voices always pricked up my ears, harking for such phrases as "going to the show." Not very long, either, did they put me off with "owing-gay oo-tay uh-thay ow-shay," because pig Latin came easier than English.

In spring and summer my ears sharpened up, hoping to hear "owing-gay oo-tay uckle-hay erry-bay." Nothing in Seattle — not the fish and chips at the Alley Cat Cafe or the ceaseless, tantalizing, circling before my eyes of pies and cakes at the Merry Go Round Restaurant, not the awesome palaces where Eddie Peabody played his banjo and the pictures were starting to talk, not the Woodland Park Zoo or Golden Gardens Beach—held a candle to Huckleberry.

Going to Huckleberry meant loading camping gear in the trunks and on the running boards and fenders of two or more family cars, driving miles beyond the last town, the road narrowing to a dirt track tunneling

through forest, to camp — *our* camp, nobody else knew about it — in the giant trees by the White River.

For Dad and the uncles it also meant pulling on hip boots and cutting sturdy poles to ford the river, wide and swift and milky-white from Mount Rainier's glaciers — a dangerous crossing, and that's why the fishing was so good on the far side, in Huckleberry Creek.

The cousins and I had our own little creek by camp where we gathered periwinkles for Dad and the uncles to use when the trout weren't biting on flies or eggs. The creek was great wading, so cold your toes went numb and you shrieked when the sunshine brought them back to life. We couldn't go in the river, naturally, but the gravel bars never ran short of rocks for throwing and the stretches of sand were as good for castles as Puget Sound beaches. We held "boat" races, tossing our sticks in the rapids and cheering them downstream, out of sight, then arguing who won. In the forest we clambered up the tangled roots of toppled trees and walked the trunks on high, far above the jungle of undergrowth.

In evening Dad and the uncles returned over the river, creels heavy with trout that Mother and the aunts rolled in cornmeal and plopped in frying pans and served up sizzling. Though the cousins and I never could agree about the boat races, the trout-eating championship could be settled on the spot; in morning there'd be the hotcakes.

The folks sat on logs around the campfire, drinking coffee. We kids toasted marshmallows, and the winner there was the one who got the sickest fastest. Then we set the sticks ablaze as fire crayons for drawing pictures on the night.

In good weather we were permitted to sleep outside the wall tent, spreading blankets on the forest floor and cuddling close for protection and giggling at everything — at being where we were and who we were. When shadows went "thump thump" we screamed and the folks came to our rescue; we complained we were okay, we didn't want to come inside.

What the ears last heard was the river. What the eyes last saw were the big old trees reaching from campfire embers to the stars.

Little of our 1932 flight east from the Seattle Depression to the Lowell Depression stuck long in my mind.

Lincoln, Nebraska, had opened the city park to free camping, what with so many people on the roads and needing places to sleep. At nightfall the dusk sparkled with flying fires. Dad caught one and introduced Mother and me to the lightning bug.

One night a carnival was going full blast in a field where the farmer was letting the folks camp. We hadn't the money for ice cream or cotton candy or to ride the ferris wheel, but Dad said it didn't cost anything to look. A crowd was gathered around a booth where men were throwing baseballs at a target. Hitting the bull's eye triggered a spring that tilted a bed and dumped out a lady wearing nothing but underwear.

We passed a Great Lake which wasn't anywhere near as great as Puget Sound and didn't have any mountains.

We stopped at a sign that said this was a battlefield. There wasn't a soldier in sight, dead or alive.

The day we arrived in Lowell was hot and humid in a way never known in Seattle. Day by day the weather got hotter. Never cooler. In Seattle a spell of summer sun can be trusted to suck in mists from the Pacific Ocean, wet cold air to keep the land green and pleasant. What the Atlantic Ocean does is smother the sweltering seaboard in wet *hot* air. Nights were the worst, lying naked atop sheets, while relatives vacationing in New Hampshire mountains were sending postcards, "Sleeping under blankets. Wish you were here."

Week by week the sun pumped the Atlantic up into the atmosphere, building the head of steam that powered hurricanes and tornadoes. In afternoon our house was darkened by miles-high, black-bottomed, Hell-hearted towers that silenced the birds and sent dogs whimpering to shelter and dumped hailstones as big as marbles. In evening the New Englanders — Dad and his folks and the aunts and uncles — sat around the

parlor talking, pausing only when they couldn't hear each other. The Puget Sounders, Mother and me, huddled on the couch, our mouths clamped shut, and when every window flamed, our eyes too.

This was half the year. In the other half the winds from Labrador coagulated the Atlantic and hurled it at us in white furies that drifted over shuttered windows and piled to the second storey. Week by week the Arctic sucked the life from New England. We abandoned the parlor, evacuated the dining room, retreated to the kitchen, barricaded doors and windows and shoveled coal in the range.

Preparations for bed were only less elaborate than Peary's for the Pole. Over the long woolen underwear went heavy flannel pajamas, wool bedjacket, bedhat, bedmittens, and bedsocks. Just before my dash upstairs to a bedroom that was the exact temperature of the snowdrifts, Grandmother fished a hot brick from the oven, wrapped it in felt, and by this means I got through the winter with no toes amputated.

Peary went to the Pole once; five days a week a seven-year-old from the green and pleasant West was despatched alone over the frozen wastes from Boylston Street to Sycamore Street Primary School. Enormous as were my sins, the punishment seemed harsh. Mother thought so too. Dad shrugged — either a kid took it or he didn't grow up, not in New England. Mother couldn't understand why the Pilgrims hadn't caught the first boat back to England.

The New England year has two redeeming virtues. Brief ones. After winter's terminal squalor of slush, mud, and flu there's a moment when leaves and flowers erupt, birds burble, breezes flow, and a person may well take the sun for a friend. After the burnout of summer's furnace there's a moment when moonbeams glint on frosted cornstalks, woodlands turn a hundred hues of red and yellow, and a person might well fall in love with the beauty of death — which may be weeks away should he be caught by a blizzard on the way home from school or in bed without a hot brick.

A crystal-brisk day between the two dangerous seasons Dad guided me into the boondocks beyond Shedd Park, through woods and fields, beside and over the stone walls built by three centuries of farmers picking up after the glacier in the task set them by God, resisting the Devil's lure of good soil in the West. He taught me the skills of a New England boy, how to

borrow potatoes and corn and apples from farmers when they weren't looking.

We came to a chunk of granite too big for a stone wall and too small for a quarry. One side was soot-black. Dad built a fire, his first at the spot in more than a dozen years, and taught me how to bake potatoes in the coals and roast corn in the husk and apples on a stick. He was sorry not to have brought a hook. Fish was always on the menu here, at his Secret Camp.

Massachusetts aunts and uncles who came visiting Puget Sound were astonished to discover there was a precinct of Creation where mankind was not perpetually punished for original sin. None immigrated, though; at vacation end they went home to resume penance. Even Grandmother, who lived with us a spell after Grandfather died, and was so open to new ideas she broke loose from the Republicanism compulsory for a non-Catholic New Englander and voted for Roosevelt, returned East. She allowed as how our weather never bothered a body. I believe that's why she didn't feel safe, eternally speaking, on Puget Sound.

Mother said it was madness to tolerate such a climate. In June of 1933, another New England summer upon us, another New England winter not far behind, Dad — for a decade now a Puget Sounder himself — agreed. We loaded up the Plymouth and fled from the Lowell Depression to the Seattle Depression.

The first thing that struck me was that past a certain point the houses lacked storm shutters and lightning rods. After a year in New England they looked downright dangerous.

Where a sign said "Continental Divide" we got out of the car to stare in every direction at flat miles of sagebrush. The wind was as cold as Lowell in December.

Spindly fences weren't hooked together, sure couldn't keep cows in place; Dad explained they were to keep snow from drifting over the road; a whole lot of the world was as bad off as Lowell.

One day a detour sign led us out through the sagebrush on a wagon track to get around a sand dune that had drifted over the road.

Money was so tight we often drove the clock around, Dad and Mother alternating at the wheel, me sleeping in the back seat. One night they woke me to see flames leaping high on both sides of the road. Lowell at least didn't have prairie fires (or sand dunes) but I remember climbing Fort Hill to watch what looked like half the shanty Irish of Lowell being burnt out of their shanties.

In Cheyenne the money was holding out good enough and we were near enough home to splurge on a restaurant breakfast. The cafe was full of genuine cowboys in town for the rodeo. We didn't have time to stay for it. In Chicago we hadn't had time for the World's Fair, the one where Sally Rand danced with her fans.

Dad just had to have a swim in the Snake River and walked a trail through the sagebrush to the water. A rancher sat in his rocking chair watching him go, and come, and as Dad passed his porch on the way back to the car said he was interested in seeing how things turned out because that was not a people trail, it was a rattlesnake trail.

At the Columbia River Dad honked the horn and a man came out of a house and we drove the Plymouth on a barge which the current carried on a cable to the far side.

Our last morning we stopped at a tourist camp to take showers and wash clothes so we wouldn't look so ratty that afternoon, arriving at Uncle Bill's and Aunt Grace's acre north of Seattle. The highway climbed from sagebrush to forest, sunshine to clouds, and descended into a green and pleasant summer rain.

It's a thin scrapbook for crossing 3000-odd miles of continent. A person can't see all that much from a car going 40 miles an hour, 500 miles a day.

There's a chance I'd have come to adulthood a better person had we stayed in New England. Had I made it to adulthood. We respect the

Eskimoes who survive in the arctic wastes, yet how long would they last in the jungles where the Bantu, whom we also respect, also survive? And vice versa? New Englanders as a matter of course journey from the Equator to the Pole and back again every year. It may be the reason I took up wildérness hiking is that living a year in Lowell gave me, like Grandmother, a spiritual need for New England.

SCOUTS FORWARD

In 1910 Scouting was chartered "under the provisions of federal law" of the United States. Lord Baden-Powell had devised the organization in England to train youth as the vanguard of armies in future Boer-like Wars. The New World was way ahead of the Old. James Fenimore Cooper had been inspiring boys for decades with the deeds of Nattie Bumpo, and nobody would be so brash as to take a wagon train over the Great American Desert or the U.S. Cavalry into the Indian nations without sending scouts forward.

In 1915, though still a year short of the joining-age of twelve, Dad began tagging along after the troop sponsored by the First Baptist Church. His first overnight hike was from the city edge to the wildwoods of Walden-like Baptist Pond. He was taught to roll equipment and food in a blanket, tie the ends, and drape the "horse collar" from one shoulder to the opposite hip in the style of the U.S. Army in the Spanish-American War.

The grandest event in the history of the young troop, and of young Scouting in American, was the Jamboree in Harvard Stadium. The forty-odd boys set out in high excitement at "going down to Boston." Horse collars were well-stocked with emergency rations — sardines, Hydrox cookies, Cracker Jacks, and Hershey bars. More prosperous than most, the troop owned an Afrikaaner trek cart for hauling first aid kit, stretcher, the wall tent that served as field headquarters, and bedrolls of whichever eight Scouts were taking their turns at pulling the cart, this done by means of ropes attached to the long shaft thrusting from the front. The two-day, thirty-mile hike via Billerica, a route chosen because it was mainly in woods and fields, was a fine adventure, and the Jamboree was more fun than Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. However, "going up to Lowell" was anticlimax and the Hershey bars were all gone. Not an invested member yet and thus not formally sworn to be Loyal, Dad spent twenty-five cents for the trolley car and arrived home a day ahead of the trek cart and the Scoutmaster and his shrunken band of Loyalists.

My first overnight hike with Troop 324 was to the Carkeek Park Camporall. Dad had made me a Yukon-style Trapper Nelson, using Uncle Bill's as a pattern. A few weeks later several fathers drove the troop in family cars to the North Fork Snoqualmie River, at the edge of the Cascades. The trail to Lake Hancock was so steep and some of the Tenderfeet (I was practically Second Class already) were so slow we had to turn back and camp by a logging road.

The Boston Jamboree pretty well ended Dad's Scouting. Lake Hancock nearly did it for me. While fellow patrol members faced starvation because our Patrol Leader couldn't start a fire in the downpour, I snuck off in the woods to avoid sharing the slab of Hershey's milk chocolate Mother had slipped in my pack for emergencies. That wasn't at all Friendly and the guilt weighed heavily on me when reciting the Oath.

The prospect of Camp Parsons and the Navy cutters kept me going. Then came Kipling. My 7000 miles of travels east and west from ocean to ocean had made me a considerable expert on geography. I knew, for example, that a "pass" is a place where a road crosses the mountains. The big guys in The Hike party, the ones who wore the Silver Marmot, had warned us new boys to be sure to bring money. A cold pop at the top of the Poop Out Drag would really hit the spot. The milkshakes at the Marmot Pass soda fountain were terrific. The *R Book* described Camp Parsons as "330 acres of wilderness." Yet there was a road through it. There'd been a road to our camp at Huckleberry. There were roads to or very near every place I'd ever been. Sucking my pebble and gasping for breath on the Poop Out Drag, I wondered where did Marmot Pass's road come from? Go to?

In that 1938 sunset atop the pass, the first sunset of my life I *felt*, were answers — answers to questions I didn't yet know enough to ask.

Two years later, July of 1940, those weren't summer snowfields out west, they were more of the same as on the ridge we were running. They were *glaciers*. My roomy in the Ranger Lodge (he was Junior Assistant Scoutmaster, I was Senior Patrol Leader) was there this minute, packing to

Glacier Meadows. Tomorrow his bunch, ice axes in hand, would tie to ropes, the axes and ropes kept at Parsons specifically for this supreme adventure of the summer, scheduled just once each year. They would climb the Blue Glacier to the summit of Mount Olympus, highest peak in the range. Wild horses couldn't keep me away next year, turned the minimum age (I was days shy this session) of fifteen.

I could wait. The Ranger Hike was adventure enough for now. Yesterday we twenty — the camp elite, perhaps a tad less elite than the Olympus party, but that could be debated — had hauled packs fifteen miles up the Dosewallips River to Dose Meadows. This morning we'd climbed to Lost Pass, stopped for lunch in a meadow at the base of Lost Peak and while eating had seen three deer, fifty elk, two bear, and two "dogs" which were probably coyotes but maybe wolves. We'd continued to the top of Lost Ridge and now were running the crest toward a junction with Lillian Ridge, which would connect us to Hurricane Ridge, which would connect us to Grand Ridge, which would take us to Deer Park, where the Big Red Truck would meet us for the trip back to camp.

Some of us (the more Cheerful) sang as we walked:

I wanna wake up in the mountains,
Where the mountain breezes blow,
Smell the flapjacks fryin' and the socks a-dryin'
'Round the campfire's ruddy glow.

Wanna scramble up the rockslide,
Where the fuzzy marmots go,
And slide down from the topside
On the fields of summer snow!

A cold gray soup engulfed us and just as suddenly released us to warm sun. The wisp of cloud no larger than a man's hand sailed onward, northeastward. The icy crags of Olympus stood raggedly dramatic against a black horizon. The ocean was minutes away as the clouds roll.

Oh the ocean waves they roll,
And the stormy winds they blow,
And the three jolly sailors go tripping to the top
While the landlubbers lie down below below below.

In a 1938 dawn we'd climbed Delmonte Ridge through tiny white dots of cold water that tingled in the nose and beaded the hair on naked arms and legs. In a 1939 dawn we'd climbed the Anderson Glacier in a fog so thick that Scouts ahead in line were dimmed to silhouettes. Both times the sun won through and struck us blind.

In my eleven highland days on Parsons hikes we'd had fog. Never rain. It was accepted as scientific fact that rains poured on the Olympics until June, quit while camp was in session, and only resumed in September. We carried no tents or tarps or raincoats, wore short cotton pants and light cotton shirts. Socks were wool because of the snowfields. For the evening chill we had wool stocking caps and either a sweater or a windbreaker; mostly we walked until it was too dark and crawled in the bag. Beneath our short pants we wore pajama pants, rolling them down during snow travel to prevent crippling burns. Sun, not rain, was the Parsons enemy.

I'm forever climbing mountains,
Shaggy mountains one by one,
They go so high, almost touch the sky,
I'll always climb them 'til I die.

Oh, mountain lakes and ridges
All appeal to me,
And so I'm going back to Parsons,
More Olympics I must see.

In late afternoon we left the ridge. The year before I'd made my first descent of steep snow, from Flypaper Pass. One by one we'd leapt from a rock rib into the track established by the trip leader, Bruce, the Copper City Scoutmaster, who went first to see if it was safe. (If it hadn't been, what then?) Arrived on the floor of the Anderson Glacier, we one by one checked arms and legs to see if they worked, then one by one reclinced the track to search for sunglasses, cups, cameras. This year our leader, Grant, Ranger Scoutmaster, instructed us in riding the packboard as a sled, using its horns as brakes. The technique proved as effective as those we'd been taught for baking bread on a stick and starting fire by friction. (In

our months of practicing the stunt for the Scout Circus, not once had a member of Troop 324 succeeded. As we prepared to dash out on the floor of the pavilion with bow, spindle, board, and tinder, Scoutmaster Kenny had issued each of us a cut-off head of a kitchen match. One pull on the bow and we had a ball of flaming tinder to hold aloft, speculating exactly which Law we were breaking.) Arrived in the meadow basin at the toe of the Lillian Glacier, Scouts checked arms and legs, then reclinced the snow to search for packs.

On my second Parsons hike of 1939 (an extra week of camp having been won for me by Dad, who sold the most tickets in the troop raffle), I'd passed through the slot between Mount Deception and Mount Mystery into Deception Basin, just like the scene in *Lost Horizons* where Ronald Colman enters Shangri La. The tundra plain was ringed about by cliffs and moraines and snow. A buttress jutting above the gray-milky lake at the toe of the Mystery Glacier was exactly where you'd build your castle if this were a fairy story.

In this, my third Parsons summer, I walked along meltwater streams rippling through a garden of red and white and blue and yellow flowers, meandering over the lawn to trees at the basin lip, and uniting in a waterfall to forests of the Lillian River. Twenty-three miles and two passes and a glacier from any Ford or Plymouth or Chevrolet or Buick or Big Red Truck I lay me down to sleep with snow water in my ear, flowers in my nose, stars in my eye.

The middle-of-the-night sound on my sleeping bag I recognized from hikes with Troop 324, which was not protected by the Parsons umbrella. Pit-a-pat. Pat-pat-pat. SPLAT. In bleary dawn I joined the exodus from meadow to forest. Subalpine trees caught and held the rain a while. Then, sodden from crown to foot, the branches coagulated raindrops into rainplops. One way or another that whole skyful of water had to get down to the ground or to Rangers, whichever came first.

Grant grimly identified this as a Three Day Blow. In the bleak morning of July 11, 1940, five days short of the birthday which would have qualified me to be catching the rain on Olympus, we twenty elite hoisted packs to address a glacier, two passes, and twenty-three miles.

Lillian Glacier was plug plug plug as the rain soaked through windbreakers, sweaters, shirts, shorts, and underwear, as it sloshed round

in boots, as it added pounds to sleeping bags, foodstuffs, and toilet rolls. But say this for it — on the glacier it fell *down*. Atop Lost Ridge it came at us sideways doing better than thirty knots.

Then up spoke the captain of our gallant ship,
 And a right good captain was he,
 "I left me a wife in Boston town
 And tonight a widow she'll be."

For the ocean waves they roll,
 And the stormy winds they blow. . .

Dad's mother came from a long line of Nova Scotia ship captains, most of whom drowned. Our mothers had been gratified to note, on the checklist of clothing required for Parsons, pajama bottoms ("Why not tops, too, dear?"), supposing they were for civilized sleeping, as at home. They never foresaw their sons rolling down the candy stripes and polka dots as a last thin line of defense against getting rained to death.

At every meal in the Mess Hall we read, on the wall:

Something lost behind the Ranges.
 Lost and waiting for you. Go!

The Parsons elite had gone. On Lost Ridge we'd found more than we'd been looking for.

THE GREAT SEATTLE GAME

Ronald School District provided eight grades in the country and a bus to the city. The fall of 1938, weeks after Marmot Pass, I started riding the bus to and from Lincoln High School. Once a week, though, I'd take the streetcar downtown to the Seattle Public Library, which had the books I wanted about the Roof of the World, and catch a ride home with Dad on his way from work. After returning and borrowing books I'd have two hours to explore.

The city was a foreign land and I'd never been there alone. No need to darken my skin and hair, though, I could easily pass for a native because that's what I was. I'd walk the streets, studying the buildings, and counting the number of floors to pick a good tall one for the afternoon's expedition. I'd start with an elevator to the top floor. The strategy there was to walk the corridor briskly but nonchalantly, as if I belonged, and when nobody was looking, try the knobs of unmarked doors. Almost always one would open to a rooftop stairway. When Dad picked me up I'd describe my afternoon's explorations, and repeat them to Mother at home, and I became widely recognized as an expert on building summits.

Seattle's second-highest was the Northern Life Tower, completed in 1929. The soldiery proved too fierce and I had no better luck than the Duke of Abruzzi on K-2 in 1909. The top of the Smith Tower, the tallest building in America outside New York when erected in 1914, was accessible only by an express elevator firmly guarded against thirteen-year-old Pundit Explorers. But there were plenty of other challenges and I pretty well wiped out Seattle.

After a conquest I'd stop in Seattle Area Council headquarters to pick up troop mail and brag to the Parsons leaders, University students, always hanging out there, like a social club. After three summers at Parsons, and two Winter Camp weeks of leadership training sessions (which I could afford because the troop paid most of my way), I was sort of a junior

member of the club, certain to be accepted on Parsons staff next summer. I'd made Silver Marmot in 1938, was Assistant Leader of the Lost Ridge hike in 1940, and on the retreat in the Three Day Blow was one of the three Rangers who remained indomitably Cheerful, singing the whole storm through, hour after hour. Grant gave me an Honor rating, the highest. If they'd been Scouts, that was what Mallory and Irvine would have got on *their* ridge.

The Parsons leaders had all climbed Olympus. Grant had been turned back by weather on Mount Rainier but had been promised another try by Seattle's most famous climber, Ome Daiber, who had been on a genuine expedition, someplace up North. Thanks to Scouting I knew Ome personally because he was my examiner for Hiking and Camping Merit Badges, two of my twenty-one for Eagle.

I was impressed by myself for knowing so impressive a man. In 1936, while still spinning visions of sailing a small boat around the world, alone, I even so revered Mount Rainier, as what native did not. Ome had been all over the Seattle newspapers. Many years later, coming upon a long-forgotten scrapbook, I opened the pages to yellowed clippings.

Delmar Fadden was an Eagle who had done his first climbing in the Olympics in 1930 and 1931. He was page one news in 1932, when he crossed the Ranges^{es}, alone, equipped with little but a Boy Scout knife, carrying no food, living on plant bulbs, frogs, and polliwogs. In thirty days he came out from behind the Ranges via Marmot Pass weighing thirty pounds less than his normal 160.

In 1931 he had explored The Mountain, the biggest and highest we had, hiking to Steamboat Prow, 9500 feet. Next year, after his Olympics exploit, he climbed from the Prow up the Emmons Glacier to 12,000 feet. Two winter assaults were repulsed by storms. In 1933 he attained the summit (then measured as 14,408 feet) via the Emmons. Alone. The first to do so, it was thought.

In 1934 he began planning to repeat the solo, this time in winter, a feat thought to have been accomplished just once, by a strong party of experienced mountaineers from the East or Europe or someplace like that. January 20, 1936, twin brother Don, the only person in on the secret plan, reported to rangers that Delmar had not returned from "a week of skiing." January 29, as a passenger in a small plane, Ome spotted the body on the Emmons at 13,000 feet. Two days later the searchers found him, frozen solid.

The story was filled out by a roll of film in his pocket. Views of the crater established that he had made the summit; the fatal slide was on the descent, apparently when a crampon slipped off a mukluk. Climbers the next summer located his crater camp and from the empty cans determined he had spent several days there. Lines in his scrapbook explained:

If a dream
 Meant anything to me
 Would it seem
 A bold reality?

If I knew
 My hand of fate,
 Would I do —
 Or hesitate?

The scuttlebutt at Parsons was that his plan, his Great Game, was to build a reputation on close-to-home feats affordable to a Seattle kid and catch the eye of the rich people in the East who bankrolled expeditions. It had happened to Ome, after all. They said Fadden had his heart set on Everest.

For a class recitation in 1932 I told about my climb of Rainier. The teacher expressed doubts. I was furious. Thanksgiving Day we'd eaten turkey dinner at Longmire Inn and in afternoon climbed the meadow trail

above Paradise Valley. We stopped at a knoll. I asked if this was the top. My folks said it was and that was good enough for me. Whatever that heap of snow in the sky might be, it was no concern of mine.

Seven years passed before my second (my first real) summit, Del Monte Ridge. The next year we were nearing Flypaper Pass when a Scout took a rock in the head and bloodied up an incredible amount of the glacier so we didn't make Mount Anderson. The day after, we were following the crest of a meadow ridge under a blazing sun when Scouts began toppling like trees in a hurricane, so we didn't make Mount LaCrosse. The next year, on my final Parsons hike, Lost Ridge was three and our retreat from Lillian Basin took us accidentally up Mount McCartney, number four. My fifth, the same summer, was the fire lookout atop Mount Pilchuck; as Senior Patrol Leader of Troop 324 I'd shaken up the hikes program to get the guys out of the woods into the sky. My first post-Scouts ascent, my sixth peak, was with Dad, to the fire lookout on Surprise Mountain, 1942. In 1943 I climbed from Deer Park to the lookout on Blue Mountain (twice, alone), to the summit of Elk Mountain, highest point on Grand Ridge (alone), and while my Lincoln High schoolmate, Osberg, was fishing Eagle Lake, to the crest of Mount Townsend (alone). Therefore, as the summer of 1944 began, my bag held nine peaks, sort of. Not counting Seattle buildings.

The summer of 1944 . . .

Through three-quarters of the University year the three-storey (plus basement) mansion housed forty sorority girls, housemother, and (in the basement) cook, maid, and three houseboys. The latter waited table and washed dishes, pots, and pans for the forty and, on Chapter Night, for an equal number of "townies." The wartime male shortage reduced the housboy complement to one. Me. Come summer and the house was empty except for the caretaker. Me.

For the convenience of training programs of the Army and Navy, whose uniforms constituted the entirety of the University's male

enrollment save for Deferreds for Essential Occupations (engineering students), Section Eights, and 4-Fs (me), the quarters were being replaced by trimesters. The last of the former ended in early June, the first of the latter began after the Fourth of July. Though I was to continue in school straight through the summer, this Great Interregnum left me free of classes for a month, and jobs were so easy to get I momentarily was too cash-rich to have to work that month.

Free! Alone in the city, alone in the University District, alone in a sorority house (the basement, but having in the confusion of the mass evacuation adroitly palmed a key to the kitchen, enjoying full "privileges" there and in the food storeroom as well, my conscience clear because no Law declares that "A Scout is Honest.").

Free to adventure. The year before, in the break between Spring and Summer Quarters, I'd taken off in my Model A for a solitary wandering in the mountains. This year Osberg and I were planning a months-end expedition to Rainier which would sufficiently satisfy the mountain appetite. There was another adventure closer to home. The Great Game.

Parrington Hall was the highest building on campus whose summit was attainable without breaking and entering. All my English Lit courses being given there, I knew the interior from ground floor to the fourth floor where the juncture of nave and transept at the building front permitted only a pair of slope-roof garret classrooms, one on each side of the facade. I was equally familiar with the exterior because as originally built the structure was a firetrap and escapeways had been added from the two garret rooms onto the flat roofs of the two transept wings and down two outside staircases. These, though signed "Keep Off", gave easy access to the transept roofs for moments of coupled privacy or, in my case, uncoupled.

The best views down to the Central Plaza, the open space between Suzzallo Library and Meany Hall, ~~and~~ and from the plaza out the wide corridor of Rainier Vista to The Mountain were from the summit. That called for a bit of genuine climbing, more than any of my nine pre-1944

conquests, and it's therefore not improper to list Parrington as Peak No. 10. A short Mountaineering Course at Winter Camp had introduced me to the vocabulary. The first pitch from the transept roof was a layback, the feet placed flat against shingles of the nave roof, the torso laying back, the hands pulling the metal frame of the garret skylight in opposition to the feet. From the top of the skylight the slope of the shingles lessened for slabbing — flat-footing and hand-palming for friction. The summit ridge was straddled *a cheval* ("on horseback"). The absolute top was the metal cover of a ventilator shaft, the perch from which I looked godlike down on bug people. It never occurred to me that my illegal location was conspicuous from the ground. But I never noticed anybody noticing me. Bugs don't look up.

Night was my favorite. Ever reluctant to accept the death of each day's life, during the month of freedom I went to bed progressively later, until midway through June I was getting up in early evening, leaving the sorority house to walk abroad as night was deepening, the streets and campus emptying toward perfect solitude.

In the view from atop Parrington, the massed lights of Seattle cut off abruptly, of course, at Lake Washington. The mass did not resume across the water, whose far shore was only scatteringly twinkled. The most prominent lights to the east were the airway beacons which in this seventeenth year since Lucky Lindy flew the Atlantic (alone) guided other wings through the Cascades.

Often I sat out the night until the sky over the mountains paled from black to dark blue to light blue to sunrise yellow. During the pale-blueing the eaves of Parrington and the trees around came alive. Peeps. Chirps. Twitters and burbles. At the yellowing, trills here and arias there, rising in crescendo to such a symphony I marveled that groundlings did not leap from beds to shout "Bravo!" or "Quiet!" Birds have no reserves of fat and must breakfast quickly or die, but first they must sing, because in this season the species must breed or die. A stone gimcrack decorating the peak of the facade offered the best sightlines and soundlines for sending messages of love over shrubbery and lawns. Bird after bird would take the stage and bust its guts until run off by another sex maniac.

One dawn an uproar in the bushes drew my eye. A cat burst into the open going billy hell. A jay dove for its head and hovered in midair

cursing. The cat flattened ears to head and belly to grass and hung on for dear life. When the jay fluttered off to resume guard duty at its nest the cat tore up the turf to escape — and a second jay came hurtling down in a cloud of oaths and threats. The sequence was repeated again and again until the cat reached the campus edge and the garbage-can sanctuary of an alley.

Aside from me, the lone human on campus in the middle of the night was a gimpy old cop in Sam Browne belt and black leather puttees. In daytime he always had a simper for the girls, who thought him cutely grandfatherly. To me, aspiring to be a Communist or Anarchist or something along those lines, he was a dirty old Cossack. One afternoon as I was innocently sitting on the transept flat-top he ambushed me from the skylight exit and when I admonished his rudeness pulled his pistol and waved it in my face.

One night I was on the transept roof, alone with a skinful of burgundy, supplied by a Section Eight of legal age who'd got sick and gone home to bed. Three years after making Eagle and outgrowing my uniform and developing the rheumatics that began in the Three Day Blow and ruled out a fourth Parsons summer, I was still quite Clean, more Reverent than ever, though in a different direction, adequately Loyal even if 4-F, Trustworthy and Helpful enough, necessarily Thrifty, but only selectively Friendly, Courteous, Kind, and Obedient. The burgundy made me abundantly Cheerful as I sang "The One Ball Reilly," and Brave to a degree when the gimp hobbled to the base of the facade and flashed his light up at me and read the Riot Act.

I dared him to shoot me full of holes, root-a-toot-toot. He ordered me down. I invited him up. He threatened to summon reinforcements but I knew there were none, the campus law at night being old and arthritic and solitary. He hitched his Sam Browne and reluctantly came clang clang clang up the fire stairs. As he started the final flight it was layback, slab-climb, and *a-cheval* along the ridge to the other end of the transept, and slab-descent and layback and fire stairs to the ground and away, crying "Sic semper tyrannis!" and "Death to Fascist pigs!" and whatever else the burgundy had on its mind.

SOMEBODY LOST BEHIND THE RANGES

The Skykomish Quadrangle portrayed 875 square miles of the Cascade Mountains as they were at the turn of the century. That is, it portrayed the country as seen by U.S. Geological Survey fieldmen who struggled through tangled brush and over raging rivers and up airy cliffs to high viewpoints, and from these determined by plane-table triangulation the locations and elevations of "benchmarks", and then freehand-sketched intervening valleys and peaks, rivers and lakes. The scale of two miles to one inch and the contour level of one hundred feet minimized detail, and that was good; a veteran of three summers in the high Olympics neither needed nor wanted more than a general idea. The greater the ignorance the greater the adventure.

Though my heart was in the Olympics, I chose the Cascades for my first post-Scouting expedition because chances were better of getting a father to drive us there. I chose this section of the Cascades because in it lay Lake Dorothy, almost the only place our troop ever had hiked, aside from the Tolt River. Months of my junior year at Lincoln High were devoted to perfecting a line on the map and recruiting companions. The first day would be seven miles on the Miller River trail to Lake Dorothy and two miles along the shore to a huge old log cabin famed throughout the Seattle Area Council as a good port in a storm for an entire troop. The second day: Leave the trail at the lakehead, follow the inlet creek to the base of Big Snow Mountain, climb the valley wall to the ridge, contour a sidehill mile, cross the divide from Miller River drainage to that of West Fork Foss River, and drop to Chetwoot Lake. Third day: Four-five miles around the lakeshore, drop to Lake Angeline, follow its shore to the outlet, turn the corner of a ridge to Heart Lake, where we would hit the end of the trail from the Foss valley. Fourth day: five miles past Copper Lake and steeply down to Trout Lake. Fifth and final day: two miles to the Foss River road, twelve miles via Skykomish River (hopefully, by thumb) to the car parked at the Miller trailhead.

Sully, Bob, and Hal signed up, and Hal recruited his father as not only car driver but hike partner. When the doctor ruled that 1941 was to be my year without a summer, no Camp Parsons or anything else, the four took the trip as I'd planned.

Well, not *precisely*.

The second day ended in a valley they knew not where. The hotshot Camp Parsons Eagle was forgiven for that night the morning of the third day, at Chetwoot Lake, a fairyland of cliffs and talus, tundra meadows and snowfields. They were not *fully* convinced, aware as they were that not everybody gets out of fairy tales alive. The government surveyor, doing his freehand sketching from a ridge miles away, had not seen the cliffs that forbade a shoreline walkaround. However, he certainly saw the ridge between Chetwoot and Heart Lake and the spacing of his contour lines meant gentle terrain. Lake Angeline could be skipped and trail found in the large basin draining to Heart Lake.

By the evening of the third day the country had taught them things the U.S. Geological Survey didn't know. Crucially, the large basin across the ridge from Chetwoot was totally occupied by a large lake walled by cliffs plunging to deep water. Old ashes testified that mankind had built fires here. The ashes said nothing about the fate of that mankind. Neither did the raft, three half-sunk logs lashed together with rotten rope. Why was it *here*, rather than at the other — the presumably *safe* — end of the lake, the lake the fieldmen hadn't seen?

In morning the four boarded the raft. It sank. Poles were gathered from the rockslide and slid under the logs, adding enough buoyancy to float four packs but only two hikers. Bob and Sully set out, boots awash. They paddled as the sun climbed to the zenith, they paddled as the sun fell to the horizon, they paddled as the water overtopped their boots and lapped their knees. They pulled ashore at a tiny meadow bench for more dry poles. None were to be found. Sully chose to be marooned. Bob paddled on alone in the night to the lake outlet. The trail! More than that. A shelter cabin! A flotilla of rafts! No people, but civilization! They were saved! That is, Bob was, and possessing the entirety of the party's provisions and sleeping bags, he ate and slept well. Two sparks of light on far shores established that Sully there, and Hal and father there, were enduring.

At dawn Bob selected the raciest-looking raft and set out to rescue Sully. But Sully had abandoned the meadow bench and his shouts from a distance informed Bob he'd had his fill of rafting and was going to try his luck in the cliffs.

Hal's father also had spent the long and hungry night pondering and at dawn had set out to investigate the ridge above "Big Surprise" Lake. His was a unique urgency. Only he was able to drive the car and thus he had somehow to negotiate the dozen miles from trailhead to trailhead. Along the way he would hope to find a telephone to call families in Seattle with reassurance (if that is the word) that their sons were safe (?) and happy (?) at several separate places on the shores of a lake unknown to the government of the United States.

Bearing merely two hikers and no packs, propelled by two paddles, the racy raft broke the record for the lake voyage. In dusk, at the outlet, Bob and Hal found Sully waiting, and were told by a note that Hal's father was en route toward the car. The fifth night they were on the highway home, the final danger being that Hal's father was at the wheel in his second sleepless night after a day of walking (the thumb hadn't worked) twenty miles.

None of the four ever again underook such a journey. They'd never been to Camp Parsons. They didn't appreciate the fun they had. *My fun.*

The U.S. Geological Survey map of Mount Rainier National Park showed a road up the Carbon River to Cataract Creek, near the snout of the Carbon Glacier, and, just across the creek from the road-end, a shelter cabin. We'd be three nights there, but with a hauling distance from the car of merely several hundred feet there was no need to go light. Osberg, who planned and outfitted the trip, laid on fresh eggs and home-cured bacon, steaks and home-cured ham, butter and milk, and spuds and onions and carrots and apples, all from the farm his father had acquired to maintain a comfortable standard of living, including unlimited gasoline, through the war. Weight being no consideration, Osberg scorned a Boy Scout hatchet, brought a double-bitted axe. No flimsy of a tin fry pan for him — before becoming a highway contractor his father had run a logging camp and the heart of the kitchen was a massive cast-iron skillet.

The first night, June 28, 1944, we camped at Ipsut Creek, three miles short of the road-end. Next morning, to our dismay, wheels were halted by a washout a short way from Ipsut Creek, a long way from Cataract Creek. The wise course would have been to base our three days at Ipsut Creek. But Osberg was Osberg.

When he invaded my burrow on a Saturday noon and said, "Come on, we're going to a football game," I went to the only football games I ever attended after high school. Basketball games, ditto. Conventions of the Democratic Party; he claimed to be a Communist but the New Deal was as close as he could get. Fortunately he was an atheist or I'd have got hauled off to church. When he commanded, "Come on, we're going to spend the night at the farm," I obeyed, though it meant stuffing myself on protein and fat from the walk-in freezer and returning home with "C" stamps issued for the farm tractor but convertible, at a certain sinister gas station on the shore of Lake Union, to fuel that would keep my "A"-stamp-only Model A running to the far margins of the city where lived my sweetie of the season. When he rounded up the whole gang, all our Lincoln High bunch on deferment as students in civil engineering and me a 4-F in English literature, and ordered "a weekend in the cabin," we went tame and docile to the family retreat on the Miller River to eat logger-high on the hog and explore old mines and do whatever else Osberg wanted.

It was not possible to basecamp at Ipsut Creek, Osberg had planned on Cataract Creek. He was not to be denied by the act of a God who didn't exist.

A Trapper Nelson chanced to have been left in his car trunk. He stuffed it full of food, hung skillet and logging-camp coffee pot and kettles on the outside, and with that burden on his back and in one hand the double-bitted axe and under the other arm a paper sack of groceries, set off to trample the wilderness into submission. What he couldn't cram into the Trapper I stowed in Dad's old seabag and slung it over my shoulder. Then the other shoulder. And the first again.

Two miles from Ipsut Creek we cached the loads, cheerful about the single mile left to be done in afternoon. Burden-free we crossed the river, climbed to Windy Gap, investigated the Natural Bridge because the name on the map demanded engineer Osberg's inspection, and returned by an old trail looping over the top of Chenuis Mountain (Summit Number

Eleven). The day was long under the blue sky, the hot sun, the monstrous white heap of Rainier ever before our eyes. Late in the afternoon we recrossed the Carbon to do that one, only, mile.

I slung the seabag over my shoulder, the shoulder sagged, and the bag fell to the ground. One-sidedness was the problem. Osberg had it easy with the two-shouldered Trapper. He offered to trade. I sat on a cutbank to slip into the straps, stood, and took a step, or would have had not my knees buckled. Osberg resumed the Trapper and I the seabag, until in sight of Cataract Creek it took me down for the count. An ordinary person would have carried his load to the shelter and returned for mine. Osberg lashed the seabag I couldn't carry atop the Trapper under which I couldn't even stand, tucked the sack of groceries under one arm and picked up the double-bitted axe in the other hand and proceeded to his planned camp as relentless as a Norn.

The three nights at the shelter on Cataract precisely fulfilled his ordering. We were deep enough in the wilds to escape scissorbills and fat ladies and screaming kids. We had beefsteaks and onions and fried spuds, fresh bread and butter and milk (whipping cream, actually, from the family cow), home-canned peaches and homemade cookies. And that was just supper. Breakfasts of hotcakes, butter, syrup, eggs, bacon, ham — the memory boggles — if this was Osberg's war, what might be his peace?

The wilderness experience was not entirely submerged by the unrationed avalanches of delicious food. Because of the roadblock, no scissorbills. Because of the war, no hikers. The valley, this entire side of The Mountain, was solely ours. The dazzle of literature, music, philosophy, girls, and burgundy had dimmed the Marmot Pass sunset of 1938. The rheumatics had banned me from Everest. Yet following in the footsteps of berserker Osberg proved me, still, a Mountain Man.

The day after our arrival at the shelter dawned gray. The Cataract Creek trail rose into mists at Mist Park, clouds at Seattle Park, snowfields at Spray Park. By the campfire that evening we speculated how near we'd got to Echo Rock and Observation Rock, up there where to reach out the hand was to touch the boundary between reality and nullity. For sure, we'd been halfway from sealevel to the summit of Rainier. Unwashed and uncombed, stubble on chin and grime on hands, cussing and spitting and

belching and farting, pissing by the side of the trail — you couldn't do that on the Avenue.

The following morning was grimly darker, strictly for Mountain Men. We crossed the Carbon River, climbed past the ice wall at the snout of the Carbon Glacier, through forest to Moraine Park. We rounded the shoulder of Old Desolate, topped the pass, and descended to Mystic Lake. The dark sky lowered on the sallow water and mushy meadow. The air filled with swirling snowflakes. The wind slashed at our cheeks, blew ice crystals into our bones. We gloried in it, climbing back to the pass. Mountain Men!

In the blizzard there materialized an idiot grin attached to bib overalls, flannel shirt, slouch hat, and tennis shoes. The "howdy" identified him as a Boeing import from the Confederacy. The fishing rod signified he'd heered there was free meat up here and he was a-goin' to git him some. The blanket roll over a shoulder and the shopping bag in hand meant he intended to spend the night at Mystic Lake. In meeting this first human (sub) since Ipsut Creek, Osberg and I were consoled by the knowledge that his chances of opening eyes in morning were slim to none. God was a-goin' to make him pay for deluging Seattle radio with Roy Acuff and the Smoky Mountain Boys. ("I heard the crash on the highway, but I didn't hear nobody pray, dear brother.")

In the blizzard there materialized a second figure in tennis shoes, bib overalls, flannel shirt, and — instead of a slouch hat — a kerchief. No pipe in her teeth, but a number of them irregularly filling out an idiot grin. Doomed, thankfully.

Two more. Tiny ones. As with mammy, no packs. The blanket and shopping bag carried by Daddy Scissorbill were expected to keep a family of four alive in the wintry waste from which two Mountain Men were retreating in haste. The little girl was clutching a rag doll, the little boy a cap pistol. A mercy they'd never grow up.

As we were skidding down slush and mud to Moraine Park, a fifth appeared. High-heeled shoes! Rayon hose held up by whatever rig was under the cotton-print street dress and cloth coat with rabbit collar. A forty-nine cent bargain-basement hat, de-permanented hair straggling down from the drooping artificial flowers. On her arm the purse which contained all the worldly goods she would require in these her final hours.

