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ON THE TRAIL OF THE MILKY WAY

A Variety of Wilderness Experiences

by

Harvey Manning

O miss 2001

ON THE TRAIL OF THE MILKY WAY

A Variety of Wilderness Experiences

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Return to
Milky Way

SKYGLOW

Except for the candy bar of that name, I've no recollection of the Milky Way from Bainbridge Island, where my folks and I lived in the 1920s. The lights at night that drew my eye were eight miles east, across Puget Sound, in downtown Seattle, the place the steamer docked when we were going to dinner and a show, a birthday party, or the zoo.

From our 1930s home, in the woods ten miles north of downtown, I well and truly remember the arch of stars above because often it cast such harsh glare on my sins I had to shut my eyes and pray. The comfortable brilliance was the one to the south, where the city's electric blazes illuminated clouds and mists, a tent of human light fending off the blackness that filled the forest around our house and ^{that} during nightmares tried to push in through the windows.

In 1943 I left the woods for the glow, ostensibly to be handier to University of Washington classrooms and libraries, really to escape chickens and cornstalks and silent nights and savage skies, to mingle in the glitter and clatter and all-around uproar of the Twenty-Four-Hour Party granted those of us who have cheerfully jettisoned ~~the~~ our ^{immortal} ~~eternal~~ souls.

In 1952 Betty and I moved ten miles southeast of downtown, away from the glow to the darkness, not to cleanse our ^{soiled} spirits but to get some sleep. Our night was so pure that an astronomer friend used to bring his telescope to view stars Seattle hadn't seen in decades -- stars that no longer scared me, there being so many things so much more fearsome under the glow.

Through the 1950s and 1960s the glow advanced eastward over Lake Washington to Mercer Island, to Bellevue, and at last to Cougar Mountain. The forest next door was chopped up in lots and yardlights spilled over property lines to dissolve our night, our clean and serene night, and never a by-your-leave. The shopping center at the foot of the mountain suffused clouds with a furnace's hot pink. The Milky Way dimmed. Our astronomer friend carted his telescope to the east slope of the Cascades. ~~But~~ Betty and I were willy-nilly in the neon glare and motorcycle racket of the Twenty-Four-Hour Party.

The summer of 1979 four of us aging wilderness walkers spent a week circling the second-largest volcano of the Washington Cascades, Mt. Adams. From our meadow camps the only human lights were distant hamlets, twinkles of the fifth and sixth magnitudes. However, during the week's first nights an edge of the Milky Way was invaded by the skyglow of Yakima (the city itself hidden by foreground ridges), and later in our circuit by the glow of (unseen) Portland-Vancouver, along the Columbia River, and on the final nights by the monstrous conglomerated glow of (unseen) "Puget Sound City," the sum of Olympia, Tacoma, Seattle, Bremerton, Everett, and their scores of satellites.

Turning eyes to the campfire, we reminisced about when we were kids and the city glows were small and widely separated, symbols of friendliness and good cheer -- as, now, was the darkness. We wondered how long there'd be any darkness at all in our home country. Certainly, were electrification to continue at the present rate, when our kids were as old as we now were they'd have to take tourist excursions -- far out to sea or to the Poles -- to see the Milky Way.

Return to
"Mully My"

GOING TO HUCKLEBERRY

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

In spring and summer what I most hoped to hear was "owing-gay oo-tay uckle-hay erry-bay." Nothing in Seattle -- not the downtown movie palaces, the fish and chips and ice cream sodas, 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 fenders and running boards of two or more family cars, driving miles from the last outpost of civilization, Enumclaw, the road narrowing to a dirt track over-arched by branches, to our camp ringed about by giant trees dripping moss.

For Dad and the uncles it also meant pulling on hip boots and cutting poles and fording the White River, wide and swift and murky from Mt. 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 spent the day climbing roots of toppled trees to bark ridges airily high above jungles of undergrowth; and wading the little creek by camp, gathering periwinkles for Dad and the uncles to use when the trout weren't biting on flies or eggs; and tossing sticks in the river, yelling and howling as our "boats" were flung through rapids and spun about in eddies and hurled against boulders.

In evening Dad and the Uncles returned over the river from Huckleberry, creels heavy with trout that Mother and the aunts rolled in cornmeal and

plopped in frying pans and served up sizzling. As the cousins and I had raced our boats down the river, now we competed for the trout-eating championship; in morning there'd be the hotcake contest.

The folks sat on logs around the campfire, drinking coffee. We kids toasted marshmallows until about to throw up, then set the sticks ablaze to make fire crayons for drawing pictures on the night.

In clear weather we were permitted to sleep outside the wall tent, spreading blankets on the forest floor and cuddling up and giggling. When shadows went "thump thump" and we screamed and the folks ~~came~~ ^{came out} to rescue us, we complained that 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 for the stars.

BAD WEATHER

In July of 1932 the jobs in Seattle ran out, my folks loaded up the Plymouth, and we drove to Massachusetts, where Dad's father could get him work. 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 draw 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 ~~se~~aboard in wet hot air. Nights were the worst, lying naked atop sheets, thinking of the postcards sent by relatives vacationing in ^{New Hampshire} ~~the~~ mountains, "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 on Boylston Street was darkened by miles-high, black-bottomed, Hell-hearted towers that silenced the birds and sent dogs whimpering to shelter and dumped tons of rain and hailstones as big as marbles. In evening the New Englanders -- Dad and his folks and the aunts and uncles and cousins -- sat around the parlor talking, pausing only when they couldn't hear each other. The Puget Sounders, Mother and I, 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 to which I'd changed in October 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, if that; five days a week a seven-year-old from the green and pleasant land was despatched alone over the frozen wastes 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 said it was madness to ~~put up~~ ^{tolerate} ~~with~~ such a climate. She couldn't understand why the Pilgrims hadn't taken the first boat back to England.

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 -- had enough. He quit a good job -- a rare thing, indeed, in that year. He had no prospects in the West except the WPA. We loaded up the Plymouth and drove back to Seattle.

The New England year has two redeeming virtues. Briefly. After winter's terminal squalor of slush, mud, and flu there's a moment when leaves and flowers

erupt, birds babble, breezes flow, and a person may well mistake the sun for a friend. After the burnout of summer's ^{furnace} ~~heat~~ there's a moment when moonbeams glint on frosted ~~mountains~~ cornstalks, woodlands turn a hundred shades of red and yellow, and a person may well become acceptful of ^{lovely} ~~beautiful~~ 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.

Massachusetts aunts and uncles who came visiting Puget Sound were astonished to discover there was a part of the world where mankind was not in a state of perpetual punishment for original sin. None immigrated, though; at vacation end they went home to resume penance. Even Grandmother, who lived with us quite a long spell after Grandfather died, ^{and} was so open to new ideas she broke loose from the cast-iron Republicanism of a non-Catholic New Englander and voted for Roosevelt, and who admitted our weather scarcely ever bothered a body, returned East. I believe she didn't feel safe, eternally speaking, on Puget Sound. It may be that the reason I go hiking in the wilderness is that I, too, feel a deep spiritual need for New England.

SIX THOUSAND MILES OF AMERICA

Very little of our 1932 drive east from Seattle to Lowell stuck long in my mind.

Lincoln, Nebraska, had opened the city park to free camping, to help folks out. At nightfall the air ~~was~~ filled with little 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 people stay. We didn't have money ~~to~~ for ice cream or cotton candy or to ride the merry-go-round or ferris wheel, but ~~we~~ Dad said, "Doesn't cost anything to look." The big attraction was a booth where men were throwing baseballs at a target. If they hit the bull's eye, hard enough, a spring was triggered that tilted a bed on its side, dumping out on the ground a lady wearing nothing but underwear. It didn't seem the least funny to me and I was very sorry to see Dad and Mother laugh.

We drove by a Great Lake which didn't look so great to me. Puget Sound was bigger and had mountains, too.

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

The first thing I remember from our 1933 drive west from Lowell to Seattle is that beyond a certain area the houses no longer had storm shutters and lightning rods. After a year in New England, ~~we~~ I felt they looked naked, downright dangerous.

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

Lowell in December.

Spindly fences were explained by my folks as meant to keep snow from drifting over the road. This country looked as tough as New England.

One day a detour sign led us ~~off the road~~ out through the sagebrush to get around a sand dune that had drifted over the road. Tougher.

One night my folks woke me to see ~~the~~^a prairie fire, flames leaping high on both sides of the road. We sometimes drove through the night, Dad and Mother alternating ~~at~~^{at} the wheel, because our money was running ~~low~~ short.

By Wyoming our money was holding out well enough that we could afford a hotcake breakfast in Cheyenne. The cafe was full of cowboys come for the rodeo. We didn't have time to stay over for it. Before that, in Chicago, we didn't have time for the World's Fair, the one that had Sally Rand.

At the Snake River, Dad wanted a swim and walked a trail down to the water. A rancher sat on his porch watching him go, and come, and told Dad he was interested in how things turned out because that was not a people trail, it was a rattlesnake trail.

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

Our last morning we stopped at a tourist camp to take showers and wash our clothes, because today we were going home. 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 6000 miles of world. A person can't see all that much from a car going 40 miles an hour, 500 miles a day.

*Return
to
Milly My*

A PASS TO ANOTHER COUNTRY

In 1915 Dad joined a Boy Scout troop in Lowell and learned the motto and oath and law and knots and all. His first overnight hike was from the church where the troop met, along streets to the city edge, and through wildwoods to ~~the~~ Baptist Pond; he carried his clothes and food in a blanket rolled up and slung in a "horsecollar" over one shoulder and tied at the opposite hip, the technique of the U.S. Army in the Spanish-American War. His last trip was to the jamboree in Boston; this time ~~and~~ the troop's gear was loaded on an Afrikaaner trek cart, the Scouts taking turns, six or eight at a time, on the pulling poles.

In 1937 I joined Troop 324, headquartered in the Scout Lodge next to Ronald School, and learned the motto and oath and law and knots and all. My first overnight hike was from the Lodge, along country roads, through wildwoods, to Carkeek Park, on the shore of Puget Sound; I carried my gear in a Yukon-style Trapper Nelson packboard Dad had made for me, 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 Cascade Mountains, for a hike to Lake Hancock. The trail was so steep and some of the little Tenderfeet were so slow we had to turn back and camp by a logging road.

The Boston Jamboree pretty well ended Dad's Scouting; spending another long, hot day on the pulling poles was pushing Trustworthy and Loyal too far; he abandoned the trek cart to the scoutmaster and took the streetcar home to Lowell. Lake Hancock nearly did it for me; while fellow patrol members faced starvation because our patrol leader couldn't build a fire in the downpour, I stole off

in the woods to avoid sharing the slab of Hershey's milk chocolate Mother had slipped in my pack *for emergencies.*

What kept me going was the description (in the R Book issued each new Scout by the Seattle Area Council) of Camp Parsons:

"...the greatest place for real scout fun and training anywhere in the country! ...the big adventure of the scout year -- more hours of active scouting packed into two weeks than you can get in all the troop meetings of a whole year -- wonderful opportunities to advance in tests, to hike into the ~~wilds~~ of the Olympic Mountains... The cost to each scout is only \$16.00 for a 2-week period including boat fare between Seattle and the Camp. Scouts may come for one week if they can't arrange to stay a full period..."

I certainly couldn't. However, though earnings from lawn-mowing and flower-weeding ~~went~~ went mainly to family expenses, such as buying ~~my~~ clothes, I managed to divert enough to buy a 25¢ Parsons savings stamp each troop meeting from fall to summer. A Monday in August, just turned thirteen and recently promoted to First Class, I boarded the steamer, waved goodbye to my folks, and voyaged north on the Sound to Admiralty Inlet, south up Hood Canal, north into Dabob Bay, to the Mariners' Dock on Jackson Cove.

Parsons had one foot in saltwater and the other in mountains. Wednesday morning half the Scouts piled into Navy cutters to spend three days rowing along the Canal, camping on beaches. The other half, ^{including me,} piled into the Big Red Truck, which shuddered and grumbled up the steep and twisty Big Quilcene River road to the end at Bark Shanty Shelter. Here began the trail to Camp Mystery, a steep eight miles infamous at Parsons as the Poop Out Drag.

We did the eight miles, sun-fried, tongue-dried, and to varying degrees pooped out, and shivered through the mile-high night under a skyful of ~~glowering~~ chunks of ^{shining} ice. Thursday morning we hoisted packs on sore backs and tender shoulders and climbed the mile from Mystery to Marmot Pass. All the gang but me dropped their packs ~~at the pass~~ for a sidetrip to the top of Mt. Buckhorn. I continued alone, slanting down bare scree and a snowfield (in summer!) to green fields and a little-tree forest.

I stopped where the leader had told me to, at Boulder Shelter. While waiting I clambered over and under boulders as big as houses. Dehydrated still from the Poop Out Drag, I stuck my burned face in the ^{cold} creek, often. Mostly I sat by the creek and thought about where I was.

My 6000 miles of travels east and west from ocean to ocean had taught me that a "pass" is where a road crosses mountains. I'd also learned that despite sand dunes and snowdrifts and prairie fires and broad rivers, every place a person might practically want to get to (not including the oceans, the jungles of the Amazon, Darkest Africa, the Roof of the World, and the Poles -- the realm of books) could be gotten to by car.

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 been in my whole life.

What I thought about, sitting by the creek, was my first ascent to Marmot Pass, after supper the evening before. There was no road at the pass. It came to me in a flash that there were no roads below, in forests of the Dungeness River, nor at Constance Pass, where we'd be crossing from the

Dungeness to the Dosewallips River to complete the Three Rivers Hike.

Boulder Shelter was 11 miles from where the Big Red Truck had dropped us off, and farther ~~far~~ than that from the end of the Dose road, where it would pick us up.

I hadn't joined the gang on Buckhorn, ^{despite} ~~though~~ climbing mountains ^{being} ~~was~~ what Parsons was all about. I wanted time to think about passes that had no roads. About flowers and lawns that grew lush and gaudy without the help of kids to mow and weed and water. About lying in my sleeping bag at Camp Mystery, shivering, and little trees pointing at ~~the~~ cold stars.

return to
Mickey Way

SECRET CAMP WEST

To become an Eagle Scout a person had to earn twenty-one merit badges. One was Swimming, a reason I never ~~thought~~ ^{expected to} make Eagle, because I wasn't permitted by the doctor or my folks to get my bad ear under water and consequently was a ~~weak~~ weak swimmer. But the doctor and my folks weren't at Camp Parsons and the Ranger leader ~~ordered~~ ^{ordered} me to pass Swimming and you don't disobey the Ranger leader. I managed to do ~~200~~ ²⁵⁰ yards -- from the Swimming Cove to the Mariners Float -- but was still in the water when the rest of the class was ~~able to~~ ^{gone.} dressed and ~~on the way to the~~ ~~Mariners Float~~. The Mariners on lifesaving duty kept trying to haul me in the rowboat. With what little breath I could spare I'd holler, "Get out of my way!" When I reached the float they rowed swiftly and angrily away, never waiting to see if I could pull myself out of the water, which actually was a very near thing.

Lifesaving was worse -- much worse. Even good swimmers dreaded the week-long morning and afternoon sessions. I passed, but not honestly. The Swimming Cove was crowded with pairs of "buddies" and Loody, the Chief of the Cove, couldn't watch every pair. I had a great buddy, a strong swimmer and a nice guy. When it was my turn to "drown" he'd flip me on my back just like that and chin-tow me around the Cove a mile a minute. At first, when he was drowning, he'd put up a fight, as he was supposed to, but when he clutched me we both headed for the bottom like a rock. After that he faked the fighting and ^{would} slip his chin into my cupped hand and surreptitiously keep his legs kicking to save both of us from drowning for ~~a~~ real.

for
Iss. H. P.
book

Bird Study eased my conscience. Some scoutmasters would ring in an Auduboner who would take the troop on a couple walks and everybody would jot down the fifty species and go to Court of Honor together. I did it all by myself, with a field guide on loan from the Seattle Public Library (renewed every two weeks) and binoculars obtained for two Wheaties boxtops and 25¢ in coin or stamps. ^I pursued ~~ed~~ birds through fields and forests ~~in~~ from February ~~to~~ ^{and to} October ~~x~~ ~~my~~ deep satisfaction the examiner -- a leading Auduboner -- threw out only two of my birds, leaving me several to spare.

The most strenuous merit badge was Pioneering, which demanded construction of a miniature Boonesboro. As a rule the task was undertaken by a sizable group; nobody else in my troop was interested; nobody else made Eagle.

A beginning could not be made without first finding a secure site. Thanks to my paper route I knew my piece of countryside better than anyone else in the world. The Shopping News was a giveaway, delivered to absolutely every residence except those where the dogs were so vicious the district manager granted special dispensation. The 170 copies I delivered each Wednesday and Saturday thus were a precise census -- there were 170 houses, some 500 people, along and near Aurora Highway (U.S. 99) between Foy Station (on the interurban) at 145th Street and the south edge of Richmond Highlands at 175th. Except for this highway strip, the region was a vast, second-growth woodland broken by a few gravel roads and scattered stumpranches and chicken ranches. Little was lacking but wolves and catamounts and Indians for Daniel Boone to feel right at home. The problem was that while some of us young pioneers of modern times

this
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sought to improve our bodies, minds, and souls by studying woodcraft and doing good deeds, others ~~of course~~ roved the frontier seeking opportunities to sack and pillage.

A camp could not be built east of our orchard -- Aurora was there, and beyond, a valley of peat bogs and cow pastures. The Foy direction, south, was largely wooded, but the closer to Seattle the thicker the savages and vandals. Despite my three days in the Olympic Mountains the previous summer, the west -- the forest skyline viewed from the Jumping Tree -- was too intimidating. That left north, the way of the trail to school, church, and Scout Lodge.

The forest was almost entirely Douglas fir, the trees too young to have personalities, the groundcover a monotony of salal and Oregon grape. The terrain was virtually featureless, nondescript dumpings of gravel and sand and till that hadn't been dissected to any extent even by meltwater of the ancient glaciers and now had no streams at all, except for a few weeks in winter. It wasn't Huckleberry, or Shedd Park, much less the wild mountains of the Three Rivers Hike. But it was where I lived.

I minutely scouted the rectangle between Aurora on the east and the gravel ^{lane} ~~road~~ of Fremont Avenue on the west, ^{between} our orchard at 165th Street (gravel) ~~to~~ ^{and} on the south ~~to~~ 170th (gravel) on the north. Crashing through the brush, often I'd pause to see how far through the woods I could see and thus be seen. For all the density of the forest canopy above and the brush below, the midair sightlines were long. There seemed no hope of hiding Boonesboro, and therefore no hope of even getting it built.

^{interesting}
 The one feature of the mainline trail (other than the Jumping Tree) ~~was~~
^{that}
~~was~~ was a rarity in ~~the~~ woodland, a treeless, brushless opening, a gravel
 knoll so sterile that all these thousands of years since the glacier went away
 it scarcely grew moss and kinnickinick, ~~the pebbles were packed~~ through. So hard
^{pebbly}
 was the ground packed by ~~the~~ centuries of rain, snow, and gravity that a
^{go off}
 person's foot could make no dent -- could ~~leave~~ the trail without leaving a
 telltale print. At the edge of the barren the firs had free scope to extend
 branches to the fullest and had formed a green wall impenetrable to the eye --
 and almost the body. For years I'd taken a wide detour around the green wall.
 Now I squirmed through ~~the dense forest~~ interlaced branches -- and stumbled out
 into a forest room. Only by magic could the place have been made more secret.

To preserve a clueless vicinity (savages have the sharp eyes of animals)
 I gathered materials at a distance. Poles (logs were beyond my powers) for the
 cabin walls I felled on the far side of Fremont, selecting firs three to four
 inches at the butt and -- because they were in a "choked" stand -- having little
 taper. I chopped them into lengths of ten to twelve feet for dragging, one under
 each arm, the quarter-mile to camp, using many different approaches to leave
 no track that would not be erased by the first rain. A lifetime wouldn't be
 enough to get the stickiness of the pitch from armpits, the pungency from the
 nose. The cedar for roof shakes was much easier -- I scavenged fenceposts of
 an abandoned pasture near Aurora.

I never slept a night in my leanto cabin. I never built a fire in my
 firepit, which was a snazzy design from the Handbook, a square of notched and
 layered logs, filled with gravel hauled in by bucket, bringing the fire

conveniently to waist height. I never relieved myself in my KYBO trench, ^{leaning}
~~sitting~~ ^{back} on the smooth-peeled pole. Often, though, I sat an hour on my cedar-slab
 bench, in clear weather beside the ~~firepit~~ firepit, smelling resins being cooked
 out of the trees by the hot sun, and in the rain under the leanto roof, watching
 fir branches ~~to the ground~~ sag lower and salal leaves glisten brighter.

It was a place to come ~~to think about~~ to think about
 life and death, God and girls. --And a place not to think about ~~them~~ ^{them}
 but just listen to wings buzzing in the sun or raindrops pitter-pattering on ^{the}
~~the~~ roof.

return to Mulkey Way

THE THREE DAY BLOW

Those weren't summer snowfields out west, more of the same ^{as} on the ridge we were running. ^hThey were glaciers. My roomy in the Ranger Lodge was there this minute, ascending to ~~the high camp~~ Glacier Meadows. Tomorrow his bunch would tie in to ropes and take ice axes in hand -- ropes and axes kept at Camp Parsons solely for this one annual trip, grand climax of the summer. They would climb the Blue Glacier to the summit of Mt. Olympus, highest peak in the range. Lions and tigers wouldn't be able to keep me away next year, turned the minimum age, fifteen.

For this year the Ranger Hike would do for me very well. Yesterday we twenty -- the camp elite, only less elite than the Olympus party -- had hauled packs fifteen miles up the Dosewallips River to Dose Meadows. This morning we'd climbed to Lost Pass, continued to the top of Lost Ridge, and now were running the crest toward a junction with Lillian Ridge, which would take us to Hurricane Ridge, which would take us to Grand Ridge, which would take us to Deer Park, where the Big Red Truck would carry us back to camp.

We sang as we walked:

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

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

A cold gray soup ^{engulfed} ~~swallowed~~ us ~~up~~ like so many ^{soda crackers} ~~potatoes~~ and just as suddenly released us to warm sun. The wisp of cloud no larger than a Scout'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 I'd climbed from the cirque of Home Lake through ~~mystery~~ tiny white dots that tingled in the nose and beaded the hair on naked arms and legs; as our group attained the top of Delmonte Ridge a breeze ripped away the mist and we stood blinking on a rock ^{isle} ~~islet~~ in a dazzling cloudsea that stretched in every direction to the horizon. In a 1939 dawn we'd climbed the Anderson Glacier in a fog so thick that Scouts more than two ahead of me in line were dimmed to silhouettes; the sun burned through and we were struck blind.

I'd spent eleven highland days on Parsons hikes. We'd had fog. Never any rain. It was an established 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 and for the evening chill we had wool stocking caps and either a sweater or a windbreaker. 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.



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, who went ~~first~~^{a head} to see if it was safe. (If it hadn't been, what then?) Arrived at the floor of the Anderson Glacier, we one by one checked arms and legs to see if they worked, then one by one reascended the track to search for caps, sunglasses, cups, cameras, and sweaters, ~~that had come off in flight.~~ This time our leader -- the Ranger leader -- instructed us in a better way to descend the Lillian Glacier, taking off the packboard and riding it as a sled, using the horns for brakes. The technique proved as effective as those we'd been taught for starting fire by friction and baking bread on a stick. Arrived in the meadow basin at the base of the glacier, Scouts checked arms and legs, then reascended the snow to search for ~~their~~ packs.

Last summer I'd passed through the defile between Mt. Deception and Mt. Mystery into Deception Basin, a parkland ringed by cliffs and moraines and snows. Above the gray-milky lake at the toe of Mystery Glacier, on a jutting buttress, was the best spot for a castle I'd ever seen. The summer before that I'd returned from the sunset at Marmot Pass to Camp Mystery and for the first time in my life lay me down to sleep without Ford or Plymouth close by to help the Lord my soul to keep. Now, in my third Parsons summer, I followed meltwater streams that rippled through red and blue and yellow and white flowers, meandered over the grassy fan to the edge of timberline forests, and there united in a waterfall to the valley -- to the Lillian River. Twenty-three miles ~~from~~ and two passes and a glacier from any Ford or Plymouth or Big Red Truck, I lay me down to sleep with snow water in my ear, flowers in my nose, stars in my eye.

on the sleeping bag

I was awakened by a sound I knew from hikes with Troop 324, which was not protected by the Parsons umbrella. [^] Pit-a-pat. Pat-pat-pat. Splat. In gray dawn I joined the mass retreat from meadow to forest. Subalpine trees soon were sodden from crown to foot; the branches caught the raindrops and ^{united} ~~made~~ them into rainplops; one way or another that whole skyful of water had to get down to the ground or to us Rangers, whichever came first.

The leader grimly identified this as a full-scale Three Day Blow. In the bleary morning of July 11, 1940, we twenty elite hoisted packs to confront a glacier, two passes, and twenty-three miles.

Step by step we plugged up the Lillian Glacier. The rain added pounds to sleeping bags, foodstuffs, toilet ^{it} paper, packbags; soaked windbreakers, shirts, shorts, and underwear; ^{it} ~~and~~ sloshed around in boots. At least it fell down. As we ^{topped} ~~hit the crest of~~ 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...

Our loving mothers had been gratified to note pajama ^{bottoms} ~~tops~~ (why not ^{tops} ~~shirts, shorts~~, too, dear?) on the checklist of required Parsons clothing, supposing they were for civilized sleeping, as at home. They never foresaw their little boys rolling down the

candy stripes and polka dots as a last line of defense against getting rained to death.

At every meal in the mess hall at Parsons we read, on the wall, Kipling's challenge:

Something lost. Go and find it. Something lost behind the ranges. Go.

We, the Parsons elite, had gone. On Lost Ridge we'd found something we hadn't been looking for.

MW

BEYOND THE BIG TREE SKYLINE

The view from the Jumping Tree plainly told ^{me} that the forest of the skyline to the west was very unlike the second-growth of my Secret Camp. The green was darker, on cloudy days nearly black, and the very fact of being the skyline meant the trees were much taller, ~~More~~ of a sort with those on trails that climbed from Olympic rivers to meadows and glaciers.

The Olympic hikes set me to filling in the white spaces on my home map. There was nothing of interest east, the highway direction, but I explored south through woodlands to settlements in process of amalgamating as Seattle suburbs, and to The Highlands, enclosed by a Cyclone Fence and patrolled by armed guards who captured trespassers and handed them over to the dreaded deputy sheriffs. I hiked back roads north three miles to Richmond Beach and five miles to Edmonds, and ten miles on the recently abandoned grade of the Seattle-Everett Interurban Railway, halfway to Everett. I didn't go west for the same reason the Vikings didn't leap in one bound from Norway to Vinland, and the Portuguese were three-quarters of a century inching down ~~the~~ Africa ~~continent~~ to the Cape of Good Hope. Be thou bold, the man said, but not too bold.