There was an old lady who swallowed a fly,
Don't know why she swallowed a fly,
Poor old lady,
Perhaps she'll die.

Damned old lady. The worst of it was that perhaps none of them
would die.

ON THE WINGS OF A SNOW-WHITE DOVE

(Ten fingers clawing and two heels gouging and butt muscles trying to grip snow in the crease. . .)

This was my first summer off, ever. In the country there always were lawns and potatoes and chickens, and under the skyglow there always were classes, summer school being less lonesome than the rest of the war. But now the gang was coming home, in good time to help me celebrate the right to belly up to any bar in the civilized world free from fear of being tossed out on my under-aged ear. Savings from winter-spring afternoons at the lumber mill allowed a regular Oxbridge-style long vacation.

(Roaring of wind past ears and hissing-scraping-thudding of hurtling flesh. . .)

The freest summer of my life would climax in the longest walk of my life, seven days, nearly two Parsons hikes in one, and the most adventuresome because the way would be largely off-trail and there'd be no leader except me and there'd be no chattering mob in gay pajamas but just me and Arild, my hiking partner our senior year at Lincoln High until he ran away from home and joined the Navy.

The trip plan was inspired by the weathered sign, "Graywolf Pass," I'd seen on my lone hike up the Dosewallips trail in June. The Olympic wolf had been exterminated in the 1930s or so. The country whose name preserved the memory always was spoken of at Parsons with awe.

The route had drawn itself on the Constance Quadrangle. We'd drop from the pass to headwaters of the Graywolf River; go between two of The Needles, the crags on the western horizon from Marmot Pass, to Royal Basin; cross the ridge to Deception Basin and the Mystery Glacier, which I knew from 1939; cross the ridge of Mount Mystery to headwaters of the Dungeness River and contour to fondly recalled Home Lake, beneath cliffs of Mount Constance, highest peak of the Olympic skyline seen from Seattle; and as we'd done in 1938, climb Delmonte Ridge and run rubberlegged down Sunnybrook's switchbacks to Constance Creek; and as not in 1938 gather in the six stubbies of beer hidden in the icewater.

(Bouncing high in quiet air and slamming down on noisy snow. . .)

We left the Dose trail in a meadow hipdeep in blue lupine, red paintbrush, white daisy, orange tiger lily, red columbine — and a lot of other flowers, but those were the only ones whose names I knew. Above us lay Graywolf Pass, 3000 feet above. We'd have lunch there and then see about the afternoon.

The Constance Quad didn't show the trail and the sign pointed off into trackless greenery, but by heading straight up we couldn't miss intersecting the tread someplace. A handy gulch led straight up and as an added benefit carried a snowmelt trickle that was very welcome in the hot sun, under fifty-pound packs.

The gulch entered a cliff and deepened and steepened. Too late I took out the map and saw the proper route from the trail sign was a downvalley-angling ascent. We were a halfmile west of the pass and the cliffs blocked a sidehill traverse. But the gully was a staircase and the ridge crest was close. "Who," blustered the Old Ranger, "Needs the pass anyhow?" The Sailor, barely getting land legs after years at sea, was silent.

(Snow and sky and peaks flashing by in a merry-go-round whirl. . .)

The steps got higher and narrower. I turned to consider a retreat and faced most of the air in the world. I quickly turned to clutch the rocks. Palsied hands pulled off handholds. Fumbling feet kicked loose boulders that crashed down the gully, missing Sailor by inches.

(This glissade isn't nearly as much fun as Flypaper Pass and Lillian Glacier but I'd be glad to keep it up all day, considering what's going to happen when I run out of snow. . .)

Heart was pounding, eyes swimming, brain frying — and then the gully topped out on the crest, a stone's throw from the 7000-foot summit of Graywolf Pup!

From my thirteenth summit (Number Twelve had been on a hike the summer before, with my philosophy professor, along Grand Ridge and Lillian Ridge, to a nameless peak at the head of Grand Valley) we looked west to Lost Ridge and beyond to Mount Olympus. South across the gulf of the Dosewallips valley stood Wellesley Peak, which seemed impossibly lofty on my solitary walk three weeks ago and now lay beneath us. To the east, beyond Graywolf Pass — 500 feet below our peak — were The Needles, Deception, Mystery, and Constance. To the north, 1500 feet straight down, was the headwater basin of the Graywolf River, snow-white

except for a half-acre oasis of green instantly identified as our camp for the night.

Said Sailor, "We'd have come up here for the view anyhow." It was his way of forgiving me.

A Ten Can filled with snow from a cornice and set out to soak up sunshine soon produced icewater to wash down the traditional Parsons lunch of cheese, chocolate, raisins, and (substituting for Sailor Boy pilot bread, all still packed away in liferafts) Rye Krisp.

I asked Sailor, who had been a weatherman for Admiral Halsey, if the flawless blue sky held any signs or portents. "No typhoons today," he judged. It was a polite way of saying the weather wasn't what worried him.

(A dozen heartbeats more and bones will be snapping and flesh crunching and blood spattering the mountainside. . .)

Graywolf Pup was the most exciting mountain I'd ever climbed, this was the greatest afternoon of my life, and the best part was gazing down to the white basin and the oasis of alpine trees and meadow, the Green Woman on whose soft flesh we'd lie tonight.

First we'd soak our heads in snowmelt foam, then take off boots to freeze our hot feet. When shadows of Graywolf Pup crept over the oasis we'd gather avalanche wood so seasoned it would burst into flame at the touch of a match, cook up a Ten Can of Spam and split peas and onions, then a Ten Can of coffee to drink as the mountain night froze all Creation to blackness except our campfire and the Milky Way. We'd watch for shooting stars and exchange tales of a weatherman on the *U.S.S. Missouri* and a 4-F in campus fleshpots.

(Where did my life go wrong? Well, there — and there, too — and also there — and those are just today's mistakes. . .)

We shouldered packs and clambered rock blocks eastward along the ridge crest — to a brink. Sailor was wrong. Had we found the trail to the pass we could not have come up here.

A gully descended toward the basin — to a brink. Fingers palsied and knees jittered and rocks kicked loose by fumbling feet clattered away into silence, to resume clattering in an immensely distant lower space.

claw
up

(It will be like the time my bicycle handlebars jammed and I shot off the side of the road and the load of newspapers on my back carried me down the hill through the brush into a pile of rusty garbage and I saw blood spurting over the tin cans from the slash on my cheek I later referred to as my dueling scar from student days at Heidelberg. Like when the masked assassins in Lowell strapped me to a table on my back and slapped a metal cone over my nose and mouth. I know how it will be — everybody does — but I sure wasn't expecting it when Sailor and I were swilling beer in a tavern and I showed him this terrific line I'd drawn on the Constance Quad. . .)

After the hike I intended to make a triumphal tour of all the taverns that ever had thrown me out on my ear. Sailor planned a tour over miles and miles of dry land in the brandnew De Soto on which he'd put money down from his first Navy pay in 1942 and which was momentarily expected off the assembly line. Then he was going looking for girls.

A band of cedar shrubs cut horizontally across the face of the cliff, permitting an ape-swinging traverse to a snowfinger that poked up from the white basin into the rock walls. Between cedars and snow yawned a moat somewhat wider than the world record for the standing broad jump. Athletes at track meets lacked my incentive. The snowfinger merged below into the snowfield that ringed the oasis.

(I went to see the Naked Lady and met the Barefaced Enemy. . .)

I broke the world record and landed neat as a cat, intending next to take off my pack to use as a sled, in the technique that hadn't worked on the Lillian Glacier but might now. When my boots hit the snow I realized I'd made a terrible mistake. The snow that had been slushy and delicious in the Ten Can atop the ridge was, here in north-slope shadows, hard and slick. My boots did not dig in but flipped up in the air and just-like-that I was whizzing down the snow on my butt.

*(. . . And slide down from the topside,
On the fields of summer snow.)*

The Old Ranger, veteran of four Parsons Hikes, dug in heels. Nails bit the snow and boots slowed, and that was good. The rest of my gear — and of me — continued at high speed, thus pivoting into the lead, and that was

very bad. It therefore was necessary to lift heels in the air and scramble with hands and elbows to get boots back in the lead, inasmuch as broken legs were preferable to a broken head. But with heels in the air I had no brakes.

(Why don't we wear nails in our butts?)

I dig in heels; the boots slow, the rear-and-all pivot forward. I lift heels free, kick and grab to reverse the pivot; speed increases. I dig at the snow with fingers; skin and nails abrade away and don't slow the body, so dig in heels again.

After a while I attained a steady state that I might well have kept up for hours, had there been enough snow.

(There isn't. . .)

Those few hundreds of feet of snow below me were the entire rest of my life. It was a sweet life, rocketing through Whiteness.

*(They go so high, almost touch the sky,
I'll always climb them, 'til I die.*

Which is now, because here come the rocks. . .)

An historical curiosity: the world's first Bomb was exploded on my birthday, the year before. Today, was, for me, the last Bomb.

(Now.)

From the outer calm I observed ground zero, was proud to see how gracefully the mass of flesh rose from the mushroom cloud, how serenely it flew headfirst through the silent air, flapping wings. There wasn't time to get the technique down pat because the flying quickly ended in somersaulting and cartwheeling.

(I was months learning to ride a bicycle. Neighbors stayed off the street when I was practicing. So clumsy then, now I'm an acrobat. . .)

Motion and noise ceased.

The dome of Blueness arched over the fence of peaks that for eight years, since Marmot Pass, had guarded the home of my soul. The quiet was broken only by Heavenly water music. In air as pure as flowers I felt myself ready to merge into the One that remains.

I was sorry not to be able to tell Sailor, who was watching from the cedar shrubs on the cliff, that he shouldn't worry, he'd *like* it, more than girls or a brandnew De Soto.

Amid the All lingered the Me, in that last moment for which the first
was made.

lost (*(There was blood on the rocks and blood on the snow,
The body was bloody from head to toe.
Oh pity this hiker all covered with gore,
He'll never go sliding down snowfields no more.)*

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PART TWO

A DIFFERENT HUCKLEBERRY

Life — abundant, exuberant, transcendent — that's what Marmot Pass was all about, and Deception Basin, and even at the worst of the blow, Lost Ridge. What was Everest all about?

In the lowlands, while minding my own business, never a thought of adventure, I'd been outright killed three times already: at seven when they cut open my head, at eleven when they yanked my tonsils, and at nineteen for a wisdom tooth. They promised they were just putting me to sleep, but I knew the difference between sleep and the other thing.

In the mountains as a simple (in two meanings of the word) hiker, I flew on the wings of the Graywolf dove right into and by dumb luck through the White Light. Next day, stubbornly insisting on the Brave way through The Needles, I saw the Light looming and chickened out in the nick. That night in my snug bag (golly knew where, or how we'd get away from wherever) a Blackness plunged upon us from the Milky Way. Just missed me. Did it get Sailor? I feared to ask lest he not answer, lest Another might. In panicky morning, fleeing the Graywolf, I slid on the seat of my britches and managed to stop just short of a brink (brinks! brinks! everywhere brinks!) by jettisoning the Trapper, which took the fall better than my bones could have, aching still from the mushroom cloud. Atop Del Monte Ridge, where I'd gloried in the sky eight years before, I said a coward's heartfelt goodbye to the brinky mean son-of-a-bitch.

A Brave hiker no more. At most, Reverent. Meek and mild. The song had ended. But the memory lingered on.

Something hidden. Go and find it.
Go and look behind the Ranges.

My reason (excuse?) for not going was the new baggage. One functioning eye and one complete lung. So slow that often in twilight when we should have been hours in camp I mistook her for a boulder until I noted the other rocks moving faster. With her as the tail on my kite it was for dang sure I'd nevermore soar into that near-White terror a lad wants (or says he wants) to spice (in moderation!) the flowers.

With the baggage came her friend Monie. Blinded by a radiologist's blunder, before a surgeon restored her sight she'd learnt Braille. We'd be walking down the Avenue and pass a stucco wall. She'd stop, close her eyes, and run fingers over the grains of sand. Messages from the Infinite, she explained. The Infinite, she cackled, was a dirty old man.

She was a climber. I'd known Parsons staffers who'd climbed Olympus and tried Rainier, and of course everyone had done some Olympic peaks and talked about Everest but when it came right down to it they were just plain hikers. She was the first climber I ever knew. A whole other species. Across the line, in a foreign country.

The natives there delighted in luring hikers over the line, especially those like me, an old Parsons hand who despite the Graywolf affair thought pretty well of myself. Monie kept dangling the South Face of The Tooth in my face. Lots of air but the rock was all buckets and doorknobs. Every belay bombproof. Even if you fainted you couldn't go anywhere, would just hang there on the rope. Easy day for a lady. A cheap thrill.

I wasn't fooled a minute. She couldn't manage a straight face, kept breaking up, cackling in a spine-chilling foreign accent. So why did the fly accept the spider's invitation? I had no cause for complaint about the honeymoon summer. Love in the flowers had given the flowers a new dimension, even as the flowers did love, and hadn't prevented several hiker-easy, walk-up ascents. However, there'd never been a moment anywhere near the other thing. The Graywolf scar kept itching. As for the tail on my kite, she came along because that's what tails do and she didn't know what was happening until she was hanging in the sky and I was cussing her and she was cussing me and Monie was cackling.

I was appropriately terrified on Sunday and that gratified Monie, but by Wednesday I was disappointing her, asking for more. So she gave me Cruiser Peak. Descending the obscene phallus, excruciating proof that the Infinite truly was a dirty old man, in the meadow I clasped dear Earth to my bosom, and was content. Momentarily. After a few days in the city I again, like a dickey-bird in the nest, having just somehow swallowed a very tough worm, demanded another. Monie later was to confess that Cruiser had had a personal significance totally unrelated to pranking an uppitty hiker. For whatever reason, whether having solved her personal

problems or coming to fear I was going to get her killed, she informed me the joke was over.

March yielded our first summit in the Mountaineer mob. My Number Twenty-Four (having since Graywolf Pup attained seven hiker-type peaks in addition to the two climbs) stood a mere dozen feet over the lawns of Seattle's Camp Long, a city park named, by a curious coincidence, for Monie's father, the judge. Monitor Rock was a construction not of God but the WPA, yet in a slashing southwesterly was mountainous enough, the faces and ribs and slabs, ledges and cracks and chimneys giving soul-testing laybacks and bear-hugs and stems and rappels.

In April another slashing southwesterly (or was it the same opus, second movement?) impelled the horde up Little Si. From above in the gully came a horrid clatter and a chorus of "ROCK! ROCK! ROCK!" A boulder big as a watermelon flew past my face a foot or so from my nose, and a foot or so from the nose, on the other side of the gully, of my beloved.

half May featured the Commonwealth Snow Practice. I went to the Coop, a week's wages in hand from my job serving out student supplies at the chemistry stockroom, and bought two ice axes, the top-of-the-line Bhend Guide. Sunday morning teams of students and instructors were strewn from the floor of Commonwealth Basin to just below the summit rocks of Lundin Peak. To be exact, a half-dozen of us were just below the summit rocks. There our instructor left us for other business, unspecified, directing us to go to the summit. Being tied to the front end of a rope, I obeyed. The Boiler Plate was rather exposed yet after South Face and Cruiser, Monitor Rock and Little Si, easy. I settled into a sitting-hip belay and called, "Belay on!" Nobody accepted the invitation. They remained below the Boiler Plate, awaiting arrival of momma, not trusting a fellow dickey-bird. A lonesome two hours I basked in surly gusts and squalls of snow and sleet before the Big Mommas arrived and clucked the hell out of me as a solo fool. I roped down, muttering, and shivered in the snow while hundreds of students

interminably crept up the Boiler Plate and were herded, whimpering, off the summit and down the rappel to make room for arriving creepers.

The last whiner was down, the shouted release signal shook the clouds, and sodden bodies were flung into the Lundin Chute to hurtle toward the basin floor a thousand vertical feet below. It was a glissade beyond Flypaper Pass, beyond the Graywolf, beyond the Lillian Glacier, longer than all of them combined, and as much faster as light is sound, it was the glissade for which I was born, for which I had lived these twenty-two years and ten months. I lay on the basin floor in post-orgasmic epiphany, as bodiless as in the mushroom cloud. From very far away, some other order of reality, my name was being called. Up there in the void, I was wanted.

To reclaim my baggage, damaged in handling. I hadn't seen her since morning, it being Climbing Course policy to save marriages by separating marrieds. Plugging steps at a half-run back up the Chute, pushing through a crowd of leaders and gawkers, I came upon her where she had been pausing to gasp in mid-glissade when down upon her came tons of snow and a half dozen of the whiners and whimperers who had set out in a bunch for mutual security and during their tumbling liberated a half-dozen axes, one of which got Betty in the ribs, bloodying a half-acre of avalanche. The Climbing Course faculty was alarmed by her apparent deep shock and stared at me in open-mouth consternation when I said she always looked that way at the end of a day in the mountains. They glowered when I asked her what she'd done with the Bhend which cost me *half of* half a week's pay. When they tied her to a student who would serve as human toboggan for the evacuation and I complained they were spoiling her, now she'd expect a free ride home from every hike, I was proclaimed throughout the mountaineering world as a monster.

Eight years before, I'd appeared at Court of Honor to receive the Eagle badge, wearing a uniform so outgrown as to be a scandal in mixed company. The year before this I'd opened my eyes to the truth about academia and busted out of graduate school. Joining The Mountaineers had been an aberration, a second childhood. As they ostracized me I ostracized the club. I now could finally quit Trooping, proceed into a sane adulthood of solitary (well, nearly, exceptions allowed for baggage and friends) anarchism.

Inasmuch as Betty had missed by an inch or two being fatally stabbed by the mob of whimpering ninnies, I could not regret the three months in Monie's alma mater. Flawless walls were transformed to staircases of buckets and doorknobs by "balance climbing": three-point suspension, weight over feet, test holds, move smoothly, climb with the eyes. Obedience to these principles having been imbedded in reflexes, the oceans of giddy air beneath the feet became the bracing element in which the climber swam, exhilarated by the "exposure." As for snow, daunting enormities of white wastes were shrunk to humanized space-time by the "rest step." The rope: Sailor and I could have rappelled off the Pup to Graywolf Pass in blithe minutes. The axe: What miracles it wrought, taming the lions and tigers, feeding the multitudes, raising Lazarus from the dead.

I indulged in one final trooping after Commonwealth because the scheduled Experience Climb was Mount Constance, acme of the Olympic horizon from Seattle, home peak of Camp Parsons, the citadel we'd circled from Quilcene to Dungeness to Dosewallips on the Three Rivers Hike of 1938, into whose sanctuary, Dead Man's Canyon, I'd hiked with Dad in 1942. At the last minute the climb was canceled by avalanche danger, so I followed Monie (leaving Betty to lick her wounds in our garret) up Snoqualmie Mountain. I looked south to Rainier and north to Baker and west to Olympics, to hundreds of mountains which a year ago were the stuff of dreams — and nightmares. Enough of them now lay within my grasp — my grasp as a *hiker* — that never again would I have to be satisfied by a diet of unseasoned birds and flowers.

Snoqualmie was a splendid graduation. Still, one more weekend with the mob couldn't hurt, and the next Experience Climb on the schedule happened to be Sluiskin, which to Osberg and me four years before had seemed the definition of impossible. Even had there not been a leader who knew the way, it would have been to me now, axe-in-hand, rest-stepping, balance-climbing, a scramble. A hike, in fact. Easy day for a lady. Ironically, the Climbing Course had not enlarged my experience of the near vicinity of the White Light, instead had enlarged my range as a hiker, the Light so far over the horizon a person never would guess it was there.

From Snoqualmie and Guye (which we'd climbed the same day, doing a traverse), and before that from Lundin, and before that from The Tooth, and before that from Red, I'd been struck by a fierce-looking beast to the east, an almost Cruiser-like phallus-gruesome extrusion. The name was — what? Some old brushape's idea of a joke? Within the laughter, nostalgia. Huckleberry. Monie cackled as she recounted how the first-ascenders wrote their wills on shirtcuffs before attempting the descent — and the very next weekend of 1915 led a large party of fellow Mountaineers to share the thrill. In the technique refined by a third of a century, more cheap now than thrill. The summit pitch, said Monie, would give my heart a brief pit-a-pat, but the challenge was getting that far. Ten miles of abandoned trail, lost-man's blazes, antique maps of U.S. Geological Survey guesswork, and (in this June of a winter that wouldn't quit) creeks in snowmelt flood, deep snow virtually from sealevel to the summit rocks. To my tastes, the more of all this the better. Finding routes is a higher satisfaction than following them. Even should it be proven that Mallory failed to climb Everest, he pointed the way.

Monie allowed as how Huckleberry would be a nice little entertainment for me, but for her a yawn. The flaw that now emerged in my rationalization for taking up climbing was that ten miles — any ten miles — were too many for slow baggage, who anyway was still celebrating her avalanche by sticking close to our garret. The venture was more than I wanted to try alone. I neither knew nor intended ever to know any Mountaineer mobsters except Monie. However, there was a fellow who had been assigned to me once by the Climbing Course car pool. I called. He was willing.

Fresh from Chicago, my Partner sat by the car during the hour I spent flailing and crashing through loggers' jackstraw and slash to find a trace of the trail. Gold Creek was five times the most violent tumult I'd ever forded and I probably wouldn't have had the nerve had not Partner, who alluded to his Eastern past as something of a street tough, expressed such strenuous, pitiable, amusing doubts. A city child lost in the rude West, he dogged my steps through the snows, pathetically trusting that I knew where I was going, never knowing it was not my exact timetable to arrive

from the steep valley wall of Gold Creek onto the white plain of Joe Lake's cirque precisely at twilight.

Atop a melted-out knoll were dry wood for a big blaze and heather for a soft sleep. The weekend was a success. Nothing added could make it better. In fact the best part was we wouldn't be climbing tomorrow. The dense clouds hung just above the subalpine firs of our knoll. I was pretty sure Huckleberry was up there. But you can't climb what you can't see.

Eyes opened on an erection from Hell raping the blue sky. Where was a slashing southwesterly now I needed it? Alone, or with Betty, I could have lazied through breakfast and a leisurely return down Gold Creek. But Partner didn't blink. The juvenile delinquent who had faced death daily in jungles of Chicago was imperturbable here. I assumed that though incompetent in wilderness navigation, on rock he was, as veteran of alleys and jails, a gymnast. Far too courteous to outshine me, he stood aside to let me kick steps up a snow gully to the ridge, and then, roped up, let me lead the tricky pitch to the false summit, my knees doing the sewing machine and blood draining from my head.

And from the top of the false summit was revealed to mine eyes — oh dear God — the true summit, a tower. . . Had my nose ^{not} been inflammable it would have gone up in flames at my fumbling to light a cigarette. A second Cruiser and no Monie. Partner sat down, wrapped the rope around his hips, and said, "I can give you a bombproof belay from here."

Had I been standing above a fiery pit I'd have been forced by social pressure to jump. That's what comes of submitting to mob rule. Show the yellow streak here and there'd be a considerable part of the civilized world where every sidelong glance of a stranger, every barely concealed hint of a scornful smile, would seem to me evidence of Knowledge.

As it turned out, the hair clinging to the huckleberry bushes on the wide, flat summit of the flawless tower had been left by goats which slept there, as they doubtless had in 1915 when the Mountaineer heroes were writing farewells to loved ones on shirtcuffs. But no thoughts of goats or other heroes marred my exultation as I stood tall in the loneliness at the top of the rope. In leaving The Mountaineers my escutcheon would remain spotless, my copybook unblotted, the umbilical cord cut without a drop of blood.

Monie came clean about Cruiser. Scaring the hell out of me was secondary to the other thing she had in mind. It hadn't been a good year for her in Seattle. She explained that my belay was so bombproof and her fall would be so long that the 7/16-inch manila rope would snap. She'd fall alone, leaving me alone and alive and well and safe.

Matters somewhat improved in her life. We saw her only once after she moved to Hawaii, on a return to Seattle for the marathon, a sport she'd taken up because the islands had nothing to climb. Soon after that visit she was struck down and killed while running a Honolulu street.

Several years after Huckleberry my Partner was belayed by the bedstead in his second-floor room, the bowline around his neck, as he jumped out the window.

ON THE SHORE OF OUTER SPACE

The second-grade teacher's skepticism about my climb of Mount Rainier the Thanksgiving afternoon of 1931 was infuriating. However, though I long believed it truly was my first ascent of a mountain, I grew careful about saying so out loud. Well before I met Parsons staffers who had been on The Mountain, and certainly before Ome Daiber was my examiner for Hiking and Camping Merit Badges, I hoped nobody was around who remembered my child's brag.

Feelings of personal ownership continued as strong as those of any native Puget Sounder. When the U.S. Geological Survey, in the course of remapping a portion of the Colorado Rockies, increased the elevation of an obscure ridge a few feet, enough for it to displace Rainier as the third-highest mountain in the forty-eight states, we were outraged. In the 1850s Rainier was touted by patriotic locals as the highest peak in the nation — or North America — or the world. The latter two claims were in time grudgingly conceded to McKinley and Everest but demotion by California's Whitney to second place in the nation was a cruel blow, and by Colorado's Elbert to third a scarcely bearable fardel. Now a "mountain" nobody ever heard of, Massive, had been invented by bureaucrats suspected of being in the pay of Denver.

Ome Daiber volunteered to lead a party to Rainier's Columbia Crest to heap stones a dozen feet high to displace Massive, or twice that to surpass Elbert as well, and if the CCC could be recruited to pack cement and timbers, thrice the twice, overtopping Whitney. The National Park Service denied permission and Washington's Congressional delegation was outnumbered by California's.

Local newspapers reacted by discovering that highness isn't as significant as tallness and separateness. Colorado had fifty-three peaks over 14,000 feet, but they rose from 11,000-foot valleys and the base of the range was better than 5000 feet; Washington's Cascades and Olympics boasted hundreds of peaks taller than any in Colorado. The 11,000-foot lift of the Sierra scarp from Owens Valley to Whitney was acknowledged to be

very tall indeed; the peak, though, was so lost in a muddle of chunks of granite the first ascent's problem had been finding it.

The press pointed to valleys immediately below Rainier's 14,406-foot summit (later raised 4 feet by the Geological Survey when Washington's two senators gained enough seniority to be the most powerful duo in Congress) that were as low as 1500 feet. Moreover, the total tallness properly had to be measured from sealevel, viewed now as it was in 1792 — a century before there was an Everest or a McKinley — by Captain George Vancouver, when he turned the corner of the Olympic Peninsula and south down the saltwater saw "a remarkable high round snowy mountain." Exceedingly tall. (Who can see Whitney from saltwater? Colorado?) And absolutely separate.

Even I, native son and chauvinist, didn't fully grasp the boggling dimensions until later years as a traveler with a geographically sophisticated eye. You had to climb a peak in British Columbia, and another halfway down Oregon toward California, and from there, and there, see The Mountain. Drive west from Idaho and while still far out on the Columbia Plateau watch the remarkable high round snowiness rise from the Cascade Crest like the full moon. Sail east from China and long before landfall marvel at what one supposes to be a towering cloud.

Spend a long, hard-driving highway day circling the enormous sprawl of rock and ice. Pause to goggle at The Mountain of the West, where the three-mile-wide Puyallup-Tahoma Glaciers tumble from the icecap; The Mountain of the South, where the lava bluff of Gibraltar Rock and the chaos of the Nisqually Icefall lean out over Paradise Valley; The Mountain of the East, composed wholly of the Emmons-Winthrop Glaciers, largest ice mass in the forty-eight; and The Mountain of the North, Willis Wall, a mile tall, the most formidable ice-and-rock precipice in the forty-eight.

All these are *one*.

Returning from New York my first time by air, I traced the route of our family migrations a quarter-century before, east and then west, from ocean to ocean. The Great Lakes couldn't compete with Puget Sound, the Great Plains were a bore, and among the high ridges of the Rockies there wasn't a single real mountain. Our DC-6 lowered into night while Rainier still stood tall in a pink shimmer, and I learned what not even the local editorialists or chambers of commerce ever had had eyes to see: of all the

American earth, this was the largest lump, no other a close second, only the other Cascade volcanoes in the same league.

Glaciers. Rainier had thirty named glaciers and a dozen-odd nameless, more ice than the total in the forty-seven other states. I'd tramped the Anderson Glacier, and the Lillian, and looked down from a terminal moraine to the snout of the Mystery. Itty-bitty by the Rainier standard. Therefore I had to stick with the Climbing Course for the final classroom, the Nisqually Glacier Ice Practice. Crevasses big enough to swallow a ten-ton truck. Deeper and darker than any sea-dingle. Hard blue ice to whack at with axe and stab with the twenty daggers of a pair of Eckenstein crampons strapped to boots. Ice-climbing was as much creating as finding route, not humbly accepting whatever the mountain might be gracious enough to bestow but shaping it to your steel-tipped will. We climbed from the Nisqually into the icefall of the Wilson, halfway from sealevel to the summit of Rainier, higher than ever in my life.

High. Volcano high. I couldn't pass up the next event, the Experience Climb of Mount Adams, second-highest of Washington's volcanoes. The familiar slashing southwesterly denied my going-away present.

A customer at my stockroom window, a graduate student in chemical engineering, was hailed by block letters chalked on his lab wall as "Kermit the Hermit, Friend of the Land." In a single summer he had climbed all six of Washington's "major peaks," the five volcanoes plus Olympus, and proposed to repeat the feat this year on skis. Freed from the mob by his invitation, I climbed Glacier Peak, 10,541 feet, fourth-highest of the volcanoes and half again higher than ever I'd been, so far in the sky I was giddied to look down and down on summits to which always before I'd looked up and up.

Where might it end? How close could I press to the edge and not topple over?

Friday evening, having driven to Mount Rainier National Park's Longmire Campground, I studied the forty-five savages yahooping through the forest. Two-thirds were survivors of the 150-odd who had started the Climbing Course with Betty and me in February; the rest were graduates returned to serve as ropeleaders, because this school was founded and maintained on the principle of "each one teach one." Some thirty beginners had survived the final review by the Climbing Committee. My case doubtless had been lobbied there by Monie. Reporting my acceptance, cackling, she described to me the symptoms to come: at 11,000 feet (higher than Glacier), listlessness, loss of appetite; at 12,000 feet, staggering and throwing up; at 13,000, hearing voices in the wind, seeing faces peering from crevasses, and conversing over the shoulder with "the extra man" ; at 14,000 feet, sinking into fugue.

Saturday morning the Nazis stormed out from Paradise Valley, heiling and goose-stepping, for the 6500-foot ascent of glaciers and snowfields. I climbed silently and alone, sorry — so very sorry — to have been so mean to the baggage about the Bhend.

My own strength through — not joy — grim desperation? — drove me nonstop to The Castle, 9500 feet. Was this lunch tasty, hearty? Were these the stirrings of incipient joy? Resume the rest-stepping. Legs and lungs can't get in synch. The start of the Symptoms? What bodies are these fallen flat on faces in the snow? Nazis! Their joy expired and, by the looks, very nearly their breath of life. How would the Thief steal up on me? Blink of the eyes and just-like-that go to sleep? Don't blink.

Camp Hazard, 11,500 feet, wind screaming and howling over the sterile rock ridge, commingling with a chorus of retching and moaning. My stomach was steady, so long as I didn't try to eat. My problem was the brain. The lassitude was explained by the strenuous ascent from Paradise. What sort of Symptom was this, this drifting out of focus to Home Lake, Huckleberry (the childhood original) baggage (yes, her)?

Two weeks earlier Kermit and I had camped in deep forest beside the Whitechuck River and the entire climbing day spent barely four hours above the uppermost reach of green. Early this morning I'd left the last of Rainier's green and wouldn't be back until late tomorrow. Thirty hours in

rock and snow. Parts of two days and all of a long night. Where rhythms of body and soul were not supported by living companions rooted in Earth.

Puget Sounders live where large slabs of sky are blocked out by Cascades and Olympics; it's cozy. Natives of the Great Plains feel claustrophobic squeezed in between our mountain ranges, are liberated by their Big Sky. A Puget Sounder can understand their feeling when standing on a summit gazing a hundred and more miles in every direction. Sitting in lava rubble beneath an ice cliff in the queer last light of day, the enormous night climbing pitilessly from the valleys, I gazed east over the Cascade Crest to the Columbia Plateau, where the sagebrush and the rattlesnakes live, and south beyond the Columbia River to Oregon, goal of the wagon trains of the Great Migration, and west to a wizened orange star sinking into the Pacific Ocean, where a silly fish once wiggled up on a beach and decided to grow legs, and down to the lights of Paradise, as unattainable as the Milky Way. There was too damn much sky.

Pebbles rattled the liferaft sail in which I and my sleeping bag lay wrapped, huddled against the boulder wall whose lee was expected to thwart the barrage of sand and rock and might have done so had not the wind been blowing from every direction at once. Hail battered the sail. Thunder shook the ridge. Fire slashed the night. You wouldn't have to blink to totter on over. Shelley had it right:

Death is here,
Death is there,
Death is busy everywhere.

Closer lights flashed, screeches pierced the wind. To creep from portable wombs and pull on frozen boots and parkas and strap on crampons and tie to ropes, all this was sane if our intent was to flee to Paradise. But we were headed the other direction, superficially up but actually Down, characters in a tale told by an idiot.

The sun rose out of Idaho. The cloudcap storm evaporated in rainbows swirling over white castles of the Kautz Icefall. The glacier rounded to the icecap, a shining island in the gleaming ocean that had engulfed the lowlands and now drowned all but the uppermost mile of Rainier's tallness.

The humane strain of anarchism ameliorating these mass classes of the Climbing Course was that rather than marching in close-order drill the rope teams were permitted, in proper weather on an evident route, to move independently. Having taken a variety of routes through the icefall, some quick and some slow, and climbing now at widely different paces, the fifteen teams, three climbers each, were motes in an immensity of white, as closely related as the families of man but as detached and alone as the coral atolls of Micronesia.

The evening before, at Hazard, the climb leader and the Climbing Chairman had been arranging rope teams and found they were short one experienced ropeleader. The Chairman was very sick and wanted only not to talk because when his mouth opened he threw up. He spotted me cowering behind my boulder wall and I wasn't throwing up and that was good enough for him. Today, therefore, as ropeleader, my closest mate was fifty feet to the rear, and the other was that much farther away. I was alone with The Mountain and myself.

The Kautz Icefall was the boundary between the lower world which contained (somewhere down there beneath the cloudsea) forests and flowers, and Plato's upper world of Whiteness (snow), Brownness (lava), Blueness (sky) shading toward Blackness (outer space).

The Wapowety Cleaver separating the Kautz and Nisqually Glaciers was a boundary. Approaching its buttresses and boulders, feathered white by hoarfrost, I remembered very well what lay below the Kautz Icefall, knew I still was walking a glacier of Earth; leaving the cleaver, I'd forgotten all that and crunched crampons in a glacier of the sky.

In homeopathy, the curative ingredient is dissolved, a single drop of the solution is further diluted, and a drop of that, and a drop of that until the ingredient is for all practical purposes entirely gone, leaving the immaterial essence. The air of Hazard was too dilute for human lungs. At every stop upward from there it had thinned more. *And so had I.* It was not flesh and blood but essence only that stood in the 14,000-foot saddle

between Point Success and Columbia Crest, beneath the slope of sugar candy rising to a straight-edge dividing the purest of White from a Blue more ideal than Plato dreamt of in his philosophy.

Chopping a route through the Kautz Icefall had brought on the Symptoms threatened by Monie, and to cure them I needed a breath for each step — each deliberate rest step. From the Wapowety Cleaver, two breaths per very deliberate step. At the saddle below Columbia Crest, three were not enough and my pace was scarcely distinguishable from immobility. By a corollary to the Paradox of Zeno, it was mathematically impossible to attain the summit.

I awoke. I'd blinked. Been blown right back out of nullity by a hurricane. Not the cyclone of a low-pressure area. Not the jet stream. The very centrifugal force of whirling Earth. The Mountain had been shaken loose from its foundation by the night's storm and was adrift in the cloud ocean.

At ten o'clock in the grandest morning of God's creation I stood 14,406 feet above the saltwater where I was born twenty-three years and two days before, and the way things were going I could never die because this wind surely would snatch me away from this high wilderness to a wilderness *beyond*. Through the years and the centuries the peoples around the globe would spot the orbiting wink in the night sky and say, "There goes Manning, he was blown off the top of Rainier in 1948, the lucky son-of-a-gun."

Waves of the cloudsea were lapping at Camp Hazard. A sitting glissade of 2000 swift feet plummeted me from sunshine to limbo. I swooped by climbers who had halted, uncertain. Then I, too, halted. Glissade tracks continued down in the fog to loud shouts and laughter but my inner eye thought they didn't belong there, thought it recognized this place, thought the correct route did not drop steeply right toward the unseen merriment but traversed left under cliffs of The Castle, also unseen but sensed.

As a first-year climber I was impressed by the evidence of all those happy people being where they were, yet as a ten-year hiker I'd learned to heed my inner eye. I tried to discuss the route with passersby but one after another cocked an ear at the unseen mob and glissaded down to join Splinter Goup No. 1.

Veering left, I found the track of our ascent and quickly caught up with a moblet of five led by a fellow I recognized as a Course veteran. I followed in the deepening gloom, traversing, glissading, traversing. My inner eye sensed the nearness of a crucial turn, the descent into the Nisqually Chute leading to the glacier floor. I raised the question. The climber immediately ahead never slackened pace, flinging over her shoulder, "Rudy knows where he's going." I stopped to think it over and Splinter Group No. 2 vanished in the fog.

Time passed, three cigarettes worth. I scouted this way and that and found tracks, old and new. Whose tracks? *Somebody* was lost. Splinter Groups Nos. 1 and 2 couldn't *both* be right. On a day when some people were lost, all might be lost.

At what point does philosophical anarchism become anarchy? In these mob marches, the limitation on absolute freedom of members is the "buddy system." Never wander in the fog on a glacier alone. Always stick with a buddy. If I'd had a buddy or two we could rope up and get home somehow. At Hazard, unroping, I'd lost my buddies. Alone amid cliffs and crevasses I was helpless.

Two shapes dimly appeared above in the fog. I shouted joyous greetings and was joyously answered. They were close enough to have joined me in a minute or two. Why didn't they? Were they resting? That wasn't sociable. I reminded them I was here. They sounded friendly. How could they be so slow?

Because they were rocks. Two rocks and a friendly echo. I did the logical thing. I panicked. Cold sweat was gushing as a moblet of ten *came* plunging past me to the Nisqually Chute.

My troubles were over in company of all these buddies, among them the climb leader and the Climbing Chairman. I neglected to reflect on the discrepancy between the ten of the mountain-sweeping rearguard and the full party complement of forty-five.

Visibility shrank more, to a few feet, as we galloped across the Nisqually and up lateral moraine to snowcovered meadows a skate and a hop from the Paradise parking lot. The leader and Climbing Chairman were too far ahead to see and their tracks were lost in a muddle. The buddies close in front of me turned right, into the vale of a little creek. My inner eye spoke up. On the Nisqually Ice Practice, a month earlier, I had learned something about this little creek that was not known, or not remembered, by Splinter Group No. 3, which disappeared in the fog, down the creek.

Buddiless once more. Somewhere near Alta Vista, a horn-honk from Paradise if I could figure out where Paradise was. Why didn't somebody honk a horn? Why weren't the tourists babbling and gushing? No tourists today. Nothing to babble and gush about inside this cloud, which was starting to drizzle. Refusing enticements of the beguiling creek, I traversed, descended, traversed, descended, a little at a time, straining eyes to solidify something of the gray.

A buddy appeared, a palpable buddy! We discussed the options, failed to agree, and drifted apart. He, Splinter Group No. 4, chose to traverse a bit more before descending, I to descend a bit more before traversing. Almost immediately buildings coagulated below and at 6:30 p.m., five-and-a-half hours from Hazard, I achieved Paradise. I hurried to the ranger station to check in, fearing a search party might already have been despatched.

I was an early arrival. The leader and Climbing Chairman and several of their heel-dogging buddies. Now me. Nearly forty were missing, out there in the snow, the fog, the drizzle. Was I several hours from cozy garret, beloved baggage, or several days of dismal search and grim rescue? At what point does anarchy inevitably mature to chaos?

Splinter Group No. 4 soon appeared, hiking up the road from Edith Creek Basin.

Splinter Group No. 3 arrived by ones and twos. They had followed the creek to the Nisqually Glacier, climbed to Paradise by any number of routes, and straggled into the parking lot from many points of the compass.

My car passenger was one of them and we headed hastily home to avoid being conscripted for the search. At the Nisqually Bridge we saw

Rudy's Splinter Group No. 2, thumbs out in the hard rain, trying to hitch rides to Paradise, fat chance, the tourists snugly in Seattle.

Splinter Group No. 1? The mystery never was dispelled. The sidetrip glissade is easily understood, seeming a logical extension of the 2000-foot slide. Their presence in that fog hole hardly could be suspected by the mountain-sweepers, who never would suppose climbers would be so stupid as to go to the right rather than the left of The Castle. No stupid ever confessed in public but the word got around that some had descended to meadows before returning up up up, then down down down to Paradise after dark. Rumor had it that several followed the Van Trump Park trail to the highway and didn't get home until Monday.

INSIDE THE RABBIT HOLE

Totalling every mountain and ridge and counting even the Thanksgiving "Rainier" and Parrington Hall and Monitor Rock, my lifetime bag of summits early in our first Climbing Course year was twenty-six. At the conclusion of the second year, the bag held half a hundred more, and no rocks or roofs, all peaks, small, medium, and large. Busy years, the pace unimpeded by the commerce and industry and politics imagined to be the real world. Down the rabbit hole.

Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream.

Settling up with childhood. The first mountain I knew by name. While Dad and Mother fished the river I played on the sandbar and inspected the heights, unsure whether I was looking for a snowfield of the right shape or an actual White Horse galloping the cliffs.

Settling up with Camp Parsons. Mount Anderson, twice. With Betty, the two of us, Flypaper Pass a delightful cheap thrill with ice axes in hand. With Dad, the two of us, he a source of innocent merriment to me, knowing what wasn't self-evident to him, that with ice axe in hand he was perfectly safe. The apex of the Olympic horizon, Mount Constance, which all my life had been swallowing the setting sun. First viewed from Lost Ridge against the doomsday sky of the coming, coming Three Day Blow, Mount Olympus.

Wiping out Snoqualmie Pass. Nineteen of the Snoqualmie Pin Peaks, finger exercises in early spring and late fall when big-mountain bravuras were impractical.

Developing a taste for the big mountains. Stuart, long considered (mistakenly) the highest non-volcanic peak in the state. Shuksan, "the most beautiful mountain in America," if calendars are any judge. Eldorado in the North Cascades, higher and icier and wilder than Olympus; a handful of climbers had been on the summit before us.

Volcanoes. By the plethora, presaging a satiety. By the Six Peak Pin: St. Helens, Fujiyama of America, too elementary a trudge for the bother of a rope, which would impede the greatest sitting glissade in the Western World, four Lundin Chutes in a single run, the more hilarious because to avoid plunging into deep blue holes, one had to "slide with the eyes", ruddering the axe left or right to whiz across bridges.

Adams, less than a halfmile farther from the sky than Rainier. Betty's first volcano. She and I left high camp at three o'clock in the September night, just the two of us. At 10,000 feet we breakfasted on frozen grapes as the Idaho horizon was yellowing.