By 1941, however, I was in the fix of Columbus in 1492 -- only ~~that~~ one direction left to go. He puffed up his reputation ~~for boldness~~ by neglecting to mention to the queens and kings that he knew where he was going because he'd talked to fishermen who'd already been there. I freely acknowledge that my informant also was a fisherman, a school pal who regularly put food on his family's Depression dinner table by sneaking past the shotgun that guarded the Hidden Creek waterworks which supplied The Highlands and poaching trout from

the rich folks' private preserve, Hidden Lake.

Arild led me the quarter-mile west from the orchard on 165th, down the neighborhood sledding hill to the valley that in glacier times ^{had} carried water to Hidden Creek, and north a bit on the valley road to the start of the poachers' path. We dropped to the ravine bottom and climbed the far slope. Into the big trees. Seen the first time close up, they were very big, ~~so~~ very tall. There were no logger-sawn stumps. It was a virgin forest.

The path inconspicuously intersected the Pipeline Trail ~~to~~ ^{connecting} the waterworks to The Highlands; Arild looked both ways for traffic because little rich girls rode horses here and when they spotted peasant boys galloped home to call out the Cossacks. Silently we switchbacked down through old-growth Douglas fir and red cedar to the fern-walled gorge of Hidden Creek. Here we tip-toed; ~~be~~ not far away in a field was the house where the shotgun lived. But soon we were beyond its range ~~and~~ and followed the stream down to a delta of golden sand, ^{thrusting out into} still waters ringed by trees that closed off all the sky except a circle no larger than the lake.

Thereafter, on afternoons when matters were going poorly at Lincoln High, I'd take the early bus home and while city friends were doing whatever it was that city kids did after school, I'd be sitting by the lake outlet, listening to water splash down the dam spillway, watching ducks glide across the mirrored sky.

On Sundays or vacation days or days when things were ~~so~~ so rotten at Lincoln I didn't go at all, I'd have time enough to continue beyond the lake, along the creek past abandoned trout-rearing ponds, ^{and} a tiny hydroelectric

plant (rich man's toy), under the Cyclone Fence by squirming on my belly or over it by climbing the steel rungs in the powerline pole and leaping the barbed wire and crashing to the ground. In the sanctum of The Highlands, now, I'd circumspectly walk the old road down the bluff to dock. The road led only to the dock and wasn't used because neither was the dock, once a port of call for the steamers that used to take us from Winslow to Seattle, Seattle to Camp Parsons. I'd sit on the dock, dangling legs over limeade where little white jellyfish hovered, and listen to waves lapping the shingle, smell seaweed baking in the sun, and gaze across Puget Sound to Marmot Pass.

My wildland days ^{of my} ~~in~~ three Parsons summers totaled sixteen. In four years with Troop 324 I added about that many more. How many family days (and nights) did we spend on the wilderness edge ~~at Huckleberry~~ at Huckleberry, Greenwater, Longmire, Paradise, Clearwater, Bogachiel, Maloney's Grove? Half a hundred? For comparison, from discovery day in the spring of 1941 to leaving-home time in the spring of 1943 I spent parts of 200-odd days beyond the Big Tree Skyline.

I followed every trail and game trace to see where it came from and where it went. I criss-crossed the offtrail sectors as systematically as a crazed prospector seeking the Lost Dutchman Mine. At last a single large portion of the wildland, between The Highlands and Hidden Lake, remained unknown. It was a big chunk and would demand a major effort, ~~of a sort~~ of a sort (on reduced scale) of Lewis and Clark crossing the continent to the Pacific, the Englishmen seeking the Sources of the Nile, the Spaniards hunting for the Seven Cities of Gold. On a blue-sky, spring-breeze morning when my legs had been free of pain for weeks I struck off due west from the Pipeline Trail, determined to hold the course straight through to the beach.

Half a day I'd been slashed by thorns, stung by nettles, muddied to knees and cheeks, bruised on thigh and shoulder, sweated to dehydration of dangerous degree, and I was -- incredibly -- precisely back where I'd ~~start~~ started, to within half a ^{stone's} ~~stone's~~ throw. I hadn't gotten to the beach. Hadn't gotten anywhere. At least, that's what I thought then. Years later I came to understand I'd gotten ~~everywhere~~ everywhere I ever would ~~get to~~ that was worth it.

NW

LONELY AS A CLOUD

Bells clanged and whistle hooted, engine rumbled and deck shuddered, and a churning of white bubbles in limegreen water pushed the ferry away from the dock. Between parallel lines of foam the oily-smooth wake grew longer, the Edmonds dock smaller, the mainland -- and all that -- receded at ten knots.

Today at noontime, lunch over and dishes washed, I'd gone to my basement room and listened to footsteps on the ceiling. The house was emptying, come evening would be creaking-still, and would remain so the whole long week to the start of Summer Quarter. The campus, too, would be deserted, and the Avenue depopulated as ^{if} by the plague.

Three months in a houseful of girls had proved no more socially rewarding than ten years next to a houseful of chickens. Less so. The chickens revered me because I fed them. The sorority girls, I just washed their dishes. At night I went walking along the Row and on the Avenue, and bright lights obliterated the Milky Way, the University District was entirely a party, but they hadn't sent me an invitation.

I stopped at the orchard to pick up mountain clothes and camping gear. The folks were both at work, nobody was home but the chickens, who flocked to greet the master, not forgotten, home every Sunday as he was, often as not to eat one of them.

The prow cleaved cloud-gray waves, aiming for the water gap between the Kitsap Peninsula and Whidbey Island. Alone in the ten-knot wind I circled the promenade deck, looking south on Puget Sound to Seattle and Bainbridge Island, then north on Admiralty Inlet to the San Juan Islands, then south into Hood

Canal, and finally west to the ferry dock in Port Ludlow, on the Olympic Peninsula.

Sequim Bay State Park was deserted. The two hours over the water had been my first voyage alone and this was my first night alone, between the past and the future, where the girls and the chickens were. Nobody in the world knew where I was, ~~and~~ I didn't know where I was going. While cooking supper I discussed the situation, in whispers and mutters. Snuggling into the sleeping bag, I caught myself beginning the recitation that had been a nightly ritual since early childhood, ~~and~~ discontinued barely a year before.

While building the breakfast fire I paused to remove from a mocassin a crunchy object that proved to be the ruins of my glasses, put there for overnight safekeeping. In a month and four days I was to register for the draft, and in another month and four days was to be pronounced too blind for war. I didn't know that, the morning of June 12, 1943; the question today was whether I was too blind to drive the Model A.

The blurred yellow line guided me west on Highway 101. The gravel sideroad to the south began with a comfortable width between ditches. At the end of farms the ditches ceased, the width narrowed, angle steepened, and a sign warned in letters large enough for even me to read, "DANGEROUS ROAD. PROCEED AT OWN RISK."

I shifted down to second gear and crept around corners, honking the horn, squinting to be sure I was turning the same way as the road. Steam curled from the radiator. I stopped to let the water cool. The track ~~turned~~^{slanted} up the side of a ridge, a screen of trees on my right inadequately masking thin air.

Ten miles from the warning sign the tilt increased and I double-clutched to low. Cooling halts now were made at snowpatch creeks, to fill the radiator. The road was somewhat wider than the A, by at least an inch. Trees on the rocky slope above to my left were spindly and scattered. No trees guarded the brink on my right. Had it not been for the clouds and no glasses there'd have been a long view out to mountains. Glasses weren't needed to feel the long view down to the valley.

After two miles of low gear a snowbank blocked the road. I switched off the A to let it cool and my pulse slow and to study how far I'd have to back up before a chance to turn around.

A shovel was stuck in the snowbank.

At the end of her fall down the rabbit hole, Alice found a locked door and a little glass table, nothing on it but a tiny gold key. She didn't think about it, simply ~~went ahead and~~ did what ^{the key} ~~was~~ expected of her. The snowbank measured hugely in cubic footage, yet tapered out to a thin toe at the cliff edge. Two hours of shoveling exposed enough roadway to accommodate the width of the A, ~~an~~ half an inch to spare. My right foot stood heavy on the gas pedal to keep the engine racing, my left foot slipped the clutch to maintain a slow, easy pace, my hands held the steering wheel steady to gently snub the left front tire against the snow wall. --Then I let out the clutch and the A lurched ahead, around the corner of a spur ridge, to an abrupt leveling off in a vasty blur of green earth and gray air.

Deer Park! The goal of our Ranger gang from Camp Parsons in July of 1940! Three years late the Lone Ranger, astride his trusty blue steed

(Hi-o, Model A, away!) had arrived!

It was a guilty sort of exploit, to be sure, sneaking on wheels to a scene a decent Scout wouldn't accept without paying his dues ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ sweat. As a new houseboy I'd been sent on an errand to the second floor, ~~and~~ ^{had} The housemother [^] failed to tell me to yell, while ascending the stairs, "Man on second!" I no more deserved these flower gardens and Christmas trees than all that. But, so long as nobody was around to scream.

A trail shelter (the road was a decade or less old) offered a cozy camp. The open side of the leanto looked out on a creek trickling from a snowfield through fresh-greening grass, ~~and~~ on clumps of spike-top pines, and on the soft flow of mist. As night fell my ears sharpened to leave no sounds unexplained: The creek, nearly as silent as the cloud. The Graywolf River, distantly roaring, far below. Snaps and crackles of the fire that stood on guard between me and my first mountain night alone.

Something out there was thumping. Very like the thumpings at Huckleberry, ^{like} ~~and~~ my sorority sisters on the ceiling. A gas pocket in a log flared. Two green fireballs burned in the blackness. I lept to my feet. THUMP THUMP THUMP receded in the night, quieted in my chest.

In morning I climbed meadows that swelled in mounds, dipped to swales, lush curves of a great green woman. Had there been no clouds and I been wearing glasses, I'd have seen Lillian Ridge, at whose foot the Three Day Blow hit us in 1940, ~~blasting out of the north~~, and Mt. Deception, at whose foot we ate lunch in 1939. Had it been ^{dimout} night, and clear, and there'd been no ~~up~~, I'd have seen the skyglow of Seattle. As it was I saw only the naked flesh of earth taking a cold bath.

Atop Blue Mountain the cloud washed my face and lungs and blind eyes. It was helpful not to see out, the view in was improved. The temperature was too brisk for a proper mystic experience. but the summit perspective revealed definite spiritual improvement, increased physical handsomeness, a general superiority and probable invincibility. What 200 days beyond the Big Tree Skyline had taught, the night at Deer Park had confirmed: the sovereign cure for loneliness is solitude.

Alice never asked who provided her key. Before leaving Deer Park I met a fellow who'd lived there, ~~██████████~~ through the winter, watching for enemy bombers. He'd been about to go grocery shopping, as he hadn't since November, had walked to the snowbank to clear a way for his car, assessed the white tonnage, and decided a few more days wouldn't matter. He left the shovel because, "I figured somebody like you might show up."

return to Miller Hwy

WHAT ROUGH BEAST

Soon after returning west in 1933 we got together with the uncles and aunts and cousins and went to Huckleberry. The road was much wider, in fact was being made into a highway over the Cascades. We couldn't stay at our old camp because it wasn't there. The CCC and the Forest Service were churning up the woods to build The Dalles Forest Camp.

The secret of my 1939 Boonesboro was revealed only to Dad, one cousin, and two more than routinely Trustworthy Scouts, including the Scoutmaster, who had to sign my M Book so I could get the merit badge. So cunningly was the camp hidden that no ravening outlaw boy ever found it.

In 1941 a developer's bulldozer did. Coming by a few days later, I read the story in the cat tracks. The operator had no business on the barren knoll, a hundred feet from the street he was pioneering, but had climbed to the summit because it was there. Then he'd been challenged by the green wall, had smashed through and discovered the forest room. Before returning to work he'd taken a few minutes to play -- crushing my firepit, bench, and KYBO, giving my cabin a nudge, knocking the walls comically askew, collapsing the shake roof.

It was my first encounter with people like that, other than rotten kids.

By 1945 I'd been long at the skyglow party, very long away from the Big Tree Skyline. One Sunday I opened the rotogravure section of the Seattle

Times to photographs of the big trees being felled, skidded to the beach, rafted to the mill. The reporter was delighted by the spectacle of nineteenth-century tidewater logging on the outskirts of twentieth-century Seattle.

The wildland had been known locally as the "Boeing Tract," for the timber baron whose name would have been flushed down the sewer of history had he not had a hobby of building airplanes. As the story went, he'd evolved from logger to land merchant and sold chunks of his forest lands for residential purposes, including The Highlands. A man of wealth and whims, as evidenced by his hobby, he retained the adjoining tract as his private pleasuring ground, and, since even loggers know the difference between stumps and old-growth trees, had spared the virgin forest. He dammed the creek to create the lake, built concrete ponds to rear trout, and trails for horses, and a gazebo for summer picnics on the bluff overlooking Puget Sound. In the Crash he lost his airplane company and perhaps his land as well, the local story wasn't clear on that. By the time I arrived most of the pleasuring for a decade had been by the likes of Arild, poaching trout.

After the logging the streets were gouged and the houses built. Rains that previously had been retained by forest soil for slow release rushed off roofs and carports and patios and lawns and one winter night tore out the dam and rearing ponds and toy hydro plant, ~~and a quarter mile of Cyclone Fences.~~

So I heard. Myself, I couldn't go back.

But of course, I've never stopped going back to Hidden Lake, my Secret Camp, Huckleberry. If I didn't go back there'd be mighty few places to go. Most of my life has been logged and bulldozed.

LOST PASS AGAIN

The reef of gray rock broke the surface of the bleak white sea. Floundering, wallowing, half in fear of drowning, I pulled myself up and out of waist-deep snow and lay on my stomach gasping, wiping sweat from my eyes.

Snowfields fell away from the pass to forests of the Lost River, climbed slopes of Lost Ridge into dull clouds. Six years had passed, six summers with the length of six long winters -- or not quite, because despite summer having been on the calendar a week, the sixth winter was still flourishing here, at 5500 feet. Except for more snow, everything was as remembered from that last over-the-shoulder glance before we Rangers in gay pajamas began the descent to the Dosewallips River.

Everything except me. Boy Scout had yielded to college boy, bicycle to Model A, Milky Way to skyglow, cornfield to Ludlow Fair (left my necktie God knows where). Almost I'd quit the wilderness, as had virtually all my companions of the trails. There was so much else to do. The Twenty-Four Hour Party was everything I'd dreamt those dark and silent nights out where the chickens lived -- roaring lads and nut-brown maids and goblets of blood-red wine, poets and philosophers and pitchers of gin and grapefruit juice, roistering into a tavern to quaff the jolly good ale and old and getting thrown out on my ear for being under-age.

And faith, 'tis pleasant till 'tis past,
The mischief is that 'twill not last.

I'd awake in the city feeling like the picture of himself that Dorian Grey kept locked in the attic and could not face another long, wicked winter

without ^{current} ~~sparing~~ accounts ~~to~~ -- making a good confession, doing penance, receiving absolution, being granted communion.

I wanta wake up in the mountains,
Where the mountain breezes blow...

Yesterday morning the Model A had steamed up the Dosewallips road toward Constance Creek, where in 1938 ^{we} ~~I~~ came down from the dawn atop Delmonte Ridge to meet the Big Red Truck, and in 1939 began and ended one hike to the Anderson Glacier and another to the Mystery Glacier, and in 1940 waited an extra day and a half, sans lunch, sans supper, sans breakfast, and sans lunch again, for Big Red, which was so busy rescuing rained-out parties of little Scouts that it left us big Rangers to enjoy our elitism. In 1942 Dad and I clambered up the two-mile ladderway of roots and rocks the 4000 vertical feet to Lake Constance. With Huckleberry long gone, and the Big Tree Skyline recently, no place in the world was so much home as the country beyond Constance Creek.

The A had topped the last rise, rounded the last corner -- and collided with a wall of wind. At the bottom of 4000 feet of continuous waterfalls, Constance was less a creek than a snowmelt storm. It pounded my ear drums, reverberated through my semicircular canals, shuddered the marrow of my bones, flung gobbets of ice spray in my face, chattered my teeth and blued my nose. Only a lunatic would lay up to lick his wounds in the company of forces older and more fearsome than Creation, forces that lift an ocean into the sky and freeze it and dump it on a mountain range, then melt it and pull it thundering down to put the ocean ^{back} ~~again~~ together. A person never could sleep with this in the backyard.

Nevertheless, feet slipped ^{joyously} ~~happily~~ into leather molded by years and miles, arms welcomed the wool shirt stinking with sweat too deep in the fiber for cleaning; ~~and~~ back and shoulders stoically accepted the Trapper Nelson, endured these past four years a meager total of fourteen days.

in sequence:

The trail I was taking, the East Fork trail, passed Dose Forks, where the West Fork trail branched off, our way to the Anderson Glacier and nearly to Flypaper Pass; ~~the~~ the Sunnybrook trail, down whose switchbacks (according to Parsons gospel so numerous that nobody ever had been able to count them) we ran rubberlegged from the ~~island~~ island ~~floating~~ in the clouds; the tributary valley of Silt Creek, rock-milky from the Eel Glacier which would have been our route to the summit of Mt. Anderson had we succeeded in crossing Flypaper Pass; Deception Creek, a cold wet gale from the Mystery Glacier and the site of the castle; and in nine miles reached Camp Marion, in whose forest we dried sleeping bags and gay pajamas after the Three Day Blow.

The lack of bootprints on the trail and the ~~fact that~~ ^{thorough leaching of} (all ~~the~~ campfire ashes along the way ~~had been leached~~ indicated I was the first visitor since fall. The lack of other cars at Constance Creek established that I was the solitary human in the hundreds of square miles of Dosewallips wilderness. However, on the trail to Marion I'd rounded a corner into a band of elk slopping up iron-red muck. They ~~considered the matter~~ ^{studied the situation} a while before stepping aside to let me pass. The chief remained, standing guard, saying "You're not supposed to be here. Olympic National Park isn't open yet. Even the rangers are still at headquarters in Port Angeles."

In the sleeping bag at Camp Marion my ears had perked up to identify the splash of raindrops in the duff, the rustle of mice feet scavenging my supper spillage, the inhalings and exhalings of the big old trees that rose straight and tall above campfire embers into black nothing. I listened beyond the small sounds to the Dosewallips River, a hundred Constance Creeks in one, and through the uproar to hurricanes in Florida, tornadoes in Kansas, typhoons in Tahiti,

volcanoes in the Ring of Fire, legions of souls screaming in the flames of Hell, and thundering hooves of hordes of infuriated elk.

This morning I'd left Marion under a sullen nullity of low sky and followed the trail to where it disappeared in snow. The route continued as a trench beaten deep by many big feet, none wearing boots. Three trench-beaters in fur coats separately confronted me and before yielding the right of way declared, "This is our path to breakfast. Is that by any chance your name? If not, you are unwelcome in our dining room."

On a melted-out knoll a hen grouse flung up from the heather and attacked my face, shrieking, "Get away from my chickies!" At Dose Meadows a water ouzel, dipping up and down on a rock in the river -- very possibly the very dipper written up in 1940, in my Bird Study merit badge record booklet, as No. 42 -- cut me dead.

At this season at this elevation, 4500 feet, the terrain was too coldly sterile to provide breakfast for anyone but the ouzel, who lived off the river bed and didn't mind snow walls or even a snow roof. The route beyond, to Hayden Pass, where in August 1939 we'd climbed through a green valley loud with whistling marmots, was impossible lacking the help of bears. Therefore I ~~had~~ kicked steps directly up the valley^fwall and swam to the reef of bare rock.

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

Having caught my breath I sat up to address the ills of the soul that had brought me here. However, the sweat that had soaked me from waist upward to hair quickly cooled. The ^wsmelt that had soaked me from waist downward to socks never had gotten warm. I pulled on a sweater and rolled the stocking cap over my ears and ate a Milky Way and that was the best that could be

done and it was nowhere near enough. The soul would have to wait. A lump of protoplasm at an average temperature of something under 100°F rested upon a rock whose temperature was approximately that of the atmosphere and snow, roughly 32°F. Far above the clouds and deep beneath the snow there were solar and plutonic infernos that were saving the planet from the deep freeze of outer space, but today at this particular interface of earth and air nothing was as warm as me, everything lusted to steal the calories from my pulsing blood and clog up my veins with red icicles.

How long before the shivering would stop and hands and feet go numb and the core begin to chill and the brain to sleep? At what point between 98.6° and 32° would I for all practical purposes reach absolute zero?

Where was the Great Green Earth Mother-Lover to welcome me home and make me whole? I saw only a whiteling plain that offered neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain -- the crystalline visage of the Enemy. To be somewhat holy, somewhat sinful is to be human. I needed both party and wilderness. But here I was offered only penance, no absolution.

Right at Marion the devil elk would again march to the drums of the

This time there would be bears, too. A weregrouse. And an

In ^{idn't} give a darn.

Where the sun was shining and flowers blooming and marmots whistling, the Rangers innocent of sin ran about the ridges in gay pajamas. Here, a flake landed on the tip of my nose and was very slow in melting.

I sat upon a rock in a wilderness that was as unchanged in six years as ^{National Park} was not, a wilderness that would endure ~~a National Park~~ as my Secret Camp and Big Tree Skyline and Huckleberry had not, and as I would not, because this cold damn rock was sucking my life out through my ass.

Return to
Molky Way

ON THE GREAT WHITE WINGS OF THE DOVE

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

1606 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 patronize any tavern in the civilized world with no fear of being tossed out on my ear. Savings from my springtime job at the mill, and the five-spot; Dad ~~always~~ slipped me whenever I went home to eat a chicken, let me take 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 chattering mob in gay pajamas but just we and Arild, my hiking partner until June of 1942, when he ran away from home and joined the Navy.

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

The route had drawn itself on the Constance Quadrangle. We'd drop from the pass to headwaters of the Graywolf River; go through The Needles, the crags seen from Marmot Pass, to Royal Basin; cross the ridge to Deception Basin and the Mystery Glacier; cross the ridge of Mt. Mystery to headwaters of the Dungeness River and contour to Home Lake, beneath cliffs of Mt. Constance, highest peak of the Olympic skyline seen from the beach of the Big Tree Skyline; and climb Delmonte Ridge and run rubberlegged down Sunn^ybrook's switchbacks to Constance Creek and the six stubbies of beer hidden in the icewater.

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

Three weeks had passed, twenty-three days with the strength of twenty-three suns, and the Enemy I confronted at Lost Pass ^{had} melted to green. As we left the Dose trail the meadow was 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. Three thousand feet above ^{us} lay Graywolf Pass. 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 had 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 to the pass was a downvalley-angling ^{ascent.} ~~descent.~~ We were a halfmile too far west. But the gully was an easy enough 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 eyes in a merry-go-round whirl...)

The risers of the steps got higher and the platforms narrower. I turned to think about the possibility of a retreat and was confronted by most of the air in the world. I quickly turned to clutch the rock. Palsied hands pulled off handholds. Jittering knees and fumbling feet kicked loose boulders that crashed down the gully, most of them missing Arild by at least several inches.

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

Heart was pounding, chest heaving, eyes swimming, brain frying -- and then the gully ended ^{a stone's throw from} on the very 7000-foot summit of Graywolf Pup!

We looked west to Lost Ridge of 1940 and Lillian Ridge of 1945 (my sole highland hike of that year) and ^{Mt.} Olympus, which I didn't climb in 1941 because 1940 was my last Parsons summer. South across the gulf of the Dose valley stood Wellesley Peak, whose summit seemed to me impossibly lofty three weeks ago and now was beneath us; beyond lay Mt. Anderson of 1939. To the east, beyond Graywolf Pass, 500 feet below our peak, were the crags of The Needles, Deception, ^{Mt.} Mystery, and Constance. To the north, 1500 feet straight down, was the headwater basin of the Graywolf River, still Enemy-white except for a half-acre oasis instantly ^{selected} ~~identified~~ as our camp for the night; beyond were Blue Mountain of 1943, and the strait of Juan de Fuca, and Canada.

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

and set out to soak up sunshine soon

A ten can filled with snow from a cornice ~~remnant~~ yielded ice water to wash down the traditional Parsons lunch of cheese, chocolate, raisins, and (as a substitute for Sailor Boy pilot bread, all of which still was 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 an acre of 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 with the oasis of alpine trees and meadow, the half-acre of Green Woman on whose ~~tender~~ ^{soft} flesh we'd lie tonight.

First we'd soak our heads in snowmelt foam, then take off boots to freeze our feet, ~~and~~. 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 split peas and Spam 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 expand on tales exchanged in letters to and from F.P.O. San Francisco -- life on the U.S.S. Missouri, which as Halsey's flagship had the fewest loud noises and the best ice cream in the fleet, and the adventures of a civilian in ~~the~~ 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 -- to the brink of a cliff. Sailor was wrong. Had we found the trail to the pass we definitely would not have come up here.

A gully descended the north slope of the ridge toward the basin -- and ended at the brink of a cliff. Fingers palsied and knees jittered and rocks kicked loose by fumbling feet clattered away into space.

(It will be like the time my bicycle handlebars jammed and I ~~fell~~^{shot} off the road and the load of newspapers on my back carried me down the hill and into a pile of rusty garbage and I saw blood spurting all over the bushes. Like the night a bully who didn't like my ~~ambush~~^{New England accent} ambushed me on the way home from school and I put up my fists and stars exploded behind my eyeballs. Like when I had an earache in Lowell and masked people strapped me to a table and slapped a metal cone over my nose. I know how it will be -- everybody does -- but I sure wasn't expecting it when Sailor and I were swilling bear in the tavern and I showed him this terrific line ^{I'd drawn} on the Constance Quad...)

After the hike I planned a grand tour of all the taverns that ever had thrown me out on my ear. Sailor planned a tour in the brandnew De Soto he'd shortly take delivery on, having made the down payment with his first Navy pay in 1942. Then he was going looking for girls.

A horizontal band of cedar shrubs cut across the face of the cliff, allowing an ape-swinging traverse to a snowfinger that poked up from the ^{white} basin, high into the rock walls. Between the cedars and the snow yawned a moat somewhat wider than the world record for the standing broad jump. However, the athletes who compete at track meets didn't have the incentive I did. The snowfinger merged below into the snowfield that surrounded 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 manner 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 was, here in north-slope shadows, hard and slick. My boots did not dig in as they were supposed to but flipped up in the air and just-like-that I was whizzing down the snow on my rear.