Baker, three times, twice in mid-October, autumn on the calendar but winter on the mountain. On one trip a leaden stratum of cloud pursued us from the valley, an incubus of cloud pressed down from the sky, and as we crossed the summit plain the jaws of the vise clamped together — and the dreadfulness exploded to a smithereen of snow crystals a-swirl in sunflames darting through whirling mists.

The other October we'd packed to high camp in a Saturday night so cold that waterfalls were icicling before our eyes. The freezing had come on the heels of a slashing southwesterly that washed the atmosphere to so astonishing a transparency that in the Sunday dawn we gaped at the volcano shadow sprawling across farms and towns of the Nooksack Valley and delta, saltwater bays and straits, to Vancouver Island. The tip of the shadow raced toward the mountain, the edge so sharply defined that we saw a barn burst into brightness while the farmhouse remained dark. The wind from the Pole was so fierce we could no more look steadily north than stare at the sun. Quick glances we had, no more, of a range colder and mightier and wilder than the North Cascades. Taller than the rest by a third was what until recent years had been merely a rumor, "Mystery Mountain."

North, man, north's the way to go,
For fellows who are in the know.

Ice, man, ice's the scene
For chaps who like their mountains clean.

As a premature ropeleader I'd been enthralled by the creativity of fashioning a route through the Kautz Icefall. Twice at season's end I returned to the Nisqually-Wilson Glaciers to whack blue ice. Through the winter I plotted against the Everest-like Nisqually Icefall until I learned two rangers had made the first ascent just the past summer, and on their recommendation the Park Service had closed the route as too dangerous. Simultaneously, though, it had reopened the long-closed route through the icefall of the Ingraham.

Kermit the Hermit and two other customers of my chemistry stockroom responded to my call. Friday after work we drove to Paradise and near midnight dropped packs at 10,000-foot Camp Muir. In first light we crossed the Cowlitz Glacier and passed through Cadaver Gap to the Ingraham. The icefall was a disappointment, the rumples in the narrow, fast-moving glacier so smoothed since the preceding year we had to dodge around "wheelbarrow" lanes to find ice worth taking photographs of a hero leader wielding axe. A cloudcap storm enveloped the crater, driving Kermit and me into an Army mountain tent which volcano steam converted to a sauna. At midnight, the storm having blown itself out, we relocated on dependably cold snow, walked to Columbia Crest, braced against the hurricane from the Pole, and gazed upon billion-eyed Puget Sound City.

Scott's journal entry at the South Pole: "It is something to have got here."

Rainier is renowned for the mystical experience (or close) it provides natives who have lived many years looking at it, thinking about it. The heroic experience is readily available and the tragic experience is ever a possibility. The universal experience (or close) is the barf. For mountain sickness the Colorado 14,000ers aren't in the game, what with Denver climbers living already a mile high. A weekend ascent of Columbia Crest from Seattle fells a higher percentage of aspirants than the Great Pestilence did the population of fourteenth-century Europe. On the Ingraham, barely sixteen hours from sealevel to summit, my stomach held its own and I didn't press the issue. My total intake from Muir to summit and down to Paradise was a quarter of a candybar and two nibbles of a

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honey-peanut butter sandwich. At the Paradise soda fountain I ordered a milkshake, drank two bottles of pop during the shaking, had a third pop for a chaser, and set out for the drive home ice cream cone in hand. We stopped in Puyallup at the world's only known source of peanut-butter milkshakes. At the snug basement in the University District awaited lettuce-and-tomato salad, pot roast and potatoes and gravy, a quart of milk, and Betty.

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Subsequent to the great event of the following weekend the club annual proclaimed me the leader of Rainier's biggest climbing party yet, exhibiting an ignorance of history surprising for a "journal of record." However, if not matching the Fujiyama-scale human swarms of olden days, sixty-nine was, indeed, an impressive number, never after surpassed by The Mountaineers because the Climbing Course began scheduling more climbs and limiting party size.

Neither was I the leader. Cam, serving his second year as Climbing Chairman, was that. I was his designated routefinder, an interesting choice because he neglected to ask if I'd ever climbed the Emmons. I hadn't, yet felt qualified for the honor by virtue of the routefinding I'd done on the Kautz and Ingraham, four sessions practicing ice-whacking on the Nisqually, and that elegance on Baker's Coleman Glacier (unfortunately witnessed only by Kermit) when I disdained an end-around run of the bergschrund and stormed the upper wall on a handy-angling boot-wide ledge.

Friday evening the sixty-nine made camp in the meadows of Glacier Basin, 6000 feet, four miles from the road at 4000 feet. By lunchtime Saturday we had climbed Interglacier to Steamboat Prow, 9500 feet, and were rearranging volcanic rubble to make beds in the Fo'c'sle, where the prow cleaved the ice streams of the Emmons and Winthrop.

Had Cam realized this side of The Mountain, was, to me, terra completely incognita, he would surely have supplied two bits of information which would have resulted in a very much different — and

much less interesting, which is to say less anguishing — trip. The first of these I figured out for myself, that the proper route was not directly summitward into an impossible turmoil of crevasses, but a swing left to the low ridge (surmised to be a lava cleaver beneath a thin covering of glacier) where crevasses were few and small. Conscripting two ropemates, I planted wands (bamboo garden stakes, red flags tied atop) up this "Corridor" to 12,000-odd feet, halfway to Columbia Crest. Given a second bit of information, I'd have continued flagging another thousand or two feet.

At five in the bright afternoon I bundled into bag and pulled liferaft sail over me to keep out wind and sun. The high-camp rule was no talking, no noise, let people sleep if they can. Mostly they could only doze and nap and occasionally barf. On the stroke of midnight Cam screamed and at a quarter past, mates fumbling with knots, I led out onto the glacier, tugging them after.

The wind was incessant, unblinking, unrelenting, not a motion of air but a dimension of The Mountain, of absolute zero and end-of-time blackness and the impersonal animosity of gravity and entropy. Muscles and lungs were flagellated to utmost pace by the necessity of preventing a terminal sludging of the blood. A glance back down the Corridor. Sixty-six fireflies milling about in a darkness that might be of sky. Another glance. Immensely distant, a line had formed, a dragon's tail trying to catch the dragon legs that in the sixteen-odd hours since Glacier Basin had gained 8000 feet, but retained such force they never could be caught by fireflies.

The last flag. Corridor's end. Half the route still to find. The moon was new, which is to say, no moon, no moonlight. The sky was not the ebon tapestry "Pin-pricked to let Heaven shine through," it was three-dimensional outer space jampacked by more stars than I ever saw or wanted ever to see but their massed furnaces cast no (none, zero) light on Earth.

I asked the high Hell of stars
How I could tell my fear.
They answered with silence,
Silence, and a sneer.

An enormously wide crevasse, stretching in both directions beyond flashlight's reach. Which way? Flip a coin. Plant a wand and turn right. Descend along the crevasse lip to the end. Plant a wand and turn uphill.

Another enormous crevasse. Plant wand. Flip coin. Turn downhill along the lip — always downhill, the crevasse pattern was convex upward, the lip ever at its highest wherever I chanced to arrive.

Crevasse after crevasse after crevasse. Wider. Longer. Wand after wand after wand. Twist and turn, blindman stumbling in a maze. For every foot of elevation netted, five or ten grossed. Crueler than Zeno's, Manning's Paradox.

Campfire tales were told of Experience Climb routefinders who had failed. Years later they were haunted by behind-the-back chuckling, the retelling of the old fiasco to a new generation. I sat down, my first halt since the Prow, and burnt a dozen matches before the wind would let me light a cigarette.

The tail caught the dragon, here dwindled to a lizard. A flashlight glowered at my face. Ev, who a third of a century later would be so irritated by an Internal Revenue Service auditor he'd pull a .357 magnum and blow his head off (his own head, that is), howled in disgust, "What you trying to do, Manning? Freeze us to death?"

The wind had goaded the firefly line to abnormal speed. Fruit juices sipped to settle queasy stomachs rebounded quicker than basketballs off a backboard, I heard the sounds, though only on the descent in daylight saw the rainbowed snow of sixty-six stomachloads of orange juice, grapefruit juice, apple juice, grape juice, pineapple juice, cranberry juice, papaya juice, and golly-knows juice.

There came out of the night to meet my feet a crevasse which extended in either direction to infinity and on the far side to Gehenna or Hades or both. A bridge thrust out into the nullity beyond my flashlight beam. To where? No matter. Never had the Climbing Course failed on Rainier. Could not. Must not.

Experience and skill had nothing to do with it, leaving as alternative hypotheses that a Clean life as an Eagle Scout was paying off, or that His own was being looked after by God, or that the Devil was keeping His end of the bargain. As I reached the halfway of the bridge, pitchiness lightened just enough to let eyes discern the far wall. Mere chance could not explain

the conjunction of the bridge and a handy angling ledge, twin to the one on the Coleman.

Later I learned (that is, figured out for myself) the second bit of information Cam had neglected to provide. The "Emmons Glacier Route" is almost entirely on the Winthrop Glacier. It does not proceed straight up from the Corridor, which is the divide between the two glaciers; where the giant crevasses commence it turns right, toward the saddle between Columbia Crest and Liberty Cap. In all my after years in The Mountaineers I never met anybody who ever had heard of anybody ever making the summit via my direct line. The word spread among people who underestimated my stupidity, "That Manning — he's an *ice* man."

I knew nothing about that, yet. On the descent, retrieving wands, I was disgruntled to see so many of them atop ice towers. Who was the hyperkinetic clown? Ev, no doubt, taunting me for that cigarette. I was boiling up a head of steam to scald him at the Prow when it came to me that the clown was me.

Years later I sat in an audience as one of my sixty-nine recited the saga of the moonless night; he had a speech impediment which in tense moments stuttered the drama up to epic level. He described the flagless maze, the providential bridge and miraculous ledge which were, by his implication, not the hero-routefinder's discoveries but his inventions. From far behind me in line he could have had no notion of my life crisis at the top of the handy ledge. It did not lead to smooth slopes of the summit icecap, as a handy enough ledge would have done, but to another bridge, not across a crevasse but between two, the one extending infinitely, eternally to the left and the other dropping cataclysmically in an ice cliff to an icefall. An odd little bridge, several steps long and half that wide. Curiouser and curiouser, it was not a slab of glacier split off by gravity, nor a layer of winter snowcover hard-compacted to summer corn, but a confection of hoarfrost. I set about axing away sugar-candy to seek solid cake. Half the bridge destroyed, a hearty whack opened a hole through which I saw the icefall below. Only a loony would imagine the remainder of the half-whacked filigree could support a body, much less sixty-nine bodies, times two if they wished to get home. The future was crowding my heels. Honor's sole recourse was to take the filigree down with me to the icefall. The years-later saga-man knew nothing about my moment of

decision. He concluded his tale in hushed stutters because he, too, had looked through the filigree to the icefall. I was legend.

At this elevation, a week before, I'd been sick. Not sick enough to barf but not well enough to eat. At two, three breaths per step The Mountain distinctly exceeded man's grasp.

But in those thirty-five or so hours above 10,000 feet, twenty of them at 14,400, I'd done what you have to do to have a chance on Everest. I had *acclimatized*. In this trip's twenty hours since Glacier Basin I'd grossed 13,500 feet (adding the clown climbs of ice towers, more like 16,000), all but the initial 3000 in the gasping-barfing zone, and on the final slope to Columbia Crest felt still fit enough to run sprints. I impatiently dragged my ropemates, their eyes rolling like silly fish flopped on the beach. For me, the air was surflevel-rich.

Cam collapsed in the crater rubble, head down, knees apart, to avoid getting any on him. Ev homed in evilly grinning, proffering an open can of smoked oysters. Very funny. Very delicious. Tom tottered up and barfed on Cam's boots. Cam raised eyes to the heavens and through tight lips muttered, "I gotta get out of here. *You* rearguard."

Routefinder *and* rearguard. Halfway through my second season. What next, here in the rabbit hole? Legs and guts and head assured me that despite the 16,000 feet they were ready, willing, able, and eager to do 3000 feet more before lunch.

I'd thought the 1944 hike with Osberg might be my farewell to the highlands. The doctor had counseled that if I always wore a hat in the hot sun and took a slow pace up stairways I might lead a normal life. To my ear he clearly implied I was unlikely to live to thirty, or survive at 7000 feet. A year ago on Glacier Peak I approached 10,000 feet wondering if that would be the toppling-over-dead elevation. Monie's terrorist campaign of Symptoms had given a life-or-death poignance to the Kautz epiphany.

Today. . . A pity I'd run out of mountain. Were I now on McKinley. . .

A FIRST STEP NORTH

My first look North came the summer of 1946, a full year before Monie baptized me on the South Face of the Tooth. I'd car-camped with the folks at Sulphur Creek and one day Dad and I hiked up the Sulphur Mountain trail and while we were eating lunch atop the ridge the clouds slowly rose and across the valley a monstrous mass of unsuspected ice materialized. Dome Peak. Three years later the "Sunny Mountain Leper Colony" battled Sulphur Creek brush and marinated in August rains until the sun pierced through and lighted the way to the top of the dome. I would have been there but had other and older business, leading Dad to the summit of Mount Anderson and abandoning him on Flypaper Pass to inch his way down the track of my swooping glissade, no help from me except smart remarks from the glacier floor, thus getting mine back for when he graduated me from my .410 rat gun to a grown-up .12 gauge and laughed heartily as the recoil sent my nine-year-old flesh and bones flying to the far side of the acre.

Several weeks after I returned from Anderson (and ^{the lepers} from the Climbers Outing), a river roared unseen in the cloud below to my left, and a river roared unseen in the cloud below to my right, and we of the Experience Climb party gingerly kicked steps along a knife-edge of snow cleaving the void. On the summit of Eldorado the cloud fragmented and in a hole we saw a Rainier-scale glacier and in another hole an Alps-size peak, here a hole, there a hole, everywhere a hole hole, each and all stuffed with rock and ice, and the climb leader couldn't put names to half what we saw.

In the Himalaya an expedition was porters. In the polar ice, dogs. Such adventures were too rich for the blood of a lad of the middling class unless (English) he caught the eye of the Varsity, ever on the watch for a strong oar, or (American) of the Ivy, ever on the watch for a strong back. That was the presumed strategy of Delmar Fadden, soloing Rainier in winter. Paul Petzoldt, the Grand Teton cowboy, got himself a free ride to K-2 in 1938.

A semi-expedition as we defined it was near enough home that travel costs were affordable by lads of the middling class. The maximum length was two weeks because that's as heavy a load as an ordinary

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person can carry in rough country, and that's as much vacation as a middling person ever got. It didn't have to be two weeks. A three-day weekend could be a semi-expedition. The kinship to a full expedition was the magnitude of the goal and the intensity of the planning.

The lepers of Sunny Mountain were boggled by a monster to the east. The map had a name, "Bonanza." An elevation, "9500." They asked around. Nobody had heard of Bonanza. It was east of the Cascade Crest, over there in the sunshine and sagebrush and rattlesnakes. Seattle climbers stuck to the ocean side of the range where the brush and rain could be trusted to keep a person physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight. The few who knew a little about the East Side commented, "Lots of big high walkups over there. They graze sheep on the summits."

While ^{lepers} they were doing the asking there occurred an epochal event in the history of Washington climbing, publication by the American Alpine Club of *Climbers Guide to the Cascades and Olympics*. The author was Fred Beckey. In 1939, age 15, he'd been on the first ascent of Despair and had led the first of Bear's Breast. In 1942 he and his younger brother had done the second ascent of Waddington ("Mystery Mountain"), the eighteenth attempt, sixteen of them defeated. Fred had since then made himself not only our most formidable firster but the preeminent scholar of alpinism in the state, as well as of several other states and several Canadian provinces. In his description Bonanza was no fit pasture for a sheep.

Not having climbed the peak, he relied on a *Mazama* article for details of the 1937 first ascent. A Wy'Easter group from Portland spent a week on the mountain, trying this side, then that. Digging themselves out of an avalanche was trip enough for most of the party. An undaunted three renewed the assault and succeeded. Not without further tests of nerve. High above the glacier, on the summit ridge, there was such an obstacle as Mallory and Irvine faced 600 feet from Everest's summit. The

Mazama author shuddered in print at memory of the hundred-foot wall of flawless rock.

Research unraveled the puzzle of the peak's reputation. The original Bonanza was a walkup. When a cartographer's careless transposition of names of peaks two miles apart promoted an undistinguished 8000-foot bump to North Star, its name and reputation as a scramble were bestowed on the eminence, familiar to turn-of-the-century prospectors as landmark and lodestar.

Proving the power of libel, nobody from Seattle had bothered to do a second ascent. Everybody in Portland was freaked by the first. The lepers began plotting the first ascent from Seattle and the first from anywhere in thirteen years. The route from Seattle would start with a five-hour drive over Stevens Pass to the Columbia River and Lake Chelan, followed by a two-hour voyage to Lucerne, a ten-mile bus ride up Railroad Creek to the mining town of Holden, 3200 feet, and a five-mile pack to Holden Lake, 5300 feet. That was Day One, and in reverse, Day Three. Day Two was via the Mary Green Glacier (named by a prospector for his wife) to the summit ridge and the Everest-echoing crux, the hundred flawless feet.

Plotters Vic and Tom wanted two-man rope teams (three on a rope being too cumbersome for serious business) and three teams (two would lack sufficient reserves for serious trouble). I accepted the invitation, having plots of my own afoot. Farther North. So far North it was a foreign nation where they spoke the language of Geoffrey Winthrop Young, George Leigh Mallory, Robert Falcon Scott, Edward Whymper.

It's all very well in winter to be bold about summer. Vic and Tom were better climbers than I, and Vic much more experienced. They had seen Bonanza, as I had not. They took it very very seriously. Early in the spring they began calling expedition-like meetings of the six, a third leper and ~~three~~ ^{two} carefully screened others, debating and inventorying tents and breakfasts and emergency rations, pitons and bolts and carabiners and hangers, sling rope and reepschnur. The preparations were magnitudes beyond those for my own plots, were grossly out of scale for the enterprise — unless it was the case that I didn't know what I was getting into.

To grow, a climber must extend his limits, press ever closer to the edge. I was trained up on climbs of several pitches, brief moments of nerves. Bonanza was a thousand feet of sustained difficulty upward from

the bergschrund of the Mary Green, hours of unremitting tension. No modest push, this. A quantum leap. To my edge? Over it? A man's reach must exceed his grasp or what's a Heaven for? Who brought *Heaven* into this? I brooded in my beer at the Blue Moon. The specter of Cruiser Peak hovered before mine eyes. The jolly boys, non-climbers but veterans of the war in Italy, France, Germany, and darkest Texas, jeered, "You ain't in no flippin' Army! Quit!"

The soft slap of wind-driven snow on our tent Saturday night of the Memorial Day weekend was a lullaby. I slept like a baby, ashamed. When kidneys drove us out Sunday morning, and the clouds parted and I for the first time saw our objective, hypocrisy concealed joy. Fresh white blanketed trees and cliffs. The sun struck us blind. A delightful day not to be climbing. We hiked snowfields to Holden Pass, 6400 feet, and continued on the glacier to a notch in the ridge, 8000 feet, above the head of Company Creek, tributary to the Stehekin River. We knew from the grapevine that the Roof of the World was at this moment busier than ever before, every nation but America in the field. The French were on Annapurna and in six days Herzog and Lachenal were to attain the summit, mankind's first achtausender — peak of 8000 meters. We gazed upon scores of achtausenders (feet, that is) and neuntausenders too, all on this May 28 a Himalayan white.

There was some bravado about bluffing our way up the last 1500 feet. Cirrus was dimming the sun. During the inevitable bivouac (assuming we weren't avalanched) the snow would again be falling. Four of us had wives at home. Everybody's got a mother.

The fire was melting a pit in the snow, erupting eye-stinging, throat-choking smoke. Five of our circle were probably as gloomy as all six of us looked. Happiness ringed the pit when personal calendars were compared. In five weeks, a second chance, and my rejoicing was not entirely faked. Five weeks away, death is no more fearsome than eternity. Five weeks I could continue a North-looker.

At Holden every citizen met on the street was buttonholed. "Bonanza? What's that? Now, if it's the liquor store you want. . ." We crossed the bridge over Railroad Creek, tailings oozing the cyanide which had poisoned the creek-bank forest to twin rows of skeletons. A staircase climbed the slope beside the tiers of the concentrator plant. "Bonanza? Oh sure, that mountain above the lake. Good fishing." One engineer had the address of a former engineer who was no fisherman. Vic wrote a letter. The answer described a second ascent. "Nowhere near as bad as those Portland folks made out." He'd returned to show the big view to a young neighbor but the kid fell in a crevasse, impaled himself on his axe, and bled to death.

On the return, June 24, we brought minimal hardware and three wives. Further analysis of the *Mazama* article had aroused a strong suspicion that though the climb leader was known to be one of the best in the Northwest the author probably didn't play in the same league. Certainly, the success by a mining engineer who wouldn't know a knifeblade from a spoon had unmasked Bonanza. The highest non-volcanic, lately remeasured at 9511 feet, was worth doing but not worth fretting.

The Railroad Creek trail was five weeks into summer, lushly canopied by alder and willow and maple. The branch path climbing steeply to the lake reeked of snowbrush vapors baked out by the rainshadow sun. The white bark of an aspen grove glowed amid the vivid green of breeze-quaking new leaves. Coniferous trees that a month ago were black-limbed bare, apparently dead, were sprouting fresh green needles, the Lyall larch, "the evergreen that is not." Ashes of our Memorial Day campfire were perched atop a four-foot pillar of snow. Blue leads streaked the lake ice. Enough ground was snowfree for sleeping. No need for tents under the serene sky. In calm evening our eyes climbed from the lower cirque (the lake) to the upper cirque (the glacier) to the summit ridge. Calmly.

Sunday, 4:30 a.m. Cirrus wisps in the blue, a concern for tomorrow but we were climbing today. In the snow gully to the Mary Green, Ray at

every step loosed a fart in my face, and I recommended he change his brand of alfalfa. At 8:30, 8500 feet, the bergschrund, the roping up. The lead rope, our two best, Vic and Tom. The second, Spick and Jay, experienced and steady. Tom took me aside to apologize for putting me with Ray. He was nearly twice my age, had been climbing twice as long as any of us, had three or four times been rescued. It wasn't always his fault, or maybe never, but accidents had a way of following him around looking for a chance to happen. He'd have to be watched. Why, then, had he been selected? Because as a veteran of the Leper Colony he had a sort of right. Because he was ever-cheerful, life a ceaseless guffaw — a guffaw unmistakable a mile away. As lovable as a climber gets. Not, of course, a true friend if one of his accidents killed me. A week ago, on a silly little peak called Castle, traversing a ledge while stupidly unroped, a piece of the mountain broke off under my boot and I very nearly killed myself with no help at all.

Above the bergschrund, the final thousand feet. A white precipice unknown to the engineer, who climbed in high summer. As with the Portlanders, our season was anachronistic winter.

An end run passed the schrund, to the long steep slope of the Portlanders' avalanche. Slabs to the left forced us to the right, where the runout was a plummet to a lower bay of the glacier. The toe of my boot bumped rock! The snow was a loose veneer, too thin for secure steps or for the axe pick to find purchase for a self-arrest. We must not fall. But every other minute the rope tightened on my waist, and Ray did not guffaw as he apologized for slipping. Should I belay him? The axe shaft couldn't get deep enough to anchor. For that matter, it couldn't serve as a third leg. The suspension was two-point, and when taking a step, one-point.

The snow steepened — but deepened enough to secure boots and axe. Exhale. But not relax. Vic and Tom, out of sight, were shouting back and forth. "*This* won't go!" "*What about that?*" "*That is terrible!*" The engineer was unjust to the Portlanders. Anybody who came up here a month too early had better be a worrywart.

Tom and Vic, in the front lines, could work out nerves by coming to grips. The second echelon, Spick and Jay, could vent vocally: "Watch out! Bad spot here!" "How the heck did you get up *this*?" Hundreds of feet from the front lines, Ray farted and I dreaded. There plainly was no way

through those icy walls. Would hubris in the front lines overpower reason, would social compulsion force us out of the trenches to charge the German machine guns with naked bayonets?

A buttress jutted from the icy walls. Around the corner was a south-facing exposure of snowfree rock, a staircase of short steps and wide ledges. Around a rib a rubble gully romped to the ridge. Ray and I took our first sit-down since the schrund, our first cigarettes. Somewhere ahead, out of sight, were the others. Whatever happened to the flawless hundred-foot wall?

A howl! We leapt to our feet, scrambled up a ridge step, ran the gentle crest toward the disaster. Atop a bulge I stared, bewildered. Where was the wall? Where was the rest of the mountain? The howling was Vic: "Bo-NAN-za!"

At 1:30, five hours from the bergschrund, we had little time to spare for lunch. Dawn cirrus had been succeeded by altostratus, thickening, lowering, darkening. Little black squalls were prowling the achtausenders to the north, to the south, to the west. Only the sun-cooked desert to the east, beyond Lake Chelan (unseen in its trough) gave hope of a tomorrow.

The register book placed by the Portlanders, signed by the engineer, was as shocking as would have been a lightning bolt from one of those little black squalls. The first ascent we'd known about for a year, since publication of "Beckey's Bible." The second we'd learned about several weeks ago. *Who were all those others?* Muckers run amok? In the final summers of the 1930s one of them, presumably a non-fishing tetotaling bachelor with no other entertainment handy had climbed repeatedly, by several routes, sometimes alone, setting speed records and breaking them.

No third, ours. A sixteenth. Still fewer than twenty individuals had preceded us, and none for a decade. Ours was only the second "mainstream" (non-Holden) ascent. We had rescued the giant from obscurity, would see to due honors in Seattle, where it mattered.

Time to run from the little black squalls. Ray and I, again in third place, again were subjected to the bombast of Spick and Jay, but no longer terrorized. Ray, known for his general appearance and many mishaps as "The Avalanche that Walks Like a Man," guffawed as he ran down the staircase. On the steep (deep and solid) snow where even Vic and Tom

were so shaken by the fretting of Spick and Jay they descended in face-in super-secure position, the scrubs of the third team plunge-stepped.

At the top of the veneer (Portlanders' avalanche) slope, Number One and Number Two dithered. Number Three whispered between themselves that the shades of night were falling fast and the wind had the feel of coming on to blow a living gale and we could heel down in five minutes. One and Two agreed we must rappel on the snowmelt-wet slabs alongside the veneer. Tom could find no cracks for pitons or rock horns for slings and got out his bolt kit. His drills were dull, he'd forgotten his sharpener, and his language was shocking for a teenager barely three years out of the Scouts.

An hour he pounded granite. A squall blew in, thrusting ice crystals up my nose, rattling my bones. Soaking wet, cramped by the tight quarters on the community ledge, and then the worst happened— I ran out of cigarettes. But Ray was well-supplied and generous. Wings were his brand, which was why his guffawing always ended in wheezing. I asked if the cheap weeds also caused the farting. Guffaw, wheeze. Returning from a climb as a passenger in my Jeep station wagon, he would be hugged and kissed on the parking strip by wife and son and two daughters. Approaching his house and the welcoming family, I'd look him up and down in his grizzled whiskers and fart-stinking old clothes that a ragpicker wouldn't pick out of a garbage can and ask why his family didn't bolt the doors and shutter the windows when he came in sight. Guffaw, wheeze. "The dog's used to me!"

We ran out of matches and our filthy habit disqualified us from sympathy until Jay relented and dug in his emergency kit for a dangerously small supply that never would last us to camp if a wind came up, as it surely would, what with another squall rolling in.

The hole was deep enough, the bolt driven, three 120-foot climbing ropes tied together and to a reepschnur for a 360-foot rappel, the longest dulfersitz in the annals of Northwest mountaineering and the slowest. Jay, first down, was an hour unsnarling lines. But at 7:45 we were at the schrund we'd left eleven hours earlier and an hour later dashed into the wife-crowded camp whinnying in idiotic unison, "Bo-NANA-za!"

Betty and I awoke to voices in the night. In morning we learned Ray had gone off in the woods for a private moment. Someone had chanced to

awake and noticed his sleeping bag was empty. Tom and Vic, informed of his absence, knew what it meant. An illness in youth had so affected his semicircular canals that he had poor balance and orientation. He tended to fall. He got lost. Once he and I happened to meet atop Denny Mountain and he asked the name of the peak and when I told him he guffawed (wheezed), "Thought it looked familiar. Was up here just yesterday!" Coming out Sulphur Creek from Sunny Mountain he turned up missing. The lepers camped overnight and found him in morning. This time he was found quicker, a few hundred feet from camp, stumbling through the brush in circles. Half a dozen years after Big Banana he fell from a rain-slippery goat path in the Cashmere Crags. Ome Daiber and I scattered his ashes on a meadow hillock in Glacier Basin, at the base of Monte Cristo Peak. Later I scattered his son's ashes, and later still his wife's, on "Ray's Knoll." Spick didn't die until nearly a decade later. He remains there, on cliffs of a peak neighboring the one that now bears his name.

THE WOMAN WHO WOULD CLIMB IT

At midnight the leader-braying began. From here, from there, from everywhere on the sterile rockery between the Muir Snowfield and the Cowlitz Glacier I saw Vic's flashlight impale cocoons of tarp-enwrapped sleeping bags, heard his personalized demand of each and every of the four dozen students and teachers that they instantly emerge into the bitter night, pull on frozen boots, strap crampons, and prepare to rope up and set out. When my turn came I informed him — calmly, respectfully, finally — "I'm sick, Vic. I'm not going." He snorted and brayed onward into the darkness, pursuing his flashlight beam.

I was truly sick. Of Mount Rainier. I had friends who'd climbed it dozens of times, for whom a year with The Mountain was like a day without a bowel movement. I knew of people who suffered the same compulsion as sex maniacs, had humped it hundreds of times, as embarrassingly insatiable as the horny males in the monkey house at the zoo. I couldn't see it. The mindless enslavement to the Big Heap was — well, to be brutal — juvenile. The boy virgin entrapped by the squeezing legs of an aged succubus. The born-again rolling his eyes and foaming at the mouth when the preacher issued the altar call. I'd come on this Experience Climb only because Vic pled with me, claimed to be short of ropeleaders. That was a crock. Fact was, he felt that if he, as Climbing Chairman, was required by his eminence to participate in the spiritual as well as topographic high point of the Climbing Course, so should his choir, the Climbing Committee.

I'd outgrown Rainier. Last year I'd climbed Eldorado, and this year Bonanza and Snowfield and Colonial already, and in several days was leaving for a week in the Picket Range, the "pole of remoteness" of the North Cascades. I was preparing for Farther North, two weeks in the Selkirks: Sir Donald, Tupper, Dawson, the Battle Range.

North, man, North's the way to go,
'Tis true now and 'twas always so.

At the culmination of my dazzling *direttissimo* of the Emmons, I'd been so ginger-fit that the 20,000-foot summit of the continent was mine for the grasping. I had only to figure out the sled dogs. And the money, of course, since Alaska was on the same continent as me but many many dollars distant. Also, McKinley took a lot more than a two-week vacation. Details. It had to happen. Like the ontological argument: God is perfect. To be perfect is to exist. Ergo, God exists.

Aside from that I was just plain sick. The maxim is, "How you feel on Rainier on Sunday is determined by what you've been doing all week." What I'd been doing all this week was the winter routine, curtailed in spring, terminated in summer — except the immediately past Friday night — the Blue Moon and Pink Palace. This Saturday morning I arose in our University District basement apartment after three hours in the sack, eyeballs the size of cantalopes, stomach refusing aught but coffee. When I picked up Ray he guffawed and wheezed and offered me a Wings. My other passenger lived in the same old hulk of a Northern trader, half-sunk in Lake Union, as Crooks, veteran of first ascents while I was still at Camp Parsons, now my sometime companion of the peaks and more frequently of the Palace, where he'd been at the pinball when I left for bed, and now arose prematurely in order not to miss witnessing the fulfillment of his predictions so few hours ago.

Arriving at Paradise at noon, my alimentary canal mistook misery for hunger and in the cafeteria I blundered through roast beef, cold, mostly gristle; gravy, cold, greasy; mashed potatoes, cold, lumpy; string beans from the tin can, cold, woody. At least the milk was warm.

Ten vertical feet of snow from the blacktop of the parking lot took more out of me than the Kautz Icefall, and beyond and above rose an eternity of 4500 more feet. Sisyphus had it easier with his stone than I with the lump in my gut. The summer before, on the Ingraham ascent, I'd climbed from Paradise, 5500 feet, to Camp Muir, 10,000 feet, in three hours, including a picnic supper at Anvil Rock, and never drew a deep breath. Today each boot was an anvil and the air was as thin as at the North Col. At 9000 feet I went down for the count and told Ray I was done for. The dear man vowed to sit in the snow and smoke Wings while I finished dying. So I had to hoist the anchor in my innards and stir the anvils to motion.

At 8 o'clock I pillowed my face in the rocks of Camp Muir. I'd done what I could and nobody could ask more. To climb Rainier on a two-nights' total of seven hours sleep was absurd. Not to mention the lump in my gut, which at this elevation never would digest, would be with me home to Seattle and most likely until Wednesday. The compensation was that by not climbing Rainier this time I was freed from ever having to climb it again.

At ten o'clock the camp was unnecessarily awakened by new arrivals. Marsh was wearing the opera hat he reserved for festivities and had to go about popping it open for each of his friends, Lardy providing the flashlight spotlight. They had rented alpenstocks, kept at the Guide Hut for tourists on flower walks, and had to make sure everybody saw those, too, as they chattered in what they imagined to be the accent of nineteenth-century Oxbridge. Choosing a central location calculated to disrupt the maximum amount of sleep, Lardy fired up his Primus and cooked a Ten Can of rice and tuna fish and dehydrated mixed vegetables and ate the entire potful down to the bottom.

At half-past midnight Vic came braying by me and cried in dismay, "You're not up! You're my routefinder!" I reminded, "Vic, *I'm not going*. I'm *sick*." He brayed off into the night.

Lardy, staggering in a daze, the joke over, found me still abed. Not going? He never had heard of *not going*. He didn't know it was possible to *not go*. He was dazzled. He, himself, was very sick. Brayed out of the bag at midnight, he'd stood up and the Ten Can of rice and tuna fish and half-rehydrated vegetables came straight up. He crawled into Ray's vacated bag to marvel at my revelation of the Secret of the Gnostics.

From behind Vic's flashlight came a wail. Two down! The flashlight of his substitute routefinder was at the far side of the Cowlitz Glacier, nearing the gap in the Cathedral Rocks connecting to the Ingraham Glacier, and two of his chief lieutenants had become conscientious objectors. He exhorted no more. But neither did he accept defeat. As Lardy and I snuggled into our burrows we discovered we were not alone. We supposed this dark shape outlined by the stars was a recruit to our rebellion and asked what it was doing out of its burrow.

"I'm your rope team," she said. Vic had given up trying to bray Lardy and me into accepting our assigned rope teams and had reassigned

them. (The lying bastard had plenty of ropeleaders.) Out of pure spite he left Elizabeth.

I stuck my head out in the wind and screeched at the rearguard flashlights halfway across the Cowlitz, "God will punish you, Victor!"

Snug in our bags, we reasoned with shaking-like-a-leaf Elizabeth. You feel terrible, now, don't you? A person who feels terrible at 10,000 feet will wish she were in Hell at 11,000, suffer irreversible brain damage at 12,000, be terminal at 13,000, cold meat at 14,000. Your stomach is trying to jump out your mouth, right? It *will*, it *will*, followed by your intestines, small and large, your gallbladder and liver and lights. The shivering makes you gasp for breath, doesn't it? Halfway to the summit your brain will atrophy from lack of oxygen, you'll see demons peering from crevasses, you'll fall asleep on your feet and we'll have to leave you there for the glacier to carry on down to its terminal moraine, where your siblings' grandchildren will be waiting to see their silly great-aunt who didn't know when she was well off. On the other hand, crawl back in your bag, still warm, sleep comfy, in the bright morning eat a hearty breakfast and loll away the hours to await the amusing retreat from Moscow, legs wobbling, eyes vacant, faces scarlet-fried, parkas vomit-splashed.

She nodded. She understood. Teeth chattering from the cold, every limb and sub-limb a-quiver, she responded. She had just returned from the club's Summer Outing, hiking or climbing every day of the two weeks, getting in the best condition of her life. She never would reach this level again. She was at that stage of youth's end when each summer she was not quite as fast or quite as nimble as the summer before.

"Every day — every clear day — since I was born I've looked at The Mountain. This is my last chance."

We three were alone in the night with The Mountain. A solemn moment in a most solemn place, a step from Heaven and Hell.

"Elizabeth," said I, kindly but firmly, sternly, "If you make us get up, you will regret it."

"I know, I *know*..."

Though our bodies had been abused in the hours (Lardy) and days (me) immediately preceding, in this our third season we'd been climbing hard since the calendar announced (falsely, prematurely) winter's end, four months of toughening up to expedition (or at least semi-) standards.

In 1924 Norton and Somervell had been so ill at 26,500 feet that in London they'd have been clapped in an ambulance and run off to hospital, bells clanging. Yet they managed 28,100 feet that day. Lardy and I had no doubts of our ability to reach 14,410 feet today. We just didn't want to. Until Elizabeth gave us a motive. To make her pay. Then we'd deal with Vic.

We roped Elizabeth in the middle so that one of us could maintain a relentless tug, forcing her to her fastest, most excruciating sustainable pace, while the other kept up a scathing commentary from the rear. She was not to be allowed to enjoy a single step of the ascent.

It would be an interminably long ascent. The year before we'd gone straight up the Ingraham Glacier. This year the icefall was impassable. The willow wands and boot-beaten trench traversed the Ingraham onto the Emmons Glacier, zigged and zagged to dodge around huge crevasses and then, blocked at last, traversed back across the top of the Ingraham to the Nisqually Glacier, only then breaking through to the crater rim. It was the longest and deadliest-dull route ever devised on Rainier.

Lardy and I enjoyed commenting on the wayside colors — orange, grapefruit, apple, grape, cranberry, pineapple — and complimenting Elizabeth for her tasteful additions. We began meeting teams descending, giving up, some from sickness, some from boredom. We chatted with a ropeleader friend who was retreating with a deathly ill student, almost as bad off as our Elizabeth. His other student was disappointed so we took him aboard, roped behind Elizabeth to ensure he could not ameliorate the relentless tug on her waist. When we set out as a team of four, Eager stopped dead in his tracks to gape at the verbal abuse from the rear; the pull from the front jerked him off his feet.

We began meeting teams returning from the summit. We drew Elizabeth's attention to their wobbling legs, their fried faces, their vomit-smearred parkas. Vomit dribbled down her own chin because we refused to stop to let her make a clean job of it. At each meeting with a descending team, Eager lurched out to try to report us to a higher authority.

Thanks to the excellence of our long-term conditioning, the higher Lardy and I climbed the stronger we were, the more vicious. At noon we met Vic, rearguarding down. He commanded us to cease and desist, turn back. Eager appealed to Vic to save Elizabeth's life, Eager's life. We

informed Vic that Elizabeth had got us out of bed and therefore was going to the top and if she never came down it was on his head. If we had to dump her on the crater rim, all the better, we could make better speed catching him as we *would*, he could count on it we *would*.

Elizabeth had no comment, hadn't spoken since we dragged her out of Camp Muir at two o'clock. No breath to spare. Whenever she had dropped to her knees we'd permitted several quick gasps, no more. Now she began toppling full-length, face in the snow. Two gasps and we'd jerk her to her feet. Eager was whining.

She went down and when we yanked didn't stir.

"You 've *killed* her!" sobbed Eager.

Lardy and I stood over the body. I leaned down and whispered in her ear, "Elizabeth, twelve hours ago you wouldn't let us sleep. Do you recall my promise?"

Shoulder to shoulder, Lardy and I yoked up on the rope and as in the man-hauling of the sledge in *Scott of the Antarctic*, at the cry, "Ready? *Heave!*" began dragging the inert mass on its belly. Eager followed, wringing his hands.

Lardy and I unyoked. "Sit up and sign the register, Elizabeth."

We were unroping at Muir when Elizabeth uttered her first words since the middle of the night, humbly thanking (sort of) us, "I never could have made it without you."

However, she never sent us Christmas cards.

THE MOST AWFUL PLACE

I was savoring the best of sleep, the last for which the first is made, when an outbreak of cheerfulness affrighted the birds in the mouldering forest and filthy air and stood my hair on end. The Rover Boys, Yorick and Pablo, were banging pots and cups, gargling oatmeal, giggling and jiggling and hanging from branches by one hand and scratching their armpits. The camp area was too cramped, on a buttress jutting over the valley of Chilliwack Creek, to permit space for a separate peace, and soon Vic and Ray and four others of the Climbers Outing were shuffling about in the half-light.

Not me. This was no climb day, this was a trail day. A person can stand upright under seventy pounds only a finite number of hours. Nine o'clock was early enough to begin. Assuming one had to begin, and that question was open. Five months: thirteen summits, plus five weather-outs, plus five teaching trips. I wasn't sure I even liked mountains anymore.

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,
"And your nose has a look of surprise,
And yet you incessantly stand on your head,
Do you think, at your age, it is wise?"

It was not yet seven and there they were, booted up and packed up, fed and toileted, all eight sitting like ducks in a row watching me in my bag, furiously smoking a cigarette. I suggested they start without me, expressed how intense would be my pleasure to rejoin them at suppertime or when Hell froze over. All in a row they sat, the Rovers chirping merrily, and at seven-thirty I flipped a lighted cigarette at a chipmunk and got up.

On the trail my rucksack, lashed atop my Trapper Nelson, broke loose and bounded a hundred feet down a creek and over a waterfall. A glass jar of strawberry jam (my week's supply) broke and gooyed pitons and crampons; my toilet roll was half the week drying enough to do its job adequately.

At Tapto Shelter on Brush Creek I pitched my liferaft sail securely distant from the others, Rover racket muted by subalpine forest. In evening as I walked alone to Whatcom Pass the rain stopped and the clouds broke and sunset watercolored cliffs and I decided I wasn't

terminally burnt-out after all. That I was loaded up and on the trail at seven-fifteen next morning owed nothing to Rovers, everything to the promise of the serene dawn which was fulfilled in afternoon by Whatcom Peak, 7700 feet, a fifth ascent, the rarity of human presence on the summit testifying to its remoteness, its proximity to the Pole.

The camp at Perfect Pass, 6000 feet, between Whatcom Peak and 8400-foot Challenger, was a thin strip of tundra, cliffs dropping to the Baker River on the west, a cornice hanging over the Challenger Glacier on the east. A ptarmigan mama cluck-clucked after her lone chickie, squawking in maternal agony when it leapt off a cliff, flapping pinfeathers, and fell like a stone, cooing relief when it walked back up around the cliff, having averted the presumed fate of brothers and sisters.

The glacier sprawled from its upper névé, wrapped north around Whatcom and south around Challenger, down to the valley of Little Beaver Creek. The winter-white was so vast, so wide-open to the rising sun, its brilliance penetrated eyelids and would permit no sleep. At six-thirty a tight line of Trapper Nelsons was aimed at the apex of whiteness and eighteen boots were crunching frozen snow.

The bergschrund, full stop. The chasm itself was well-bridged but the upper wall, some fifty feet tall, overhung. On the left it ran out on a cliff, could not be turned there. On the right the angle layed back enough to be climbable — carefully, very carefully, because there it ran out into an icefall and some hundreds of feet of empty air. The glacier surface was good, firm stuff, excellent for kicking solid steps. But atop that neve lay half a foot of treacherous slush from a snowfall that on us, at Tapto, had been cold rain. Vic offered me the lead. I didn't really want it. I was wearing Army boots, Bramanis, and the rubber-lug soles could punch through the slush but wouldn't bite the underlying neve. I was donning crampons, gloomily anticipating how the slush would ball up in the irons and how, while standing one-legged on that wall, above that air, I'd have to remove axe from anchoring position in the wall and knock the balls loose. Pacing nervously below the wall, Vic abruptly decided that he, after all, wanted this lead. I couldn't deny him, the tricouni nails of his boots were just the ticket and he performed nobly if slowly, two cigarettes' (mine) worth. The lead of the summit rocks, exhilarating exposure, one piton, was my share of the glory.

Ours was the fifth party to sign the register. The fourth, the summer before, had been my inspiration for the trip. Kermit the Hermit was the first of my climbing partners who had been to the Pickets. His companion was a new professor of geology at the University, Peter Misch, the first in our Seattle circle ever to have been to the Himalaya. Before we met him we'd read his name in *Nanga Parbat Adventure*, the book about the Greek-tragedy-like expedition of 1934. Where I pounded my piton, Peter (I later learned from Kermit) had also pounded. It was something of a connection to the Roof of the World.

We rappelled off the summit, and ingeniously-experimentally (from a snow bollard) down the bergschrund wall as well. In late afternoon we skated snow slopes below the Challenger Glacier toward Luna Cirque, seeking campable ground, and at 5500 feet only just did, on ledges at the brink of the cirque cliffs. Scattered amid hemlock shrubs and gneiss buttresses were heather beds for sleeping bags, one or two to a ledge.

The third morning, the Challenger day, the menace of the Rovers had been, in the dawn splendor of the vasty white, zero. The fourth morning was the dangerous one. So much time as this in wilderness, denied the city's easy escapes to privacy, can test the firmest friendships. Nothing so gross is required as ~~the~~ perpetual farting. (In Ray's case, that was part of the man, love me, love my farts.) Belching is worse because the belcher wears so beatific an expression of complacency, assuming every listener will share his satisfaction. Sucking hot tea, coffee, or cocoa, then smacking the lips, "Ah!", is trying, very trying. Practicing the harmonica, intolerable. These are major offenses. Very little things, endlessly repeated, can be as bad. A comrade's breakfast ritual must never be watched. Neither crime nor sin is committed in the shaking-up of orange juice, gulping a vitamin pill, stirring of oatmeal and sprinkling raisins in it, or gloating over a strip of sizzling bacon, but no sanity can withstand a week of it, sleep will not come at night for anticipating the morning. A sinus problem. The first several days you don't hear the sniffing. Then you hear nothing else. You wait for it, grow impatient for it, want to take ice axe in hand and scream, "Sniff, damn you, sniff!"

As for the Rover Boys' ode to joy. . . That fourth morning it held off until seven and was oddly muted. But they could have squealed and

gabbled as early and loud as they pleased because by seven I was long awake and oblivious to sounds merely human.

Years later, over mugs of Cougar Mountain homebrew, I confessed to Yorick my dark and bloody thoughts at the buttress camp, first morning of the trip. He, in turn, revealed how frightened the Rovers were by my fierce cigarettes, so different from Ray's genial Wings. At subsequent camps they sought distance from me as avidly as I from them. In morning they kept watch until I'd crawled from bag and pulled on boots, stirred water in a cup of Grape Nuts and powered milk and brown sugar, fired up the Primus for a cup of cocoa for dunking a fig newton, and gotten halfway through a cigarette. It was then safe, they observed, to venture withⁱⁿ~~out~~ twenty-five feet of me — if steps were soft and voices hushed.

That fourth morning the Rovers lay on their ledge unavoidably — dangerously — close to mine, as quietly as seething glee would allow. Arising as silently as Mohicans in Huron territory, they conversed in murmurs and muffled the cups and spoons. The entire party felt lazy after Challenger and we didn't start for Luna until eleven. Four hours, therefore, the Rovers watched me that morning. Yorick wondered what I was watching so intently. He began watching too.

Two summers before, from summits of Baker and Glacier and Shuksan, I'd discovered peaks that wouldn't shame the *Swiss Alpine Calendar*. The previous summer I'd climbed in a cloud to the top of Eldorado and through holes seen a glaciated wilderness I'd supposed existed nowhere south of Canada. This year, appointed by Vic as maestro of the Experience Climbs, I'd pored through pages of the brandnew "Beckey's Bible" and listened intently to Kermit's paean to the Pickets and

chosen this, the Pole of Remoteness of the Cascades, as scene of the Climbers Outing. I was confounded by the reaction. Even leading climbers of our group grumbled and whined. They didn't want to go where hardly anybody ever had been, they wanted to go to Dutch Miller Gap, to peaks familiar as seen from summits of the Snoqualmie Pass "pin peaks" (climb ten for the First Pin, ten others for the Second, the two pins bracketing your Six Majors Pin). To me, my third season was time to put away child's pins and head North. How could a person be a climber and do otherwise?

Something lost behind the Ranges.
Lost and waiting for you. Go!

That was one thing Yorick watched me watching — Alpine-like peaks, Canadian-scale wilderness, viewed not from a distance or the edge but from inside, from the Pole.

Another was time. Baker and Shuksan were weekend climbs; Glacier and Eldorado and Snowfield, three-day weekends. At Luna Cirque camp we were four days in from the cars at Ruth Creek and would be two-and-a-half days out.

Then, architecture. The cirque headwall rose 4000 feet from gray moraines to the horseshoe of peaks and gendarmes and cols anchored at the ends by Challenger and Fury. By a dozen routes I climbed with the eyes from fans of avalanche snow, over moats, up snow couloirs and icefalls of hanging glaciers, rock ribs and chimneys and perched snowfields, to the sawtooth summit line.

The massif was not dead mineral, it *lived*. Eyes fixed on the wall would see a lump break from an ice cliff, slide down rock slabs in slow motion, smash to smithereens, spew seeming-liquid over a cliff and flow over a basal fan, all in perfect silence, only at the end commencing the roar that continued long after motion ceased.

That morning I watched the wall in first flood of dawnlight, then in pale shadows of cotton clouds. I watched during our 1500-foot descent to the cirque floor, our 4000-foot ascent of Luna, 8500 feet (a fourth), and our evening slog back up to camp. I did, for sure, still love the mountains. Even my companions. At the head of the line, kicking steps, I staged an entertainment to amuse them. Glancing over my shoulder to eight bowed

heads, eyes fixed on bootheels ahead, I gradually bent my route from straight-up to angle-up to sideways and gently down, then straight down, and when the end of the line saw what I was doing a chorus erupted of "What the hell!" and only Ray guffawed.

In camp I watched the sawtooth summit line darken to a black silhouette in pink sky. Abed, wrapped in liferaft sail against the wind, eating a Milky Way, I watched a moon red as a dying sun sink behind the black wall, stars sparkle out one by one and in clusters, and clouds of stars mass together in the Milky Way. My eyes closed on a wall huge beyond daytime imagination. Sleeping, I listened to a never-silent wall that had lived hundreds of thousands of days and would live thousands of thousands more.

A thick, swift sky lowered on the summits. Before joining the flight I heaped stones in a cairn to cover a register can intended for the summit of Fury or Phantom. In the register book I scribbled the date and our names and the entry by Scott at the South Pole, when he knew his journal might survive but probably not him: "Good God! What an awful place!"

Awful: "full of awe". The wall was the most mountain architecture, the most mountain life, the most mountain time, the most mountain wildness I'd ever watched so long.

Awful: "appalling." Writing the note as sleet swept the ledges, I was appalled by the gulf of Luna Cirque, whose floor had been walked by only seven humans before we nine descended there yesterday, and also by the six miles of glacier and snowfield between us and Whatcom Pass, where the trail had been abandoned by the Forest Service a decade before and in recent years had been brush-busted on the average every two or three years.

In the back of the mind was the sequence after a rock struck a head, a crampon gashed a leg, or a foot stuck in a hole during a glissade. Eight companions could not carry the casualty very far, very fast, on a stretcher improvised from Trapper Nelsons, climbing ropes, and hemlock branches —

assuming the injuries would permit the victim to be moved at all. If his condition required a physician, or more stretcher-bearers, or immobilization by a Stokes stretcher, a messenger party would have to be despatched. Six miles of glacier and snow to Whatcom Pass, then seventeen miles, many in brush jungles, would bring hard-hiking messengers to Ruth Creek road the second day after the accident. The rescue party recruited in Seattle would reach Ruth Creek the next day, and two strenuous days later, Awful Camp. Three grueling carry-out days. From mishap to hospital, six to nine days.

At the back of the mind was a determination not to get hit in the head by a rock, slash a leg with a crampon, or stick a foot in a hole — or suffer acute appendicitis, which would demand no fuss unless the loved ones insisted on delivery of the body to consecrated ground.

During our week in the Pickets we saw just one aircraft, hired by the U.S. Geological Survey to take photos for what would be, when published half a dozen years later, the first accurate map of the area. There were no radios or helicopters around, then. The first we saw of either in the mountains was two years after Luna Cirque, in the valley below Mount Stuart, the peak where Rover Pablo was killed.

WITH WHAT EASE ON THIS SOFT NIGHT

After nigh onto half a century of being set straight, Ted continues to insist that what I said an hour before midnight, an hour of cliffs still to be somehow descended, was "I want to die." It is a sweet thing to save a friend's life and he would like to think that's what he — and Vic and Tom — did. His (their) testimony can't be dismissed out of hand. It deserves a polite hearing and then a rude dismissal.

At eight o'clock, as dusk was thickening and we were not yet escaped from The Bowl, I asked my ropemate, Vic, to start keeping me on belay during rests. My body remained perfectly able to downclimb and rappel. Never did a foot fumble or hand lose grip. My brain, however, when not kept busy telling muscles what to do, lost focus and fell asleep. While Vic, above, belayed me, Ted guided my steps by flashlight while his ropemate, Tom, searched for the route below. It was a three-man job, those last four hours, getting me off the mountain. The fact that it was not *necessary* to get me off the mountain that soft summer night — well, more about that later. The fact that it took those exactly same four hours to get themselves off the mountain, and would have if I'd not been there — well, that dulls the luster on the hero medal.

Ted supposes that a person who spends four hours more asleep than awake and can't remember the night's stupendous exhibition of Northern Lights is not a reliable witness to anything. Ted is wrong. What should I have been doing, if not sleeping, while Tom was thrashing around in the jungle of vertical cedar and filthying the night air with his vile language? As for Northern Lights, I'd seen plenty of stupendous exhibitions, I needed another just then much less than sleep.

I remember everything that happened those four hours. Everything important. For example, thousands of feet below us a passenger train glided beside the Skykomish River. Through the windows I saw smiling travelers hoisting glasses of icewater, gulping them, refilling from frosted pitchers which, when empty, the waiter replaced, unstinting, because should the kitchen run dry the train could stop and everybody dash out and stick their heads in the river.

During the climb I sweated out so much of my precious bodily fluids that despite the next morning at Lake Serene, where I had to keep

crawling forward on my belly as the lake level dropped, and the lunch at Monroe, where the cafe ran out of milkshake makings and we had to move to another, Monday afternoon the bathroom scales read ten pounds under my Friday weight, a frightening loss, and I was half the week getting them back at the Blue Moon. From the moment in the upper Bowl when I emptied my last canteen, my mucus-clogged airways were kept open solely by Vic's canteen supply, which he denied his own throat and rationed out to mine, a swallow at a time, and only when my breathing became dangerously raucous. In that hour before midnight when the four of us assembled on the comfortably spacious ledge and looked down to stars glistening in Lake Serene, a swandive below, it is not surprising that Ted misheard, the others too, and Vic hysterically bleated, "Don't talk like that!"

I didn't "talk like that." Their tin ears caught a single word; fear invented the rest — and it was fear for themselves, because a couple-three people almost died that night and none of them was me. A person cannot forget, ever in his life, the revelation granted me by those stars below. Mangled though the words were by a tongue sloppy as a rotten banana, what I said was, very precisely, "It would be easy to die now."

Of all the mountains I never wanted to climb — better say, wanted never to climb — none revulsed me more than the North Peak of Index. This was the negation of "something hidden behind the ranges." It flaunted its nakedness at the front of the Cascades, had been featured in newspaper ads of the Great Northern Railway since the tracks were laid in the 1890s, and had been burning up camera film at an Old Faithful rate since inventions of the automobile and the Kodak.

Distinctly, emphatically, disgustingly it was not Picket-clean. Pleistocene glaciers had excavated the cirques of Lake Serene and Anderson Creek, leaving between the two huge cavities a slender cleaver of aiguilles, and had deepened the Skykomish valley at the cleaver's base to an elevation of barely 400 feet, and had blunted and steepened the

cleaver's north face and scooped in its upper reaches the shallow cirque of The Bowl. But the sanitary and sanitizing ice had melted away millennia ago. The climbing on the North Peak began above Lake Serene at 3100 feet and concluded on a summit of a meager 5367 feet, the entire route in the domain of hyperactive organic acids which over the millennia had dissolved hard edges of rock to a corruption of moss, lichens, weeds, and slime. Crooks, our premier danseuse of pure rock, had been attracted to the sheer, high precipices, had come away compulsively washing his hands and petitioning the Forest Service to dynamite a trail to the top to keep climbers from temptation. It didn't deserve to be a climb, he said. In the Alps they would dig a tunnel for a cog railway to carry tourists to a gipfelhaus for tea. As an alternative he would accept a quarry, the leveled site to be made a golf course to serve a different species of imbeciles and let climbers make fools of themselves elsewhere.

So long as it was there (ah Mallory, how your word haunts your memory!) the abomination would be an attractive nuisance. In 1929 a group of non-climbers (Boy Scouts, in fact) had emerged from the bushes claiming an ascent, their description so incoherent they were judged not to know where, if anywhere, they'd been. A decade later, though, a skilled climber newly arrived from the Alps and not yet knowing any better, got to the top and found evidence the Scouts indeed had been there. Teenage Fred Beckey, always larking, followed with his little brother. Beckey proteges wishing to ape the master added two ascents. Beckey schemed a final epic jest, a traverse of the three peaks of Index, with a first descent of the south ridge of North Peak, a first ascent and first traverse of Middle Peak, and a first ascent of the north ridge of Main Peak. To amuse the largest possible audience, he announced the impending feat to the press. The newspaper item tickled the fancy of Dick Berge, an obscure Everett lad who thought to steal a march on Legend Fred. He succeeded on North Peak but was stopped there by the weather, as was Fred later the same day. Berge's laughter impelled three hiker friends to follow. As the disgusted night-club comic says when a heckler disrupts his act, "Everybody's a comedian."

The foolery interested me far less than the juvenile caperings of Geoffrey Winthrop Young on the roofs of Oxford and Cambridge. He and his Shropshire lads had the excuse they were drunk. Having been there

myself, I could smile at drunks on university roofs. Not at a pair of Sunny Mountain lepers proceeding directly from ice-clean Dome Peak to the antithesis. Lardy and All-American Boy in the company of, if not exactly accompanied by, the Whittaker twins had blundered to the summit and somehow tumbled down. This spring, whenever we were together in my Jeep station wagon headed for Tumwater Canyon, they would compel me to stop while they jumped out to grovel and salaam, salute and "seig heil!" Their "Nordgipfel" epitomized all that was pubescent and ignoble and revolting about the sport.

The root of the problem — the Nordgipfel problem, the Canadian railroad problem, the Victoria problem, the baby-kidnapping problem, the whole bloody damn sea of problems that plagued the end of the 1950 summer — was Sloan. Though just a few feet short of an achtausender, the blamed thing was a *pin* peak, a person can't respect a pin peak. As is said about speaking French to a Frenchman, it just encourages them. We left Seattle three hours too late for the long and brushy ascent to high camp, were three hours too late getting there for a proper night's sleep, three hours too late to the summit to return to the car before dark, three hours too late to bed in Seattle to arise Monday morning for work as anything but a zombie, the walking dead.

I tottered from work to our basement apartment, toppled to the couch (dinner? Was there dinner?), and ring-ring-ring went the telephone. Betty, always momentarily expecting God to summon us home and thus never ignoring a ring-ring-ring, woke me: "It's Pete." Pete, asking about my weekend, telling about his caper with Fred, consummation of the veritable First Traverse. "North Peak is a laugh. We didn't even rope up. You ought to do it sometime." Pete well knew my abilities. "Yeah, sounds like a yawker. I'll have to do it sometime."

Totter to the couch and topple. Ring-ring-ring. "It's Vic." He had been doing his Climbing Chairman duty on a routine Experience Climb. Nothing worth talking about. Sloan was more than I wanted to talk about but I had

to be polite, so I told how Lardy cooked up his usual Ten Can and as it was ready to eat kicked over his Primus and took flashlight in one hand and fork in the other to dig in the heather for his rice and tuna and rehydrated vegetables. How Lardy went off in darkness for private business, came back, forgot where he'd gone, and went off in darkness to throw down his sleeping bag, and out of the darkness came a pitiable whine of obscenities. How at midnight in Darrington he ate three cheeseburgers and Betty tried to keep up but couldn't finish her third so Lardy had to eat that too.

A lull. Vic wasn't ready to hang up and I was out of Lardy jokes. — Well, not quite. Lardy was ambitious and asked if I minded him taking all the leads, and that was fine by me, and he was in terrible form from lack of sleep, and twice I had to give him shoulder stands, a technique neither of us ever had used before. — Oh yes, on the trail Lardy sprained his ankle and that's why we were eating cheeseburgers in Darrington at midnight.

Another lull. I had nothing left but the news from Pete. "He says North Peak is a joke. Says we ought to climb it sometime." Vic leaps. "I've always wanted to do it. When shall we go?" I'd forgotten he was on Sunny Mountain with the other lepers. "Well, we're leaving for Canada Friday. Maybe when we get back." "That will be September. Not enough daylight. Hardly enough now. Can't you put off Canada a couple days? Go next weekend to North Peak?" "Tom's all set to leave Friday. Awful late to change plans." "If it's okay by him is it okay by you?"

Anything to get back to the couch. Ring-ring-ring. Vic. "Tom is hot to go. You've got two whole weeks in Canada." Tom, of course, also was a leper. I'd forgotten, though, that he was with Lardy and All-American on North Peak and while scouting the route the day before the climb was hit on the hand by a falling rock.

Not back to the couch did I go, but to the Blue Moon. I'd seen combat vets grip their glass so tight their knuckles were white, and stare deep into the bubbles rising in their beer, as they quietly, darkly told of the one episode of the war that now woke them at night in cold sweat. My recurring nightmare was Cruiser Peak, 1947. I'd gone back often to the South Face of The Tooth. Never to Cruiser. Whenever I looked at the photo I'd taken from the false summit, the demon tower blurred because I couldn't hold the camera steady, I knew I never could go back. Driving the

highway past North Peak, I'd blessed the saints that this was a nightmare I'd never have.

Vic had informed me that he and Tom agreed we'd need a fourth climber because a rope team of three would be too slow. Tuesday morning, when Ted came by my chemistry stockroom window, I told him, "Something terrible has happened." My hope was that he would burst into maniac laughter. He did! "Sounds like a yawker," he said.

I got no sympathy from the jolly boys at the Blue Moon, the vets drowning in beer their nightmares of combat overseas and at Fort Dix, New Jersey. In their opinion, I didn't have to go. Had they been at the Somme, when the lieutenant blew his whistle they'd not have gone over the top.

There surely was no sympathy as I carried my hangover up the root-ladder to Lake Serene and the talus slope to our slummy camp where the upthrust of cedar jungle marked the abrupt beginning of the ape gymnasium. Ted was a cruel disappointment. Often enough he'd helped close the Blue Moon. Not a kind word now. At the Somme, as the German machine guns cut Vic and Tom in half, he'd have picked up their whistles and tootled.

Sunday at 5:37 a.m. (he announced the exact time loudly, accusing) Vic thrust his flashlight in my face as he had at Camp Muir and cried, "You look terrible!"

August 20 was recorded by the Stampede Pass weather station as the hottest day of 1950. Of the eight-and-a-quarter hours to the summit I retain, nigh onto half a century later, minute-by-minute recall. I remember a slab so gently sloping it would have been a cinch had there been any purchase for fingers but there wasn't because every crease that should have been a hold was stuffed with dirt, and even so would have been easy had it been clean enough for flat-footed friction but it wasn't because the surface was all moss or lichen or sand. I remember a vertical hundred feet where I never got closer to the cliff than six feet, climbed from cedar branch to cedar branch, muscling tough branches apart to

squeeze through. I remember a log blocking the route up The Bowl, so big the tree must have been centuries old when it fell and somehow jammed in mid-air a plumbob drop from the Skykomish River. I remember halting in mid-pitch to gloat over a tiny jewel of water shining before mine eyes, the runoff of dew accumulated in a tiny rock basin, now visibly evaporating: I was in the nick of time to suck it onto my tongue and its setting of mud too, also delicious.

I remember Tom leading the crux of the escape from the top of The Bowl, spewing vile language (never heard in *my* Boy Scout troop) for the peak's failure to provide a piton crack and Ted's inability to find a belay stance. Tom suggested Vic and I try another way. We inspected a pillar leaning against the wall. Vic revealed unsuspected resentment of my deference to his leadership, "For a change, why don't *you* take a lead?"

Atop the pillar I attempted the overhang in the wall above, failed, and stirred Vic beyond umbrage almost to anger until he joined me atop the pillar, tried the overhang, failed, stood on my shoulders, failed again, and apologized for what he'd been thinking. From the pillar we shouted in unison and Tom and Ted (an hour later — a hour to be kept in mind when the subject of pre-midnight memories comes up) lowered a rope.

At the ridge notch above The Bowl, Tom and Ted waited impatiently until Vic and I arrived, then took off like a shot. Fully rational (the only person in the party able to claim that mental condition), I realized that my remaining strength had best be reserved for getting off the mountain. Vic took the disappointment well, for about five minutes, until his near-tears compelled me to relent. Almost immediately we caught the others, their hurry stalled while Tom tried to curse a piton into the mountain.

An hour in the sun-blasted heather of the summit was another waste of time, doing less to rest me than to complete my wilting. Of the five-and-a-quarter hours from the summit to the lower Bowl, where I began slipping into sleep, I also have full and vivid memories. Those were the dangerous hours, and not for me. I remember rappels: The one in the upper Bowl where the leftenants' haste could not spare a minute to tie slings, the rappel rope was draped over a minor protuberance of rock, and had the load not been kept constant would have flipped off and down would have come baby, cradle and all. The one crossing the Big Log where the anchor was a scrawny huckleberry bush. The one below The Bowl

where Tom and Ted anchored themselves with a single piton which Vic lifted out with his fingers, and swearing the only oath I ever heard from his polite lips, cried "Pitons are cheap!" and pounded three more, none better than the first, so he belayed me lest they fail, and then took his own chances. Here we were, the Climbing Chairman and two members of his committee, four climbers whose joint experience totalled fifteen years, trusting lives to lunatic abuses of the most dangerous of "standard" techniques.

I remember Ted finding the other end of his rope unattached, Tom having vanished in the night. I remember crazy leaps for holds and mad giggles when they didn't end with a "ker-splash" in the Skykomish River. It was not for me the leftenants were risking their necks, it was for honor, their own, personal honor, as they would blow their whistles at the Somme to give the Germans an aiming point.

The strangeness of the place, the time, and the people was a precondition of the revelation, as was the blurring between waking and dreaming. I was simultaneously in our basement apartment playing a hot game of hearts with Betty and Pete and Chuck, at the Blue Moon disporting-disputing with the jolly boys, and on a ledge a swandive above the Milky Way.

Keying on "die," the leftenants missed the point. The fear was in *their* heads, not mine. They misheard "would be" as "want." The word they lost altogether was "easy."

Since childhood, reading narratives of the Poles and Darkest Africa, the Oceane Sea and the Roof of the World, I'd been baffled by how common it is for adventurers to heroically exert themselves and then tamely lay themselves down to die. From my personal experience of tough times, a quitting — the Final Quitting — seemed a very hard thing. Impossible, actually, for a true hero. Here was the fatal flaw we tried not to see in Scott. Mallory surely did not quit, he fell.

This had nothing to do with the four of us on the North Peak. Our ledge was spacious, the night balmy, and thirst was only intolerable during the heavy breathing of hard labor. We could have slept out the night comfortably and in dawn quickly found the way through the cedar jungle to camp. What frightened the leftenants was not death; had that been their concern they'd have taken more pains with rappel anchors. Their worry

was that all but several of the nine previous parties to climb Nordgipfel had been forced to bivouac on the descent, and unless I cooperated, we would too, leaving Lardy and All-American, who had *not*, the laugh on us.

As they strutted and fretted, fingering their whistles, I relaxed. For one thing, I held in contempt any person who valued the sort of prestige to be gained on this pile of shit. For another, four ascents of Rainier had convinced me I was probably immortal. It was not *my* death I saw in Lake Serene.

Three hours I'd been repeatedly yanked from easeful sleep to downclimb or rappel and had learned a thing about — not the end — but the (or at least *a*) beginning of the end. Given a task, eyes could focus, hands grip doorknobs and feet step in buckets, and all could coordinate in the intricacies of a rappel. However, the brain was fed up with bossing muscles around, wanted a breather. Leaving aside suicide (the *soul* getting fed up with bossing the *brain* around, or being bossed around by the body), it is never the case that a true hero lays himself down to die. It is to *sleep*, fully expecting to awake as he has every morning of his life. The mortal peril — yes, it is at hand and must be faced. But not just this minute. First things first. The brain is tuckered out and needs a little nap.

Gazing down into the Milky Way, I was in a lifeboat in the South Seas, a three-master pounded by a Cape Horn gale, a swamp of the Amazon, alkali flats of Death Valley, a blizzard at the North Col, Death Camp a day's march from One Ton Camp.

I spoke with my banana tongue not to whine or melodramatize but to share a revelation deeply significant to every mountaineer, a four-star trumpets-and-tympani epiphany. The lieutenants, insofar as they were able to think at all that hour before midnight, were unreceptive to the philosophizing and insighting which are, after all, the sophisticate's justification for the "sport." They were preoccupied by Lardy and All-American getting the laugh. If in afteryears the message ever got to any of them, they've never said. Ted has so exalted his moment of heroism he now goes about telling people I tried to jump.

KIDNAPPING BABIES IN CANADA

Monday afternoon, returning to the apartment from North Peak, I got the news from Betty: "The Canadian railroads quit yesterday. Everybody's on strike."

Confound their politicks,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
Gott strafe der Queen.
And while He's at it, Vic, too.

Tuesday the Canadian Pacific assured us a settlement was expected momentarily. Wednesday, ditto. Thursday.

Friday morning, August 25. Half our two weeks shot to hell. Summer ending and no seven-leagues steps taken North. Hardy had it right — the typical human tragedy is not a fall from high estate but getting run over by a ten-ton truck. In a frenzy of sudden resolution we were off and away in the Jeep station wagon across the Cascades and the Columbia Plateau and over the border into a foreign nation.

Foreign . . . Our winter and spring plotting had been for an assault on a mountain range accessible only by train and now impossible. We drove by Columbia Lake and over Sinclair Pass, up the Kootenay River and over Vermilion Pass to the Banff-Jasper Highway. Above the junction rose the garbage-brown rubble heap of Eisenhower, as mediocre a mountain as he was a president.

Foreign. . . Their gallons of gas had five quarts. Nobody could pronounce the "ou" diphthong correctly. A queen was on their "dollar" bills, which were worth only ninety cents. French! I thought that business was settled on the Plains of Abraham by my redcoated ancestors. The entire gaudy currency was counterfeit. I ordered a strawberry milkshake and before my very eyes the girl poured milk in a glass, slopped in strawberry syrup, stirred with a spoon, and placed it before me without so much as a smirk. This must have been how Noel felt in 1913 after he smuggled himself into Tibet.

We drove north along the Bow River, appalled by the monstrous masses of sedimentary trash, rotten precipices half-submerged in talus, peaks outside the scope of our research and dreams, unknown.

One name rang a bell, faintly. Abbot Pass. The guidebook referred to an Abbot Hut, which had a quaintly-hospitably Alpine sound. Peaks of 11,000 feet rising above a big lake. We'd seen pictures. The whole world had seen pictures.

We hoisted packs and walked lawns on the shore of 5044-foot Lake Louise, past the Chateau, which the books of Frank Smythe call "The Penitentiary," and other climbers, pitying the tourists trapped there, the "Orphan Asylum." On benches were tweeds and mustaches which had fought the fuzzy-wuzzies and the dervishes. The lawn path led to a forest trail which a navvy was busy shoveling to keep open for fox hunters and Bengal Lancers.

The trail ended at the Plain of Six Glaciers Tea House, perched at 6900 feet on a shelf above a grand confluence of glaciers. A bit beyond the tea house a rippling creek coursed a meadow, a delightful campsite, except this was where the lancers pastured steeds while they teaed. The only flopfree ground was in front of the tea house, so there we fired up the primus for a hoosh. Our every move was closely watched by the button eyes of two replicas of Englishers in a Madam Tussaud mini-museum in chairs on the porch. When we unrolled bags on the ground the lady replica came to life, gasping, "*Surely*, you are not intending to sleep *out*. You will have your *death*." She would not hear our reassurances. "I could not close my eyes a moment, thinking of *you out here*." A rumble from the mustache of the other replica, the O.B.E. At their insistence the hovering houseboy extended us the protection of the Empire. We slept luxuriously on the thick, soft rug by the fireplace.

The houseboy asked if we would desire breakfast. We declined, explaining we would be leaving too early. "Breakfast is served at your convenience, sir." At 4:30 a.m. sahibs on the rug heard sounds of cookery in the kitchen. At six o'clock the houseboy summoned us to orange juice, bacon, eggs, toast, marmalade, and coffee. One buck a head. In Monopoly money, at that. The poverty of the coolies (as the redoubtable Fanny Bullock Workman called her Himalayan porters) was an embarrassment to us wealthy Americans.

The dawn sky was gray and grim and low as we turned the corner from the Plain of Six Glaciers into the narrow alley of the Victoria Glacier, pent between ice-and-rubbish walls of Lefroy and Victoria, the four-color magazine background to lake and chateau familiar the world around. Zap! The blitzen. Boom! The dunder. The cloudburst saturated stocking caps, parkas, shirts, pants, underwear, and socks. That done, a blizzard commenced, and a fifty-knot wind herded us to Abbot Pass, 9598 feet, where we would have quickly and surely curled up our toes had it not been for the Canadian Pacific Tourist Department's importation of Swiss guides who did what the Swiss always do, built a stone hut.

The storm raged through the slot, too noisy for us to hear ourselves shiver inside the hut, the calm, still eye of the hurricane, a cold-storage locker, a tomb. At eleven in black night where morning ought to have been we stripped, hung clothes from rafters, where they instantly froze solid as boards, and burrowed into Hudson's Bay blankets heaped in bunks. At two in the unrelenting night of afternoon we transferred for lunch into more maneuverable sleeping bags. At three, back to the burrows. At seven-thirty, out for a primus hoosh. Nine, the burrows.

After great hibernation a distant feeling comes, the brain sits ceremonious like a Madam Tussaud museum. An atom of consciousness swam upward from un-creation toward an eerie brilliance, expanded to a molecule, an amoeba, a bladder which informed the brain it must stir the body at any risk to avert an explosion. For Betty, the adventure sufficient unto the day was emerging from icebox into ice world, blinding bright in a sun that had no heat to it; peering down through the hole in the seat of the little house behind the hut to rock-milky waters of Lake Oesa; and baring anatomy to the wind blowing up the hole from icebergs in the lake.

For Tom and me, the choice was between Lefroy, the new snow an obvious avalanche trap, and Victoria, and no glory to be got there, the excrescence of garbage having been climbed by Summer Outing mobs of pin-peakers, loosing clouds of moths at every gasp.

The day's challenge began inside the hut, inserting Hudson's-Bay-cozy flesh into stiff-as-a-board underwear and socks and pants and shirt. After that ordeal, frozen boots and parka and mittens came easy, and after that walking was immediately essential lest the blood sludge up. The upthrust of Victoria began exactly where the hut wall left off. Virtually at

the door was the first step, a waist-high rock riser. Had it been clean, dry rock, simplicity. But it was verglas, and we, shod not in honest old tricouni iron but the faddish new rubber lugs of Army Bramanis, had to don crampons. The verglas was too thin for buckets to be chopped. The crampon points punched through to rock, split off the ice, and punched again, split ice again, until a rock niche was found. After the riser came a ledge, a foot or two wide. Originally, that is, before the crumbling sedimentary rock covered it with a slope of scree. Clean and dry, the scree by a kick of the boot would have made a step. Frozen solid, verglas-sheeted, it needed to be stabbed by crampons. But the night's half-foot-deep powdered snow balled up in crampon points. Another riser. Verglas. Another ledge. Balls! Pigs on a greased floor. Climbing on our knees where the pin-peakers exhaled moths. We couldn't afford to sneer at them. Nor laugh at ourselves, because a slip on a riser could not be self-arrested on the ledge below, or the ledge below that, or anywhere short of the Victoria Glacier.

Every gauntlet has an end, should you live so long. The sun was brilliant and the wind thrilling atop 11,000-foot South Peak. We stared in prickling awe at the close-by fright of Hungabee, and gazed in sadness over the air gap of the Columbia River to the Selkirk Range.

The ridge north to the highest summit of Victoria, 11,365 feet, was a highway. Except for a short dip to the saddle. I belayed Tom as he cut steps down a snowfield. Or tried. The surface was crampon-balling new powder, and beneath that was the verglas, which split off not in chunks, but plates, producing no spacious buckets, only shallow scoops, and these, where stabbed too vigorously by crampons, split off entirely. Tom ran out of rope while still a long stretch from the saddle. I'd have to come out of belay. The two of us both in shallow scoops at once. One goes and two go. Never after in my life could I endure a four-color magazine photo from the shores of Lake Louise. There — right there — my eye fell upon the point where we comprehended the profound difference between the Empire and the Native States. American had the Bomb. The British had funny money and queer gallons and primitive milkshakes and couldn't talk the language. But aside from Shakespeare and Everest, they also had these damnable Canadian Rockies.

Forswearing heroism, shrunk to tourists, we drove north on the Banff-Jasper Highway, furtively glancing up to the rows of peaks on either side. The routes were described blithely in the guidebooks. We couldn't see how to get off the ground. In our North Cascades we had begun to take on airs. Here we were Texas Leaguers in the World Series. Humiliated. Along the North Saskatchewan River the Rocky Mountain Trench was a continuous vast subarctic meadow, the river alternately braided in wide gravel flats and entrenched in deep solution channels through limestone. A few years earlier we could have backpacked the route, reveled in a wilderness of grandeur and flowers. Come too late, on wheels, we could see, not feel, the beauty. Car-campers! All we lacked were window decals and souvenir pillows.

We escaped the car at Sunwapta Pass, 6678 feet. Tourists walked the few steps from the parking lot to the Athabaska Tongue of the Columbia Icefield, the hydrographic apex of North America, draining meltwater to three oceans. We proceeded onward over miles of bare ice, amusing ourselves by chopping channels to assemble surface streams in a single flow. On our return we were pleased to note that our swollen torrent had dug a canyon which doubtless had mystified the driver of the tourist-laden tractor-icemobile-bus.

Wednesday Tom and I climbed Athabaska, 11,452 feet, ice and snow no more demanding than the simplest Cascade volcano. The satisfaction in getting at least a booby prize in the (hah) North was wry — geographically. Historically, it was the most pregnant summit of my life. The first ascent had been by the mythic Norman Collie, who during a solitary walk in the fog of a Scottish ben met the Grey Man and ran in headlong terror down to the village where he'd ignored the innkeeper's warnings. Frank Smythe, who in the 1930s got as high on Everest as Norton and Somervell, and alone (except for the Extra Man), had stood on this summit of ours. In a wine bottle were scraps of paper bearing names. One, scribbled just days before, was Odell, last to see Mallory and Irvine as they disappeared in the cloud, going strong.



Betty was home sick from her job at the University when the apartment door opened and Landlord tippy-toed in. At the question from the couch, "Is there something I can help you find?" he jumped a foot and mumbled and retreated. Landlord had been a big man on campus, a fullback, and was devoting his retirement years to preserving American morals by prowling tenant's apartments.

Our relations with him were cool and infrequent; with neighbors, essentially nonexistent. We were not aware, after Canada, of any changes in the faces passed in corridors or on sidewalks. To be frowned at was nothing new, what with middle-of-the-night laughter in the streets as I and fellow jolly boys came by on our way home from the Blue Moon or Pink Palace and rowdies arrived before dawn to pick Betty and me up for a climb.

In 1944, new in Seattle, Betty briefly had belonged to American Youth for Democracy, which everybody in the world except Daisy Mae and Olive Oyl and her knew was the Young Communist League in sheeps' clothing. In 1950 she still was on the regular milk run of courteous, well-spoken, neatly-dressed FBI agents. They came always in pairs, and always during business hours, first paying respects to the highest available boss and working down through the chain of command to the suspect, so that everybody from top to bottom knew J. Edgar Goodguy had a hot one.

Betty was so used to it she came home laughing about grown men in suits and neckties seeking the whereabouts of people she'd barely known and hadn't seen in years. After the post-Canada visit by the Hoovers, no laughs, tears of rage instead, because now J. Edgar wanted to know: If she liked children. Ever had had any. Ever had had an abortion. Ever had tried to get pregnant and failed.

Some days passed. Observing we had not been hauled away in chains, kicking and screaming, our next-door neighbor apologized for not telling us sooner that the FBI had been through the apartment house and the neighborhood, asking: Have you ever heard sounds of an infant from their apartment? Have you ever seen her (*or him!*) staring at little children?

We barely recalled the item in a Canadian paper about the disappearance of a toddler from a campground in Jasper National Park. The bushes had been beaten, Lake Maligne dragged. The Mounties

investigated other campers. The FBI was asked to check American visitors. We'd come nowhere near Lake Maligne, had gotten only deep enough in Jasper Park to sign the entry register at Sunwapta Pass. That is, as the driver, *I* had signed *my* name, only.

Newsreels and movies of the era shared J. Edgar's gloating over his Great Hall, nearly a mile long and half that wide, said to contain the fingerprints of a hundred million Americans, living and dead, starting with Sacco and Vanzetti and continuing, thanks to the Selective Service Act — *to me*. I'd spent so much theater time in the Great Hall my mind's eye clearly saw the machinery clackety-clacking through three-by-five cards until mine kicked out and was leapt upon with an "A-hah!" But my most subversive membership had been the Boy Scouts. The only thing on my card was "See Betty."

Having at the age of nineteen associated with a bunch of featherbrains who didn't know the only Marx who made sense was Groucho it was reasonable to believe that at twenty-five she'd switched from overthrowing governments to stealing children.

Tom became an engineer on projects requiring a Secret Clearance. Whenever I got around to regaling a party with the tale of "the trip where we kidnapped the Canadian baby," he left early, unless it was at his house, and then he hid the gin.

NORTH IS THE STAR

J. Monroe Thorington was not the sort to coddle foreigners. His guidebook informed us, in total: "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."

Tom and I dropped packs at the col, 8200 feet, higher than all but a handful of our home hills, and commenced commenting on the ancestry of the Canadian at the Wheeler Hut who assured us the arete was not so much cragging as bouldering. "Neat and tidy. Hours and hours of good sport." We saw no boulders, we saw flawless walls and impossible overhangs; the angle of the arete was so sheer than when eyes were turned sufficiently upward to study what awaited us the neck got a crick and the body toppled over backward. It was like looking from a Seattle sidewalk up the city's tallest building, the Smith Tower — or rather, *two* Smith Towers, one atop the other. And that was only the half of it because clouds cut off the ridge at the level of the summit on the other side of the col, 9620-foot Uto. Sir Donald was 10,818. Above the ceiling, unseen, lay two more Smith Towers, one atop the other.

A patch of sand tucked between blocks of quartzite felsenmeer was just room enough for two sleeping bags. The snow edge above the moat of the Uto Glacier supplied a meltwater drip. Wind deviled the primus insufficiently to keep it from warming to edibility a hoosh of corned beef, canned potatoes, and vegetable soup.

Clouds gave away their motion to the ridge, giddyng the head, quivering the feet which entertained notions of walking up there. As the sun touched the horizon the gray clouds burst into flame and shriveled to wisps. The wind stopped dead. Abruptly. Uncannily. We gazed west in eerie red air and a spooky hush to alien peaks and glaciers, two lonesome Americans at 8200 feet in Canada as night surged from the east and stars by the trillions exploded out of nowhere.

The instant we crawled in our bags the snafflehound leapt out of the rocks to scout the supper pot, steal the cheese and bread intended for lunch, and run up and down our bodies, dodging ice axes. We wouldn't have slept anyhow.

I never could understand a Seattle climber heading south to the High Sierra or the Mexican volcanoes or east to the Tetons or Wind Rivers. North was the only way to go — to the British Columbia Coast Mountains we could see on crystalline winter days from our North Cascades, to the Cariboos, Monashees, Purcells, Canadian Rockies, and Selkirks of Thorington's cryptic little books. Then, when ready and able, to the Yukon and Alaska, in dreaming distance of the Pole.

The quandary was where to start. Objectives were wanted that would stretch us to our limits yet not humble us. The alpine journals were infinitely more garrulous than Thorington but just as unhelpful, in a different way, because written by strangers of unknown abilities. Few people whose skills we'd witnessed and could use to measure our own had traveled out of state. Most Mountaineers were blind to The Gleam, as demonstrated by the atavistic grumbling to hold the Climbers Outing at Dutch Miller Gap, the familiar, disdaining the Pickets, the unknown. Those who did glimpse The Gleam had short vacations and short money, unlike the Ivy Leaguers who wrote the journals.

Our goal for 1950 had been set by our elders, our teachers in the Climbing Course. Several years earlier, before we came to the school, a small group had hoarded enough pennies for the Selkirks, and whenever the subject of foreign adventure arose, this was the golden place of their memories. They especially doted on a peak whose smooth-planed faces and sharp-chiseled aretes were in the classic mould of the Matterhorn, and whose name came from the Everester race.

They had climbed the Southwest Face, the Vaux Route, and in the Seattle winter and spring this had been the absolute outermost maximum

of our aspiration. Yet now we were camped at the foot of the Northwest Ridge which was their answer to the question, "What's a Heaven for?"

It was the company we'd been keeping.

Tails between legs, we were slinking home. Driving west over Kicking Horse Pass, we observed locomotives shuffling cars in the yards at Field. Apparently the strike was over, too late to help us, but if we didn't check at Golden it would be said we used the strike as an excuse to chicken out.

The stationmaster was glowering at a dozen days' accumulation of paper. His complexion was further sanguinized by the impertinence of an alien asking in outlandish accent when the next train was due. Flurrying papers, he barked, "On time! All trains on time!" Having expected him to say, "Next week," and not having a schedule to know what time was *on*, I stood at his window confused, heightening his exasperation. He poked an angry finger toward the schedule posted on the wall.

The train being shuffled together in Field would arrive soon in Golden. Today was Thursday. To get to work Tuesday we didn't have to be home until late Monday, Labor Day. We'd have to catch the Sunday morning train back to Golden. We could have Thursday evening and Sunday morning and all day Friday and Saturday at Glacier. Our plans were built around two weeks. What could we do with two days? Never had we been so bold as to think of trying Sir Donald before getting the feel of the quartzite on lesser peaks. Yet if we failed to take that train the rest of our lives would be haunted by the might-have-been.