...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 with undiminished speed, thus swinging into the lead, and that was very bad. It therefore was necessary to lift heels in the air and scramble with hands and elbows and whatnot to get the boots back in the lead, since (looking ahead), 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 behinds?)

I dig in with my heels; the boots slow, the rear-and-all pivot forward. I lift my heels free, kick and grab to reverse the pivot; speed increases. I dig at the snow with my fingers; skin and nails abrade away without slowing the body, so dig in with 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 in front of my boots 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...)

By an historical curiosity, the first Bomb in the history of the world was ~~tested~~^{exploded} on my birthday, the year before.

Now, I was there. Having abandoned my body to observe ground zero from the outer calm, I 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 second Bomb exploded and flying was intermixed with somersaulting and cartwheeling.

(It took me months to learn to ride a bicycle, the neighborhood used to go indoors when I was practicing so they wouldn't have to watch me fall down. I was clumsy, then, and now I'm a circus acrobat...)

Motion and noise abruptly ceased.

The dome of Blueness arched over the fence of peaks that for eight years 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 merging into the One that remains while the many change and pass.

I was sorry not to be able to tell Sailor, who was watching this performance from the cedar shrubs on the cliff, that he shouldn't worry,

FACE TO FACE

Monie, somewhere out of sight on the cliff above Pineapple Pass, yelled "Belay on! Climb!" and I followed the rope away from earth, out into the middle of the sky.

Why?

Had the peak been Constance or Mystery or Olympus there'd have been history, sentiment -- blank spaces in my life that cried out to be filled. But this insignificant jut of rock on an inconsequential ridge, requiring a sharp eye to spot while driving the Snoqualmie Pass Highway, meant nothing to me. Only during the past year, since meeting Betty's friend, Monie, had I even heard of The Tooth and its South Face.

As I later was to learn, the first ascent of the face in 1928 was the sensation of the decade. Nineteen years of escalating sensations had reduced it to routine scheduling as an "experience climb" for students in the Climbing Course. Still, it remained the classic "cheap thrill" -- hundreds of feet tall, vertical and airy, yet so well-broken and solid that anyone able to grip a doorknob and stick a foot in a bucket could manage easily, ~~and~~ the pitches so short and well-protected by bombproof belays that should a climber faint from fright he couldn't fall -- unless he was the ropeleader, and ropeleaders did not fall.

For the likes of Monie the South Face served a further purpose. It now and then happened that a member of The Mountaineers became socially involved with a ridgerunner who ~~snickered at~~ ^{jeered} climbers, claiming any Camp Parsons veteran could run rings around them were he so inclined, as he would't be, having long since outgrown the twitches and jitters of pubescence. The Mountaineer would

encourage the ridgerunner farther out on his limb and then saw it off by requiring him to put up or shut up. Dumb mouth still hanging open, he'd find himself tied to a rope at Pineapple Pass with a Mountaineer out of sight on the cliff above, yelling "Belay on! Climb!"

In a year of taverns and trails I'd come to like Monie, but definitely not to trust her. She was middling short and wiry-lean of body -- that is, if there truly was a human body inside the big boots, the baggy ski pants, the two wool shirts stolen from her ~~big~~ brother and thus many sizes too large, and *the* red kerchief covering all of her head except the face. The face took getting used to. A doctor had experimented with the medical miracle of the age, X-rays, to clear up her acne, leaving her with no real skin from the neck up, just scar tissue. He'd also blinded her, and though operations had restored sight, her bottle-thick glasses magnified her eyes to preternatural size. She'd retained her knowledge of Braille and entertained herself running fingers over stucco walls, "seeking messages from the Infinite." These would set off fits of laughter, never explained except by, "The Infinite is a dirty old man!" The "laughter" itself was disconcerting; inherited by her and her three siblings from their father, it was not a giggle, not a chuckle, not a guffaw but a maniac cackle that even on a Saturday night at the Red Robin would bring a moment of tavern-wide silence. Early in our acquaintance I lagged behind on a steep trail to wait for Betty, she and I being in the preliminaries of courtship, and heard a faerie melody high above and spotted Monie dangling legs from the brink of a cliff, blowing a silver flute. As any peasant knows, "faerie" may beguile but isn't always nice.

Betty ~~with me~~ proved to be my Green Woman. An additional benefit of the marriage was that I never needed an excuse to chicken out. From her perspective, even after the operation to bring a wandering eye in line, the wildlands were a maze of traps. Every footlog was a tightrope spanning a snakepit. It was impossible for the two of us to attempt the sort of terrain that twice in the seven Graywolf days almost killed me -- six times, counting ~~the occasions~~ ^{when} it scared me half to death. Further, so slow ^{was} her pace, what with her having lost ^{part of} a lung to childhood illness, that often, waiting in the twilight, I squinted at an object to determine if it was Betty or a boulder; if it moved perceptibly it more likely was a boulder; there was no question of hauling packs over the tops of mountains that went so high they nearly touched the sky. On a hike during our honeymoon summer we camped on the High Divide, across the Hoh River valley from Mt. Olympus, and if I regretted not having had a chance at the summit in 1941 I'd no desire to attempt those polar wastes now -- not me, who since the Graywolf glissade trembled at sight of an ice cream cone.

So, I looked happily forward to a languorous life in the flowers with the Green Woman. However, always hovering close by was Monie, cackling.

"An adventure is a sign of incompetence," said Stefansson the Iclander, sneering at English gentlemen who died gallantly where Eskimo women and children lived very comfortably. ~~the~~. But not to be incompetent is to be not human. Some of us, some of the time, feel the urge to prove we are more -- or less -- than machines.

Betty established her proof each time she stepped out of the Model A. As for me, with her in tow I couldn't get ~~within~~ a mountain mile ^{from} any

useful trouble. Never would there be another campfire like that on the half-acre oasis in Graywolf Basin, drinking coffee under the Milky Way, a dozen yards from where I came to nearly final rest, bloody and bruised but more fully alive than ever before -- or since.

A cosmos is incomplete without a Devil, a person cannot advance beyond the many to the One except through good and evil. Monie scorned such thoughts, as she did all the ~~usual~~ moony attempts to ^{explain} ~~describe~~ climbing in terms of German philosophy or English poetry or Buddhism, tummy-patting. For her, the sport was simply "pampering her neurosis." She recommended it for mine, which I hotly denied having, but if not, why did I tamely submit to her tying the rope around my waist at Pineapple Pass?

The route began on a ledge the width of a tennis shoe. It was not, however, a fit place for a tennis shoe because as the ledge traversed the cliff out from the pass, the chimney that headed at the pass plunged toward the valley, and each outward step expanded the quantity of air beneath the tennis shoe horribly.

at the starting end,

If the ledge was skinny and airy, it at least was connected to the solid pass, which was no great distance from ~~the winding life~~ of trees whose mouths were firmly pressed against the earth's sweet-flowing breast. At the ending end, however, it melted away into the sky -- sky above, sky to the left, sky to the right -- and sky below -- sky disconnected from earth -- substance ^{every man} of the [^]nightmare as old as being rocked out of the cradle, falling out of a tree.

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The ~~cliff~~^{cliff} in front of my eyes, the trees on the valley floor three thousand feet below, the cloud billow a mile above, couldn't be united, ~~and stabilized.~~
The feedback from visual and auditory signals sent out by my internal gyroscope ~~to establish a level~~ were contradictory and confusing. My horizons pitched and tossed as on a stormy sea. Only the rope, the 7/16-inch-thick manila umbilical cord, could be trusted. ~~_____~~ Mindless as a rat in a psychologist's torture chamber, legs twitching like a frog's in a frying pan, I stepped from the ledge into the sky and remember nothing but a jumble of doorknobs that I gripped with my tennis shoes and buckets that I stuck my hands in until the pixie appeared before my eyes, sitting in belay, and lo, she was dreadfully beautiful.

A DIFFERENT HUCKLEBERRY

"I can belay you from here," he said, snuggling hips between boulders at the base of the vertical, flawless wall, reefing in slack to bring taut the 7/16-inch manila line connecting us.

I stared at him aghast. From the little I'd seen of Bill amidst the springtime mobs of the Climbing Course, he'd struck me as another of the Nazi Youth, the sort who would demand his racial right to lead this wall, which was so exposed that if the leader fell to the left he'd punch a hole in the frozen surface of Joe Lake, to the right would impale himself on a tree in the valley of Burnt Boot Creek. I was glad to let him do it and was rather curious which way he'd fall, into the lake or into the forest. Why was he offering to belay me? The rope around my waist wasn't labeled "front end."

I didn't care if we climbed the peak at all. For me, Saturday had been the trip, a long and rich and exciting day. We'd been late getting out of Seattle, were delayed an hour on the highway by a busted fanbelt, another hour at the road-end by a brandnew clearcut that obliterated the trail, and didn't hoist packs until two o'clock. No sooner did we find the tread beyond the clearcut than we lost it in the snowmelt fury of Gold Creek, boiling to our waists. Once across, we plunged into blowdowns and brush and then the valley-bottom snows heaped up by the heaviest winter in memory. A gray ceiling lopped off the peaks we needed to fix our position and find the route. We ~~waded~~ waded dozens of torrents before selecting one as most probably being Joe Creek. In premature dusk we pointed boots straight up the steep white, wove through cliffs, and as we were eyeing likely trees for tying sleeping bags to, at eight o'clock the slope rolled over into the cirque, 4500 feet.

That was plenty of entertainment for a weekend. From the look of the weather, it was all there'd be. We rigged my liferaft sail on a patch of bare ground, lowered a ten can through a hole in the snow to dip water from the lake outlet, pulled slabs of weathered wood from a snag to erupt light and cheer in the fog, and cooked a ^{ten} can of noodles and ⁱ chipped beef, then a ten can of coffee.

Saturday

Bill being newly from the East, ~~was~~ had been my day. I'd searched out the trail in the loggers' jackstraw, ^{I'd} braved the ford of Gold Creek to see if it was survivable, ^{I'd} found blazes to stay on the snowcovered trail route as long as there was a trail, among a bewilderment of torrents ^{I'd} chosen the correct Joe Creek, and ^{I'd} kicked the thousands of steps up from the valley to Joe Lake.

When morning sun burned off the fog to reveal that the 6300-foot peak was not the berry garden promised by Monie (pixies!) but the phallus of the Enemy, I quite naturally expected Sunday to be the Nazi's day.

I hadn't taken the Climbing Course to do more South Faces, to fool around with demonic phalli. All I wanted was to learn enough tricks with the ice ax and rope to go through ~~the~~ Graywolf ^{-like} country in a condition more relaxed than stark terror. This weekend I'd asked Monie to suggest a mild little conquest suitable for my humble ambitions, something to give my new skills a bit of a test. The name of the peak surely was not intimidating. I'd no reason to suspect another prank. ~~_____~~

My jaw was still hanging open when Bill barked "Belay on! Climb!" Mindless as a tortured rat, quivering like a fried frog, I yelped "Climbing!" and leapt at the wall. An eternity or three minutes later I pulled myself up onto a lawn of huckleberry bushes trimmed with the white hair of the mountain goats who for centuries had been ascending the flawless wall on ledges

wide enough for a half-dozen tennis shoes side by side.

Nevertheless, there had been no rope showing me where to go, no umbilical cord dangling from the womb of Heaven. It's lonesome at the top of the rope.

Later I learned it can be lonesome at the bottom of the rope, too. In subsequent climbing partnerships I perceived that Bill was not a Nazi, ~~was~~ had some ^{deeper} ~~other~~ trouble. As did Betty and I and other Mountaineer tenants of the upper storeys of University District firetraps, he kept a rope tied to his bed for emergency rappel. When he at last threw the rope out the window it was to escape worse than fire; he didn't wrap the rope from crotch over hip and chest in dulfersitz mode, but tied it around his neck.

return to
Moby Day

ON THE SHORE OF OUTER SPACE

During the 1930s the U.S. Geological Survey, ^{in the course of} ~~while~~ remapping a portion of the Colorado Rockies, increased the elevation of an obscure ridge a few feet, enough for it to replace Mt. Rainier as third-highest mountain in the forty-eight states.

That was a cruelty too many. At the time of Seattle's founding, ^{in the 1850s,} voices could be heard locally bragging up Rainier as the highest peak in the nation -- in North America -- in the world. The latter two claims were eventually yielded with minimum anguish to McKinley and Everest, which were not competitors for tourist traffic, but demotion by California's Whitney to second place in the nation had been a stab in the vitals, and by Colorado's Elbert to third such a shock as to strike the Chamber of Commerce dumb. Now a mountain nobody ever heard of, Massive, had been invented by a cabal of bureaucrats, probably in the pay of Denver.

The living legend among ^{local} mountaineers, 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, or if CCC trail crews could be enlisted to pack cement and timbers, thrice the twice, overtopping Whitney. The National Park Service denied permission and Washington's Congressional delegation was outnumbered.

Local newspapers then discovered that highness didn't matter, the proper measure of a mountain's grandeur was a combination of two factors -- tallness and separateness. Granted, Colorado had fifty-three peaks over 14,000 feet, but the valleys they rose from were 11,000 feet and the range as a whole rested on a base above 5000; Washington's Cascades and Olympics had hundreds of peaks

taller than any in Colorado. The 11,000-foot lift of the Sierra scarp from Owens Valley to Whitney was conceded to be very tall indeed; the peak, though, was so lost in a muddle of chunks of granite the main difficulty of the first ascent had been finding it.