We walked every foot of the distance from Golden to Glacier, up and down the cars, the only passengers, free to sample views from every window. The rails left the Columbia River for a slow ascent of the Beaver. Peaks appeared, not repulsive heaps of brown sedimentary rubble but sharp-edged, aristocratically gray, metamorphic mountains, waterfall-and-brush, wet-green mountains of home.

The Connaught Tunnel burrowed five miles into the night under Rogers Pass, emerged to daylight. There it was. Sharp and stark, a gray horn ripping blue sky.

How *dared* we?

At Glacier we were greeted by the entire population, the whole dozen, as if we were celebrities, though possibly their ebullience was mainly for the first mail and groceries in a dozen days. The hospitality of the park warden (Canadian ranger) went well beyond the perfunctory. Noel wouldn't hear of us camping out, insisted on our staying at the Wheeler Hut, 4096 feet, local base of the Alpine Club of Canada, and drove us there in his Land Rover.

The company we were keeping. . .

Our best Seattle climbers — our best *American* climbers — were generally rated as somewhat less than "world class." We read about the Great North Walls, the Tryptych of Blanc, expeditions to Kanchenjunga and disasters on Nanga Parbat, as reverent as a band of ragged Kelts huddled around a campfire in the fogs of Snowdon, painting themselves blue and listening to talks of the big chaps from Rome.

Noel was a climber. Of The Race. As if showing off a toy to impress a new friend, we reported finding the Athabaska signature of Odell. "He's stopping in next week. We're doing a bit of climbing together." Another houseguest and peak companion expected within the month was Smythe.

The company. . .

A Canadian family was at the Wheeler Hut, not inconsolably trapped these past dozen days but ready now to catch tomorrow's train east. He knew Sir D well. Frowned at our intention to do the Vaux. "Rather a shag. The Northwest Ridge — there's what you want. A lovely line. Marvelous air."

In the middle of the night Tom and I arose. The drumming on the roof was not the blue sky falling. In morning, the Canadians gone and the cabin to ourselves, we three sat on the porch drinking coffee, watching drizzle. Sir Donald the dream, lost and found, now lost again. Our third season, overture to glory, was ending not with a bang but a whimper.

Drizzle dwindled to mist. As the darkness of the atmosphere lightened, so did despair. We had to leave on the Sunday morning train but could stay over Saturday. By pushing to a high camp this Friday afternoon

we'd be poised for a quick strike if the weather broke. Abruptly Tom and I were on the trail. Friend of a friend of Everesters, we steamed through thickets of ripe huckleberries recently plundered by bears, over moraines and snows, to the col in the middle of the cloud. The cloud evaporated and we saw the lovely line rising high in the marvelous air. "Mere bouldering," said the Canadian who for all we knew had done the Great North Faces and taken tea with the lamas of the Rongbuk.

A movie had been made of Ullman's novel, *The White Tower*, and the Seattle distributor had invited Climbing Course faculty to a studio preview. The poor fellow stood in the back of the viewing room, at every outburst asking Vic, "What are they laughing at?" The allegorical solemnity of the book had been a favorite joke of the Mountaineer year, right up there with the compulsory whistling, by the third man on a rope, of the theme from *The Third Man*. The movie was hilarious. Glenn Ford (Hero American) was as spastic on a rock wall as Holly (Pulp-Fiction-Writer America) was dull-witted in Vienna. Lloyd Bridges (Villain Germany) moved as beautifully on a mountain as Orson Welles (Amoral Europe) did in the black market. On climbs thereafter whenever a group had been sitting long enough for sweat to cool someone was sure to burst forth with Bridges' arrogant, "To rest is not to conquer!"

The Nazi was right. Crooks argued, as the club's Safety Chairman, that every climber should be required to take up smoking. Whereas a Brave Clean and Reverent, upon espying a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, would shift to high gear to outrun the storm to the summit, a smoker would stop for a cigarette while studying the cloud. Drawing closer, it demanded another cigarette. By the third, rain had begun, or, if the cloud had vanished, time had run out.

To be discouraged by weather is not to conquer. The first symptom of being over the hill is fondness for clouds, rains, hurricanes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions. Was my gloom at the strike, at the rain on the roof of the Wheeler Hut, not for losing Sir Donald but for losing my nerve? Did I

secretly rejoice in the intervention of the gods who drive Hardy's ten-ton truck? Was I a fake, in love not with the reality of Sir D but the idea of Sir D? Was I a rabbit scurrying from bush to bush, seeking a hole to dive in, to hide me from myself?

In darkness, shivering ('twas cold, 'twas bitter cold), we masticated icewater-soaked cornflakes and lumps of powdered milk. At 6:05 the rocks took dim form. The summit could not be seen but lay, we knew (we *knew*), terribly far. Smythe had come within a single Smith Tower of the top of Everest; we had four to go. We'd gained 2000 tough feet on North Peak but that was garbage and brush, not honest climbing. Here, starting from a col higher than all but a handful of our home peaks, we faced 2600 feet of naked rock, continuous difficulty and exposure, more than ever we'd attempted — by a factor of six or seven.

In halfight we fumbled over frost-wedged boulders of the col. Brave plans of winter, springtime visions of glory, a string of summer victories, and now, at the brink of autumn (winter not far behind) I shuddered from the cold and the cornflakes and the fear. The oral history of American mountaineering, in the Northwest as in the Ivy League, is replete with heroes who every December sign up for expeditions and every June are kept home by recurring appendicitis. Tom, the better climber, was in the lead, snarling and cursing at Canadians and their mountains. My knees bounced like a dipper's and the touch of frozen quartzite set my hands and backbone a-shaking.

The upleap of the ridge was as abrupt as the ten-ton truck. Tom scampered at the pace of our Third Member, the *snafflehound* at the col, the full eighty feet of rope between us, and set belay. At a slow walk I joined him, to protect his next lead, which he ~~did~~ not scamper but definitely ran. It was going well. *Too* well. When things turned bad they'd be terrible because for every ropelength we went upward the Uto Glacier went another length downward.

Cliffs that had seemed smooth as window panes proved to be ladders of layered quartzite. However, an apparent overhang *was*, and from the top hung a rappel sling. What horror awaited on the North Face, where we'd have to go to bypass the overhang? So recently a Boy Scout, Tom used words I'd never heard while pushing a handtruck in a warehouse, running rough boards through a planer in a lumber mill, boozing with combat vets at the Blue Moon, or reading Chaucer.

We couldn't find the horror that had forced the rappel. The North Face was as staircase-simple as the ridge. Dawn lightened to full morning and we scrambled past more sling-draped overhangs. We were not the least competent ever to do the route, evidently were superior to somebody, probably the Ivy Leaguers who filibustered in the journals.

No pitch was more than thirty feet; we paused to wrap the surplus rope around waists. The ladderways scarcely were "pitches" at all, the holds so abundant the eyes never had to climb and the rock so sound the holds never had to be tested. Tom's language improved. He noted the stabilization of my knees and offered me a lead and thenceforth we leapfrogged. Belaying became more ritual than necessity, though the route often veered off the ridge crest to the Southwest Face, where the number of bounces in a fall to the Asulkan Glacier was incalculable, and to the North Face, where a person on the way to the Uto Glacier would be lucky to get in more than two or three.

Sunlight flooded Uto Peak, just across the way, while our ridge remained in frozen shadow. Isolated pockets of powder snow lingered from our Victoria storm six days earlier, invigorating our toes in tennis shoes ("rubber soles useful"). We did not rest because to stop was to shiver, no matter how warm were the Selkirks blossoming north and south and west, and the Rockies east.

Sir Donald's quartzite was as pleasing to the eye as to the fingers. Had the mountain been handy to Athens, this rock, banded dark gray and pale gray and cream and pearly white, would have been the stuff of the Acropolis.

We quit belaying, only remained roped for the unity, and drew even with the summit of Uto; two Smith Towers climbed. Except for occasional neat little puzzles, a joy to solve, we traveled simultaneously; a third Smith done. The loftiness was as exalting as on Rainier's Columbia Crest, but

different. There, crampons kept the body attached to Earth, the chance was accepted of being picked up by the seat of the britches and flung into orbit. Here, though on a flagpole-skinny splinter of Earth, no solar winds would blow a body loose, fingers and tennis shoes let a buckaroo ride out any storm.

At 11:10 in the morning that was the reason God went to all the trouble described in *Genesis*, we arrived at 10,818 feet in the Canadian sky.

At the bottom of a 7000⁷foot plummet to the east ran a silver thread meandering the parkland of an arrow-straight fault, the Beaver River. Meadow ridges of the Dogtooth Mountains rose up and fell off to the broad vacuity of the Columbia River trench, foreground for the sweep of the Rockies from southern foothills to gigantic Robson.

Directly below to the south sprawled the fifteen square miles of the Illecillewaet Névé, a Greenland-style icecap. Beyond an intriguing vacancy lay the even larger Deville Névé and others in the rarely visited Dawson Range, Bishops Range, Purity Range, and Battle Range. In an adjoining mountain system, the Purcells, we plainly saw the Bugaboos, a group of super-Cruisers which for half a century had haunted climbers.

The other half of the Selkirks, north of the Canadian Pacific Railway through Rogers Pass, culminated in the Sir Sanford and Adamant Ranges. To get to the basecamp in Fairy Meadow we'd have to rent a boat to row across the Columbia River, machete-slash and relay-pack through miles of brush, build bridges over torrents, and be very polite to grizzlies.

We belonged in Canada after all, and Canada belonged to us. The *North* belonged to us, or would when we galloped on our chargers, lances held high.

Thirty-five minutes were all we could spare to snap the photographs that later would let us discover precisely what we were seeing, and to eat "Sir Donald sandwiches" of Sailor Boy pilot bread and Hershey milk

chocolate, the only provisions spared by our campmate. At 11:45 a.m. in the beginning of September, twilight was eight hours off.

On the ascent, the quartzite Earth had been close before our eyes and within fingers' grip. On the descent the route lay through the sky. Eyes seeking footing found none in the gulf of the Asulkan on our left nor the gulf of the Beaver on our right. Newly seen from the up side, the ridge was as much a stranger as it had been in dawn from the down side, and more intimidating because then we had the option of turning around. The summit of Uto was two Smith towers below; the col, unseen, two more. Hasty moves led into traps. Retreats verged on panic. The routes up a mountain converge at the summit, the routes down diverge to overhangs.

On the way up, the turning point in our confidence had prompted internal relaxations that were celebrated by private trips out on the North Face. The turning point on the way down came during a fearful North Face search when our noses informed us we had been here before. Tom gathered as souvenirs the ludicrous rappel slings. The last of these, the first we'd seen in the dawn, was not quarter-inch manila (cheap) but 7/16-inch nylon (unholy). Ivy Leaguers!

We hop-skipped down the quartzite ladders as graceful as ballerinas, cat-stepped the ridge's knifeblade as cool as tightrope walkers. Gravity was not an anchor dragging us down, it was a stream of energy to be ridden as kayakers do white water. The wind from the North was not trying to throw us away but to teach us the technique of the birds.

I was lighter than ever in my life, no lump of too too solid flesh, rather a bubble bouncing down exquisite quartzite befitting the jewel box of the Queen of England. A flick of the feet and I could soar over the gulf to Uto, Sir Sanford, Robson, McKinley, the Pole. I was sad to see Uto rise above because that warned of the impending death of this day's life.

At 4:55 p.m. we discovered that the snafflehound had whiled away the day eating the leather wristloops of our ice axes. Perhaps it now would scamper to the summit for crumbs of Sailor Boy and Hershey's, scamper back down to the col and check out the "trail from Glacier to watercourse below overlook" for other climbers, if any, and scamper up the ridge again, and again, and again, scamper scamper scamper.

That would be the life.

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PART THREE

OUR MATTER

"You don't have to go home but you can't stay here!"

Thus at closing time did Mary expel the jolly boys from the Rainbow onto 45th Street. Other barmaids emptied the Blue Moon next door, the College Club in the next block, the Red Robin on the far side of Lake Union, across the University Bridge, the "Montlake Library", across the Montlake Bridge, the Northlake on the near shore of the lake, and the Century on the Avenue at the north edge of the University District. The legions would disperse, fragmenting from battalions to companies to platoons to squads, and for half an hour the roistering set the birds chirping on their roosts before streets of the District quieted.

The truly jolly boys tapered off by making public nuisances of themselves at one of several late-night restaurants. The seriously jolly boys converged on the Avenue's only all-night joint, the Pink Palace. There we would join the teetotalers of our bunch, prominently Crooks, the grinning son-of-a-bitch.

At eight o'clock Tom and I burst out of the Canadian night into the Wheeler Hut. Betty, who had spent the day hiking to Asulkan Pass and whistling at yellow-bellied marmots, awaited with a hoosh embodying the totality of our remaining provisions, a bag of noodles and a can of stewed tomatoes. Rising from table, before taking a step I sought a handhold, and that reflex epitomized the wholeness of the ten hours when hands and feet and eyes, climber and mountain, were one. Awaking in the bunk I couldn't get back to sleep until I'd done each pitch from col to summit and summit to col. Next day, on the train to Golden and on the highway south, Tom and I rattled recollections back and forth of this pitch and that and the snafflehound, Betty sneaking in her marmots. In Idaho we bought a pair of cheeseburgers apiece and a half-case of stubbies. Quartzite and marmots ran amok to the outskirts of Spokane, where we threw down our

sleeping bags in the gravel of a gas station parking lot and slept until awakened by the business day.

If 1951 were to bring as giant a leap beyond 1950 as that of 1950 beyond the previous twenty-five years of my life it would be impossible in the near future not to outgrow humanity. Sir Sanford? McKinley? Careful, careful. . . Whom the gods (the incumbents, that is) would destroy. . . Too soon to plot new conquests, overthrows. Just back from ten hours of Heaven I was depleted, complete.

Crooks was a good listener. Through the spring and summer I had regularly retailed adventures and misadventures — Big Four, Bonanza, Colonial and Snowfield, Whatcom and Challenger and Luna, Sloan, North Peak of Index, and ten lesser climbs, including Elizabeth's Rainier. I simply reported, certainly did not brag, not to a leader of that prewar generation which had made first ascents of every peak of significant difficulty in the North Cascades. He spoke little of his own climbs — not in words, that is. As I talked he drew and on the table top his pencil celebrated great climbs, noble mountains.

The quartzite, night after night of my quartzite, at last drew out memories of his own Heaven. There, it was dolomite. Basecamp at a village inn. Hitch a ride up through pastures to the cow path leading to the cliffs. No getting out of bed in the middle of the night. No burdening the back with weighty packs. No fighting brush. No tramping miles and miles through sodden wilderness. No cliffs of garbage and moss, only rock as full of holds as a Swiss cheese, so solid it couldn't spare enough sheddings to make a talus, so vertical that when your nose itched you scratched it by leaning your head forward an inch. Rope down in minutes from summit to pastures, saunter the cow path, hitch a ride back to the inn for pasta, sausage, and vino, and sleep on a feather bed. What did you do if it rained? It never rained in the Dolomites.

One night (morning, actually) as I again was climbing the Northwest Ridge, the other Crooks emerged from behind his elegaic pencil, the Crooks of the infuriating grin.

"What have you climbed since?"

Aye, there's the rub. The two best months of the North Cascades year, fall colors backlighted by the sun arcing lower in the southern sky,

crisp nights and frosted heather, crystalline air and no bugs, eight weekends to die for, and I'd climbed Red and Roosevelt.

The dreaded Crooks laugh, "*Pin peaks! Two Snoqualmie Pass pin peaks!*"

I was always trying to get vets to tell about combat. Crooks would talk only of Dolomites, never the Appenines. One night a friend of his joined us in the booth. When Crooks went off for his turn at the pinball, Bob was willing to talk about Italy.

He and his detachment of paratroopers were flying to Sicily for a predawn drop. The kid pilot called him forward. Bob scanned the night sky for the other craft. There weren't any. The pilot laughed, he hadn't seen anybody since Africa. Bob asked what the hell. The kid giggled, he'd never been good with a compass. A darkness, a landmass, broke the moon-bright Mediterranean. "There you go!" bleated the lad. "Where you want out?" Bob compared the landmass to the map. "For godsake!" he screamed. "That's not Sicily, that's Sardinia!" The flyboy was delighted. "No shit! How did I do that?" Bob was an experienced mountaineer, his basic training gained at my own alma mater, Camp Parsons. The course he dictated brought in view another dark landmass. The Wild Blue Yonderite chuckled, "If that ain't Sicily you're going to have to invade Africa again because I'm running on empty." Bob knew they weren't at the designated drop but it was jump now or miss the war. His guys plunged into the night and were shot dead before they hit the ground. Bob got off with a hole in the shoulder. A German officer saluted, "Congratulations, lieutenant! For *you* the war is *over!*" Tracer bullets streamed from the sky and Bob was ringed by dying Germans. His captor's blood was gushing. Bob saluted, "Congratulations, lieutenant! For you the war is *over!*"

Bob's turn at the pinball came and Crooks rejoined me in the booth. I raved about Sicily, it was the greatest first-hand combat story I'd ever heard. Crooks burst out laughing. "Bob was in the *Navy!* In the *Pacific!*"

In nights to come I got to know Bob very well. He wasn't a Baron Munchausen driven by a war-whipped psychic storm. Days, as a doctoral candidate in geology, he pounded his brain on hard, cold rocks. At night he had to relax his head. He never told a simple, dull truth when an invention was more entertaining. Crook didn't believe anything Bob said. I preferred to believe everything Bob said.

My favorite story was The Nunatak because I was in it.

The beginning was the day he spent alone gathering specimens from rock islands in the icecap. He was sitting on one in late afternoon, awaiting the ski plane that would return him to base. At his feet a scoop in the rock was full of sand deposited by a surface stream at an earlier, higher level of the ice. Idly sifting a handful through fingers, he was struck by a thought, filled a cup, poured water from a canteen, swirled. . .

The survey season was cut short by storms, preventing further investigation. He hadn't mentioned his find to companions Nor to any living soul — until now. But he would need a partner. A placer mine on The Nunatak would take some doing. Devising a way to melt snow to provide sluicing water. Bringing in lumber to build the sluice box. Constructing a camp to withstand icecap storms.

Our middle-of-the-night exchanges of Camp Parsons memories, the climbing we'd done since, our shared taste for post-adventure thirst-quenching, made me his choice of partners. Crooks likely would have been surprised at the modesty of Bob's expectations. He had calculated the volume of alluvium in the scoop, the value of the color in his cup, and factored in the normal increase in richness with depth. The Nunatak would not set us up for life but several weeks of placering would support each of us for a stretch of fat living. Peaks in a dozen ranges of three or five continents. A tight little ketch to sail the Oceane Sea. Between climbs and voyages, nights at the Blue Moon and Pink Palace.

Bob had a doctoral dissertation to write and I, having quit the stockroom and being now supported by Betty, was going to have to either start looking for a job or another hard-working wife. The Nunatak would have to wait a year or two. Korea yanked Bob back into the Navy. Crooks got a good laugh out of that. Bob had bragged about screwing the System out of Reserve pay for doing nothing but going to school. Crooks had

warned that the System always has the last screw. So he had the right to laugh.

Crooks was the best rock climber in the Northwest, before Italy. He probably would have believed everything Bob said, then. He believed in the System, then. He must have. He volunteered for the Mountain Troops. After the Appenines he didn't even believe in the North Cascades. Only the Dolomites, and a person from Seattle can't get there without a war. Maybe because I wasn't in the war, was just a few steps from Camp Parsons, I still believed in the North Cascades, and certainly in Sir Donald and the North all the way. I believed in Bob. His inventions were deeper than reality. As in Plato's cave, they reflected a truth too blindingly brilliant for Crooks. The postwar Crooks, that is.

A night when the coffee at the Palace was getting weaker as the bastard who owned the joint took advantage of his monopoly, and dawn was threatening to break, Bob and I got around to the tired old question: How far would we be willing to "push it"? Not as far as some climbers we knew. Mountains were important but so were other things. Beer. Women. Pinball. Blearily sober at 4 o'clock in the somber gray light of the new day we'd have to suffer through before regaining the security of night, Bob summed up: "There's only one peak in the world where I'd take that extra step. Up to the line." He didn't have to say, it goes without saying, that a climber on the line has a fifty-fifty chance of going this way, going that way.

Smythe, Shipton, Norton, Somervell, Mallory. They peopled The Matter of Camp Parsons.

The postcard from Bob was a lightning bolt. My comrade of Camp Parsons, the Pink Palace, The Nunatak was not cruising off the coast of Korea, he was at sea on his way south — *all the way South*, which was even better, far better, than all the way North. Amundsen, Scott, Shackleton — our Matter had more than one Grail.

Electrified, I had to share his glory by at least cheering. He hadn't given a return address. I used an oversize envelope, red ink and block letters, addressing by name and rank:

c/o United States Navy

Washington, D.C.

PLEASE FORWARD TO THE OVERLAND PARTY TO THE SOUTH POLE

The letter was faithfully transmitted from the nation's capital via a chain of Navy stations to Bob's ship at sea, embellished along the way by a number of Crooks types who either knew Bob or knew the Bob type and added their good wishes to the hero.

Months later I received an anguished postcard from a ship somewhere south of Australia that never had made nor ever was intended to make a landfall of Antarctica: "YOU HAVE DESTROYED ME!"

Home from his second war, Bob was kept so busy becoming a wealthy geologist we never got to The Nunatak.

THE POLE OF REMOTENESS

For Robert Falcon Scott it was the South Pole. For us it was the "pole of remoteness." In my second climbing season, a traverse of the Olympics from the Hoh Glacier to the Quinault, crossing the Blue, Hoh, and Humes Glaciers and the Blue-Hoh, Blizzard, and Dodwell-Rixon Passes and the Low Divide, the midpoint, Queets Basin, had been a candidate. In my third season, just past, there was Luna Cirque. In Camp Parsons times, the Lillian Glacier in the Three Day Blow had seemed as remote as a person could ever want, and then some. The night Sailor and I lay in our bags golly knew where, the flight of the snow-white dove behind us and the as yet unknown way across The Needles ahead, and a Blackness plummeted from the Milky Way and just missed me but I wasn't sure about Sailor, that was almost too distant.

There are poles and poles. The Battle Range, Waddington, the rumored peak that might be higher than Everest, those were poles from a faraway book, not in the home library of Seattle. If the others were ever in the back of our mind, always in front was the *home* pole, almost visible but not quite from where we lived. The governor of Washington Territory told young Seattle that behind the city's Olympic horizon lay something hidden, America's last unknown wilderness, and the *Seattle Press* promptly despatched an expedition to find the cannibals said to inhabit a valley of milk and honey behind those Ranges.

The *true* pole of remoteness, of course, has to be somewhere in winter, when wilderness expands by orders of magnitude. I tried winter mountaineering. Too much night. Too much snow. Too much cold. Too much clutter of clothing and gear. Busy, busy, busy all the time just to avoid freezing to death. Vilhjalmur Stefansson stuck it to the Englishmen whose polar expeditions always ended in disaster; he wrote a book pointedly titled *The Friendly Arctic* in which he said "An adventure is a sign of incompetence." The wilderness is more exciting if you don't know too much or own too much. Well, there are other things in life besides excitement. But in winter, not many, not often.



Blue holes fleded over the city Sunday morning, January 28, and by afternoon the solid-gray sky was breaking up in white billows, slow-drifting, shrinking, only enough left at evening for a gaudy sunset. For the first time in the new year the Olympics stood sharp in the west, flaming rags lingering on Constance. I wondered why Pete didn't call.

I didn't call Pete. Nowhere in his plan was there provision for me calling Pete. Chuck and I were to stand by, the whole winter if need be, ready to go on four hours' notice whenever in Pete's estimation a Clear was developing. He was the trigger man.

I dreaded the call. City life was so cozy. In wild winter the soft flesh would be brutalized, the relaxed nerves stretched taut. Why had I signed up? To be jolted back to life from the post-Sir Donald suspended animation, my longest absence from wildland since 1945. Boris Karloff needed a lift into the lightning.

These three years since the South Face of The Tooth my life had been organized by climbing, otherwise would have been a directionless drift in the meaningless eddies of New Rome, where fellaheen toiled at building airplanes, ignorant that history had ended and no place was worth flying to anymore. As a mountain bum whose goals were complete unto themselves, I was apart and content, yet after McKinley, what? Everest never had been a possibility and apparently I'd missed my chance to die young, or young enough. A spectral, empty future loomed. I'd abruptly quit the stockroom job which for three years had paid for beans and beer and gas and made no demands on ambition. I explained to Betty my need to have time to think, and I did some, not a lot. The organizing force in my life was Blue Moon and Pink Palace.

Was the future to be a succession of dawns bursting over the Palace as terrifying as one damn Hiroshima after another? Or Frankenstein pulling the switch on the lightning? Actually, the danger was small that we'd ever leave town. However, boots and pack and ice axe and beavertails by the apartment door testified for me. Barkis was willing. Not my fault about the weather.

Scarlet sky above the white Olympics ended the gray peace of January.



The first ascent of Olympus in winter. . . At least, the first anybody knew about, doubtless the indubitable first since the Climatic Optimum of the 1930s, when palm trees were reported taking root at Paradise. The notion seems to have arisen when Kermit the Hermit, newly back from the war, spent a January week skiing the High Divide, impeccable sunshine every day, bright stars at night. This was identified as the Midwinter Clear, a prolonged spell of blue sky and crisp air hypothesized to be a certain-sure annual event. The week on the High Divide in the Alaskan presence of Olympus, lofting more than 7000 feet above the Hoh River, preached up the Crusade. The First marched up the Hoh sustained by faith the Clear would come, prelude to pie in the sky (bye and bye). Then the grim Second, the feckless Third, the gibbering Fourth. . . It never stopped snowing except to rain. I greeted them cheerfully when they returned, wrinkled like prunes. Nothing in my life plan was more resolute than a determination never to take up the Cross.

A new player came on the field. In January of 1950 Pete was thrown back from the Hoh, battered and humiliated, but not defeated, instead energized. As the two-by-four does the mule, the Unsolved Problem had caught his attention, and that was *it* for the Problem. His eyes were trained North on a virgin summit in the British Columbia Coast Mountains, a challenge that was financially possible, just barely. Olympus was even more so.

Next summer, Saugstad. This winter, Olympus. In October he hiked the trail to the Blue Glacier and pondered. In Seattle he acquired aerial photos and studied intricacies of the massif. There came about The Plan.

Traditional strategy had been as straightforward as trench warfare. A party agreed on a mutually convenient week, started on schedule no matter what the weather, and bulled up the valley, cannon to the left of them, cannon to the right of them, as long as food and morale and temperature of the body core held out, trusting in the Coming of the Clear.

Pete's Plan was as revolutionary as the blitzkrieg. It was founded on the illusion-free pessimism that extended Clears were almost violations of natural law of the Northwest Coast, that in January and February Olympus might have at most a dozen days of climbable weather, once in a great while consecutive for a week, as in Kermit's trip to the High Divide, but normally parceled out a day here, three days there. The Plan specified a small group prepared to drop everything and go, and to remain so mobilized all winter if necessary.

The second axiom was that sunshine must not be wasted staggering heavy-loaded through forest snows and windfalls. To expedite a lightning assault, over New Year's Pete and Chuck hauled a cache of food, tent, and sleeping bags to the Elk Lake Shelter, which they stocked with wood to be drying in wait.

A Flaw in The Plan — serious, seemingly fatal — became apparent. Among those who had been passionate Crusaders, not one could be found hankering to see more of the cold wet dark Hoh. Any number were willing to serve in the support party required by Olympic National Park, to go about their business in Seattle until the attack group was some days late in returning home. But the Park Service also insisted on adherence to the Climbing Code of The Mountaineers, including: "A climbing party of three is the minimum." That's where I came in, haunted by conscience and a wife who kept asking when I'd have done enough thinking to go look for a job.

Pete stopped by our apartment frequently to discuss the route. The trail was recognized as insanity in winter, blasted as it was from cliffs and scored by avalanche chutes whose runouts were over the brinks of those cliffs. Leaving the trail to follow the river to its source in the Hoh Glacier would be easy travel once on the glacier, but the valley to the glacier toe was trackless and unknown and certain to be impractically formidable. The aerial photos suggested 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 iced rock would require much iron, and we'd have to haul packs up to the final camp, but the way appeared free of avalanches.

I was an impostor. The rib was immensely more elegant than anything I'd ever done, was in fact, tougher than any stretch of the dog route up McKinley. I was appalled. Excited. What Pete could lead I might be able to follow — given a pull on the rope. Pete and Chuck returned from the New Year's reconnaissance to report that the winter, anomalously mild in the New Little Ice Age that was stampeding glaciologists from around the globe, had ruled out the elegance by not snowing enough to bury the brush of Glacier Creek. Disappointing. Sort of.

Monday morning dawned cold and sparkling, as I observed through the bedroom window when Betty got up to go to work. As the afternoon was drudging out the hours until the coming of night and the Moon, the phone rang. Pete: "Darned if I know what the matter was with me." Who was I to cast blame? In twilight he and Chuck arrived. Up from the doomful castle into the thundercloud. Zap!

Pete veered from the direct route through town to a certain little bakery, the only place in Seattle to get the essential pumpernickel. In Aberdeen we stopped for hamburgers, the buns toasty-warm, juicy meat steaming-hot, lettuce crisp, relish sweet, cheese tangy, ketchup red and mustard yellow. The waitress joined Pete in giggling though she didn't know the joke — that as we took each bite we knew how vividly it would be remembered in days ahead.

Deep in shivering night we paused to buy flashlight batteries and got into a theological discussion with the storekeeper about the Shaker religion. "I'm a Baptist myself but there might be something to it," she said. "They seem to get a lot of good out of it." My scholarly aside: "So do the Quakers. Some of my best friends." We returned to the highway shaking and quaking into a state of grace befitting the epiphany ahead.

After midnight the headlights violated the black peace of the Jackson Guard Station, end of the Hoh road, 578 feet above beaches of the near-neighbor Pacific Ocean. Stocking cap on head and parka over pajamas, the ranger greeted. He'd been expecting us since Friday, when the weather

cleared. (Friday? That's when the latest in the procession of storms blustered through Seattle.) He was sure we'd arrive Saturday, when the temperature plunged below freezing. (Saturday? That's when a miasma was squatting motionless on Seattle.) By Sunday he'd given us up. (Pete apologized to the ranger, to Chuck, to me.)

The ranger had been disappointed. He was lonesome. Nobody ever came to the Hoh in winter except poachers, the reason he was here. He offered the hospitality of the bunkhouse, vacant, unheated. I thought the thermometer on the wall must be broken and wondered if it was the chattering of my teeth that did it. At half past one o'clock in the morning of Tuesday, January 30, just as the jolly boys were starting to whoop it up at the Pink Palace, we crawled in our war-surplus feather bags to begin warming them enough to sleep.

At seven o'clock we were hastening up the trail to get warm enough to start shivering. The vigorous blue of the Clear gleamed through the giants of the world-famous (in summer) rain forest. The temperature was twenty degrees — in the sun — when rays found holes through the cathedral roof. It wasn't a lot warmer inside our Khaki Gang garb of Army packs, Army parkas, Army mittens, Army socks, and Army longhandled underwear.

The three freezing days had not been a total waste. The rain crust had frozen hard as sidewalk concrete and we could carry our Army beavertails, watchful for the pits stomped by elk during last week's thaw. Thanks to that, and the feather-light packs made possible by the cache awaiting us at Elk Lake, we made good speed, as we dang well had to because to camp short of Elk Lake would be to know what it was like for Scott when he failed to reach One Ton Camp.

Aside from bouts of yo-yo skiing, which ranks just above golf and several notches below pinball, I'd not been in the mountains since October. Much too long. Low sun backlighted leafless, moss-swollen maples. Hemlocks and spruce and firs thrust from icy shadows to high blue. The river frothed through snow-capped boulders. Green forest rose steeply to the High Divide and chiseled-ice crags of the Bailey Range. Now and then we surprised (quite a bit, unaccustomed as they were to winter company) but not panicked (not since the ranger had been posted to frustrate the local Dan'l Boones) bands of elk.

At noon we emerged on a brilliant snow plain, sunlight spilling gloriously over the mass of (unseen) Olympus. We lunched on the porch of the Old Olympus Guard Station, ten-and-a-half miles in, elevation 1000 feet. The New Guard Station, a halfmile back in the woods, was kept locked for Park Service use. The slab-board and shake-roof Old had been rescued from tumbling down, made weather-tight, and stocked with dry wood.

Reentering forest, I glanced over my shoulder to the mountainside hiding our goal. A wisp of frozen cirrus floated into the intense, dense blue. Very pretty.

In afternoon the five months of sloth caught up with me. The trail tilted. My Army Bramanis, punished nearly to death by half-a-hundred peaks, were in shop for repair. I'd borrowed a friend's "bastards," rubber-lug foresoles and tricouni heels, in theory combining the virtues of lugs and nails. Dry rock for the rubber was absent, and as the way grew steep and icy and legs grew wobbly, the requirement to walk uphill on nailed heels became less possible. Progress was slow on hands and knees.

The lively play of light and shadow stilled in dim gloom. To pause for rest was to feel the cold pressing through the skin to the bones. There could be no rest. At twelve miles was a place of death, the new bridge over the slot canyon of the Hoh into which a construction worker had fallen. We were far, so far, from the ranger at Jackson, our "support party" in Seattle.

Afternoon deepened toward night and Pete pulled ahead. Chuck and I paused at a wall-hanging of icicles. A sniff of smoke prodded legs and at five o'clock, trees blurring in twilight, we stumbled into the shelter beside the ghostly white circle of Elk Lake, 2600 feet, fifteen miles. The dry wood stacked at New Year's' quickly got us as delirious as Sam McGee at his cremation.

We should have made a predawn start Wednesday. Pete was rustling around at the proper hour but my too too solid flesh refused to

obey the clock and Chuck felt no compulsion to be a hero. Breakfast was served us in bed. Motion commenced at ten, three hours too late, but Pete was unaccusing, still apologizing for Friday. The sky was blue and somewhere the sun was shining; along about April it would come over the mountain like the bear, or around the mountain driving two white horses.

Now the cached gear was on our backs. Now the slope turned steeply up. And now we rose above the level of last week's rain and lost the concrete crust. We strapped on beavertails for an open slope but took them off at the top because there began the forested cliff. Not since the Climactic Optimum of the 1930s, if then, had man set foot here. Most likely we were the first ever to make a Class Three ascent of the trail. The rope was a comfort; in a fall it would wrap around trees; the exposure to Glacier Creek far below was thus more apparent than real.

Pete led, stomping pits in soft snow, chipping steps in thick ice coating rock walls. Trees and bushes gave holds to supplement the axe. To cross the Big Gully, wide and steep and truly exposed, Pete kicked and wallowed and cut steps to the center, set a stance, and belayed us over. The terrain gentled and on snowshoes we plodded fluffy powder through subalpine forest, at three o'clock reaching Glacier Meadows, 4500 feet, eighteen miles and two days and a night from the ranger, a world from Seattle.

Our plans had been changed for us. Thomas Hardy's ten-ton truck. A translucency had drawn over the sky from the south, advancing slowly, inexorably, the pearly blue dissolving the crystal-hard blue that yesterday had seemed eternal. At the Big Gully the veil had dimmed the entire sky and was thickening and darkening and lowering. At Glacier Meadows clouds had settled on summits of Olympus and the sun was lost and afternoon was fading to premature twilight. So much for the Clear.

A Sunday departure from Seattle (Pete's fault) or a predawn start from Elk Lake (my fault) would have put us by now on the Snow Dome, perhaps even the summit. Who could spare a moment to recriminate or regret? Glacier Meadows under eight feet of snow, subalpine trees in fairyland groupings, glittering billions of crystals that never would be trammelled by fanny-wagging yo-yos — Lucifer might have complained, not us.

We glissaded down the eight feet to the icebox interior of a brandnew leanto shelter and shoveled and stomped and scraped to bring accommodations to the minimum for survival. We foraged for dry wood, found none, and hauled armloads of dead, ice-encrusted underbranches, conceivably flammable. We illegally and criminally and necessarily gathered boughs to make the ice-layered cedar boards of the bunks sleepable and the foot-deep snow of the floor foot-tolerable.

Housework complete, we wandered white lanes through snowhung Christmas trees. On a gentle rise a hard, boardlike surface cracked under us with a "pop!" Beneath this slab, several inches thick, were a fraction of an inch of loose powder, a thinner slab, and more loose powder smoothing irregularities of a rain crust. The story of recent weather: rain, a freeze and cold snow, wind blowing powder onto this lee slope and compacting a windslab, more snow and wind and another slab. The next chapter was above our heads but we'd soon be in it.

We beavertailed snow as airy as talcum powder over the crest to the edge of the Blue Glacier. In the twilight the glacier *was* blue, and so were the glazed cliffs and the icefall, and the clouds rushing north a mile a minute, beheading the peaks of Olympus and lowering onto the Snow Dome. Even the wind felt blue.

In this gale on Olympus I heard the gale over the South Pole, and the film music by Vaughn Williams, and again the words written by Scott in his journal on January 17, forty-one years earlier: "The Pole. . . Great God! This is an awful place. . ."

Awful, just awful. . . I hadn't yet chosen next summer's awful. Cam was recruiting for Robson. Crooks rated the Bugaboos next best thing to the Dolomites. Row row row your boat over the Columbia to Sir Sanford? A baggage might ask why the hell I was thinking vacation when I didn't have a job.

Snow began blasting from the Pole. In darkness we returned over the rise to calm air of the lee slope, to our shelter home. Against the eight-foot wall we built a fire and hung Ten Cans of snow to melt. At six o'clock snowflakes began floating featherlike into the glare of flames intermittently flickering through the smolder of frozen squaw wood. Strangling and weeping in the smoke, we eventually pronounced cooked what Scott would have called "a fat Polar hoosh in spite of our chagrin" —

chicken noodle soup and Tin Willy (the name for corned beef learned by Pete in a summer on a Forest Service trail crew), chunks of the quintessential pumpernickel lavished with butter. A restaurant that could duplicate the dish would make a fortune. If it could draw enough customers to such a place. Because the place was the secret ingredient, of course.

Thursday we breakfasted on a banquet pot of oatmeal and raisins and prunes and bullfuck (the trail-crew name for Eagle Brand condensed, sweetened milk). At noon, sugar surging through our blood and smoke blowing straight down into our cave, hazing the interior with strangling blue, we pulled on mittens and mook parkas, strapped on beavertails, and shortly were leaning into the blizzard in the middle of the Blue, blue no more, pure white underfoot and overhead and all around and halfway toward the center of our brains. Alone, only the rope suggesting the presence of other bodies in the universe, I spent most of the afternoon trying to light a cigarette.

Pete and Chuck materialized. Shouting over the wind, Pete asked if either of us had any idea where we were, where we were going, and how we'd know when we got there. By dusk we were back in our cave melting snow and making smoke.

In evening I made an exciting discovery. The Army had consulted the world's leading expert on Arctic life and at his recommendation adopted the food which for centuries had been the high-energy, low-weight staff of life, pemmican. But the Army's nutritionists proved that a person eating pemmican would surely die in weeks. Science devised a fruit-nut confection and the Army canned enormous quantities. I'd bought cases of the little khaki tins labeled "pemmican," a nickel each, carried them hundreds of days, thousands of miles, and never been able to gag down more than a bite. I now consumed one entire can and applauded the Army for its perfect emergency food, edible in no other circumstances but the edge of death.

Friday morning we melted another couple wheelbarrows of snow, inhaled another cubic mile of smoke, before thinking seriously about where we were and where we were not. On the last January 17 of his life Scott wrote in his journal, "Well, it is something to have got here. . ."

Well, it would be something to get the hell out of here, too. The ranger, and our support party in Seattle, had been told not to worry until Wednesday or Thursday or so. That didn't mean *we* couldn't, a little.

The gale roared on and if the avalanche chutes weren't roaring yet they soon would be. Until we crossed them and descended to the big trees it was a waste to discuss what-all we'd put on our hamburgers in Queets, how many pitchers of beer we (that is, I, my companions having no vices except being here) would drink in Seattle. Olympus wasn't in the same space-time as Seattle. Or Queets. Or Jackson Guard Station. It was as far away as I'd ever been, and probably farther than I had any need to be.

Two feet of snow had piled up overnight, a total of more than three since the storm began, and a heavy fall continuing. The temperature had risen to the high twenties and the flakes were not light and powdery but heavy, wet. At noon we decided to go home while we could, if we could.

On the open slope below the forested cliff we strapped on beavertails for a merry romp home. However, at Elk Lake we dropped below the freezing level. Floating crystals yielded to slapping slush, then cold, pounding rain. The sturdy crust had sickened and died. The wall-hanging of icicles we'd admired on the brisk Tuesday lay, this sodden Friday, in a heap of rubble.

I was now carrying an extra ten pounds of water and moved heavily. On sidehills Pete and Chuck managed to maneuver in the slippery slush but my snowshoes kept tangling. On the valley flat I continued to fall, making bathtub-size pits, pinned there by my pack. Chuck went on ahead but Pete stayed close, trying to stifle hysterics, but no need because I, too, was giggling uncontrollably. It was funny. Funny as Hell.

Trapped in a last bathtub, night complete, rain flooding face, I looked around for Cossacks harrying our flanks. We'd come seven miles down from Glacier Meadows, the Old Guard Station was barely a halfmile distant, but enough was enough. I unstrapped the damn beavertails.

Pete took off *his* snowshoes, despite my urging him to go on ahead, my protests that I was in no peril. In high glee he demanded the right to not merely share my postholing but hog all the fun of the digging.

At five-thirty we flung off the chains of travail and sin and were born again. Chuck had torched such a blaze of the tinder-dry stockpiled wood that the potbelly stove glowed red and chipmunks for miles around were coming out of hibernation. We stripped naked and thrilled to the hot wash of radiation evaporating rain from hair, turning blue skin a flushed pink, and melting ice from marrow. Supper was more chicken noodle soup and Tin Willy, the last of the pumpernickel (time to go home), and steaming cocoa enriched by marshmallows and bullfuck.

Chuck, a devout Christian in the city, but tolerant of infidels in the wilderness, observed that what with civilization near, we (meaning Pete and I) ought to start getting our language back in respectable shape. He proposed a "no slang" contest and volunteered to abandon even his own maximum expletives, "darn" and "heck."

Bunks had been heaped in rain-forest moss and we sank deep in fragrant sleep.

Saturday we were warmly dry-dressed and underway at seven-thirty, cold-soaked again by 7:45. Each stream crossing was a comedy, so absurd it was to beavertail over gravel in kneedeep water, but not so absurd as trying to web across the footlogs.

Surplus food had been cached at Elk Lake for the next assault and we were sustained on the down-valley march by a single package of mixed-color Lifesavers. We compared the colors, voted for our favorites. Chuck reflected on Queets. He decided on two hamburgers. Pete and I offered to pay for all he could handle beyond that. He raised his sights to four and planned the ingredients of each, the precise combinations of lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, cheese, relish, butter, mayonannise, ketchup, mustard, salt, pepper.

The ten-and-a-half miles went too fast. Monday I'd dreaded the exile from the Blue Moon-Pink Palace. This Saturday, as on Sir Donald I'd wanted the Northwest Ridge to continue forever, I wished there were no end to the Hoh. The giant trees hung in moss, the elk chomping in snowy forest, the pending avalanches of the Big Gully, the lonesome madness of the Blue Glacier, the great simple wilderness, guarded us from the complicated city. Of all the millions of people in the nation, only we three were so free, were doing anything so purely useless and important.

As it turned out, at the restaurant in Queets Chuck could manage no more than a single hamburger. That's what too much bullfuck does to you.

APOTHEOSIS

Frank and I didn't need to be told why Cam and Vic had arranged for the rest of the Climbing Committee to leave the four of us to ourselves during this particular after-meeting social at the Green Apple Pie. It was October and Vic had one last task to wind up his year as Climbing Chairman — nail a successor. Cam, who a year earlier had nailed Vic, was there to block the door.

No preamble necessary, Cam said, "It's between the two of you. Who's it going to be?"

Frank opened by extolling my climbing skills and intelligence and leadership and vast mountaineering background. I countered by lauding his ditto plus imagination and judgment and dedication and experience. He noted my popularity. Among teenagers, replied I, and that was because I was barely twenty-five, much younger than any Climbing Chairman ever had been or ought to be. But, protested Frank, you're a very mature twenty-five. Says I, you can't mean me. I haven't got a job, don't own a suit and left my necktie God knows where, my idea of dress-up is dirty cords and wool shirt and mocassins, people are always asking when I'm going to grow up.

Frank got serious. He was being promoted to the make-or-break job of his career. The months ahead would determine where he'd be ten years from now. He'd be at his desk nights and weekends to master new duties.

I got dirty. Militarism, imperialism, fascism, The Bomb. I wasn't going to stick around for the last act of the Decline of the West. Us Spenglerians were packing up our dog-eared copies of Gibbon and emigrating to Patagonia. Wonderful climate. Terrific mountains. Cheap land, so rich the crops grew themselves while you're off on the glaciers. Peons tend your sheep. All the lamb chops you can eat.

If Patagonia was a cheap trick (Where would I raise the price of a ticket? What about the baggage?) my premise was correct. Frank, in defeat, lived up to my praise. To the fall-winter meetings of the Climbing Committee he brought ingeniously innovative, meticulously detailed plans for the lecture series and practice trips. As for Experience Climbs, we stared speechless at his proposed schedule. The dozen peaks of the 1948 season had been increased by 1950 to one every week from May to

October, two on holidays. For 1951 Frank proposed two-climb weekends through the entire heart of the season. For Rainier, not the traditional Fujiyama-like mass pilgrimage but a four-pronged assault by four routes.

One question: "What about this Wednesday in May? *Four* climbs? On a *Wednesday*?"

Shrugged Frank, "What else can you do with a middle-of-the-week Memorial Day?"

A hundred and a half students and ropeleaders signed up, most for McClellan's Butte, the North Ridge of The Tooth, and the Lundin Traverse, well-worn standards close above the Snoqualmie Pass highway. The twenty-four who chose Thompson, three valleys and two passes distant, fell into two groups: students who had no idea what the hell they were doing; and the lunatic core of the faculty.

My duty was clear. Frank had won the debate after all, compelled by overwork, lack of sleep, and doctor's orders to resign, elevating me (no boat to Patagonia having docked in Seattle) to the Chair, an eminence that required my attendance wherever the possibility was greatest of big trouble. At 4:30 a.m. in day's first graying our two dozen clambered up the head-high highway-side snow wall at Snoqualmie Pass, plodded forests of Commonwealth Basin to the nook between Red and Kendall, and plugged up an avalanche fan to the ridgecrest just east of Red Notch.

(To epitomize the day by skipping ahead to the denouement, on the return Cam and Jim descended from Red Notch to the basin in a tandem glissade, a technique abandoned and condemned years ago for its tendency to attain excessive speed and compoundly fracture bundles of legs at once. Having had *my* fun glissade of the day on Thompson, I volunteered to pioneer a track. From the basin floor I watched the locked-together twosome come a-flying so fast they rode out of my track, gouging a new, swift chute around a blind corner into a hidden rock, taking separate flight, tumbling to my feet, and lying in the snow laughing. From on high came a small voice, "Is this track safe?" Hollered Jim, tears flowing, "It's a

beauty!" Yelled Cam, "You'll never forget it!" The small voice sped around the blind corner and took to the air, we three cheering. Another small voice, four encouragements, and another birdman winging through evening shadows. Another small voice, five promises of delight, more aerobatics. Six and eight and a dozen and a half and then a pretty little birdgirl broke her ankle and hobbled to the highway, laughing.)

At the elevation of the ridge the compact springtime snowpack of the basin was slushed over by a foot of snow fallen night before last. Under a fresh blue morning sky, cloud puffs scattered harmlessly about, we followed the crest to its junction with the ridge from Kendall, there crossed the divide from Commonwealth Basin to the Gold Creek side, and commenced a long, up-and-down sidehill.

(On the return in glooming afternoon I was the stepkicker on the final bitter up. Over my shoulder I saw two dozen silent climbers, eyes attached to the boot heels immediately ahead. Recalling my neat little prank on the return from Luna Cirque to Challenger Arm, I bent the ascent over to a contour, then down, then circled back to the line. "Excuse me," I said, stepping between. The eyes attached to my boot heels followed through the loop, and then the eyes attached to *his* heels, and I was angling for a second loop when a howl from the Mustache— fated to be Chairman in the next year but one — awoke the zombies.)

At Ridge Lake, a frozen pond in subalpine forest atop the divide between Gold Creek and the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River, the usual basecamp for the two-day (normal) Thompson trip, we rested.

(And on the return, rested again. Jim had been sniffing the benzedrine prescribed for his sinus and was feeling frisky. Cam requested the floor show he'd mastered at the Rivoli while presumed by the school system to be in algebra class. In baggy ski pants, loose parka, stocking cap, goggles, and clown white his sex was not self-evident. He took the stage of the frozen pond, warmed up with the Flea Hop, proceeded to bumps and grinds, and climaxed with the East Coast Shimmy and Backbreaker. Many of the audience, male and female alike, were deeply stirred.)

We trenched the sidehill above frozen Alaska Lake to Bumblebee Pass, the crossing from Gold Creek drainage to the basin of Edd's Creek, a tributary of Burnt Boot Creek, a headwater of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie.

At long last we came face to face with our objective, a fang appearing as fearsome as Cruiser. I knew better because two years earlier I'd unroped from a pair of mates clinging in terror to bushes and gone to the summit alone. However, there seemed no reason today to allay students' fears.

The glissade to the basin triggered fast-running sunballs in the new slop. Somebody laughed, "Avalanche conditions!" Another giggled, "The whole shebang could come down any minute!"

(On the return, descending Commonwealth Basin, we were startled to meet our Lundin Traverse party, who ought to have been already home in Seattle. Arriving from the Boilerplate at the top of the Chute in late morning, the leader, who well recalled Betty's Avalanche of 1948, had seen the sunballs running and held the party all the afternoon into the cool of evening.)

At 11:30 a.m., seven hours of steady slogging from the highway, we set boots on Thompson. We stopped for first lunch and roping-up on a scree melted out between two climax avalanche paths. (On the return, our tracks to and from the scree had been wiped out.) Mustache had been deviling Jim about who had given him what kind of massage to relieve muscle cramps on the way home from which climb in the back seat of Manning's Jeep station wagon. I laughed too loud and Jim jumped me and washed my face in snow so vigorously he broke the frame of my glasses. That ended my laughing for a while.

As we ascended slop-covered rock slabs, a ninny excavated a boulder and loosed it on my shin. A second ninny loosed a boulder on my other shin. Betty accused me of having no sense of humor. Mouthy baggage.

The reputation as the worst climber still climbing no longer was held by that baggage, mine, but another guy's. She had been around several years and knew she had no business on Thompson, was there because she didn't trust her husband out of her sight. She was on my rope because of our rule separating husband and wife, a policy which had saved her life to this point. Her redeeming virtue was stoic acceptance of being hoisted up peaks like a sack of potatoes. She gave me no trouble in the summit chimney.

My other ropemate was a sweet young boy who had no redeeming virtues. From the chimney top I called, "Belay on. Climb." The rope didn't

move. I left my stance to look down the chimney, a dozen feet from bottom to top, no exposure whatsoever, and asked politely, "Why don't you come up?"

He shyly said, "Don't know as I can."

"Of *course* you can," said I gently. "It's very easy. It's perfectly safe. You couldn't go anywhere if you fainted."

A team climbed through. I then asked, "Are you ready now?"

"Not sure."

The sky had gone solid gray, was darkening, lowering. Quick little winds signaled an incipient commotion.

"That's all right. If you don't feel good about it, untie and get comfortable and we'll pick you up on the way down."

Silence. The rope did not come loose in my hands. "Could you please unrope now?"

"But I want to climb Thompson."

"Great! Come up!"

"Not sure I can."

Friends, climbing through, commented on the ruddiness of my complexion, the bulging of eyes, the saliva at the corner of the mouth. One informed me the boy was going overseas as a missionary. I asked if the pagans, were, or might be persuaded to become, cannibals.

The dam burst and the inundation of vile language unroped him. At 1:30 I dragged Potatoes to the 6500-foot summit. White cliffs of Overcoat and Chimney, across the valley, vanished in a black squall. A maelstrom of snowflakes and hailstones enveloped us. Was the prickling at the back of my neck electricity or the fear of it? Just then who should amble onto the summit, simpering and smirking, but the Christian boy, cajoled up the chimney by a pal of mine purely to get my goat.

The squall impelled a mass movement down the chimney to the sloop-covered slabs. The snow was too thin and soft to support steps and the underlying rock was concealed. Granted. But as I repeatedly, heatedly informed Potatoes and Christian, that was *my* problem as last man down. They could leapfrog and goose step and somersault and cakewalk in perfect safety.

The mountain, in its eons-long progress to the sea, was moving faster than they. Trapped in belay, drenched, hypothermia advancing inward

toward my body core, I was the butt of jokes from the flow of friends. The Mustache twitched. Jim did half a Flea-Hop. Avalanche Ray wheezed on his Wings. Cam gave owlish counsel. Chuck tut-tutted at my slang. The baggage badly needed another trip to the Lundin Chute.

The crux pitch was admittedly treacherous — fifty feet of rock slab invisible under slop, no tough little shrubs for thank-God holds, the "run-out" a ledge a scant two feet wide. From there the route traversed right. The ledge lip impended over a vast vacancy, several thousand feet of air between us and Burnt Boot Creek. Potatoes and Christian could be forgiven for moving slowly. They could not be forgiven for not moving.

Potatoes spent a year and a half and the best part of my operatic repertoire inching down the fifty feet. Christian used up nearly the whole rest of my life. When both were on the ledge I rose from belay half-paralyzed, no sensation below my waist, and took position for down-climbing — facing outward from the mountain, four-point suspension. I probed the slope for a foothold and found one. Briefly. Just-like-that I was on the fifth point of suspension in a sitting glissade.

My future was clear. I would accelerate down the sloppy slabs, boots would hit the ledge, momentum of upper body would carry me over the brink, the rope would snatch Potatoes and Christian, and we three would bound down the cliffs to the forests of Burnt Boot.

Climbers queried after falls that should have killed them have reported feeling no pain or fear or regret but only surpassing wonder. I bumped down the slabs on my ass, axe spike in braking position, but not braking, only stirring a white spray and chattering on the rock. Faces of Christian and Potatoes drew nigh, eyes big as saucers, jaws hanging open. I'd enter eternity not in rapt wonder at the Great White Light but snarling in the joy that at least I was taking them with me.

The Bramani soles of my Mountain Trooper boots hit the ledge, "thud." Momentum brought me from sitting to standing. Inertia toppled my torso toward a swan dive. Box toes of warlike boots jammed in rocks.

Teetering on the brink I bellowed at Potatoes and Christian, "Don't just *stand* there! MOVE!"

My good humor was restored. Potatoes and Christian did not witness the opening seconds of the most ludicrous alpine tragedy in the history of the Northwest, they did not see a fool done to death by choler, but a

virtuoso exhibition of godlike daring and skill. And so, too, did Mustache and Ray and Cam and Chuck and Jim and Betty and — through them — our entire alpine world.

THE METAPHOR

We took pinball very, very seriously. Not pinball generically. Most Pink Palace machines had the bleak allure of waterfront whores, repeatedly, endlessly raped by neckless bully boys, orgasm announced by TILT. For us there was one machine specifically and that machine solely. Our Machine transcended glitter-buzz-gong to "infinite struggle in little room."

War had been, in our childhood, an aberration, confession made and penance done by a nation standing in silence, heads bowed, one full minute of the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Now it was humdrum obscenity, America's daily business. The cloud that horrified the desert on my twentieth birthday had vaporized two Japanese cities and become a tourist attraction of the Mafia's Las Vegas. The New Deal had faded like the smile of the Cheshire cat into the Fair Deal and blinked out in the Eisenhower vision of interstate highways linking golf courses. Civil liberties were begrudged anti-fascists and kidnapers of Canadian babies. Little work seemed worth doing and none worth doing well. Yet we were not a whining and mewling Lost Generation because at the Machine we came to grips with Man's fate.

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the night from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

Cam having drawn Vic, Tom, and me into his Robson scheme, he suggested we prepare by doing some significant ice. The Adams Glacier on the west side of the 12,276-foot volcano, tumbling 3500 feet in a continuous icefall, was handy. We knew of only one ascent since the first by Fred in 1945. Marsh, Avalanche Ray, and Rovers Yorick and Pablo joined us.

We roped at 8500 feet and cramponed 1000 very steep feet up narrow alleys twisting through ice cliffs. The angle eased and we dodged this way and that in a maze of crevasses. Trapped at last, long-legged Cam cleared a broad gap of dark blue air and his belay gave shorter mortals a margin for error and that was good because several leapers had to be reeled in from the pit.

Near the summit plateau the sulfur stench was so overpowering that when we sat for a rest I kept my knees apart, just in case. On top a cold wind blew away the gas and I lunched heartily on kippered salmon.

In the early hours of Tuesday I triumphantly notified Crooks, but he never had believed in volcanoes and smiled as he drew a Dolomite on the table top.

To begin the game the player drew back the plunger and released it, flinging the ball up the chute and out onto the top of the board. The plunger gave the first exercise of free will, a choice between a hard, fast shot out of the chute, the ball bouncing back and forth across the top of the board before beginning its descent; or a soft shot, the ball trickling from the chute and slowly rolling down the near side of the board.

Here, too, was the first test of skill: *doing* what you'd *willed*. During the ball's roll the free will and skill were channeled through the flippers, one on each side. Whenever the ball came in reach, a finger would press the flipper button; if the timing was right the flipper would catch the ball and hurl it back to the top of the board. On the fringes of our group were several bumpers who assaulted the Machine and, when denied, gave it a vicious kick. They were not accepted by the group. A TILT was like getting caught in the first grade wetting your pants.



Forbidden is the classic of the Cascade Pass achtausenders, three aretes and three faces culminating in a granodiorite horn. Six parties had made the summit, including the 1940 first ascent. I kicked the route up the couloir, every step made bombproof out of respect for the bergschrund below, two climbers resting in its depths, almost joined the previous summer by Lardy and All-American.

On the crest of the west ridge, 8400 feet, I retired to the rear of the rope to follow Tom and Johnny. They left me at the base of the Gendarme while they tried a bypass, traversing out of sight on the northwest face. I marveled at the first ascent, made in such wintry conditions the face was impossible, the Gendarme had to be climbed direct. I could see no purchase on the wall except for a spider. However, it made a dandy backrest for a little nap.

. . . WHERE WAS I! Sky to the right, sky to the left. Which way was up? Everywhere was down.

The vertigo withdrew to the darkness behind the mind, in the depths of the spirit, to await another day. . . The rock was as true-blue as Sir Donald and the skyway as exhilarating. At 1:30 we reached Verbotengipfel's 8815-foot summit. The register said fewer than twenty people had been here before. All but two or three were our friends. In the Tuesday predawn I asked Crooks if he had had tough fingernails eleven years ago when he led the Gendarme on that first ascent, or whether he was top man on a five-high shoulder stand. He drew arretes and cols.

Avalanche Ray had made the top of Buck Mountain, 8600 feet, in 1949, possibly the first ascent, via an interminably circuitous dog route. Last year Frank had found a weekend-feasible approach from the old mining town of Trinity. He'd climbed via the skyline ridge from 6000-foot King Lake; Vic and I took a couloir he'd suggested might be easier. The couloir was long and steep, the snow ran out in a rubble gully, and the denouement was a chimney that Santa might fall down but never could we

climb up. I tried the side of the gully — to a blank wall. I peered around a corner — straight down to King Lake. An evil pillar, rotten-reddish and multi-fractured, was somehow glued to the precipice. I drove a piton and stepped around the corner (lightly, lightly) onto the top, barely large enough for both feet. Above, the decaying wall overhung. Before attempting a pull-up I drove an angle. The ring got stuck and I had to bang the piton out and drive it again. This time it went in farther. I was wedging the mountain apart and had one foot on each half. Vic queried as impatiently as he had at the last pitch in The Bowl on Nordgipfel. I shouted a retort, willed knees to cease the sewing-machine, and above the overhang pounded another peg and from a hanging belay brought up Vic. He apologized.

Crooks drew couloirs and chimneys and pillars and smiled. A man may smile and smile and be a villain.

We learned the Machine individually, refining our touch with the plunger, our timing with fingers. We learned socially, perfecting strategy by watching the play of comrades. As a group we became so good we routinely abandoned hundreds of free games every dawn. Pimpled boys chewed gum on the sidewalk, noses pressed against the window, then darted in to feast on our leavings.

A violation of natural law — an intervention by the supernatural — is a miracle. Christians believe miracles are the work of a good God and by definition are good. Manicheans know there are bad miracles. A night came when the ball left the chute and rocketed down the board before our fingers could get set on the flipper buttons.

So! It was not the case, as eighteenth-century deists predicated, that when God finished His Creation He went away and forgot all about it. Further, though in twentieth-century theology He had diffused and blurred in a generalized Isness, He was re-objectified by the Machine and sharpened to a distinct Malignance. So much the better. We were not,

ourselves, mere rolling balls in a meaningless game. We had an Enemy. Someone to hate, to fight, to live for.

Frank's Rainier Jamboree came to pass. The newspapers mistakenly called it "the largest mass climb in the history of the state's highest mountain." We put eighty-one people on Columbia Crest. There had been larger masses at the turn of the century. And ours was not a "mass" climb. We made three separate ascents, reduced from Frank's planned four by the unclimbability of the volatile Ingraham Glacier.

I led a party of forty up the Emmons Glacier, a three-quarters moon keeping flashlights in our rucksacks, the windless air so balmy we climbed parka-less and were accompanied to the summit by butterflies and bumblebees. My routefinder, Don, reached the top at 6:15. Shepherding the rear, I came along at nine. Cam arrived simultaneously as routefinder for the twenty-eight of the Gibraltar party, co-led by Spick and Flea-Hop Jim, the Ingraham party having been amalgamated. By prearrangement, Cam and Don traded teams, each thus traversing The Mountain, and that probably was some kind of first. The sortie to Robson several weeks away, Cam for the only time in all his Rainier climbs felt good, even to accepting smoked oysters. At 11:30, as I started down, rearguarding my bunch, Spick rearguarded the Gibraltar group onto Columbia Crest. As he was leaving the top at 12:30, Ron's thirteen arrived from the Kautz.

Jim drew ice cream cones on the table top.

What He had done was adjust the elevation screws of the back legs to steepen the board. The screws were internal, unreachable. But two of us could carefully lift the front legs while a third inserted matchbook covers,

flattening the board. Again we were leaving hundreds of free games each morning, having first removed the matchbook covers. But the stupid little scavenger bastards put them back and left the evidence.

We came to the Machine and found the TILT so sensitive that a single matchbook cover was enough, in a hard release of the plunger, to kill the game.

We raised our skills to unimaginable heights. The plunger was not snapped but flicked. The flippers did not flail but caressed. The pinball room was put under a rule of soft talking and soft walking; we outnumbered the bully boys at the whore machines and cursed and menaced them into the night to do their raping elsewhere.

Magic was All-American's first lead of an Experience Climb and belatedly I realized he wasn't ready. I needed a weekend off from school duties but couldn't turn my back on him, much less the fifteen of his party. Pablo and I hiked to Cascade Pass Saturday afternoon. After dark we exchanged flashlight winks with Tom, bivouacked on the north face of Johannesburg attempting a new route. Sunday dawn Lardy thundered through camp, marathoning from Seattle for a one-day climb of Mixup.

It would have besmirched both our dignities for El Supremo to kick the trip leader out of the sack; left to his own irresponsibility, he was the last of his party to arise. The day-long anguish of watching his personality disintegration would have been too much pain for me, but Magic, previously climbed three times, would be a strenuous test for so large a party lacking a leader. I asked Pablo and Avalanche Ray to look after our buddy.

In late morning I sauntered up the meadows of Sahale Arm, the moraine and snows of the little glacier, and the rock nubbin of Sahale Peak, 8715 feet. Eyes swung the horizon circle of the past four years: Glacier, my first volcano; Eldorado, my first taste of the quintessential North; Bonanza, my first venture into the unknown; the Pickets, my first penetration of the heart of wildness; Forbidden, barely a month in the past

but seeming as remote as Stonehenge. Had that awakening from the Gendarme nap been the end of the beginning, or the beginning of the end?

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
 'To talk of many things;
Of shoes — and ships — and sealing wax—
 Of cabbages — and kings —
And why the sea is boiling hot —
 And whether pigs have wings."

It was not yet time to talk of ends. I was off to the Selkirks. This time, two full weeks. Dawson, the Battle Range, the Bishops, the Purities. Crooks' last mocking before I left: "This time you won't even climb Sir Donald."

Staying late one morning, a member of our group *saw* the Malignance. Of Him we already knew that His esthetic taste ran to pink stucco, that to say He watered His coffee was less accurate than saying He coffeed His hot water. That He personally tended His pinballs told us something more; for Him as for us this was war; He sought to humble us not so much to drain our wealth nickel by nickel as to steal our souls bit by bit, predawn to predawn. These were the plains of Heaven and Hell and the combat was eternal. This greasy, leering, misshapen dwarf was determined to break us.

For my unconquerable soul. . .

I didn't go to Robson. I'd never really wanted to go, it was Cam's plan, and though it would have been a significant step North, the peak was made of the same stuff as Victoria, Hungabee, and the Lake Louise

Penitentiary. Having campaigned for the Selkirks, and being the Chairman, duty called me on the Climbers Outing. Saturday evening, August 11, rain steady and hard, the two dozen assembled in the brandnew campground near the site of the long-gone Glacier House, where Whympers lodged when he came to compare Sir D to his Matterhorn.

Crooks was right. Home from the war he'd been living six years just a weekend away from Forbidden, and never returned. Perhaps while drawing Dolomites on the table top he was thinking deep and realizing he'd never go back there, either, and that's how he knew about me and Sir D. A week I was camped half a day from the summit. Others of our outing did the Vaux Route, even the Northwest Ridge, and I didn't so much as climb Uto. Was it the unrelenting pressure of months of unremitting Leadership? Or four unbroken years of un-anarchistic mobbing? Or the sense that Sir D was "ours" and these others didn't belong and in bringing them here I'd fouled my nest? The drizzly weather was no excuse — except for climbers gone over the hill. Friday the sun returned and goaded me out of camp. I walked alone to the summit of 8091-foot Abbott and sat in the meadows gazing across the valley to the finest morning and afternoon of my life. Not twice can there be a first. Come to think of it, only that once on the Kautz had Columbia Crest been not *high in* but *part of* the sky. Damn Crooks.

That evening the Robson party arrived, defeated by weather and the icefall. Something might yet be salvaged. Tom and I recruited Yorick and Pablo for a three-day lightning assault on Dawson, 11,123 feet, highest of the Southern Selkirks. Had the peak been the prime goal we'd have gone the sure-fire Asulkan Pass route. However, Tom and I were called by what we'd seen from the summit of Sir Donald, the Greenland-like icecap. As the caption of a photograph in an old book put it, we aspired to be "At sea on the Illecillewaet." Further, beyond the wide vacuity of Glacier Circle was another icecap, and another, to the Battle Range, the Bishops, the Purities. In our three days we could take only a first step, but it was a step in the right direction.

The trail gained 4000 feet, past the Vaux torrent, beneath Sir Donald, to the edge of the ice. In the five miles of the nearly flat, 8400-foot N ve the enormous suncups forced a slow pace, stumbling and skipping and

skidding. Who could wish, here, to go fast? Suncup waves rolled shining miles in every direction. So it would be in the Far North.

Sir Donald fell away behind, Dawson grew ahead, and the Deville Névé and the Battles and Bishops and Purities. Late in afternoon we blundered down moraines and buttresses and brush to Glacier Circle, 6000 feet. At dusk we made camp in subalpine forest beside the log hut built by the Swiss guides in that long ago when Sir Andrew Waugh's discovery of Everest was still hot news and Whymper was still explaining why the Matterhorn accident wasn't his fault.

Sunday we were too pooped to start as early as was necessary to be serious. Nevertheless, 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 maps drawn while the Little Ice Age was thriving. A crumbling ice cliff announced the end of the line.

Now and then there is a day in a life that has no particular distinction but for inexplicable reasons in following years is relived hour by hour, over and over again. This day was such a one. Its unique poignance was that each moment as I lived it was recognized as in the process of becoming a memory. I was at once on stage in a play and in the audience watching my performance, my life.

We descended from the Fox to the Deville Glacier, fed by an icefall from the Deville Névé, and couldn't see how we ever could climb that, either. Instead, as last year on the Columbia Icefield, we went to work with axes to assemble from surface streams a single grand torrent.

We proceeded to the outlet of Glacier Circle, to the huge terminal moraine deposited by the single huge glacier which in a past age had been the sum of the Deville and Fox and Illecillewaet. We pried loose boulders which bounded down hundreds of feet, dislodging more boulders, exploding clouds of dust, rumbling into forest.

The moraine dammed shallow ponds set in green grass. The warm water was black with wiggling polliwogs. The game was for the four of us to stand in a ring around shores of a pond and toss boulders to see who could splash the most polliwogs in faces.



Unconquerable soul. . .

We sucked it up and went sternly to the fray.

He stopped oiling the flippers, they became sticky and slow. We anticipated the course of the ball and extended flippers as it drew near so that the merest touch of the button sufficed to flip.

The spring on a flipper broke and we went one-armed into combat, finding how to send the ball out of the chute so that it clung to the side of the working flipper.

What were the days in the Appenines and Dolomites that taught Crooks what he knew about Glacier Circle? "Even if you'd got up the icefall you'd have crapped out on Dawson. You'd already crapped out before you came down from the Illecillewaet. You don't really want the Battle Range. You couldn't climb Red, now."

An hour later I'd have been too sober. But an hour later in the blur of dawn I was nearing Snoqualmie Pass. At the trailhead my bleeding eyes cried out for lids to close and seal off the horrid day. My weeping brain implored me to quit so that, an hour from now, I could be snug in bed in our basement apartment, free to sleep until Betty got home from work and would expect supper to be ready. But I pulled on boots and through forests and heather meadows I picked them up and laid them down to the beat of "Crooks! Crooks! God damn Crooks!"

Ordinarily I walked upright on the peak's final slope of huckleberries and scree and slab, occasionally putting out a hand for balance. On this morning the horizontal and perpendicular were confused — as in that Verbotengipfel awakening. I finished on hands and knees.

Atop the summit I stood and howled, "Thus I refute thee, Crooks!" I didn't stand long because the stupid little pin peak was pitching and tossing like a rodeo bronc. I scooted down on the seat of my britches, staggered the trail, grimmed the interminable highway, and fell in bed at

the crack of noon — to sleep, to dream of Sir Donald, where a year and a week ago I'd been lightfooted as a bird on the Canadian quartzite.

When the call rang out, "You don't have to go home but you can't stay here!" I made my way to the Pink Palace. Crooks laughed, "You *did* it, *didn't* you!" He'd known that if he worked the flippers just right he could make me do it. The son-of-a-bitch.

The plastic casing on the one operational flipper broke off, leaving a slender wire which the ball casually brushed aside. A number of pins ceased registering points when hit. Each morning the Malignance came to harvest His nickels.

That's the way the world ends. . .

THE VIEW FROM TWO HUNDRED METERS

The name "two-hundred-meter hut" was given by Tom. "Two-hundred meter" because of the alpine sound and because that was the median elevation of our three acres halfway up Cougar Mountain, as far up as we could afford. "Hut" because it recalled the Abbot Hut and because it was as much house as we could afford for an Advance Base. On crisp-clear January days, newly settled in far from our old base in the University District, in Domesday Book fashion I inventoried, as lord of the marches, my horizon. There was Whitehorse, first mountain whose name I knew, and the Tolt River, where I first hiked with Troop 324, and Glacier, my first volcano. Squarely in the center and prominently in front was the ridge anchored at the ends by Persis and Index.

While still a hiker reading the land on U.S. Geological Survey maps, alert for 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, denoting the fierce cliffs seen from the Stevens Pass Highway, on the west side of Persis the lines were quite far apart; the Sultan Quadrangle, surveyed in 1919-21, actually showed a trail up the west ridge to the summit. Even ogre Index had an Achilles heel — a white lane along the crest of the ridge from Persis. A hiker might conquer brown ink by dodging it, might sneak to the top via the back door.

In June 1947, my bride loath to leave our University District garret, I tested the hypothesis, alone. The Sultan Quad proved to be ancient history, the trail up Proctor Creek obliterated by logging roads, the valley a desolation of stumps and brush. I pondered black clouds through rain-blurred glasses and by early afternoon was back in the garret reading the Sunday funnies.

After 1948 I'd no need for backdoors. However, a hike can be a climb if the season is rushed, and in March of 1950 a band of refugees from yodeling records on yo-yo loudspeakers rushed the Proctor Creek logging road to the foot of the west ridge. The forests of Persis were intact but we didn't search for the trail because the rain was turning slushy and we were drenched to our underwear.



The Bowry, the Bowry,
The things they do and the things they say
On the Bowry, the Bowry,
I'll ever go there anymore.

Substitute "Nordgipfel" and the sentiments suit. Yet the morbid fascination remained, as with the dungeon in the Tower of London where Richard III had the two little princes slaughtered. In exceptionally clear air, using binoculars, from the two-hundred-meter hut I could just make out, beyond the benevolently rounded mass of the Main Peak of Index, the horns of the Devil. In April of 1951 Tom and I set out to spit in His eye from the summit of Persis. What was this strange lassitude, sapping ambition, clouding minds? Didn't Odysseus run into something of the sort? We thought to take a shortcut up the northwest ridge, ran into more trouble than languid limbs wanted, and the warm springtime air was Paradise enow.

Circe — wasn't that her name? In many old religions God was female. So was the Devil. Crooks said Persis had other defenses than topography and weather. He told tales of famous conquistadores hurled back ignominiously. Best not to ask too many questions about *what* or *who* did the hurling. Just stay away.

Not knowing the peak was impossible, we'd scheduled it as an Experience Climb. While scouting the route the leader broke his leg (aha!). Unable to find a replacement, as Climbing Chairman I substituted and on a Sunday in May of 1951 led a party of thirty-eight to the summit. Nothing could be found of the trail except scraps of fading tread but the forest was free of brush and the angle of the slope was moderate and the climb was, in fact, a hike. A time was to come when I reflected on the subtlety of the Enemy. Had the failure of three defeats to permanently repel me occasioned a shift in strategy?

If sorcery was afoot, the summit view worked. The valley of Anderson Creek separating Persis from Index was an enormous Pleistocene cirque, precipices plummeting 4000 feet to a jungle so repeatedly swept by avalanches that no logger ever had been tempted into one of the most monumental heaps of brush in the Cascades — which is to say, the world. But my hiker's hypothesis was substantiated: the horseshoe ridge enclosing the cirque was an open avenue for a two-hour stroll up the Index backside.

Tom christened the enterprise the Persdex Traverse, and the scheme was so pretty that all the Climbing Committee and half the faculty wanted a part of it, understanding that to be sporting we'd do the trip very early, before spring's snowmelting could reduce it to a hike.

Climbers are full of such a number of schemes, Persdex got lost in the shuffle. But from the two-hundred-meter hut it stared me in the face every clear day. I could not live here without walking there.

Execution of the plan was so last-minute, spur-of-the-moment, that when Tom and I left, Saturday afternoon, May 3, our only companions were Pablo, Krup (who in his first season had been on my rope when I was the accidental genius who forced the directissimo of the Emmons Glacier), and Franz, a new friend of Tom's recently come to the University from the East for his doctor's degree.

We dropped Pablo's car at the Lake Serene trail, the exit of the traverse, and drove my Jeep station wagon around to the head of navigation on the logging road up Proctor Creek, elevation 1000 feet. At four o'clock Sunday the night was starless; back to sleep. Dawn revealed heavy clouds riding low on Persis; the traverse was lost; the Nordgipfel view was lost. But we couldn't go home so early and, besides, I was the only one who'd bagged Nanga Persis. At six o'clock we hoisted rucksacks.

We walked the logging road to the foot of the west ridge, battled slash and brush from clearcut to 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. We also left bare ground for snow, at first rain-hardened, then new and sticky-powdery, sloppy-soft. Forest broke into scattered clumps of subalpine trees and in fog-dimmed parkland we passed the tiny basin where I'd planned to camp on my 1947 intended solo. At 10:30 we stood atop Persis, 5452 feet, shivering in cold-driving gray.

Wind tore open a hole. From swirling mists emerged violent Index, footed immensely far below in spring-greening brush, plastered on high by the fresh snow of bleak white winter. There she was, the beast, Nordgipfel, and the Middle Peak, climbed just that once by Fred and Pete, and the Main or South Peak, 5979 feet, two miles distant for a crow, perhaps twice that for us on the horseshoe ridge.

The traverse was on!

In gaining 4700 feet (gross, a bit more than net) from the Jeep camp we'd broken its back. Ahead lay the romp around the horseshoe. The fresh snow would slow us, we might not be atop Index until three o'clock, yet that would leave six hours of daylight, more than plenty for the slide-skip-and-dash down to Lake Serene and Pablo's car.

At eleven, sunflashes igniting white cliffs of Index, snow underfoot a dazzle of crystals a-flame, we began the triumphal march, pausing often to click cameras at alpine trees erupting green from fields of clean white, cornices jutting over the cirque void, the ever-changing Index Aiguilles.

The ridge lowered to a 4800-foot saddle and a particularly fine view. To round a 5300-foot subsidiary summit we plowed benches that come summer would be heather meadows and polliwog ponds. Boots sank deep, the pace was slow. A spur from the subsidiary had to be plugged 400 feet to the top. The expectation was to then return to the horseshoe and resume ridge-walking. Wrong. From here on the crest was serrate. No more ridge-walking today.

We plunge-stepped to a cozy nook to begin sidehilling. Wrong. Another spur from the horseshoe had to be climbed. Another nook, another spur. No sidehilling today.

On the flats (brief) we sank to the calf. On the ups and downs (constant) the stepkicker (bathtub-wallower) went in to the thighs, could advance only by shoving and grunting. The lead had to be changed every few yards, the exhausted front man falling to the rear to recuperate.

The snow seemed to be getting softer; legs and guts certainly were; May 4 was the pre-season, weekends of toughening would be required to bring us to high-season condition. No more blueness in thickening sky. No more brilliance of crystals. No more click-click-click.

We hadn't seen the aiguilles since the 4800-foot saddle. Views were south, only, over headwaters of the Tolt, along the Cascade front to Si. In lowlands shone (no clouds there) Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish. Above them rose Cougar Mountain. A telescope could have picked out the two-hundred-meter hut. Was Betty, now, looking toward us? Or was she laid low by the chronic mountain sickness that began, as close as I could figure, the night I brought home my first paycheck from my first-ever suit-and-necktie job?

At two-o'clock, when we should have been nearing the summit of Index, we didn't know where the hell we were and flopped in bathtubs to eat lunch. To empty our canteens. Bodies were soaked to the waist but throats were dry, nor would they henceforth be moistened except by the cold cold snow. And the wind she blew and the snowflakes they slapped our faces.

The squall passed but clouds hung heavy and poised, prepared to coagulate into concentrated wickedness. Ahead loomed a 5200-foot summit. Too steep to go over. However, once beyond it we must surely be at last and veritably on slopes of Index. At three o'clock we gasped onto the crest of the final spur and sure enough saw the summit. And wilted into bathtubs.

We were four hours from Persis, having gained a gross (not net!) 1500 feet, for a day's total of 6200 feet, double the amount suitable and decent for a pre-season conditioning walk. And for all that we were at 4800 feet, a net (not gross!) loss from Persis of 650 feet, and still a crow-flying three-quarter mile from Index. In dumb despair we looked down to a cold basin (ah, in mind's eye picture the smiling flowers and babbling creeks of July!) and up, up, up 1500 feet of white morass between basin and summit (oh hell!).

A return to Persis would go no faster than four hours, the wallowed-out trench counterbalanced by dwindling legpower, gutpower. Surely whatever gods might be had exhausted petulant revenge, would at last grant us Index. Once more unto the breach, another thousand or three

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plugs and wallows — and sure enough, there *was* time off for good behavior, emerging from white swamp onto gentle slopes of the summit ridge, a thin frost glazing naked rocks. Shrubs clinging to crevices were fretworks of hoar crystals. Boggling-huge cornices overhung fluted snow walls of the east face, Lake Serene a frozen plain at the base. Clouds had evanesced, sky was blue, the sun bright in the west (low, too low, in the west).

At five o'clock we stood on a promontory above white crags of Middle Peak and Nordgipfel, far far above the Skykomish River, where in memory's eye I saw the lights of the train and the golden people in the dining car sipping goblets of icewater, clink clink the cubes.

Down in the valley (valley so low), alders and maples, bare-limbed a few weeks ago, were interlacing canopies of new-green leaves, dogwood trees wore great white flowers, wild currants radiated red blossoms, and on the forest floor were yellow violets and white trillium, sword ferns uncurling fresh fronds, and all this I knew because it was so on Cougar Mountain, too. From the Pole we saw springtime, so sweet, so far.

Eleven hours a-hoofing, 7700 feet (very gross) gained, pooped to the brink of collapse, and still 6000 feet high in winter and night four hours away. Not to worry. Pablo had climbed the dog route last summer and could guide us quickly home. We backtracked the summit ridge to the descent couloir, horizontal sunrays marking the fireball's approach to the horizon. At 5:30 we stared down the couloir.

"My gosh!" murmured Pablo. "Didn't look like this last summer."

Cliffs walled the narrow chute. That the snow was steep was not my concern. That it was the loose slop through which we'd been wallowing, there was the rub. Retreat? Night would catch us on the horseshoe, exhausted, soaked. . .

To stop the fall of a body caught in an avalanche is as feasible as halting the avalanche. Or a ten-ton truck. My thought was that with Pablo and Krup jamming axes deep in the flat above the couloir lip for a stout double belay, a person might safely test the top of the slope and if it went, be held by the rope while the heavy mass slid out below. Roped, I stepped into the chute, daring it to let go. It refused. We unroped. The sun had not penetrated here since morning, and then but briefly. In the cold

shadows of nigh-evening the muck was inert, solidly glued to a raincrust. Good weather, that would have been our bad luck.

Ah, glissade, swift joy! Asses stuck in bathtubs. Well, then, plunge-step, gleeful abandon! The crust under the slop was not strong enough to support boots but was sharp enough to bruise shins painfully as we punched through and struggled thigh-deep in garbage.

The couloir debouched on a sloping shelf, the upper, apron cirque of a classic North Cascades double cirque. We angled down left to the lip of the shelf, the cliff falling to the lower cirque cupping the white plain of frozen Lake Serene. Though still in icy shadows of Index cliffs, we were warmed within by Skykomish valley forests glowing in sunset, and by the knowledge that in the trees on the shore of the white plain was the snowline, springtime, and the trail.

Tom reflexively began following his nose toward the lake. In horror Pablo cried, "No! No!" During a fall storm in 1946 two hikers had disappeared on a descent from Index. Last summer Pablo had been in the party which found their skeletons. They had followed their noses toward the lake, into cliffs. No shortcut for us. We proceeded down the ridge toward the pass between the lake basin and another lower cirque, the valley of Index Creek. Abruptly the ridge nosed over and dove into forest. Vertical forest. In summer, a safe and easy hiker's clamber through the trees. On a day in early May? The others waited while Tom and I took a look. I soon saw enough and stopped. Cursing the obstinacy of Persdex, Tom continued down, out of sight.

No sound. I yelled, "How's it going?"

No filthy language, a bad sign. "Uh, well, actually, not too good."

I yelled, "Okay. Let's hunt for a way around."

No splutters of rage. "Uh, well, actually, I'd just as soon not have to climb back up."

He'd got himself trapped. We discussed in shouts. Tom was carrying the sixty-foot nylon — the "Sir Donald rope," we called it, because after that climb we'd bought a one-hundred-twenty-footer and cut it in two, the shorter length ideal for such routes as the Northwest Ridge. Having the means to rappel short distances, he could safely tree-crawl to the pass, 400 feet down. Five of us, however, might get dangerously tangled, the worse for having two ropes.

Wearily I climbed back up, adding another couple hundred feet to my personal gross. That was why I made curt reply to the haughty Easterner's objection to our not following Tom.

The long and fatal cirque cliff prevented a shortcut to Lake Serene. A short but just as potentially hurtful cirque cliff prevented a quick way off the divide ridge to the shelf of the upper cirque we'd just descended. The gross grew by 400 feet as we returned up our tracks (trough) to where we could get off the ridge onto the shelf. Pablo and Krup followed me, moaning at the injustice. Franz stood thinking, then followed, glum.

We plunge-stepped to the bottom of the shelf, to the brink, a fringe of cedar trees, an empty airiness, and beyond *that* the valley floor. We would have to turn our backs on Lake Serene, plow in exactly the opposite direction along the shelf, seeking to gain the lower cirque of Index Creek by a break in the headwall, if any.

His Eastern civility fracturing, Franz demanded, "Why can't we go straight down?"

I lacked the patience to explain the double-cirque circumstances because I'd blundered (again) by dropping to the bottom of the shelf, where meltwaters over the millennia had dug a series of ravines. It was wallow down into a gully, wallow up to a rib, wallow down, wallow up, wallow wallow wallow, sun abandoning the world, night immutably engulfing from pole to pole. More gross, there had to be more gross, up and out of the dissection to the smoothness. But before that could be attained there was increasing steepness. Not wallowing but swimming, arms in Australian crawl, legs in frog-kick. I slipped, slid back down, bumped against Pablo, nearly carried him away. My goal was the one solid object in the white wall, a small fir. Slowly, slowly, fearful I'd slip again and this time take Pablo and Krup with me. I was running out of swim. Pablo, ever-chipper Rover Boy, was dull of eye. Krup, whose mouth I'd never known to stop flapping since meeting him on the Emmons, had gone dumb.

I lunged for a branch, caught it, pulled hand over hand to the trunk, climbed to the top of the tree, and leapt out onto gentle slopes of the smoothness, pressed hot face in cold crystals, filled burning mouth with sweet ice, lay head in marvelous soft pillow. Krup and Pablo fell beside me in the luxurious white bed.

I asked, after a while, "Where's Franz?"

While I'd been swimming, they'd seen him enter the cedar fringe, disappear over the brink. I should have found time to explain Cascades geomorphology to the ignorant Easterner who had climbed only in the Gunks, never in real mountains. He would lower himself from cedar to cedar. To a gap. Clear it with a leap — and thus cut off retreat, as had Tom, but Tom had a rope. Another gap. Hang from a cedar, weakening. A desperation leap. Fingers clutch branches, lose grip. At least we'd know where to find him before the bones were picked clean.