The press pointed proudly to valleys immediately below Rainier's 14,406-foot summit (ultimately increased a ~~margin~~^{grudging} 4 feet by the Geological Survey, when Washington's two senators gained enough seniority to be major powers) that were as low as 1500 feet. Moreover, the total tallness 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 reach saw a "remarkable high round snowy mountain." Exceedingly tall. And absolutely separate.

To grasp the dimensions a person has to move around -- 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 as grandly as the full moon. Sail east from China and long before landfall marvel at what one supposes to be a towering cloud.

A mountaineer should devote a hard-traveling half a week to the "High Orbit," circling the thirty glaciers with names and the dozen-odd without, more ice than the total in the forty-seven conterminous states outside Washington.

A tourist should devote a long, hard-driving day circling the mountain base, pausing to view the very different physiognomies of 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 awesome rock-and-ice cliff in the forty-eight.

All these are one.

Returning from New York my first time by air, I found the Great Lakes and Great Plains and Rocky Mountains interesting for remembrances of lightning and fireflies and prairie fires and blizzards and rattlesnakes and cowboys and a lady being dumped out of bed with nothing on but ~~her~~ underwear. As geography, though, lakes can't compete with oceans for size, the bigger the plains the bigger would be the bore were it not for the big sky, and a myriad high ridges may not have a single tall mountain among them. As the airplane lowered into blue-black night of Puget Sound while Rainier still stood tall in brilliant pink day, I learned what not even the local newspapers ever had had the wit to brag about: of all the American earth, this was the largest lump, without a close second, only the other Cascade volcanoes in the same league.

Friday evening, ^{having driven} ~~after driving~~ from Seattle to Mount Rainier National Park's Longmire Campground, I studied my forty-five companions, roistering and ya-hooing about the forest. Some two-thirds were survivors of the 150-odd who ^{had} started the Climbing Course with Betty and me in February; the rest were graduates of previous years returned to serve as faculty members. Each of us

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had survived, in absentia, the "ax session" of the Climbing Committee. In my case, I suspected Monie had exerted a special lobbying effort for her protégé, a person whose greatest athletic accomplishment had been jumping out of a tree didn't belong in this company of Nazis. None of them would experience the symptoms described by Monie, cackling, on the eve of my departure for Longmire: at 11,000 feet, growing listless and losing appetite; at 12,000, staggering and throwing up; at 13,000, hearing voices in the wind, seeing faces in crevasses and conversing over the shoulder with "the other man" who isn't there; and at 14,000, sinking into fugue, never to remember the final 406 (as it was then) feet.

Saturday ~~morning~~, at Paradise Valley, I watched the gangs of superpeople set out hollering and yipping on the 6500-foot ascent of glaciers and snowfields; I despised each and every one of them and tagged along glumly silent.

To my surprise -- and alarm -- while plugging my lonesome way ^{in afternoon} I passed some of the morning's most boisterous Nazis fallen ~~flat~~ on their faces in the snow. At Camp Hazard, 11,500 feet, the wind's screaming and howling across the sterile rock ridge commingled with a chorus of retching and moaning.

My stomach was steady enough, so long as I didn't insist on supper. The brain was my problem. The exhausting ascent from Paradise explained the physical lassitude but not the difficulty keeping the mind in focus, the constant drifting off to Home Lake, Hidden Lake, Huckleberry, Shedd Park, Betty, and the Blue Moon.

Two weeks earlier, to climb 10,541-foot Glacier Peak, fourth-highest of Washington's volcanoes and half again higher than any of my previous summits, we'd camped in forest beside the White Chuck River and over the entire weekend

spent barely four hours above the uppermost reach of green. Early this morning we'd left the last of Rainier's green and wouldn't return to it until late tomorrow -- thirty hours in rock and snow -- parts of two days and all of one long night -- where rhythms of body and soul ~~was~~ ^{were} not supported by living companions rooted in Earth.

Puget Sounders are accustomed to large slabs of sky being blocked out by Cascades and Olympics; we think it's cozy. People born to the Great Plains say they find the ^r/~~r~~big sky liberating. A Puget Sounder can understand the feeling when standing ~~atop~~ ^{on} a summit in bright noon, 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 relentlessly ~~toward me~~ 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, destination of the wagons in the 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 the beach and decided to grow legs, and down to the lights of Paradise, as unattainable as the Milky Way, and there was simply too damn much sky.

Windblown pebbles pelted the boulder wall behind which I cowered, rattled the liferaft sail in which I and my sleeping bag lay wrapped. Hail battered the tarp. Thunder shook the ridge. Fire slashed the ~~dark~~ night.

Closer lights flashed, demon screeches pierced the wind. We crept from our portable wombs and pulled on boots and parkas and strapped on crampons and tied to ropes, and all of this was sane, if our intention was to flee to

Paradise. ^{But we} ~~we~~ were going the other direction, characters in a tale told by an idiot.

The sun rose out of Idaho. The cloudcap storm evaporated in a swirling of rainbows around ~~gray~~ ^{white} castles of the Kautz Icefall. Where the glacier rounded over to the icecap we rested, ~~and looked~~ ^{looking} down to the gleaming ocean that had engulfed the lowlands and risen to drown all ~~the lower~~ ^{but the uppermost} mile of Rainier's tallness.

The leader released the rope teams to travel at their individual paces, fast or slow. Soon the forty-five were motes in an immensity of white. The evening before, at Hazard, the climb leader and the Climbing Chairman had been making up rope teams and found they were short one experienced ropeleader. The Chairman was very sick and wanted only not to talk any more, because every time he opened his mouth he threw up. He'd spotted me, and I wasn't throwing up, and that was good enough for him. Now, therefore, as a ropeleader, my closest mate fifty feet to my rear, I was alone with The Mountain.

Plato's world

The Kautz Icefall was the boundary between the lower world which contained (somewhere down there) forests and flowers, and the upper creation — composed of the White ^{ness} of snow, the Brown ^{ness} of lava, and the Blue ^{ness} of sky that shaded into the Black ^{ness} of outer space.

The Wapowety Cleaver was a boundary beyond; approaching its buttresses and boulders, the rock entirely white with hoarfrost, I remembered very well what lay below the Kautz Icefall, still knew I was walking a glacier of Earth; leaving the cleaver, I'd forgotten all that and crunched crampons in a glacier of the sky.

For the preparation of a homeopathic medicine, the chemist dissolves the curative ingredient, takes a ⁱsingle drop of the solution and dilutes it, ~~and~~ ^{then} a drop of that dilution and dilutes it further, and proceeds until ~~every~~ every hard molecule of the ingredient is eliminated, leaving only the immaterial essence. The air at Hazard was too dilute for humanity; at every step it had thinned, and so had I; it was essence only that stood in the 14,000-foot saddle between Point Success and Columbia Crest, beneath the sugarcandy slope rising to a straight-edge dividing the purest of White from a Blue more ideal than Plato dreamt of in his philosophy.

Upward from the Kautz Icefall, feeling sick from the effort of chopping ~~a route~~ ^{a route} ~~steps~~ I'd needed a breath for each step; from the Wapowety Cleaver, two; now three left me listless and it could have been demonstrated by a corollary of the Paradox of Zeno to be mathematically impossible to attain the summit.

I was awakened from a reverie by a blast of wind -- not a gust but a steady hurricane -- not a storm's cyclone, nor the jet stream -- the very centrifugal force of whirling Earth. During the night's storm The Mountain has been shaken loose from its foundation and was adrift in the cloud ocean.

At ten o'clock in the grandest morning God ever created I stood 14,406 feet (later the Geological Survey would ~~give~~ ^{concede} me 4 more 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 was so violent that in a minute it would snatch me away from this high wilderness to a wilderness beyond, and through the years and the centuries folks around the world would look up in the night sky and spot the orbiting blink and say, "There goes Manning, he was blown off the top of Rainier in 1948, the lucky son-of-a-gun."

FLYPAPER PASS

I wanta wake up in the mountains,
Where the mountain breezes blow...

The sleep was so deep that when my eyes opened they expected to see the sloping ceiling of our garret room in the University District. When I saw, instead, the interior of a cloud, I knew this is how the good people go -- no strain, no pain, a straight shot to Heaven -- a mattress of soft turf, flowers scenting the gentle air, a cold tarn handy for a ~~swimming~~^{quick} swim, glacier canyons and moulins to peer down into, and a blanket of quiet fog letting through the warmth of the sun while keeping out the glare.

At elbow's distance, Betty slept on. I'd soon sink back. We'd nothing better to do with the afternoon, unless she chanced to awake while I was awake.

The morning's summit had been her first since Lundin, on the Commonwealth Basin Snow Practice in May, and eased my conscience some for my subsequent conquests of Guye, Snoqualmie, Sluiskin, Huckleberry, Glacier, Rainier, Constance, and Shuksan. To be sure, in June she'd been lowered into a crevasse of the Nisqually Glacier to practice being rescued, and in July had hiked with me to a pair of high camps, but when it came to climbing she'd been left below, if not at home.

The guilty fact of this second summer of our marriage was that the Climbing Course had confused my loyalties. In part, I was the relatively new husband, delighting in his wife. But in part, too, mingling with fellow students only just graduated from the Scouts, I was still the boy who knew it was sissy to go around with girls. I'd rocketed down the Lundin Chute in the

supreme glissade of my life, synthesis of Flypaper Pass and Lillian Glacier and Graywolf Pup, but thanks to the ice ax, no ~~fear~~^{fear}, only whooping and hollering joy. Thanks to the ax, and the Climbing Course, I'd regained my Scout-like freedom.

Then, from above came shouting. My name. I climbed back up the Chute, shoved through a gawking mob, and saw my wife lying in red snow. Faculty members were bundling her in sweaters and feeding her hot tea boiled up on a Primus stove.

"Where's your ice ax?" I demanded. She weakly smiled. The faculty and the gawkers gaped. I stomped off to search the avalanche. The gapes accused me of monsterhood. They didn't know that this very week I had very adequately expressed my affection by buying her the ax, a Bhend, and the Guide model at that, costing \$13.50, a day-and-a-half's pay. I didn't find her ax, nor any of the dozen others lost in the avalanche, one of which had stabbed Betty in the ribs.

When I returned to the red snow, Betty was gone, departed by stretcher and high-speed auto run (with wailing police siren) to Harborview Hospital in Seattle. There my sluggish old 1935 Ford V-8 caught up with the Mountaineer bureaucracy. The jaws dropped open again when I complained they were spoiling her, from now on she'd expect to come back this way from all her hikes. They absolutely glowered when I explained that what they had diagnosed as deep shock was her normal and natural condition after even the easiest day's stroll in the mountains -- or as far as that went, an evening at the Eastlake Gardens.

The following week she took a day off work to go look for the Bherd Guide. ~~No~~ No luck. One of our fellow students got to the avalanche first. He found just a single ax, which chanced to be his own. ^{So he said, so he said.} I considered busting into his basement to catch him gloating over his hoard of axes. He owed me a day-and-a-half's wages and Betty a day's. Further, he being the sort he was, very likely it was his ax that stabbed Betty. For sure, one of his axes had.

The ~~fact~~ ^{bureaucracy} made too much of Betty's wound, too little of her special quality as a durable victim. To those of us who'd known and loved her through the times of her moving uphill so slowly she barely held her own against soil creep, and of blistering her feet in hot weather and freezing them in cold, of being terrorized by footlogs, consternated by rockslides, and poisoned by mosquitoes, it was inevitable that of the 150-odd faculty and students, including the dozen stupids who built themselves an avalanche, she was the only one hurt -- and not while glissading, but while sitting innocently in the snow.

As she lay in the red snow. I was ashamed that she'd gone to so much trouble to be the star. Now, however, I was proud of her in a way the gawkers in the Lundin Chute never could understand. They didn't know that when Monie led me up the South Face of The Tooth, there was a third on the rope -- Betty. This spring she'd won recognition as the worst climber in the Climbing Course -- but now summer was half over and she was still climbing, sort of, and a hundred ^{the Nazi Youth who were still with us} who had begun with us in February weren't -- and how many of ~~them~~ (got by with one lung and one eye?

Yesterday morning at Camp Siberia, after the previous afternoon's haul up the West Fork Dosewaalips River from Constance Creek, we'd awakened to mid-August mists that had rolled in from the ocean after a Milky Way night. We'd messed around the fire with hotcakes and coffee.

Smell the flapjacks fryin' and the socks a-dryin'
Round the campfire's ruddy glow.

In afternoon, the fog still on the peaks and in the forests, we'd lazied upward through Marvelous Meadows in Pretty Basin, ening on the summit of LaCrosse. That was very funny, to climb ~~that peak~~ ^{LaCrosse} as easy as a dream, because in 1939 our Parsons bunch had failed to reach the summit, defeated by heat prostration.

This morning, to beat the daily fog storm, we'd left Siberia at six o'clock, switchbacked up forest from Anderson Pa_{ss} to me_{ad}ows at the edge of the Anderson Glacier. There we'd seen the gray snake slithering along the Quinault River, welling up the valley walls; as we topped Flypaper Pass it slid over into the cirque, onto the glacier. From the pass we looked down to another serpent slithering up Silt Creek from the East Fork Dosewallips River, creeping over the Eel Glacier. We lost the race by minutes, arrived on the summit at ten o'clock in the same soft ~~and delicious~~ fog wherein now we slept.

After I'd climbed Rainier, old hiker friends found me intolerable, Nazi=swaggering down the Avenue, 14,406 feet tall. The faces of old Scout buddies contorted when they heard I'd climbed Constance, the highest point of Seattle's western horizon. Had fate permitted me just one of my twenty 1948 summits, these two would have been among the three finalists. Three volcanoes -- Glacier, Baker, and Adams -- wouldn't have made the cut, nor "the most beautiful mountain in America," Shuksan. The third would have been Anderson, the peak our Parsons bunch couldn't climb in 1939 and Betty and I did this day.