The mushroom cloud as I hit the scree island amid the snows of the Graywolf . . . The moment on the descent from the summit of Huckleberry when Partner thought I'd feel more secure with a tight belay from below and the sudden tug of the rope tugged me into the opening moves of a swandive. . . The crevasse I stepped into on St. Helens, unroped, to my armpits. . . The foothold on Castle unattached to the cliff when I, of course, was unroped. . . The famous glissade of the slabs on Thompson. . . Comrades falling from walls, sliding out of control down snow, tumbling in avalanches, swallowed by clouds of dust from rockfalls. . . None of us badly hurt. Tell the family that more people die in bed than on peaks. Tell ourselves that the most dangerous part of a climb is the drive home.

All along we *knew*. We had to know because we were climbers. Deny death and it's not a climb, it's a hike. The game isn't worth the candle if everybody's a winner. There have to be losers. This wasn't a sport but a rite, empty 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 Pablo. "All I want is to come home alive from every peak I ever climb."

A gully broke through the cliffs to the valley of Index Creek. Still we wallowed, but at least in the right direction, up the valley toward the pass where we'd find Tom waiting. We hoped. If not, we'd have not one, but two bodies to find in morning, assuming we were not, ourselves, icicles.

Far to our rear a figure appeared. The snotty Eastern son-of-a-bitch had a lot of nerve not dying. Thanks to our trench he soon caught up. In a slightly ameliorated snarl I greeted him, "Why don't *you* kick a few?"

"Guess I have that coming," he gasped. "After the stunt I pulled." Normally, haughty bastards bluster and brazen. Was this one *apologizing*? All day the strongest of us, now he was tangle-legged, stumbling. Falling to his knees, before mustering strength to stand he told the story.

I had it precisely right except he refused the irrevocable leap.

I understood, now, why Tom had invited a stranger — from the East, no less — to our private party. We became friends, climbing together, serving on the Climbing Committee together, working together five years on the committee of editors of *Freedom of the Hills*. He and wife Ginni drank California jug wine at the two-hundred-meter hut and even cheaper homebrew. I slept on the couch in their Manhattan Island apartment the night we attended the City Center Ballet and at a Chinese restaurant shared the house specialty, the deadest fish I ever saw, and they insisted on my having the supreme delicacies, the staring eyeballs. He was a professor at the University of Colorado when I read in a journal about his death while attempting a first ascent of the North Wall of Logan, second-highest peak in North America. In the same period his sister's husband, Mike, another of our group, was killed attempting a first in Peru.

At nine o'clock, at the 3000-foot pass, Tom materialized from a night not quite yet complete. No leisure to exult in the demigodlike gross of nearly 9000 feet. We plunge-stepped toward the lake 500 feet below, and with the first plunge my left leg knotted in cramps and with the second, my right leg. I fell helpless, writhing, hysterically giggling at what Circe had wrought. Water was lacking to wash down salt pills so Tom and Pablo grabbed my legs and towed me to the lakeshore, where I squirmed on my belly to a lead of water in blue ice, gulped pills, and was instantly cured.

We dashed across the white plain, swiftly dimming, ghostly walls of Index towering immensely above, the enormous fan of avalanche snow sprawling across the plain halfway to the forest at the outlet. In mind's ear one could hear the awful thunderings that shook this place, now so silent, so solemn, so holy.

At forest edge we ran out of snow onto good brown Earth. Not home, not quite. The trail, a treacherous ladderway of roots and rocks obscurely threading through cliffs, must be found. We fanned out five abreast, searching dark woods.

At 9:30 a shout, "Got it!"

In the clearcut below Bridal Veil Falls the others toppled to the ground. A mysterious energy beyond the physical drove me on alone up the loggers' cat road, taking the gross over 9000 feet. So close to winter and mortal peril, the spring night was perfume of flowers and pollens and new leaves, music of frogs and waterfalls. I stuck my face in a creek and the cold flowed not into my mouth but into *me*. The flesh must be tormented to the brink, for the spirit to *know*...

At 10:30 I lay me down beside Pablo's car and looked into the stars. If that wasn't a mystical experience, I'm out of luck.

KILLJOY

Clearing brush from the old logging road had been my morning chore and pleasure: next summer, when the kid was of an age to be wheeled around, it would be his or her first wilderness trail, first mosquito bites. In afternoon sun, sweat of my brow drying, I lay in the little strip of mowed field we called our lawn, tracing the skyline from Persis to Index, wallow by wallow. Cumulonimbus was billowing along the Cascades — some of the folks most likely were getting showered.

I should be. It was a Sunday, summit day, the day of the week for which the other six were made. It was August 10, the time of the season when the muscles were the hardest, fingers and toes nimblest, eyes sharpest, the quest keenest. Lolling in the grass at two-hundred meters! Were it not for the blinking forest fire we'd be on American Border Peak. Actually, the old master plan would have had me bashing brush toward Sir Sanford, or plodding suncups of a Bugaboo glacier, but I'd been wearing the suit and necktie less than half a year, not enough to earn a white-collar vacation. Next year, a week. Two the year after, just enough time up North to see if they'd heard about milkshakes yet. McKinley? He was a president who got shot. Anyway, the mountain's real name was Denali. Might as well be Chomo Lungma, for all the good done by its being on the same continent as me.

The wise man said, it's the old should work, the young who should retire. I'd had a spell of young freedom; now resumed the forty hours a week of getting old. Would there ever again be a window on the North?

The Experience Climb of Pugh was a Sunday romp with jolly friends. At home that night of May 18, the 10 o'clock radio. Art was in a crevasse on St. Helens. As we were flinging snowballs on Pugh a hole opened under him, unroped and carrying the party's only rope. At the Climbing Course lecture last Wednesday I'd been making a production of admiring the plaid tam o'shanters he and his two pals had brought back from a Boy Scout

jamboree in British Columbia. They were "my boys," beginners during my term as Climbing Chairman, and because of that my responsibility. The death also was my responsibility personally, because in my second season I, too, had stepped in a hidden crevasse on St. Helens, and I, too, had been unroped, because to wear a rope on our littlest volcano with its tiny glaciers and tiny crevasses was like a matador carrying a pistol. As I trod air, suspended by armpits, Betty and Chuck had laughed themselves into fits at how silly a man in perfect health looks when he's ambushed by death.

To paraphrase a Muirism, every peak in the world is hitched to every other, and every climb. In June we first took aim on American Border Peak. Tom and Betty and I stopped to pick up Lardy. The Seattle sky was formidably black. Seattle climbers must leave town, no matter what the weather, or they're not climbers. But *we* didn't. Because of May 18? Because of that formidable blackness of June, there was to be a worse in August.

The Fourth of July brought a renewal of spirit. Yorick and I went along with Tom as he led an Experience Climb of Spire Point, 8264 feet, done only several times before. In crisply wintry sunshine I looked east to Big Banana, where Lardy was this weekend, and north to Eldorado and Forbidden and the Pickets and all, and all; should I never get Far North this much North might very well suffice.

The next Sunday, home from instructing on a practice trip, again the radio. Tom and Fred and Berge, descending in darkness from an attempt on the unclimbed nordwand of Baring, had been halted by a cliff. Berge shouted that he was checking a possible way down. Silence. In the morning Tom and Fred found him at the base of the cliff.

Eight weeks, two deaths. Yet onward must go the Climbing Course, ever onward, lest more aspirants to glory die of ignorance. Lardy was leading Rainier and wanted my help. At Muir we agreed in two weeks to take another shot at American Border.

The North Pacific High settled on the Northwest, hot and dry, and the forests began to burn. Friday night I called Lardy about our starting time in morning and learned the Swamp Creek road, the approach to American Border, was closed by fire. He'd already chosen a new objective and had recruited Pablo, who had been working weekends to buy a new camera

and was going to show it off on his first climb since Persdex, and Dusty, our classmate until caught in the draft, freshly sprung from the Army. Two two-man teams were ideal for the 2500 feet of clean granite on the West Ridge of Stuart.

Stuart? In August? For us mouldering, mildewed west-siders, the end of the season for sunblasted Stuart was June. Cried I, "You'll scorch your fingers! Melt your tennis shoes! You'll shrivel up like fried raisins!"

Sunday afternoon I lay in the field grass, contented by our acres and this year's one hundred and seventy-one Cougar Mountain days and our halfway-to-birth baby, yet restless at not being *there*. Thirty-one of this year's days had been in the mountains, very good, but so many were school obligations I'd bagged a pitiable seven peaks — half the number normal for this date in my preceding seasons of twenty, thirty, twenty-three, and twenty.

The cumulonimbus billowed higher as I watched. But the billows were not, as I'd first supposed, growing higher, they were already awesomely high, pushing in from the east. Gleaming in afternoon sun against blue sky, continuous north and south as far as eye could see, rising three times the height of the mountains themselves, the white rank advanced to the Cascades front and hung there, from Si to Phelps to Index to Whitehorse. I'd never seen the like.

In the scorching noon sun of Tuesday, Ome and Otto led twenty members of the rescue party from the floor of Ingalls Creek valley, 5000 feet, toward the summit of Stuart, 9415 feet, second-highest non-volcanic peak in the state, to retrieve Pablo. Tom and Dusty and I stayed with Lardy to load him on the Coast Guard helicopter flying in from Port Angeles. We heaped two piles of branches, one dry for an instant torch, the other green to make smoke to guide in the pilot and show him the ground winds. That done we had nothing to do but hide from the sun and give Lardy water when he asked. He hadn't taken the bolt direct, as had Pablo, but the current along the rope had burned his back and feet and

fried him to deep dehydration. Monday, lowering himself from the summit on arms alone, legs paralyzed, the sun had cooked out more juices. Through the night he'd lain beside Ingalls Creek, drinking, and this morning Otto had shot him full of plasma, but he still had a fearsome lot of dry in him.

At the sound of chop-chop-chop we torched the dry branches, threw on the green, and smoke boiled from the meadow. A flailing mass of dangerous metal swooped close overhead, skimming tree tops. The monster cut a wide circle and returned below the tree tops. Three times it hurtled down the meadow alley, rotor blades inches from branches on either side, barely slipping over trees beyond the meadow. The fourth time the deafening roar abruptly gave way to a shuddering convulsion and the massive machinery stopped dead in midair. The hurricane from whirling blades flattened the grass, frenzied the smoke, bent the trees, and scared the crap out of us. Drunkenly the dragon toy teetered, then resumed the deafening roar and sped down the valley, away. Minutes from hospital, Lardy lay still at the foot of Stuart. All the Mountain Rescue Council's men, all the U.S. Government's newfangled machinery could take him no closer to home than he, lightning-struck and burned halfway to a crisp, had taken himself unaided.

Tom cranked the war-surplus walkie-talkie and called George, stationed at Long's Pass, our route over the divide to Ingalls Creek. Whenever a fawning adulator praised Crooks to his face as our greatest rock-climber, he shook his head, "You've never seen George in action." Before the war George had gone to the Tetons, the "Alps of America," and done a first on the Grand so stunning it hadn't even occurred to Petzoldt and Exum and their wealthy Eastern clients.

George called the Coast Guard communications truck, which had arrived to take up a position at the end of the Teanaway River road. The Com Truck could talk to the helicopter, which we couldn't, our U.S. Army radios not on the same frequency as the U.S. Coast Guard. George relayed the message that our meadow wouldn't work. The pilot wanted us in a meadow he'd spotted farther down the valley. He'd return in morning when the air was colder and denser and before the thermals were stirring.

The bolt had hit Sunday morning. Lardy had lain out an afternoon and a night on the summit. A second night he'd lain by the creek. There'd

now be a third night without hospital — and without sleeping bag and without food, because when we reached Long's Pass, as dawn was breaking, and heard his unmistakable "MOO! we'd gone crazy and dropped our gear and dashed down to the creek.

The rescue leaders hardly could be blamed for not knowing this meadow wouldn't work. They came from the era of manpower and stretchers. Ome had been hauling bodies since the 1930s, and Otto, too, in his home Alps before emigrating. Wolf, the guiding genius of the Mountain Rescue Council, and before that the leading genius in founding the Climbing Course, was away on business. As an engineer he surely knew what helicopters could and couldn't do. We didn't.

We wished Ome and Otto hadn't taken the stretcher. Pablo was beyond pain. Not Lardy. As he emerged from shock, Dr. Otto and his pills and needles far away up the mountain, he'd suffer more.

The textbook techniques for transporting casualties were familiar to graduates of the Climbing Course. The three of us lacked the materials for improvising a stretcher of the sort pictured in first-aid manuals. Therefore we would build a travois, also as shown in the manuals. We whittled off creekside willows with Boy Scout knives, lashed them together with belts, laid Lardy atop, lifted the butt ends to begin dragging, and the willows bent like spaghetti. We chose the two smallest dead firs we could find, lashed them together, loaded on Lardy, tried to lift the butt ends, and couldn't. Where the first-aid manuals got their travois trees was a mystery.

We tried the well-known hand-carries. We'd no notion how far it was to the meadow of the pilot's heart's desire but for it to lie within our powers it would have to be within sight, and it wasn't. We'd have called Ome and begged him to get the hell down here with the MRC's solitary stretcher but the MRC had only the two walkie-talkies and they were with George and us. Ome had none.

Tuesday afternoon. We'd missed a night's sleep and a breakfast and a lunch. The valley oven, a finger of the Great American Desert, here poked deep into the Cascades, dessicated our brains. We not-rescuers sat on the ground beside our friend, the lump, which slept. But would awake.

Voices shook us from fugue. Three lads dashed into the meadow, a trail crew. They knew there had to be a big reason for the big new toy putting on such a big show. Now we were six and the American Red Cross manuals might not, after all, be the gibbering of loonies.

Wrong.

What to do? Hesitantly, a possibility. The crew's employer, a Wenatchee rancher, packer, and trail-maintenance contractor for the Forest Service, had provided the lads a burro for carrying tools. The suggestion was ridiculed. The creature never had been ridden, though some had tried and that's why he had the habit of ominously grinding his teeth. Even as a pack-donkey he was no bargain. Defensive of dignity, touchy about protocol, trouble in the morning, trouble the live-long day. In past weeks they'd often recalled the twinkle in the eye of their boss as he told them the burro's name. Killjoy.

The three debated. Killjoy was cantankerous, Killjoy was devious, Killjoy was proud. But Killjoy was not, they agreed, mean. At times he was downright amiable, sort of.

Fetches from camp, Killjoy stopped short. Stared. Counted. There had been three, now there were seven, four of them strangers. Perhaps it was the sheer quantity of us. He trembled but stood stock still as one of them was lifted to where never they had presumed more than momentarily. His eyes rolled. He snorted. We stood on both sides holding Lardy, fearing a bucking burro.

Who knows what secrets lurk in the hearts of burro? He *accepted* Lardy. The caravan moved slowly down the valley, one of the trail crew ahead to warn of rough spots, another leading Killjoy, two of us on each side to steady Lardy and guard him from limbs and brush. In a mile we passed the meadow of the trail-crew camp, the largest meadow they knew. But it was in the valley bottom and the pilot had said to the Com Truck which had said to George who had said to us the wanted meadow was "up on the side of the ridge."

At the edge of a black morass Killjoy balked. The crew explained he was mortally afraid of muck, doubted he could be convinced to cross. To their amazement, he consented to try. All four legs stuck and he sank to his belly. Up to our own calves, we gripped Lardy. Eyes wide, muscles quivering, Killjoy endured his nightmare, bravely stoic.

Evening neared and the pilot's meadow was not to be found. Lardy was as brave as his mount but the pain was worsening. We returned to the camp meadow.

Lardy was bedded down in the crew's wall tent, all their mattresses and blankets under and over him. Supper time embarrassed our hosts. The boss was overdue with resupply, no doubt busy rescuing fishermen customers from Sunday's storm. The cupboard here was bare. For Lardy they dug out secret goodies — a can of peaches, a tin of sardines, a chocolate bar. For the rest, including themselves, they emptied the pantry, dumping into a pot two Number Ten cans of stewed tomatoes and two loaves of stale bread.

By nightfall half the summit party had straggled in, strangers who'd read about Art and Berge on front pages of the newspapers and signed up for the MRC the way they'd stop at a smashup on the highway to sniff blood. I wondered how many gawkers might be scattered over the mountain, and whether we might be here until winter on a perpetual self-renewing rescue.

Sleep came easy after a night without. Bags and blankets are superfluous when wood is plentiful. We formed a snakelike coil around the fire, bodies too hot on one side, too cold on the other, turning over and writhing and wiggling to dawn.

The rest of the summit party, the legitimate climbers-rescuers, staggered in. Cam fell by the creek, drank deep, and having missed a second night's sleep, slumped over in the shade. At Tuesday dusk the group, what was left of it, had reached the top. Otto examined Pablo and determined he had died instantaneously, if not from the bolt from the subsequent fall which broke his neck. The evacuation began. Exhausted rescuers kicked loose volleys of rocks. The night was loud with too-late warnings, cries of pain. Cam was pulling the lower end of the stretcher over an obstruction when weary hands on the upper end lost grip and the weight of stretcher and Pablo pushed him outward in airy darkness and he

tumbled and slid to a ledge. He asked Ome how much company Pablo needed on his side of the line. The party stopped and shivered out the hours of cold stars and at dawn was too weak and sane for further risks and left Pablo for later retrieval.

Cam, head down, stared at his boots, or something. Pablo and Lardy, Dusty and Tom and I, all were beginners during his term as Climbing Chairman, were "his boys." At home he had two others who in a few years would be old enough for the Climbing 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."

Two hikers burst into camp, a reporter and photographer come fifteen miles up Ingalls Creek in the night pursuing a beat and a byline. We'd not pressed Lardy for details of Sunday and Monday. We were in no hurry. Not so the necrophiliacs of the front page. They brazened into the tent, where we'd left Lardy alone in peaceful sleep. Otto had him sufficiently doped that he could respond to questioning slowly, as from a great distance.

Dusty had felt out of sorts and stayed in camp. The two leapfrogged delightful granite until mid-morning, barely noticing the streamers and curdles of weird cirrus, then altostratus. A sudden darkening, bright lights and loud crackles and booms, and they huddled under an overhang from the burst of hail and rain. Flashes and crashes moved away, clouds thinned, blue appeared, sun shone, wet rock steamed. Sky again was thickening. Should they turn back? No noise yet. The quickest way to the valley was over the top and down the dog route.

Lardy, in the lead, took a final upward step to where his eyes overtopped the summit and was transfixed. Unseen by them on the West Ridge, from the east a black-as-death, end-of-the-world cloud had rolled in from the Columbia Plateau. The edge was yards away and closing fast. He half-hauled Pablo to the summit and ran from the crest — until the rope drew taut on his waist.

"Just a second!" yelled Pablo. "Got to sign the register!"

He unlatched the massive metal box beside the massive metal plaque memorializing a dead climber. He scribbled, dropped book in box, secured the latches, and stood to follow Lardy, a hundred feet off.

The bolt struck.

Lardy awoke in pounding rain and hail. Another bolt. Ground currents knocked him out. Awake, another blinding bolt, unconscious again. Another, another, another.

He crawled to Pablo, poor Pablo, sobbing for the girl he never again would hold in his arms, for his mother who always worried from the moment he left for a climb until he walked in the door. He wanted to get back to the girl he loved, to mother, but he was too tired, he hurt too much. Lardy begged him to hang on. Pablo slept. So did Lardy.

He opened eyes under brilliant stars. He lay paralyzed on naked granite at 9415 feet, his soaked clothing ice-stiff. He slept, or fainted.

Monday dawn. Warm sun. Dusty soon would be making the phone call to Seattle. Friends would be arriving tonight. They'd reach the summit tomorrow. But he couldn't last another summit night.

He crawled to Pablo, dead Pablo. He was worried about Pablo's new camera. Pablo had given up a lot of climbing weekends to earn the money, he wouldn't want to lose that. Lardy put it in his rucksack. That was all he took from Pablo's rucksack. No food. No canteen. He unroped from Pablo and dragged paralyzed legs over granite felsenmeer toward the false summit, the dog route. He couldn't pull himself up the blocks of rock to the false summit.

He knew nothing about Stuart's south slopes but had no choice and began lowering himself down a gully. He came to pitches he couldn't see to the bottom but descended anyway. If stopped he couldn't climb back up to try another way. It would be the end. So what? Another night on the mountain would be the end. He thought of the water he'd left behind in Pablo's canteen. He had to get to the creek.

When cliffs ended the worst began, the slopes too gentle for gravity to do the work. Crawling on his stomach down talus, through brush, all the long blistering Monday on the blurry edge of fainting, at dark he pulled himself to the bank of Ingalls Creek. And drank, and drank, and slept.

Tuesday dawn. Shouts. Tom arrived.

Few of the details were judged newsworthy. A mercy. For Lardy ~~to~~ believe, Wednesday morning, in the reality of his Sunday hallucinations revealed he ^{still} wasn't yet right in the head.

The helicopter flopped in the meadow. Rotors coasted to a stop. Smiled the pilot, "I got *in*. To get me *out* you're going to have to do some logging."

From his friendly lecture we learned the theory and practice of helicoptering. The rotors pull in air and press it down, ~~the~~ thickened air forming a column which ~~helps~~ support the machinery, ~~while the rotors push against the ground.~~ The engine driver pulls a little lever, changing the pitch of the rotors to push the air backward and (toot toot) off she goes forward.

"I've got fixed-wing friends who can't get it through their heads why I can't go straight up to the sky. Once I'm up as far as the rotors can make a cushion to sit on, my angle of climb is the same as fixed-wing."

He pointed to the trees at the lower end of the sloping meadow. The meadow he'd wanted was on a bench, well clear of the forest below. This meadow was a hole in the forest he could flop into, descending the last bit on the cushion and thus not needing a landing strip. But at this elevation his column-cushion reached nowhere near high enough for him to make it over the trees in his exit lane.

The trail crew fell to work eager-beavering at the subalpine firs, which though only a couple dozen feet tall were several feet thick at the butt. Into camp rode their boss, leading the resupply pack string. His Confederate twang expressed his opinion of city folks and the U.S. government; if anybody had called *him* he'd have had Lardy home in bed yesterday. He observed the beavering and expressed an opinion about the kids you have to hire nowadays. He went to show them how it was done and trees began toppling like cornstalks in a tornado.

The pilot allowed as how he'd enjoy seeing the whole valley clearcut but the air was getting warmer and lighter and at this elevation his

cushion was thin at best. We loaded Lardy aboard, the rotor hurricane roared, the machinery rose to a point where it was unsteadily slipping off the cushion this way and that, abruptly leaned forward and skimmed trees and was gone.

At the end of the Teanaway road, trying and failing to say something to Pablo's folks, I remembered lying by his side on Persdex; "All I want is to come home alive from every peak I ever climb." I remembered Scott's plea in his journal, at Death Camp, ". . . For God's sake look after our people."

How (on earth) do you do *that*?

Among the oft-repeated memories that comprise the oral history of the Climbing Course was the trip where several of the most prominent "firsters" of the 1930s came, in the 1940s, to one of those pitches where you do or you don't and you wish you didn't have to. One of the chaps poked a foot at this and a hand at that, climbed furiously with his eyes but no other body parts, and informed his ropemate, "You know, I shouldn't be here at all. I've got a wife and a kid at home." To which ropemate replied, "Well, I've got one kid in rompers and another in the oven." He turned to the second team and asked how they felt and one fellow had kids and the other hoped to have some as soon as he got a wife. On Lardy's Rainier climb, two weekends ago, my baggage had tagged along to Camp Muir, though she was getting pretty lumpy. A year ago Cam had tried Robson; in the year to come he was to pack up wife and sons and move two thousand miles from these mountains.

He would miss an exciting period in world mountaineering. Just two years ago the French had done the first achtausender, Annapurna. That year and the next, reconnaissance parties had found a new approach to Everest. The Swiss were there now, had failed before the monsoon but were trying again in fall. In event of their failure, the English were mobilizing for 1953. The American Alpine Club was organizing an expedition to K-2 and was eyeing Pete. Tom had designs on the Yukon and after recovering from all this doubtless would resume progress North. Yorick had been invited on an expedition to Greenland. Kermit the Hermit, Naval Reservist yanked back to active duty by Korea, had climbed Fujiyama in Japan and Hecla in Iceland and was angling for Antarctica, though what Jutlands and Midways were expected there was not obvious.

As for Lardy, he likely would do best of all: in a couple of years, geology doctorate in pocket, he'd not vacation but live in our home hills and in ranges of Alaska and Canada, possibly Patagonia.

The edge, the closest possible examination of the edge, *this side* of the edge. . . . When I was seven, and again when eleven, the great big grown-up masked assassins wearing white masks had taken me *over* the edge, I thought. I hadn't seen the other side. But I did at nineteen, when the wisdom tooth came out. I died and stood at the base of the Shining White Throne. Just a gas dream, of course. I understood there couldn't be anything on the other side. Did I want to look-see the nothing? The preoccupation with death began abnormally early for me. What about the others? I suspected that until this summer none of them believed they'd ever die. That had become my belief, too. Nevertheless, the edge attracted attention. . . .

Climbing was a game of chicken. Grip the wheel and stomp on it. Go bumper to bumper with the Other Guy. Of course, you gotta end up swerving because the Other Guy sure ain't gonna. If you haven't gone to the brink of the Collision you might as well have gone bowling. If you haven't climbed to your limits you haven't climbed at all.

There was an elder statesman in the club who had set out with the hot firsters. They'd gone on. He'd stopped with pin peaks. As a beginner in the Climbing Course, respecting him as a member of the faculty and veteran of the Age of Heroes, I'd asked him about a mountain that intrigued me. Grumpily and shortly he said it was no tougher than any pin peak. Too simple for him to bother talking about. Subsequently I saw in the faces of his contemporaries, the Heroes, expressions of — what? — scorn, contempt, pity? If you swerve too soon you risk poisoned memories, a curdled life.

Of course, at some point you gotta swerve. Once you're not screeching brakes you're not climbing, you're hiking. There had to be a middle way. Cam's solution could not be mine. Marmot Pass had guaranteed that come 1953 I'd be an eager hiker. Would I climb? Would I care?

Returned home, I saw the helicopter and Lardy (and by happenstance, myself, as I helped load him aboard) splashed all over the front page. As usual in show-biz, the significant story was ignored. Not a word about Killjoy.

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PART FOUR

MT. EVEREST AND SEATTLE

Tutored by the experts who handled every bigtime production, Dick had scaled the Civic Auditorium from \$2.50 for the prestige seats down front to \$1 for the balcony, which for the sake of an impressive show of strength we filled with bodies by giving pairs of free tickets to every editor of a college or high school newspaper west of Idaho. Mustache, an actor in his youth, had engaged the usual union staff of ticket-takers and ushers and stagehands for a smoothly professional look. He also had decked out the gaunt bones of the cavernous vault with the usual gala bunting of red, white, and blue and flags from around the world. Fred, at the time a salesman of display advertising, had bought the newspaper ads and designed the gaudy posters with which Tom and his crew of climbers blanketed Seattle. Counseled by Ed Chalcraft, a reporter at the *Post-Intelligencer*, my own employer of the moment, I had issued a stream of press releases and arranged the press conference and two radio interviews, as well as photo opportunities for TV and press at airport and all.

At quarter past seven the First Chair Players of the Seattle Symphony, engaged in a brilliant last-minute inspiration by Vic, impresario of the affair for The Mountaineers, struck up a march that set the girders ringing and the flags waving. At eight o'clock in the evening of March 12, 1954, the Heroes were introduced (by none other than our own Pete) to the largest audience of their North American tour, five thousand climbers, hikers, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts (including every Silver Marmot from old Camp Parsons), and armchair adventurers, sitting on edges of seats and clapping hands to blisters.

A world tour to pay off expedition debts (Empire pockets were not as deep as in yore) had left the Heroes weary and jaded. We were determined to refresh them by demonstrating that Seattle was the capital of American mountaineering. Aside from the size and ardor of the audience, which put to shame the polite hundreds of New York and San Francisco, only in Seattle did they have the opportunity to spend an afternoon with Pete Schoening and Dee Molenaar of the 1953 American K-

2 expedition, considered by connoisseurs — including the Heroes — to be a failure more glorious than their victory.

Before the lecture evening, before the dinner with a half-hundred Northwest climbers, before the shop-talk afternoon with Pete and Dee (Ome, introduced as "the Northwest's answer to the Abominable Snowman," thrown in for good measure), before the radio interviews and press conference, was the trip from airport to hotel. We didn't know until we did it that nothing more than a phone call was needed to turn out the Seattle Police Department in force. And I couldn't believe it until Ed so informed me that to borrow the fanciest cars in town you had merely to ask a dealer.

The other New Zealander and the Welshman and the English journalist accompanying the tour were in the second car, a new Mercury, Varn at the wheel, Vic as host. Tom was the driver of the first car, conveying the star New Zealander and his bride and an elegant lady from the British Consulate who had tried to steal our Heroes for a tea and failing that had barged in uninvited beside Tom. Our vehicle was a gleaming new fire-engine-red Lincoln.

Tom never had driven the length of Seattle without a pause, every cross-street blockaded to let us blaze through at forty-five mph, yet he took to it like a kid bandit in a candy store, riding the tails of the lead motorcycles as if goosing them to go faster. While keeping an eye on business, he found time, when we passengers wondered at the array of buttons by each seat, to instruct us in the activation of the little electric motors that individually opened and closed windows, adjusted seats forward and back, up and down. He demonstrated that he, at the master controls, could set all the windows and seats going at once.

The throngs on the sidewalks of downtown Seattle who halted to gape at the motorcade had no notion what was happening, only that it was something big — police at every intersection, a fire-engine-red Lincoln and a Mercury consort and a convoy of a dozen motorcycles, sirens screaming, blasting along Fourth Avenue at emergency speed. Those who turned quickly enough as the Lincoln passed saw (through windows going up and down) five people in motion up and down, forward and back — Tom, me, the elegant British Consulate lady, and, bride by his side, Sir Edmund Hillary, K.B.E., first person on the summit of Mount Everest.

NORTH TO THE CARIBOO

The Anahim Stampede was not a slicked-up, citified rodeo staged in Madison Square Garden between bookings of Knicks and Billy Graham, but an honest-to-golly whoop-tee-doo of working cowboys and working (as cowboys) Indians, drawing ranchers and families from throughout the Cariboo country. Every several years a Vancouver paper's Sunday magazine sent a photographer for the frontier color. Tourists, though, rarely made it. The way west from Williams Lake was long and rough and had no motels, no hamburgers or ice cream, and not even postcards or souvenir pillows. Tourists preferred the Calgary Stampede, easy to get to on paved highway, cornucopias of food and booze and tons of gewgaws, and comfortable places to sleep secure from mosquitoes, which in the short sub-Arctic nights of summer in the Anahim vicinity are a serious threat to mental health.

The year of our trip the gala shared billing with the Grand Opening of the Mackenzie Highway, heralded as the inauguration of a new era of prosperity and happiness for the Cariboo, and, as well, Bella Coola. The interior plateau and the coast were to be mutually enriched by the interflow of lumber and cows and fish and Americans.

As it happened, neither of these orchestrated spectacles so fired the Cariboo imagination that summer of 1955 as the Saga of the Tidewater Wildman, first person ever to drive a passenger car from Bella Coola up through the Coast Mountains to the plateau, a lone berserker in such a rush he couldn't wait for the highway to open. Some notice also was taken of the first American-operated passenger car to drive down the highway (also before it was open) from the plateau to Bella Coola.

Vic's surface reason for the trip was to scout the possibility of reaching the Coast Mountains, traditionally accessible only by expeditions, by car for semi-expeditions, as in the North Cascades. A deeper reason, not necessary to explain to those who knew the inside tensions of the Lazy B, was that the pioneering passenger jets, the British Comets, were blowing up in midair, noone knew why. The component under suspicion was precisely Vic's responsibility in the forthcoming Boeing jetliner. He needed to go a little crazy. In order not to go a lot crazy.

Vic's invitation interested me because of that October morning seven years earlier when from the summit of Mount Baker, through the winter-crystalline air, I made out at the limits of vision the unmistakable thrust, a supernova of a peak standing above neighbors which in their own right were spectacular: "Mystery Mountain," discovered by the Mundays in the 1920s from a peak on Vancouver Island and now, after a third of a century on the map as Mount Waddington, and a dozen expeditions, still climbed but twice.

Waddington was not for my boots. My eyes would be contented by a close view. The neighbors would suffice for my boots; the multiple-abuse of the North Cascades was the U.S. Forest Service's way of telling us wilderness mountaineers it was time for us to be gittin' along.

I had to turn Vic down. I could manage my share of the gas and oil and even a few busted tires, but he was blithely entertaining the possibility that his nearly new Ford hardtop sedan would be battered to death by boulders or swallowed whole by the muskeg. I agreed to go when he assumed the entire risk. My investment would be nothing more than the several days of backpacking from the wreck, wherever, to the nearest outpost of the hitchhiker's thumb.

The morning of our second day out of Seattle (having left after work the evening before and slept in the brush by the roadside) we turned north from the Trans-Canada on the Cariboo Highway. At every gas station we stopped to ask for news of the Mackenzie Highway. There wasn't any. Each summer for several years a bulldozer had struggled through the route that Alexander Mackenzie had explored in the late eighteenth century and this or that dignitary or assistant dignitary from Victoria had ridden the cat far enough on the old pack trail to get his picture taken cutting a ribbon. A Grand Opening. Every summer another Grand Opening. A running joke.

The Wildman, he was something else. Gas stations which had not been honored by his patronage relayed reports from the more fortunate.

The make or year of his sedan, nobody could tell. Body panels were creased and dented, windows broken. A door was wired on. A fender was missing. A bumper was in the back seat with the stack of spare tires. Also in the back seat was the gas tank, relocated there when ripped loose by a high center, patched with chewing gum and tape, copper tubing jury-rigged through the dashboard to the carburetor. Pausing ever so briefly for gas or coffee, red-eyed from lack of sleep, the Wildman raved against injustice, vowed revenge on scoundrels whose names and crimes were lost in translation.

Vic was plagued by sweaty hands. Spotting a roadside creek, ditch, or mudpuddle, he'd slam on the brakes, jump from the car, and lave away. He also suffered from slack muscles. Blurting "I need some roadwork!", he'd slam on the brakes, jump out, sprint a hundred yards up the highway, sprint back, jump in the car, and stomp on the gas. Local folk would come out of houses to howdy with the American (as license plates identified us) strangers and their jaws would be left hanging as the hardtop blasted off in a screech of rubber and cloud of blue smoke.

At the metropolis of the plateau, Williams Lake, population five hundred, we stopped for gas and information. Thousands of ice cream cones were passing to and fro. It was a Saturday and from hundreds of square miles folks had driven through the July heat to the region's sole supply. We licked up some ourselves while asking about the way west.

The Cariboo Highway had been paved this far north the year before. The Mackenzie, which here turned off, had just been graveled, though not much beyond town. Questions about the Highway brought snickers. From Williams Lake to Lake Anahim was 226 miles. There the good old wagon road ended and the good old pack trail began, like always. Highway? Ha ha!

The evening of our second day from Seattle we stopped at Alexis Creek Inn for supper, served family style for us, a cowboy, and the forest warden. We asked the cowboy the whereabouts of the Gang Ranch, said to

be the world's largest cattle spread on the continent's largest unfenced range; he waved his hand across the southern horizon.

We asked the warden the extent of his jurisdiction; he waved his hand across the south, west, and north. He rarely went past Lake Anahim, though. Nobody there. He had an airplane to patrol his thousands of square miles of lodgepole pine and muskeg, larger than many states and a number of European nations, inhabited by a handful of "preempters," Canadian homesteaders. The principal means of improving the preempted claims — and incidentally the adjoining Crown, or public lands — was setting the forests afire to make more grass. Yes, that was illegal, but by the time he spotted a fire from the air, flew back to his Land Rover, and winched it through the muskeg, he hardly ever found a fellow standing there with the match still in hand.

Vic and I had read *Grass Beyond the Mountains*, the memoir of an American who had come to the Cariboo to run cattle. The warden advised us not to mention the book hereabouts; just about everybody west of Alexis Creek was in it and had plans for the author's rear end if it ever showed up in these parts again.

To the west the plateau tilted imperceptibly upward. Bunchgrass and dust yielded to subalpinelike meadow-marshes oozing springtime snowmelt — in mid-July — from mountains nowhere to be seen. The gravel ended and the Highway dwindled to dirt ruts. Settlement thinned to scattered cabins. Every hour or so we'd pass a person. He'd drop whatever he was doing to wave as if he knew us, or wanted to. Eventually Vic understood and began stopping.

They were glad of the chance to explain to Americans the book-lies by that smart-alec, nobody had liked him, he was no good neighbor. Another thing, tourists always want pictures of log cabins, and that's all they're good for. Winters up here froze right through the logs and by Christmas you had ice on your blankets. You had to have double walls, sawn planks, the between-space stuffed full of moss. But these skinny

dang jackpines made miserable planks. If there ever was a Mackenzie Highway the plateau could see some real lumber from those fat trees in the coast valleys. Nobody was holding their breath. The province had some machinery out there, they'd seen it pass by. Another Grand Opening due, ha ha.

The Wildman, now, *he* was something to talk about. Not that anybody hereabouts had talked *to* him. In such a dang hurry he didn't slow down to wave. Came from the coast, they say. Sure not from around here.

One settler who hadn't seen him was the fellow who had a sign above his door, "EATS." It being ten in the morning we opened the door and went in, and he and his wife were in bed, sound asleep. We backed out, apologizing, but he jumped up and pulled on his pants and shook his wife awake and built a fire in the range and she fried up bacon and eggs. They'd been asleep when the Wildman drove through; in the Cariboo, where the midsummer night was several hours of dusk, folks didn't sleep by the clock. They'd sure heard a lot. He was the most the Cariboo had had to talk about since that smart American with his book.

Neither had the Wildman been seen at Nimpo Lake Lodge, which we found only by a hand-lettered sign pointing off on a sideroad. They served supper, family style, to us and a pair of fishermen up from the States to catch trout of a size and a plenty as hadn't been known south of the border since before the war. Vic praised the roast, which was nothing he'd ever eaten in Seattle. "This is delicious. What kind of meat is it?" The question was indelicate in a country with no butcher shops, no refrigeration, much game, and the very occasional game warden. Sly smile. "That's *meat* meat."

Another person with no story to tell was the dour farmer who towed us by tractor across the valley of the Dean River, at this season a mile-wide lake of meltwater from those unseen mountains. He had Vic sign a chit so a fee could be collected from the B.C. Highway Department, which had prematurely put the wagon track on its official highway map and felt compelled to keep it passable, one way or another. He refused to speculate how the Wildman could have crossed the hipdeep lake without tractor help. Later we learned the farmer was not well-liked by the plank-house squatters who envied his spacious house and sturdy barn built of lumber

trucked in from Vancouver, his fat cows, his tractor and manure-spreader, and his license to exact tolls. Though these were paid by the government, the preempters-squatters beat him out of his booty by crossing the Dean as they did all other floodwaters, under their own engine power, taking off the fanbelt in order not to drown the electrical system.

The Coast Mountains did, indeed, exist, and gradually rose into view ahead. An unsigned sideroad struck off southward, and the map claimed it led to Lake Tatlayoka, a great long glacier-scooped down-at-the-heel trough at the foot of the easternmost scarp of the Coast Mountains. If the sideroad was truly a road, then the Mackenzie was indeed a Highway, but what the heck we had nothing to lose but the car, and that was Vic's. Such consummation seemed to have occurred when the hardtop bogged axle-deep in muskeg. However, a 1929 Model A Ford came hippety-hopping along, as perfect for the 1950s Cariboo as it had been for the 1920s American countryside, and we were rescued by a cheerful preempter who had emigrated North when Idaho got too crowded for him.

A museum of axe-and-jackknife woodcraft cried out for a visit, but not for long, because the elderly couple who had been chipping and whittling here a decade and a half before the arrival of another preempter had long since lost the habit and taste for conversation. Our acquaintance with the Tatlayoka population reached one hundred percent when we met two brothers and their wives and kids. They had lived here since childhood, when their folks squatted on bottom land by the river. They had no legal claim on the land, which had been withdrawn from preemption to permit drowning of the lake by a power dam, the planned ultimate fate of every British Columbia river. They were trusting that when the dam was built (the sooner the better, for them) the province would take pity and award a little pot of cash money, enough to get a start elsewhere. Meanwhile they fished, hunted, picked berries, grew potatoes. They ran cattle on the Crown grass which grew lush in burned-out Crown forests and in late summer drove a half-dozen cattle to meet the buyer

who came herding his purchases along the Mackenzie. The best of the Crown pines they logged and sliced up in a portable mill they'd cobbled together. Come deep winter, the muskeg frozen solid as concrete, they loaded an ancient, primitive, museum-specimen truck with two-by-fours (sort of) and six-inch (or so) planks and set off in minus-twenty to the lumber yard at Williams Lake.

Tourism was their other cash crop. A Vancouver wealthy flew a floatplane in once or twice a summer to fish, the brothers serving as guides, camp cooks, handymen. He'd flown in an outboard motorboat and left it free for them to use in his absence as their own. Phyl Munday, recently widowed, frequently came to visit the area she and Don had so brilliantly explored. Total up cows and planks and tourists and in a year each brother might see five hundred dollars in cash money.

Aside from Mrs. Munday we were just about the first climbers to find our way to Tatlayoka and were deemed worth encouraging. One of the brothers served us mugs of homebrew and showed us the way through the forests and muskeg and river sloughs to the scarp, and pointed out the only easy way up its thousands of feet of cliffs and brush. That was why we were able to do the first of Niut, barely a dozen miles from the super-Alpine thrust I'd seen from Baker in 1948. To the south, at the lake outlet, a white sprawl was generalized by the map as "extensive icefields." None of the 10,000-foot peaks had been climbed or even named, except one she so admired the brothers called it "Mrs. Munday's Mountain".

At the end of four days in the Tatlayoka Niuts, we returned — again rescued by the Model A from the same muskeg — to the Mackenzie, the Wildman Trail. What now? Turn east to Williams Lake, satisfied by bagging Niut 1, leaving the destruction of the hardtop to another time? Or west? Every person we'd met had spoken reverently of the Anahim Store, the Rome, the Byzantium, the Baghdad, the Xanadu of the western Cariboo. In my later travels as a book-pedlar through eastern Washington and Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, I heard similar fixations on a Seattle

emporium. At the deadend of the 226-mile wagon track was the Frederick & Nelson of the Cariboo. The Stampede was a delirium, a summer week worth a hangover month. The Store was a glory forever.

We never saw the lake at Anahim, nor the hullabaloo grounds where the Stampede was newly over, the bodies of a few cowboys still prostrate in the woods. The wagon track entered a circle of log cabins and plank huts 226 miles from the nearest ice cream cones. A gap in the circle, a tumble of charred timbers, marked the site of a great tragedy. The new stupor mundi, the New Anahim Store, had caught fire during the Stampede and burned to the ground. Enough stock had been saved to cram full the old wonder of the world, the Old Store. The largest crowd we'd seen since Williams Lake was elbow to elbow, two or three making purchases or thinking about it, the other half-dozen filling eyes for the long dreaming of winter. At five-hundred dollars of cash money a year, a person couldn't buy out the Store if he lived to a thousand.

Before turning for home, Vic perfunctorily asked the old question — and got a whole new answer. Granted, the storekeeper had the air of a one-man chamber of commerce, the "go-ahead" ebullience of a frontier entrepreneur. There had been a "steady stream" of traffic up from Bella Coola, folks on pilgrimage to the Store, as golden a legend at tidewater as on the plateau, though formerly accessible only by foot or horseback on the old packtrail. He hadn't seen the Wildman — who could notice one more during a Stampede? Folks in this country had a knack of making machines do tricks, so he wasn't surprised a passenger car had been through, though he'd seen nothing fancier than jeeps and pickups. But the government was "out there" this very minute, tidying up the Highway for the Grand Opening, four days off. This Opening was the Grandest yet, dignitaries not just from Victoria but one or two all the way from Ottawa, and rumors the Queen was sending somebody from London. Vic twitched all over.