Our afternoon sleep in the grass and fog ^{rather} made me think I might get used to being a sissy, *someday*.

return to Milkey Way

THE MOST AWFUL PLACE

Our first morning I was savoring the best hours of sleep, the last before crawling out in the dripping forest and filthy air to hoist my seventy-pound pack, when there commenced such an outburst of cheerfulness as stood my hair on end. The three Rover Boys were banging pots and cups, gargling oatmeal, giggling and jiggling and hanging from trees by one hand. The camp was so cramped, on a buttress jutting over the valley of Chilliwack Creek, ^{that} my five other companions soon were shuffling glumly about in the halflight.

Not me. 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. Yet there they were, booted up and packed up, fed and toileted, the three plus the five, sitting like ducks in a row watching me in my bag, furiously smoking a cigarette, and it was not yet seven. I suggested they go ahead without me, said I'd look forward with intense pleasure to rejoining them at lunch or camp or when Hell froze over. All in a row they sat, the Rovers chirping merrily, and at seven-thirty I flipped my last cigarette at a noisy bird and got up.

The second morning, at Tapto Shelter on Brush Creek, I'd taken care to pitch my liferaft sail at a safe distance. That I was on the trail to Whatcom Pass at seven-fifteen was not due to Rovers but the clear dawn, promising that this would be a climbing day -- as it proved to be, to the summit of Whatcom Peak.

The camp below Whatcom Peak, at Perfect Pass, was a thin strip of tundra between cliffs falling to the Baker River ^{on one side} and a cornice hanging over the Challenger Glacier ^{on the other.} However, it was not the Rovers who set my boots to

crunching the frozen glacier at six-thirty but the snows of Mt. Challenger dazzling in the sunrise.

The fourth morning was the dangerous one. So much time as this in wilderness, denied the city's easy escapes to privacy, can strain the strongest of friendships. Nothing so gross is required as farting, belching, slurping tea, or playing a harmonica; the job can be done by ~~such small things as~~ ritually drinking orange juice every morning, compulsively combing the hair, carrying a change of underwear and each night putting on clean and washing out dirty. Giggling. Clearing the throat. Breathing.

After the ascent of Challenger we'd skated down the snow slopes toward Luna Cirque, seeking campable ground, and only just did, on narrow ledges where cliffs began. Scattered amid hemlock shrubs and gneiss buttresses were spaces for sleeping bags, one or two to a ledge. I carelessly chose a one-bag ledge close below what proved to be the ~~only available~~ ^{only} three-bag ledge.

To my surprise, the ode to joy didn't commence until seven and was oddly muted. However, they could have racketed 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 described to Rover Yorick my dark and bloody thoughts the first morning of the trip. He, in turn, told how frightened the Rovers were by my fierce cigarettes, which had the look of small hand grenades. At subsequent camps they sought distance from me as avidly as I from them. Further, in morning they kept careful watch until I'd crawled from my bag and pulled on boots, poured water in a cup of Grape Nuts

and powdered milk and brown sugar, fired up the Primus for a cup of cocoa, and gotten halfway through my first cigarette. It was then safe, they had observed, to venture within twenty-five feet of me if steps were soft and voices low.

The Rovers lay on their ~~three~~-bag ledge as quietly and late as seething glee would allow. Arising as silently as Mohicans in Huron territory, they conversed in murmurs and muffled the cups and spoons. As it happened, the entire party felt lazy and we didn't set out for Luna until eleven. Four hours, therefore, the Rovers watched me that morning. Yorick grew curious about what I was ~~wa~~atching so intently all that while. He began watching too.

Two summers before, on summits of Baker and Glacier and Shuksan, I'd seen peaks as sharp and icy as those in the Swiss Alpine Calendar. The previous summer I'd climbed in a cloud to the top of Eldorado, a hole had opened, and I'd looked out over ~~glaciers~~ ^{a glacial wilderness} of a sort I'd supposed existed nowhere south of Canada. That was one thing Yorick watched me watching -- Alpine-like peaks, Canadian-scale wilderness, and viewed not from a distance or the edge but ~~from~~ the *inside*.

~~██████████~~

Another was time. Baker and Shuksan had been weekend climbs; Glacier and Eldorado were three-day peaks. At Luna Cirque 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 gendarmes and cols anchored at the ends by Challenger and Fury. By a dozen routes I climbed with the eye from fans of avalanche snow,

over moats, up snow couloirs and icefalls of hanging glaciers, rock ribs and chimneys and perched snowfields, to the ragged summit line.

The massif was not dead mineral, it lived. A person who kept 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 in seeming liquid over a cliff and flow over a basal cone, all in perfect silence, only at the end commencing the roar that continued ^{long} after motion ceased.

That fourth morning I watched the wall in first flood of dawnlight, ^{and then} in pale shadows of ~~the surrounding~~ cotton clouds. I watched during our 1500-foot descent to the cirque floor, our 4000-foot ascent of Luna, and our weary evening slog back up to camp. I watched the summit line become a black silhouette in pink sky. In sleeping bag, 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 huger than existed by day. Sleeping, I listened to a wall that had lived ^{hundreds} ~~tons~~ of thousands of days and would ^{live} ~~live~~ ^{hundreds} ~~live~~ of thousands more.

The fifth morning a thick, swift sky lowered on the summits. Before joining the flight I heaped stones in a cairn to cover a register can ^{I'd} ~~that had~~ ~~been~~ intended for the summit of Fury or Phantom. In the register book I scribbled the date and our names and a quotation from the entry made 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 descended there yesterday, and by the six miles of glacier and snowfield that lay between us and Whatcom Pass, where the trail had been abandoned by the U.S. Forest Service a decade before and in recent years had been crossed by an average of one brush-battling party every two or three years.

In the back of a person's mind was the sequence of events 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. If his condition required a physician, or more stretcher-bearers, a messenger party would have to be despatched. Covering six miles of glacier and snow to Whatcom Pass, then seventeen miles of trail, hard-hiking messengers would reach Ruth Creek road the second day after the accident. The rescue party recruited in Seattle would leave the road the next day and reach Awful Camp in two strenuous days. They would be perhaps three grueling days carrying out the wounded climber, unless a packhorse could be rounded up to save a day. From accident to hospital would be six to nine days.

At the back of a person's 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 develop acute appendicitis, which would ^{simply} be fatal.

During our entire week in the Picket Range we saw a single aircraft, a U.S. Geological Survey plane taking photographs for what would be, when published half a dozen years later, the first detailed 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 ~~the~~ Mt. Stuart, the peak where Rover Paul was killed.

return to Melby day

WITH WHAT EASE ON THIS SOFT NIGHT

After three decades of being set straight, Ted continues to insist that what I said an hour before midnight, with an hour of cliffs still to be 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 ^{before being dismissed.} respectful hearing. At eight o'clock, as dusk was thickening and we were not yet escaped from The Bowl, I had to ask my ropemate, Vic, to start keeping me on belay during rests. Though my body remained perfectly able to downclimb and rappel, my brain, 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 night} -- well, more about that later.)

Ted supposes that a person who spends four hours more asleep than awake and can't remember the night's stupendous display of Northern Lights is not a dependable witness to anything. Ted is wrong.

Thousands of feet below, a passenger train glided beside the Skykomish River and I looked in the bright windows and ^{to} saw smiling travelers lifting glasses of icewater, draining them, refilling from frosted pitchers which, when empty, the waiters replaced, unstinting, because should the kitchen run dry the train could stop and everybody run out and stick their heads in the river.

During the climb I sweated out so much essence 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, Monday afternoon the bathroom scales ~~at home~~ read ten pounds under my Friday weight and I was all 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 hot throat, rationing out a swallow at a time when my breathing sounded dangerously raucous. In that hour before midnight when the four of us assembled on the ledge and looked down to stars glinting in Lake Serene, a swandive below, it is not surprising that Ted ~~had so much dust in his ears that he~~ misunderstood, and the others too, Vic bleating ~~ed~~ "Don't talk like that!"

But they heard wrong. Their ~~logged~~^{tin} ears caught a single word; fear invented the rest. A person cannot forget, ever in his life, the sort of revelation granted me by those stars below. Mangled though the words were by a tongue sloppy as a rotten banana, what I said was, "It would be easy to die now."

Of all the mountains I never wanted to climb, none outranked the North Peak of Index. This was not "something hidden behind the ranges." Located at the Cascade edge, it had been featured in Great Northern Railway newspaper ads since the tracks were laid in the 1890s and had been burning up camera film at an Old Faithful rate since the inventions of the automobile and the Kodak.

Neither was it austere 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 base to an elevation of barely 400 feet, and had blunted the cleaver's north face and scooped in its upper reaches the shallow cirque of The Bowl. But the sanitary ice had melted away ~~was~~ ^{millenia} ago. The ~~route up~~ ^{climbing on} the North Peak, beginning at 3100 feet and ending at a meager 5367 feet, lay entirely in the zone of hyperactive organic acids ~~which~~ ^{which} over the millenia had dissolved the rock to a corruption that richly grew moss, lichen, weeds, slime, and a cedar gymnasium fit only for apes.

Two members of our inner circle, Lardy and All-American Boy, had precociously (and hysterically) done the climb the summer before. This year, whenever our bunch was driving the Stevens Pass Highway to proper mountains, we were compelled to halt while they lept from the car to grovel and salaam, salute and "sig heil!" Their "Nordgipfel" epitomized all that was pubescent and ignoble and disgusting about the sport.

A dozen days after my return from Luna Cirque, and the day after a fiasco on Sloan Peak from which we returned home only in time to ~~go~~ ^{go} to work Monday morning, Vic trapped me on the telephone. To get him off my back, and ~~to~~ ^{thus} get my body back in bed, I told him what he wanted to hear. Awaking Tuesday morning I couldn't believe I'd agreed to go. My final evenings at the Blue Moon I got no sympathy from the jolly boys. They weren't climbers and in their civilian opinion I didn't have to go. At the Somme, when the lieutenant blew ~~the~~ ^{his} whistle, they'd not have gone over the top.

 Fred
 Pdr
 12/24/41

Neither did I get any sympathy as I carried my hangover up the root-ladder trail to Lake Serene and the talus slope leading to our camp at the bottom of the ape gymnasium. At the Somme, even as the German machine guns cut them in half, my partners would've been blowing the whistles. Sunday at 5:37 a.m. (he announced the time) Vic thrust his flashlight in my face and cried, "You look terrible!"

August 20 was recorded by the Stampede Pass Weather Station as the hottest day of the 1950 summer. Of the eight-and-a-quarter hours to the summit I retain minute-by-minute recall. I remember, for example, halting in mid-pitch to gloat over a tiny jewel of water before my eyes, the runoff of dew accumulated in a tiny rock bowl, now visibly evaporating; I was in the nick of time to suck it onto my tongue, along with the setting of mud, also delicious. The hour on the summit's sun-blasted heather field did less to rest than to wilt me. Of the five-and-a-quarter hours from the summit down to the lower Bowl, where I began slipping into sleep and space, I also have full memories -- of rappels done from anchors ^{when} one of us would have trusted in our right minds, of companions leaping crazily for holds and giggling when the leaps didn't end in the Skykomish River.

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

Keying on "die," the leftenants missed the point. They misheard "would be" as "want." The word they lost altogether was "easy."

Ever since childhood, reading stories of the Arctic and Darkest Africa, the oceans and the Roof of the World, I'd been baffled by how common it was for great adventurers, after the most heroic exertions, to tamely lay themselves down to die. From what I knew personally of trying circumstances, quitting seemed a very hard thing to do, next to impossible.

This had nothing to do with ^{the four of} us on the North Peak. Our ledge was spacious, the night balmy, and the thirst was only intolerable during the heavy breathing of hard work. We could have comfortably slept out the night 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 the 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 continuing advantage.

As the leftenants strutted and fretted, I was perfectly relaxed. For one thing, I had nothing but contempt for any person who sought the sort of prestige to be gained on this heap of shit. For another, four ascents of Mt. Rainier had convinced me I was probably immortal -- it was not my death I saw in Lake Serene.

For three hours I'd been repeatedly yanked from sleep to do the next downclimb or rappel and had learned something about -- not the end -- but the (or at least a) beginning of the end. ~~When~~ Presented with a task, my eyes could focus, hands grip doorknobs and feet step in buckets, and all could coordinate ⁿ to perform the intricacies of a rappel. However, my brain was getting fed up with bossing the muscles around, it wanted a breather. Leaving aside deliberate

suicide (the soul getting fed up with bossing the brain around, or being bossed around by the body), in the usual situation a hero doesn't lay himself down to die, but to sleep, fully expecting to awake, as he has every morning of his life. There is a mortal peril to be faced but -- first things first, -- the brain is worn out by thinking and needs a little nap.

Gazing down into the Milky Way, I was in a lifeboat in the South Sea, a wooden ship pounded by Cape Horn gales, a swamp of the Amazon, alkali flats of Death Valley, a blizzard sweeping Everest, Scott's tent a day's march from ~~the fuel and food of~~ One Ton Camp.

I tried to share the revelation with the lieutenants but insofar as they, themselves, were able to think at all, they were haunted by the fear of Lardy and All-American having the laugh on us. If in following years any of them got the message, they've never said. Ted still likes to claim I wanted to jump.