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The bulldozer gouge led out from the Anahim circle through the scrawny forest of miserable little pines, wound around vast mushes of muskeg, trenched mudholes hundreds of feet long. The black muck was so deep that a faint heart ne'er could win solid ground. Vic would back up to get a run, hit the mud going miles per hour, and slither and squirm, engine racing, tires spinning, the chassis scraped and pounded by granite boulders the Pleistocene glacier had deposited for the purpose. Surely the gas tank was doomed. What then? The Wildman had had the foresight to bring copper tubing and relocate the heart's blood out of danger.

Two hours (fourteen miles) from Anahim the Ford sank to the bumpers. Vic held the pedal to the floor and rubber smoke blued the air. He'd have wrestled through, as from fourteen prior mudholes, but the engine quit. A revaluation of the Chamber of Commerce information redefined the "out there" of the government crew as anywhere along fifty miles of bulldozer gouge; as for the "steady stream," we now recalled it had been qualified by "most every week."

Vic went off to find a puddle to wash his hands, a stretch of solid ground for some roadwork. I sorted out my belongings for stowing in the Trapper Nelson. I could make Anahim by nightfall, which up here was just short of midnight. Buy provisions at the Store. Hitching rides for 226 miles likely would take several days. Along the way were three "EATS" and Alexis Creek Inn. Did buses run on the Cariboo Highway? They did for sure on the Trans-Canada and Highway 99. Thumb and bus would take me from Williams Lake to Seattle in two days, three tops. Even so the return from my Farthest North would be quicker and easier (and more successful) than Scott's from the Pole or Mallory's from the First (or was it the Second?) Step.

Three pickups arrived. From the east. They were brandnew, traveling in convoy from Vancouver to the General Motors Garage in Bella Coola, pioneering the overland route which would free the tidewater from freight rates of the pirate ships. The three trucksful of mechanics and friends couldn't get past the hardtop, had to fix it. Fords were incognita in this country, GM was the only make that still had frontier clearance. One of the guys had heard, though, that when a Ford carburetor was sucking air the thing to do was slip a matchbook cover just *there*.

One hour (six miles) from the rescue we passed a broken bulldozer and a dumptruck stuck in the mud and a dozen laborers leaning on shovels. The Opening might not be so Grand. Our rescuers stopped for lunch. Vic paused to wash hands and sprint.

In two more hours (seventeen more miles) muskeg ended at the edge of the interior plateau, the brink of the plunge to the canyon of the Bella Coola River, slicing through the Coast Mountains. I reflected that thanks to the rescue I'd be two added days hiking to Anahim — alone, because Vic would want to camp a while by the wreck of the hardtop, wherever, mourning the demise of his old faithful.

Two added days or *more* — because dauntless Vic took the plunge. The downhill was gouged in solid mountainside, no worse than many a logging road in the Cascades. Except. . . the government had dumped a heap of gravel to sop up a waterfall. Beside the road lay a large culvert pipe, waiting to be installed. The Ford buried its nose in gravel soup and Vic poured on the coal to such good effect that the rear wheels dug in far enough to bury the rear bumper and the exhaust pipe and the engine gasped and smothered. The convoy caught up, muscled us through, and shepherded us to the valley bottom and a forest road. Here, at what for many years had been the deadend of the forty-mile road from tidewater, they felt we could manage on our own.

Twelve hours (ninety-five miles) out of Anahim we entered Bella Coola, not a Boonesboro-like frontier circle of cabins but a veritable town, with gridded (if unpaved) streets. We slept in the schoolyard and in morning waited at the GM Garage while the worst wounds of the alien Ford were half-healed. Sixteen hours after arrival we left. Checking around I'd learned the next plane (float) wasn't for a week, the next ship for three. I could walk home faster. Whatever distance the hardtop could make would save me that much time, Trapper on back.

In late afternoon the Ford returned to the gravel soup and again sank to the bumpers. We camped overnight to await rescue. But the "steady stream" wasn't flowing. When in late morning a rescuer arrived he was an Indian in a horse-drawn wagon. To my consternation, Vic impatiently waved away the gracious offer. He had his heart set on three pickups. At length, facing up to the reality there wouldn't be another convoy this year, he went stark staring mad, took ice axe in hand and

started digging a drainage ditch. Almost time for me to hoist Trapper and bid old comrade a sad farewell. To my amazement, on another try the Ford made six more feet before stalling. My ice axe joined his and the next try gained another six feet. Another six, another try, and the Ford snorted to solid wheeling.

Then the plateau, the muck. Was it that the hardtop had passed the ordeals of knight errantry and won its spurs? Or was it Vic's reckless abandon, pushing to the edge and, to me, seemingly over, to where the Ford ought to see a Shining White Gas-Powered Throne? I was innured to the previously horrifying grindings and crashings of boulders on what I'd always supposed to be, echoing Churchill, the soft underbelly of an automobile.

At midnight, nearing Williams Lake, the torture chambers of the Mackenzie far behind, the Ford abruptly quit. We threw sleeping bags on the ground. At dawn, several hours later, the second vehicle we'd seen in motion since Bella Coola ("steady stream"!) offered help. Another Indian, another horse and wagon. He didn't know anything about Fords either but to him it sounded like the car was out of gas. He filled the tank from a jerrycan carried for exactly this purpose and the Ford revived.

Later examination revealed the boulders had so dented the gas tank as to reduce its capacity by half and this had deranged the dashboard gauge, as well as opening a number of leaks. Nearing Seattle the rear brakes caught fire; as flames licked near the gas tank, helpful motorists descended on us shaking quart bottles of Coca Cola. A tow truck hauled the Ford home, or close enough. The next summer Vic again drove Old Faithful to Lake Tatlayoka and made a first of Mrs. Munday's Mountain. None of his jets ever exploded in midair so his hands were clean.

Our stay in Bella Coola was too brief to know the place. A person would have to sit on the beach, watching the tides, to perceive "coast"; open ocean lay farther west out the mountain-walled fjord than Anahim was to the east. The lift of the peaks was in a way more striking than

much-higher Waddington because the eye rose up and up to glaciers while the ear heard the "moo" of cows. The forty miles of forest road gave an eerie sensation of time travel. This is how it was going to Huckleberry in 1930. This is how it would have been in 1855, had a road and automobiles then existed, to drive from Snoqualmie Pass to Seattle. The only logging we saw was a small clearcut above the beach on the outskirts of town.

When our GM friends released the Ford they reported the populace was a-buzz with news of the "first American tourists." The evening before, at the town's sole restaurant, the cook and waitress and half-dozen customers had so politely concealed their burning curiosity we almost failed to learn the denouement of the Saga of 1955. We wouldn't have had had I not felt the need of nerve medicine stronger than roadwork and asked directions to the "licensed premises," as they are called in the North. A fellow let out a yip and scooted down the counter to the stool next to mine.

"There aren't any!" he chortled, rubbing the noses of the listening merchantry in the harsh reality that they weren't ready for tourists. Provincial law provided for local option. The local majority, furiously Lutheran, had opted dry. A dissenting minority of mixed faiths imported goods by ship to tipple discreetly behind drawn curtains. A band of jolly boys of no faith at all roistered behind no curtains, so visible and audible from the public streets as to scandalize Norse dairy ranchers and fishermen whose most berserker joys these thousand years after obsolescence of the dragon ships was sticking pinches of Copenhagen between gum and cheek.

On a recent Sunday my informant had uncapped his first beer of the afternoon and stepped onto his front porch and been arrested by the lurking constable on a charge of public intoxication. He refused to pay the fine, demanded a trial. The case was declined by both the town's lawyers. The town judge set a trial date too early for counsel to be brought in by scheduled ship or plane. The accused therefore drove nonstop to Vancouver, badgered an attorney into his battered vehicle, and drove nonstop back to Bella Coola. The presence of the big-city lawyer so cowed the court the case was dismissed. Thus it was that the highway of Alexander Mackenzie brought civil liberties and irreligious freedom into

the wilderness. The Wildman offered to drive the lawyer back to Vancouver but he opted to wait for the plane, or the boat, anything.

THE RETURN FROM THE POLE

At the end of the 1960s the face of the male nation was hairier than it had been since the Civil War. At the opening of the decade, however, the only scenes in Seattle where anything in excess of a discreet Clark Gable mustache was not something of a scandal were the fine arts departments of the University and the gutters of the Skid Road. Climbers returning from a week of high adventure were permitted (as were hunters) to buy hamburgers on the highway; there was, of course, an unspoken understanding they would rehabilitate their faces before reporting to work Monday morning.

However, standing atop Mount Tamalpais on June 28, 1960, I would not be reporting to work again until late September, on Manhattan Island. I did not announce to the clouds blowing in off the California ocean, "Now I will grow me a *beard*." I simply stopped shaving and as inevitably as night the day, the one followed the other.

The stubble caused no comment on the Emmons Glacier of Rainier. The bush went unnoticed on my solitary wandering south of Cascade Pass to Slowdown Peak and my return with Betty and Crooks the next week to climb Magic and Spider. Sea breezes blew my thicket this way and that as I walked barefoot through the surf of the wilderness ocean of Olympic National Park. Crossing Timbercone Col to the South Cascade Glacier and White Rock Lakes, my companion was too busy photographing ice and goats to turn his lens on my Old Testament foliage. Home on Cougar Mountain, the little daughters liked to yank my whiskers, then run away screaming to escape a kiss by "Scratchy Daddy." As for Seattle, I didn't go there. Until September 10.

When Bud the Big-Time Drummer swung through the Northwest outposts of his territory he enjoyed staging a show for the provincials, visiting what local newspaper pundit-gourmets imagined to be Great Restaurants ("as good as San Francisco") and ordering dishes so arcane they weren't on the menu and the waiter didn't know what they were but the chef would dash from the kitchen, tears streaming down his cheeks, and kiss Bud's hand as the high society of Seattle gaped, peas rolling off their knives.

He called me to join him in Seattle for lunch. I warned that what was on my face would destroy his carefully fashioned image. Impossible, said he.

I trimmed the whiskers a bit, not to shorten but to shape, to reduce the resemblance to the old prospector hopping out of the sagebrush after five years alone with his burro. I also took the scissors to my head for a few snips; the freedom to grow had been complete there, too, since June. I donned suit and necktie, of course; these were my uniform in San Francisco and Manhattan Island, where I, too, except in summer, was a big-time drummer.

Entering the restaurant hailed by experts as Seattle's Greatest, I was smitten by a massed barrage of stares more intense than Montgomery's cannonading of the Afrika Korps at El Alamein. A quick swing of my whiskers around the room sent the creme de la creme diving for the cover of Caesar salads and mushroom omelettes. Bud waved me to his table and despite never having seen me other than clean-shaven didn't so much as blink.

Our table was not in a secluded corner but in the very public middle, ringed by men and women wearing thousands of dollars worth of spiffy clothes and effective deodorants, perfumes, and after-shaves. I didn't need to be told that this table had not been routinely assigned, had been requested.

These were not the sort of people one would find in Caldwell, Idaho, where a potato farmer might spot a plump woman and throughout dinner repeatedly declare to his wife loud enough for the whole restaurant to hear, "Wee-oo! That shore 'nuff is a *fat lady!*" However, without ever making eye contact I was aware that scores of corners-of-the-eyes were fixed on me, that I was the subject of dozens of hushed discussions. Bud knew it too. *Knew it? He'd planned it.*

We sipped our Manhattans and crunched our shrimp and munched our spinach salad and sniffed our white wine oblivious to sidelong glances and cocked ears. Except. . .

Each time a party of diners on their way out passed our table (as they all took pains to do), as they were just beside us Bud would smoothly interrupt our conversation with the earnest query, "But tell me, Commander, how did you manage after you ate the last sled dog?"

HAIL HAIL THE GANG'S ALL THERE

Odell and Smythe and I came within an ace of bumping into each other in Canada. I blazed through Seattle in a fire-engine-red Lincoln, police sirens wailing, Hillary and I on either side of his bride, and dined with them and Evans and Lowe. The two-hundred-meter hut hosted Hornbein for lunch and the Unsoeld home in Corvallis hosted me for lunch when he was teaching at Oregon State. The member of the 1963 party I knew much the best was the first American on the summit of Everest, Jim Whittaker.

The repetitiousness of climbing journals is unavoidable, the subject material severely limiting the possible variations on the few themes. Interest wanes once the peaks no longer are the objects of personal aspirations. Boredom sets in when the reader doesn't know any of the people or at least recognize some names. I followed the attempt on Lhotse in 1955 because the profits from the 1954 Everest lecture were loaned to Fred that he might accept an invitation to a European fiasco. The first American success on an achtausender, Gasherbrum 1 in 1958, struck home because the leader, Nick Clinch, was a friend and one of the two "summiters" was none other than Pete.

The opening of the 1960s was marked for me by the first edition of *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills*, my climber's peroration, reverting, as I then was in process of doing, to status quo ante, ascending only those peaks on which I didn't have to get my hands dirty. The second edition of 1967 also went through my typewriter, though members of the new editorial committee had to tutor me in new technology and vocabulary. The third, in 1974, I blessed from a distance and gave my imprimatur. Came the fourth, in 1982, and at a Mountaineers dinner the club vice-president was extolling to me to glory that was *Freedom* when a memory half-surfaced and he hesitantly asked, "Didn't you have something to do with it, once?" The fifth edition of 1992 "is a foreign country, they do things differently there."

I began to lose touch with the journals when photos of the new climbers dressed in their sisters' underwear with tin pots on their heads amused me as much as the antique woodcuts in *The Ascent of Rum Doodle*.

I saved a last hurrah for 1978, when Jim led the first American success on K-2, four of his party reaching the top, bringing the summit total to twenty.

All I knew from then on was what I read in the papers, and in the 1980s they suddenly were full of it. Americans I'd never heard of were climbing Himalayan-Karakorum peaks nobody except journal subscribers ever heard of. Everest, of course, remained the the center ring because, as in the beginning, it was there.

In 1982 the Other Whittaker, twin brother Lou, led a party of seventeen on the China-Everest Expedition to (quoting the press) "scale the North Face, the Mallory Route, attempted eight times previously." The turn-back was 1500 feet from the summit. A half-dozen of Lou's bunch tagged along after a German party in 1983 and in May several completed the Southeast Ridge, the "Hillary Route." The papers reported that at a 1983 meeting of the American Alpine Club held in Seattle, "At least thirty persons rose when asked to identify themselves as participants in Everest expeditions."

In 1984 a Whittaker (by now they were again interchangeable, as they had been before 1963) led the nineteen-member Ultima Thule Expedition. I attended a giant pre-trip rally, contributed a couple bucks, and received one of the 820 postcards sent from Base Camp. Two of the party searched for Mallory, guided by the visions of Seattle psychics, and "felt lots of vibrations." Weather defeated the attempt below the First Step, but "We got higher than anybody on the mountain without killing anybody. Also brought everyone home with ten fingers and ten toes." Another first was carrying a computer to above 21,000 feet. A half-dozen other expeditions were on Everest the same season.

The American Everest North Face Expedition of 1987 quit at 28,000 feet; a Mimi got higher than ever had been reached by an American woman. The same year's Snowbird Expedition, via the South Col, included another Whittaker, Peter, Lou's son.

The most sustained Seattle newspaper splash of all time came in 1988 when the Northwest American Everest Expedition, all Northwesterners and sponsored by The Mountaineers (that made two firsts), accompanied by Sherry, a *Seattle Times* reporter (a third first), attempted the South Col (Hillary) route. No discredit to Ms. Sherry's lavish

journalism, rather a measure of my shortening attention span, I don't recall reading whether they made it or not.

I did read, awed, in the May 11, 1990 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, that "a long line of climbers snaked near Everest's peak yesterday, Americans, New Zealanders, Swiss, Soviets, and Australians queued up. At least seventeen made the top that day." More than a hundred were climbing from the Nepal side, and thirty from Tibet in a Peace Party of Soviets, Chinese, and Americans. A fact was reported that had escaped notice by the Hillary-Whittaker generation, that the summit had room for only ten at a time. While tidying the "highest garbage dump in the world," the Peace Party made three assaults, put twenty on top, including Hillary's son Peter. Via the high-tech satellite link from Base Camp, Sir Edmund, age seventy, called for a moratorium to give the mountain a rest. "There have been far too many expeditions jostling their way up Everest. You find them in pre-monsoon, post-monsoon, and even in winter, from various sides of the mountain." The article said the mountain "had been conquered 260 times" since Hillary's and Norgay's first in 1953.

A December 1994 article in the *New York Times* pointed up the "surge in ascents of Mount Everest" that was worrying the government of Nepal. "In the 30 years from the first conquest of the peak in 1953, 143 climbers reached the summit. In the last decade, more than 380 climbers made it to the top. Two years ago, 31 climbers reached the summit in a single day." Mount Everest doesn't hog the crowds. "Each year, about 900 mountaineers, mostly from Europe, Japan, and the United States, visit Nepal to climb these 'expedition peaks'. About 40,000 other visitors climb at least the lower slopes of lesser mountains known as 'trekking peaks.'" And that's just Nepal.

Much of the Everest coverage in Seattle newspapers surely escaped my eye, and probably most of the small items in back pages about Nuptse, Ama Dablam, Pumori, Kanchenjunga, Jiazi, Nanga Parbat, Daulagiri, Gasherbrum, Cho Oyu, Trisul, Nanda Devi, and the like. I'd doubtless have been gripped by innumerable fine efforts by Northwest climbers had not my subscriptions to alpine journals expired, and had I known any of the climbers, or even their fathers and mothers.

I found myself beginning to emulate Charles Fort, clipping little oddments from the papers. Twenty-five fierce Nepalese soldiers attacked

Everest in 1990 and meeting no resistance from fierce Gurkas, five "summitted." The same year a Japanese team in a hot-air balloon tried to fly over but crashed. The oldest person atop Everest, 55, was a Utah yo-yo operator, in 1985; that made him the first to do The Seven (the highest peaks on the seven continents). Stacy was the first American woman on the summit, the world's seventh woman; Junko Tabai was the first, May 16, 1975, followed several days later by Mrs. Pjla Phabtog, a Tibetan. Lydia, a New Zealander, was the first without oxygen. The papers seem to have lost count at 220 women, I forget which year. Speculation commenced about who had been or would be first to have intercourse on the summit, or at least above 8000 meters, and that led to philosophical dispute as to whether the first ~~on~~ masturbation or wet dream~~s~~ should be counted if they could be ascertained. Though a great many climbers are gay or swing, I've not seen reports of Everest's first by the alternative life-style.

Who was first to climb Everest alone? *The Guinness Book of World Records* credited the Austrian, Oppburg, May 14, 1978. The Italian, Messner, complained that Oppburg was part of a huge expedition and climbed alone only the last 300 meters. Messner did it August 20, 1980, watched only by a girl friend in base camp. Messner was the first to do all the achtausenders, and he did it without oxygen. He has not publicly claimed any of the sexual firsts.

As early as 1982 Roskelley, of Spokane, had climbed eight Himalayan peaks, more than any other American, and when interviewed had permits for Manaslu in 1984 and Kanchenjunga in 1985, "the Superbowls of climbing," and was planning to warm up in 1983 by doing Everest's West Ridge via China, his twelfth Himalayan expedition. He described himself as a professional and inveighed against the evils of amateurism.

In 1990 another professional, Ershler, assistant chief guide for Rainier Mountaineering and since 1980 operator of International Mountain Guides, finished off The Seven. In 1989 he climbed Rainier fifteen times, bringing his life total to three hundred. For 1991 he was going to K-2 and if he made it according to plan would be the first American to climb all three of the world's highest by "their dangerous north flanks."

In 1985 Mountain Travel Inc. offered treks to Lhasa, Rongbuk, Namche Barway, the Silk Road, Muztagwa, Tien Shan, K-2, Minya Konka,

Sigunian Valley, Kashmir, Ladakh, Sikkim, Baltoro, Hunza, Nepal, and Everest Base Camp. Eight planeloads of trekkers a day were leaving the airport at Lukla.

Never a tear of regret did I shed, nor a twinge of jealousy feel. Could I have fictionalized myself at fourteen I'd have loved the role of *Tom Swift in the Forbidden City*, or one of the *Rover Boys Playing the Great Game*, but in adult reality I confessed to myself that I disliked Asia, quite intensely in fact, and wished never to get closer than the *National Geographic*.

Everywhere you went in Asian mountains, even in the old days, were people. In the old days they were natives and could be excused. Nowadays the landscape, uncomfortable at best and mostly smelling bad, was a-swarming with climbers and trekkers and gawkers loading up on souvenir pillows. The Rongbuk Lamasery had been deserted for generations. But a person could fly in to the Everest View Hotel, every room supplied with oxygen, American Express and Visa accepted.

The Everest we discussed at the brink of dawn in the Pink Palace was a solitude in eternity. There (*there*), Everyman progressed slowly, ever so slowly, in his pilgrimage, toward — what? The party was, save for the Extra Man, two in number. Two? That perhaps was one too many. Bob told how he and his best friend since childhood spent half a month hiking the high country and once returned to the city never spoke to each other again. Byrd explained why, on his "scientific research project" at the site remote from Little America, he chose to be alone those many weeks of 1934. To supply four would have exceeded the expedition's logistical capacity. Three inevitably would have split, two against one. Two would surely have attempted mutual murder. Solo was safest. So much for the Climbing Code of The Mountaineers. When a group of my climbing partners went on expedition to the Yukon, two weeks into their stay on the icecap a pair had had to be forcibly separated and their ice axes impounded. Rumors circulated that Buhl, greeting comrades on his return

to basecamp after soloing Nanga Parbat, got the shit kicked out of him for stealing all the thunder.

The old expeditions adhered to the old rules about the behavior allowable among gentlemen heroes, and the old books adhered to the old rules about what was publicly discussable afterwards. If Everesters of Mallory's time were not perpetually Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent, you'd never know it from the books. In the 1980s if you didn't encarnadine the glaciers and litter the precipices with cadavers, the only way to get a book published amid the torrent of competing manuscripts was via lurid psychodrama. The inside stuff. The dirt. Brave? Certainly. Reverent? In some cases. Friendly? Not bloody likely. "A Scout keeps clean in body and thought, stands for clean speech, clean sport, clean habits, and travels with a clean crowd." A book by America's busiest photojournalist-professional climber, a charnel house of character assassination, was entitled *In the Throne Room of the Mountain Gods*.

No, *The Boy Scouts on Everest* couldn't happen. How would it have been with Bob and me on The Nunatak? A sequel to *Treasure of Sierra Madre*?

I wore my Lindy helmet for years, until its mysterious disappearance, likely in the kitchen stove. Opening books of my childhood library for auld lang syne, I find drawings of Spads machine-gunning Fokkers down in flames, the two distinguishable by circles on the winners' fuselages, Maltese crosses on the losers. During my sixth year we filed out from Daniel Bagley Grade School in fire-drill fashion to see a great silver airship — bigger, much bigger, than the moon — pass over Seattle. We gathered around Uncle Bill's Atwater Kent in evening to hear Commander Byrd speaking by short wave from Little America. In 1929 he had flown over the South Pole!

Years later, reading about Amundsen and Scott and Shackleton, I hung my head in shame. Nor could the disgrace of Little America be

erased by changing the subject from South to North. Robert E. Peary's navigational notes were kept sealed (why?) until 1984; objective reviews then concluded he came no closer to the North Pole than 121 miles. Quizzed by Congress at the time, he had refused to submit evidence, demanded he be taken at his word as a gentleman. Of course, he refused to take the word of Dr. Frederick Cook, whose navigational notes have been objectively judged at least as good as Peary's and his April, 1908 claim to the Pole as believable as Peary's of a year later.

Neither Peary nor Cook was a childhood idol of mine. I was already a climber when I developed much of an interest in the Arctic, and then it was a book interest, focused on doomed quests for the Northwest Passage, particularly the incredibly protracted tragedy of the Franklin Expedition. My guide to the Far North was Stefansson, whose dictum, "an adventure is a sign of incompetence," was substantiated by his own years there and his definitive book, *The Friendly Arctic*. My favorite of his books, though, is *Unsolved Mysteries of the Arctic*, wherein he pretty much solves the mysteries, including how and why Franklin's people starved to death in an area the natives of the region considered their richest hunting ground.

Incompetence is a misery in the wilds. In the armchair, competence is a bore. Who stands by the interstate absorbed in the swift flow of traffic? Hearing the crash on the highway, the blood and the whiskey all mixed together, and not hearing nobody pray (dear brother), that's what draws the crowds.

The newspapers reported in 1986 that Dupont had sponsored the "first confirmed unsupported journey to the North Pole." The six members ate pemmican and for navigation relied on the sextant and other "ancient instruments." High-tech was minimized: the "only concessions were Fiberfil clothing and a radio and satellite homing device so they could airlift out their dogs." Which most stirs the imagination? That smooth stunt, or the 1984 finding of "Two bodies of the Franklin Expedition frozen 136 years ago in permafrost of Beechey Island"? The armchair adventurer clutches the pages as he reads about the frozen body of 20-year-old (plus 136) petty officer John Torrington, wearing a blue-and-white striped cotton shirt, pleated at the waist, shell buttons, canvas trousers, no boots. Clean-shaven, hands clean, no calluses.

Robert Falcon Scott, 1912. Amundsen got to the South Pole first, in 1911, and got home alive, and that's about it for him. He knew what he was doing. As do the pilots of the airplanes which fly over the Antarctic and the drivers of the ice tractors which gouge across, the monkey-tech competents who mock God and the Devil. Scott is the one who knew not what he was doing but what was being done to him. In the Vaughn Williams score for the film we hear, we see, we feel the ground blizzard sweeping the horizon-to-horizon plateau, ". . . an awful place!" In 1990 a "Zen master," upon completing a seven-month traverse of the continent, said "It has no soul, is boring, is a monster."

The South Pole has been since 1957 the year-round home for scientists who live beneath giant domes, fly in, fly out, even as they now do on the Blue Glacier of Olympus where Pete and Chuck and I heard Vaughn Williams in 1951. A friend who had been with Pete on K-2 was engaged by the U.S. Navy to draw a pictorial map of the American base. He sent me a gloating postcard from the Pole informing me he had committed a nasty on it. That's what you do to temples when the gods are high-teched out of their immortality. Amundsen and Scott possibly nastied on the Pole before him, but on polar diets of the time, high in nutrition, low in bulk, a person's bowels moved no more than once or twice a week, and then minimally. My buddy, arrived by air, full of pork chops and hominy and beer and potato chips, surely contributed more to the grave of the gods than could have, when the gods were alive, the total of all members of the Amundsen and Scott parties.

Joe Quigley lived next door to Uncle Bill and Aunt Grace. I used to mow his lawn Saturday. Once when he paid me my half-dollar, having been tipling and become convivial, he invited me to his basement treasure room. The centerpiece was a chunk of mammoth bone a friend had placered out of Alaska gravel. I couldn't figure what it was and Joe flushed and half-choked on the joke as he told me it was a "penis." I had to go home and look that up in the dictionary, which ^{was} so evasive I still

wasn't sure, travelling with a clean crowd as I did. I had no problem understanding the yellow metal glittering within a quartz crystal, and never in my life since then have been totally contemptuous of the fools who rushed to California, to Pikes Peak, to the Yukon, having myself been all set to rush to The Nunatak had not Korea intervened.

The wire gold that Joe showed me was his "discovery" specimen. He'd been up North before '98 and thus was a registered genuine Sourdough. Years after '98 he finally struck it fairly rich and worked a good little mine until the roof fell in, busted him up, and he had to sell out and retire "outside" to our neighborhood. He was in the saloon the night the boys were whooping it up about these cheechakos trying to climb McKinley and decided to show 'em how it was done. Uncle Bill asked Joe why he didn't go along when they set out for the summit. "Wasn't drunk enough."

In bald truth, I never in hell could have handled a dog team, or afforded one, or afforded to spend that much time in Alaska or even to get there. Denali was a symbol of my possible aspirations had I been rich, another example of the reach exceeding the grasp, or more accurately, the pretend reach, or what's a (pretend) Heaven for? Yet in 1949 Denali would have been much worth doing. It never was in the newspapers, then.

The first ascent is credited to Archdeacon Stuck in 1913 because the 1906 Sourdough Ascent was of the slightly lower summit which they chose because it was the one they could see from the saloon. The 1906 Cook climb is not accepted because the Establishment (Peary-National Geographic Society—U.S. Navy-Brad Washburn) ganged up on Outsider Cook. When I aspired, or thought about aspiring, the top had been attained some half-dozen times. In the 1980s, when except for me everybody in America and surprising numbers in the Second and Third Worlds got rich, Denali began appearing in the papers with Everest and the North Pole and South Pole. In a 1990 report, "For the past five years, about 1000 climbers a year have come to attempt the ascent. This year 978 tried, 543 made it, 3 died." A June 3, 1992 item: "There have been 11 deaths this season, the most ever to this date." At the end of the 1994 summer: "A record 1277 climbers scaled North America's tallest peak."

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They came from thirty-three countries, mainly (other than the U.S.) Britain, Switzerland, Germany, Japan, and Korea.

Forty percent of the "summiters" were led by one of the seven accredited guide services, \$2000-\$5000 apiece. Tourist flights to the vicinity of the West Buttress, the route taken by eighty percent of the climbers, from the air hundreds of them in view at any one time, were \$55. The mountain could be circled for \$200, giving a chance to spot world-class athletes on the "superbowl" routes. Airplanes are inevitable in any Denali story. The dogs are gone. The tragedy of high-tech. What made Denali not merely a super-Blanc but a whole other species was the sledging over the snows to the start of the climb and the fording of thawed-out and meltwater-raging rivers on the way back. The airplane cut it down to size, a wilderness grizzly shrunk to a playroom teddy. From Sir Donald we gazed out upon hundreds of peaks never climbed, never named, a reservoir of wildness to slake the thirst of generations. In a few seasons of easy afternoons, the helicopter got 'em all. From Mount Baker we saw hull-down on the horizon, and from the Niuts close up, a bewilderment noted on government maps only as "extensive icefields." Fred Beckey, who at nineteen was dropped off by small boat on the beach of a fjord and from there made the second ascent of Waddington, never has been witnessed in such a fury as when news came of the Seattle climbers who were plopped down at the base of the summit pinnacle by a chopper, which kept the motor running while they dashed up and down, and returned to their airplane connection home. A weekend ascent of Mystery Mountain, and that counted the motel night.

In the three years of my first four ascents of Rainier, an average of fewer than a hundred climbers annually attained Columbia Crest, half or less of those who tried. In 1950 the attempt was made by 235, in 1970 by 3192, and in 1993 by 9690.

In July of 1981 a thirty-year-old Portlander was forcibly plucked from the crater of Rainier after five days in a steam cave. Family

members informed the rangers he had announced himself a prophet who needed to spend time alone with God. He had plenty of clothing, a sleeping bag, a first aid kit, but no food. "What I intended to do was pray, but a lot of people were after me to come down. There are examples in the Bible of people going on mountains to pray but now when someone actually tries it he's considered crazy." The National Park Service cited him for disorderly conduct.

OLD COYOTE

The leader opened cans of salmon and dumped them in the Ten Cans. We lined up with our cups and got one slop apiece. The rice was charred black on the outside and still hard on the inside. The assistant leader took a spoonful and pretended to puke and yelled "But good! But good!" After the rice we each got a slop of chocolate pudding, burned and lumpy, but good. Finally a cup of tea tasting of salmon and charcoal but with lots of brown sugar very tasty.

I was still hungry. Also a little sick. We were a mile above sealevel and the air was thin, which was why it took so long to cook rice. I was more tired than I'd ever been in my life but I hadn't pooped out. The poopouts had to have the big guys take their packs up the last part of the Poop Out Drag and hardly had been able to eat before crawling in sleeping bags. The leader said, "Bag won't keep you warm up here. The best bet is to make the nights short. Keep moving until it's too dark to see." He and the big guys ran out of Camp Mystery to climb Iron Mountain.

That was too much for me, so I poked along up the trail. The peaks were still sunny, the valley was dark. I wondered what happened to the man who had disappeared here, the mystery. Someplace there had to be a pile of bones.

The trail led out of forest onto a big green lawn with a million red and white and blue and yellow flowers. I'd seen this place a thousand times. Not at Paradise on Mount Rainier. I'd always figured that when nobody was looking the rangers there did the mowing and weeding. These were the gardens of my old storybooks, where princes rode horses to save princesses from ogres.

I left the trail to follow the creek. In the valley it was a river. Here I could stand with one foot on either side. Above a boulder there was no more creek. I put my mouth where the water poured out under the boulder and the entire Big Quilcene River flowed down my throat and over my face.

Meadows stretched up and up to a pink sky. I was too tired to move a muscle but up here you didn't use muscles to walk. The sky got bigger and bigger. A signpost said "Marmot Pass 6000 feet." Rocks and flowers and grass went down the other side into night.

I'd brought a couple nickels like the big kids said to do but there wasn't any candy store. No highway. Suddenly it came to me that out there in those black peaks under the purple and red and orange and yellow sky there were no roads at all. This was what they meant by "wilderness." I'd thought all the wilderness was in Africa and places like that.

The big guys were up on the peak and the poopouts were in their bags. I was all by myself. There was no sound except the river, way down below in the night. There was no wind, everything was as still as in a painting, and me too. The flowers and rocks and grass had the colors of the sky. Night was coming up from the valley. I felt like somebody not me, some character in a fairy tale, under some kind of spell.

Kelty on back, I was headed north from Lincoln Park, where I'd slept in a hiding place behind driftwood logs the third and last night of my expedition along the beach from Tacoma to Seattle. My intent was to stay on the beach to Alki Park, where I'd catch the bus on Alki Avenue which would hitch to another bus which would drop me off at the foot of Cougar Mountain to hike uphill to the two-hundred-meter hut. The tide was coming in but I'd have just enough beach to finish. I forgot the invaders. Ahead I saw the first in what I now remembered was a series of trophy homes atop jutting fills. To get by the first would take a wade up to my knees. Beyond would be others to my hips, my chest, my chinny-chin chin.

Somehow I had to escape from the beach to the beach drive. But the closeness of beach drive to beach tantalizes jolly boys carrying cases of beer and wanting a spot to go wading and get blasted. Society does not understand the need of jolly boys to go wading and get blasted. Beachdwellers do not approve of jolly boys getting blasted in their front yards and wading in their waves. Houses, thorny shrubberies, and stout fences formed an impenetrable wall between beach drive and beach and vice versa.

Fortunately, I had a friend. The hour was far too early for a social call; I'd been awakened by the thud-thud-thud of yuppy joggers stirring up their testosterone before donning suits and neckties for a day at their hard drives and spreadsheets and floppies and other upscale pornography. However, my friend would be tolerant. I climbed the bulkhead from beach to lawn. He looked up from his morning soak in the hot tub. Jaw dropped, eyes goggled at the sight of a whiskered old tramp wearing a Kelty.

"What are you doing here?" he cried.

Replied I, "What were you doing on Everest?"

The first American to the summit offered me a cup of hot coffee and ushered me through his house to the street, having agreed it's true, everybody's got to be someplace.

Sitting on the floor by Uncle Bill's Atwater Kent listening to the voice from Little America, to me Byrd was a second Lindy. Only much later did I see both Byrd and Lindy as pioneers in banality. My father's mother's grandfather and great-grandfather, who skippered their windships across the Atlantic and at last to its bottom, were belittled by the *Spirit of St. Louis*, which is the city in Missouri which paid for Lindy's gas. As for Byrd, he would have blasphemed had he looked down from the sky and quoted Scott, "It is something to have got here." A time came when my baggage arrived home from her adventure (Stefansson!) in Europe and gave me an eyewitness report on the Greenland Icecap and the North Pole.

Columbia Crest never could be or will be banalized, trivialized for those who have lived looking up to it every clear day over the years. As for those of the yearly 10,000 who come from Alabama with banjos on their knees. . .

Denali would not have been banal for me (in 1949) because I was connected. I mowed the lawn of a man who would have made the first ascent if he'd been drunk enough. I'd been properly respectful of Northness, approaching it step by step from North Cascades to Sir Donald

to a near neighbor of Waddington, and could make a case that I belonged there.

At least I *thought* about dogs.

Everest? Who *does* belong on it? The Sherpas by right of residence in the vicinity. Mallory could be considered to have homesteaded "there." Not many others. Surely not the ineffable Italian who was first to conquer all fourteen of the world's achtausenders. But then, start cutting names off the list of belongers and where do you stop?

My first master plan was to sail that small boat, alone, from New World to Old, Occident to Orient, Cape Horn to Cape of Good Hope, Spice Islands to Spanish Main, Arctic pack ice to Antarctic shelf ice. In a later plan I'd have climbed from Yukon to the Alps, Mountains of the Moon, and Himalaya, and hillwalked the Lake District, Snowdon, and the Isle of Skye.

The plans became — not smaller — keener — keen enough for the world to be seen in a grain of sand. Only a person of dwarfed imagination would want to go to the Moon when he could just as well, and at less expense, walk the wilderness ocean beach of the Olympic Peninsula, raft the River of No Return of Idaho, climb a tree in the Sierra and give it a John Muir-like ride in a gale. Why would I want to trek to the Rongbuk when I'd not yet seen the cactus blooming in Arizona? Why would I ever go anywhere that required flying? Thoreau, having listened patiently to hours of gushing by a gadabout just returned from a Grand Tour of Europe, was asked, "So, Henry, what have you been up to?" His answer: "I have traveled a good deal in Concord."

In late revisions of the master plan I drew up two lists: where I'd been that I wanted to go again; where I wanted to go that I hadn't yet. The Past and the Future. In the process of listing I realized how much there had been of the one, how little remained of the other. Were I to scrap the want list of the Future to devote myself exclusively to revisiting the Past, even then there wouldn't be enough time.

My boots developed a habit of freezing in place on a summit high above glaciers and forests, cirque lakes and waterfalls; the descent could not commence until a final slow swing around the compass had filled the eyes. A camp in tundra beside a glacier stream, where mornings and evenings we'd cooked breakfast and supper, nights we'd slept under stars

or in fog or in storm, could not be left without a final lengthy inspection, and then eyes had to be repeatedly cast over shoulders to remember it from a dozen yards, a hundred. Where the trail rounded a corner it was necessary to pause for a last look, a deep sigh, and, if alone, as many tears as an old man had time for. The wizened, cooling sunball sinking into the ocean with an orange sizzle, a calypso in fresh bloom, a ptarmigan hen clucking her chicks through the heather — the boots refused to proceed until these were deeply enough engraved in memory to remain perpetually as vivid as the first step up onto Columbia Crest, the half-hour atop Sir Donald.

One year my horizons shrank, for a time, to the view out the window of the two-hundred-meter hut: seventeen house and purple finches, eight chickadees, five juncos, families of song and fox sparrows, mobs of varied thrushes and band-tailed pigeons in winter, a family of steller's jays who spent the year around demanding peanuts, mass visitations by evening grosbeaks, solitary visits by a black-headed grosbeak, and (once) by a cowbird, pairs of towhees, nuthatches, hairy woodpeckers, downy woodpeckers, house wrens, and flickers, the occasional western tanager, pine siskin, goldfinch, violet-green swallow, rufous hummingbird, golden-crowned kinglet, white-crowned and golden-crowned sparrow, miscellaneous LBJ's (little brown jobbies), cooper hawk and merlin (once each), crows who raised families in our woods but preferred the cuisine of fast fooderies down at the freeway interchange, and scouts (repelled, with force) for the pirate empire of the starlings.

Once the continents had existed purely for me to explore, the seas for me to sail, the mountains for me to climb. Without me, there'd have been no need for Creation to bother with all that. The year I lived only in the window view the rest of all that ceased to exist. The birds remained, and they were mine. This was not the megalomaniac egotistic greed of a supernaturalist solipsist imagining himself to be deserving of a Genesis and a Judgment. It's permissible to own birds, so long as one accepts being owned by birds.

A friend returned from the Olympics in consternation. He'd met motorcycles on the Poop Out Drag. A Forest Service ranger arrived at Marmot Pass and would have had his ears burned but my friend was struck dumb. The ranger was riding a motorcycle. I could not go home again.

In 1984 Congress passed the Washington Wilderness Act. What the Forest Service had machinated to prevent President Roosevelt from doing in 1938 was done at last. The new Buckhorn Wilderness meant I *could*, after an exile of a quarter of a century, go home again.

Not the whole of it, of course. The Forest Service had pushed the road beyond Bark Shanty, where in 1938 we Silver Marmot candidates had shouldered Trappers, string packs, and dishboards and set out up the Big Quil trail, marching to the clanking of Ten Cans. At the shelter cabin by the creek where in 1938 we'd stopped for a lunch of Sailor Boy pilot bread, cheese, raisins, and chocolate the cars now were parked — and exactly there was the brandnew sign announcing (be still my heart) "wilderness boundary."

The afternoon was well along and the sky was thick so I stayed the first night at Shelter Rock, where the Poop Out Drag turns sternly up the steeps. The river had moved its channel to flow under the rock's overhang, for the nonce sheltering no bed except the river's.

In morning I was only just buckling down to the serious business of 1938 when Camp Mystery appeared. It was not as I recalled, being now visited by more campers every weekend than in an entire old-time Camp Parsons summer. But today's drizzle blown in on cold winds provided old-time solitude. A snug little nook in the timberline forest would shelter me and the two Shelties from wind; squaw wood would flame high enough to ward off the chill.

But first. . . I felt like somebody not me, a thirteen-year-old in a John Masefield adventure, a time traveler, an explorer of alternate, parallel worlds. Mallory was disappearing in a cloud on Everest. I was alone in the fog at Marmot Pass. Were the big guys climbing Iron? Poopouts shivering in bags at Mystery? Everything was as it had been. . .

Except for the sunset, of course, though through the rain I could reconstruct the one of 1938. There *was* a sunrise, and as in a dream I

drifted through flowers again to Marmot Pass and contoured the meadow slopes to Buckhorn Pass, to The Encounter. . .

It was the sort of Encounter I'd sought at the age of twenty, living alone in an old millworkers' rooming house on the shore of Lake Union. School being out, I'd decided to make good use of the vacation by fasting until some creature, be it mudhen or gray squirrel or Norway rat, spoke to me and told me my Name. Turned out I was too old for the puberty rite, and the exhaust fan of the hot-doughnut shop broke my concentration.

When the People straggled into this country from wherever People came from, they shivered in the cold rain and had to eat the salmon and clams raw. Old Coyote, he took pity, and stole Fire from the Volcanoes so they could get warm and cook their food. The People were thirsty, so Old Coyote stole Water from the Beaver. Old Coyote was the Trickster, he loved to play practical jokes, but he was a nice guy, knew his way around the country, knew things the People needed to know.

We (the two Shelties and me) left the trail for a viewpoint over the Dungeness valley. On a meadow bench a dozen yards below, relaxed on his haunches, sat Old Coyote. The moment we arrived he raised his nose to the sky and opened his mouth to ululate.

He may have been talking to the Shelties, no interest in me at all. But they showed no interest in what he was saying, just lay in the flowers beside me and panted, the sun being warm, and scarcely seemed to hear Old Coyote, or even be aware of his presence.

Half an hour he sat there, interjecting into the song occasional sharp barks and long howls. Then, abruptly, he turned and disappeared down the mountain, having told me (and/or the Shelties) all he had on his mind. I now knew everything I needed to know.