Handwritten notes:
Ted still likes to claim I wanted to jump.
Ted still likes to claim I wanted to jump.
Ted still likes to claim I wanted to jump.

FARTHEST NORTH

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 cursing the Canadian we'd met at the Wheeler Hut, the fellow who'd assured us the arete was "mere bouldering." We saw no boulders, we saw flawless faces and appalling overhangs, and the overall angle was so steep we almost fell over backward. It was like standing on a Seattle sidewalk and looking up the side of 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 summit level of the peak across the col, 9620-foot Uto. Sir Donald was 10,818 feet. Above the ceiling, unseen, rose two more Smith Towers, one atop the other.

A patch of sand amid chunks of quartzite just gave room for two sleeping bags. Drips at the moat of the Uto Glacier provided water. Despite a devilish windy the Primus managed to warm a hoosh of corned beef, canned potatoes, and soup.

Clouds gave away their motion to the ridge, giddyng the head whose feet had notions of taking a stroll up there, and then, as the sun touched the horizon, burst into flame and shriveled to black wisps. The wind stopped dead. We gazed west in red air and eerie quiet to alien peaks and glaciers, two lonesome

Americans at 8200 feet in Canada as blackness surged from the east and stars by the trillions exploded out of nowhere.

The instant we crawled in our bags the rat lept out of the rocks to clean the supper pot, eat the cheese and loaf of bread we'd intended for lunch, and run up and down our bodies, dodging our flailing ice axes. We wouldn't have slept anyhow.

I never could understand a climber heading south from Seattle to the High Sierra or the Mexican volcanoes, or east to the Tetons and Wind River Range. North was the only way to go -- to the British Columbia Coast Range we saw from our North Cascades, to the Cariboos, Monashees, Purcells, Canadian Rockies, and Selkirks of Thorington's cryptic little books -- and beyond to the Yukon and Alaska and the Pole.

The problem for Tom and me in this, our third climbing season, was choosing objectives that would stretch us to our limits yet not humiliate us. The alpine journals were infinitely more garrulous than Thorington but just as unhelpful, in a different way, because the articles were 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; Mountaineers tended to have short money and short vacations, unlike the Ivy Leaguers who wrote the journal articles.

Our goal was set by listening to our elders, our teachers in the Climbing Course. Several years earlier a group of them had managed ^{to take} a trip to the Selkirks, and whenever in their lectures ~~discussed~~ they ^{discussed} ~~discussed~~ foreign adventure, this was the scene. Particularly they doted on a peak whose smooth-planed faces and sharp-chiseled aretes were in the classic mold of the Matterhorn itself, and whose name plainly came from the Everester race.

They'd climbed the Southwest Face, easiest route on the mountain, and when we left Seattle that had seemed more than good enough for us, too. Yet now we were camped at the foot of the Northwest Ridge of which they'd spoken in more than reverence.

It was the company we'd been keeping.

Our best Seattle climbers -- our best American climbers -- were not generally considered (except by themselves, and in a few cases, as the event *was to* prove, correctly) to be "world class." We read tales of the Great North Walls, of expeditions to Nanga Parbat and Kanchenjunga, as awed as a band of Britons sitting around a campfire on Snowdonia, painting themselves blue and listening to stories of the doings of the big chaps who operated out of Rome.

Two days before, on August 30, Tom and I had found on the 11,452-foot summit of Athabaska, in the Canadian Rockies, a wine bottle containing a slip of paper dated within the week and signed by Odell, who in the 1920s watched Mallory and Irvine disappear forever in the cloud on Everest. Yesterday, arriving by train at Glacier, we'd mentioned this to the park warden and he nodded casually -- Odell was his frequent climbing partner, as was Frank Smythe, who in the 1930s attained a point several hundred feet from the top of Everest and was due at Glacier next week.

Then, at Wheeler Hut, the Canadian praised our choice of peak, frowned at mention of the Southwest Face. "Nothing there for a climber of spirit. The Northwest Ridge is what you want. A lovely line. The air is marvelous."

Breathing Everester air, aspiring to be climbers of spirit, we'd carried packs from the Wheeler Hut up through

thickets of ripe huckleberries recently plundered by bears (grizzlies, the warden had warned, and this was another thing we knew nothing about), over moraines, to the col in the middle of the cloud. The cloud had melted and we saw the lovely line. "Mere bouldering," said the Canadian, who for all we knew had done the Great North Faces and taken tea with lamas of the Rongbuk.

In darkness our dry mouths masticated cornflakes and lumps of powdered milk floating in icewater. At 6:05 the rocks took dim form, the time had come -- to slink home [redacted] from our first foreign adventure? Not at 6:05, though the ridge's 2600 feet [redacted] were more naked rock than we'd ever attempted, by a factor of six or seven. Perhaps at 7:05.

We ~~hopped~~^{rocks} along the col to the upleap of the ridge. Tom, as the better climber, was ahead, snarling and cursing at Canadians and their mountains. My knees bounced like a water ouzel's and at the touch of frozen quartzite my hands shook. It's well and good to snap carabiners in winter and draw lines on maps; many a climber signs up for an expedition every December and every June is struck down by a recurrence of congenital diarrhea.

Though his language was ~~awful~~ awful, Tom quickly walked out the eighty feet of rope between us and set belay. I joined him, also walking, and protected his next lead, which also went at a run. It was going well. Too well. When things turned bad they'd be terrible because for every ropelength we ~~climbed~~^{went upward} the Uto Glacier ~~dropped~~^{went downward} two ropelengths. ~~below~~

Faces that had seemed flawless ~~proved~~^{proved} to be ladders of layered quartzite. However, ~~an apparent~~^{an apparent} ~~overhang~~ overhang was, and from the top ~~the~~^{hung} a rappel sling. What horror awaited on the North Face, where

we'd have to go to bypass the overhang? Tom, very recently a Boy Scout, used words I'd never heard in lumber mill or railway freight sheds, Blue Moon or Chaucer.

We couldn't find the horror that had forced the rappel. Dawn lightened to full morning and we scrambled past more sling-draped overhangs. We obviously were not the worst climbers ever to do the ridge, we evidently were superior to somebody, possibly the Ivy League sophomores ^{reported} ~~to~~ to be near death all over the Selkirks from attacks of diarrhea.

No pitch was longer than thirty feet; ~~we~~ we paused to wrap the surplus rope around our waists. The ladderways scarcely were "pitches" at all, the holds so abundant they never had to be looked for and the rock so sound the holds never had to be tested. Tom noted the improvement in my knees and offered me a lead and thenceforth we leapfrogged. Belaying became perfunctory -- almost. The route often took us out on the Southwest Face, where the number of bounces in a fall to the Asulkan Glacier was incalculable, and out onto the North Face, where a person on the way ~~down~~ to the Uto Glacier would be lucky to get in more than two or three.

Sunlight flooded Uto Peak while our route remained in frozen shadow. Now and then we kicked steps in pockets of powder snow lingering from the storm we'd slept out ^{at Abbott Hut, in the Rockies,} six days earlier, ~~at Abbott Hut, in the Selkirks, in the Selkirks~~ ~~at Abbott Hut, in the Selkirks~~. To pause was to shiver, no matter how sunny were the Selkirks blossoming north and south and east, and the Rockies east.

Sir Donald's quartzite was as pleasing to the eye as the fingers. Had the mountain been handy to Athens its rock, in hues from dark gray and pale gray to cream ^{and} pearly white, would have been the stuff of the Acropolis.

We quit belaying, considered unroping altogether, and drew even with the summit of Uto; two Smith Towers climbed. Except for occasional neat little puzzles, quickly solved, we traveled ~~simultaneously~~ ^{simultaneously}; a third Smith done. The loftiness was exhilarating in a different manner from that of Mt. Rainier's Columbia Crest. There a person had to trust crampons to keep his body attached to Earth, accepted the chance of being picked up by the seat of his britches and flung into orbit. Here, though ~~though~~ on a splinter of the Earth's crust as skinny as a flagpole, no solar winds could blow a body loose, fingers and tennis shoes would 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 ~~Canada~~ ^{the Canadian sky.}

~~_____~~
The eastern scarp plummeted ~~in~~ 7000 ~~unbroken~~ feet ~~_____~~ to the Beaver River. Beyond its valley rose ~~the~~ meadow ridges of the Dogtooth Mountains, and then, across the broad emptiness of the Columbia River trench, the long sweep of the Rockies from southern foothills north to Robson.

Below to the south was the Illecillewaet Névé, fifteen square miles, an icecap of the sort atop Greenland and the South Pole; beyond were the even larger Deville Névé and more of the same in the rarely-visited Dawson Range, Bishops Range, Purity Range, and Battle Range, most of ^{whose} ^{were still} ~~the~~ peaks unclimbed. [^]
Beyond lay another complete mountain system, the Purcells, and we plainly saw the legendary Bugaboos.

North beyond Rogers Pass, route of the Canadian Pacific Railway (and no highway, glory be), the other half of the Selkirks climaxed in the Sir Sanford and Adamant Ranges. To get to the basecamp in Fairy Meadow (as we would -- north was the direction to go, the way to the Pole) we'd have to hire a boat

to cross the Columbia River, relay-pack through miles of untrailed ~~trails~~^{brush}, build bridges over torrents, and be very polite to grizzlies.

Thirty-five minutes were all we could spare to photograph the horizons and eat the lunch we'd saved from the rat, several circles of Sailor Boy pilot bread and a couple squares of Hershey's milk chocolate. At 11:45 a.m. in the beginning of September, twilight was ^{barely} eight hours off.

On the ascent, despite the quantities of air at our backs and under our tennis shoes, Earth's quartzite had been close before our eyes and within fingers' clutch. On the descent, for all the deep-rooted mountain at our backs, ~~our~~^{the} route lay through the sky. Eyes seeking footing found none in the gulf of the Asulkan valley on our left nor the gulf of the Uto Glacier and Beaver valley on our right. Newly seen from the up side, the ridge was as strange as in morning and more intimidating -- 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 all converge at the summit, the routes down all diverge to the brinks of overhangs.

On the way up, the turning point in our confidence had brought an interior relaxation that was celebrated by private sidetrips out on the North Face. The turning point on the way down came when we were wandering, confused and afraid, on the North Face and suddenly knew from our noses we'd been here before. Tom began gathering souvenirs -- the rappel slings that had mystified us. Most were the quarter-inch manila everybody used for sling rope. But the bottom one, the first we'd seen on the ascent, was 7/16-inch nylon. Ivy Leaguers!

We hop-skipped down the quartzite ladders with the grace of dancers, cat-stepped the knifeblade of the ridge 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 winds from the north were not trying to throw us away but to teach us the secret of the birds.

At 4:55 we discovered that the rat, denied the Sailor Boy and Hershey, had whiled away the day eating the leather wristloops of our ice axes. Perhaps it would now scamper to the summit for crumbs, then scamper back down to its nest at the col, perhaps check out the "trail from Glacier to waterfall below Overlook," pick up the next party of climbers and do the ridge again, and again, and again, scamper scamper scamper.

That would be the life.

Back home in Seattle. I had no interest in mountains the rest of the year nor well into the next. Often, though, I awoke in the night reaching for quartzite.

*return to
puller the*

BACK TO THE COUNTY

It was so quiet the night of January 21, 1952, Betty's and my first on Cougar Mountain. The radio, dispirited by country-style low voltage, went dumb. Silence rang in ears. We spoke low and sparingly lest something bellow from the dark woods, "SHUT UP!"

The University District never was this quiet. Always there were footfalls on the sidewalk ~~and~~ outside the windows of our basement apartment, cars on the street, jolly boys roistering to and from Blue Moon and Rainbow and College Club, the hum of metropolis enveloping all.

Nights north of the city hadn't been this quiet, Aurora Avenue being U.S. Highway 99, the main street from Seattle to Everett, California to Canada.

Our Cougar Mountain home was a goodly distance from the Newcastle Road; faintly we could hear ~~the~~ cars climbing to homes higher on the mountain but only several dozen people lived there, mostly ^{all} in bed by ten. U.S. Highway 10, main street from Seattle over the Cascades, skirted the foot of the mountain but after bedtime was traveled almost solely by over-the-hump trucks grinding in compound low up to the divide between Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish; in the long intervals between trucks there was no sound of man.

Or nature. Mountain camps were not this quiet. There, near or far, always was a waterfall or a river, commonly a wind, occasionally an avalanche.

It was so dark. Nine years Betty and I had lived, separately then together, where millions of rays glared from automobiles and billboards and neon signs and streetlamps, leaked from houses and shops and office buildings, pierced through the night from so many points and in so many directions they left hardly a bush or alley unilluminated, and bounced and rebounded from walls and

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windows -- and the sky -- to unite in the all-permeating glow one only could escape, even in a basement apartment, in the closet or under (not in) the bed.

Cougar Mountain was miles east of the skyglow, under the Milky Way, and from our house no other house's electricity could be seen. Opening the door to go out in the forest that was our yard, we were confronted by the black nullity familiar in wilderness forests but startling at what was, after all, not a frontier outpost but a commuter's cottage a half-hour from downtown Seattle. We recalled from childhood that people who live ~~out~~ in the sticks always keep a flashlight by the door.

Our closest neighbor cast not the slightest glimmer from his hundred-odd acres. I never knew the precise location of his cabin -- neither electric wires nor road pointed to it and searching wouldn't have been polite. Possibly he used kerosene, more likely depended on daylight and firelight. In the years we shared a property line I saw him no oftener than every month or so, crooking along in garments he must have dug out of Goodwill's garbage cans; ~~and together~~ ~~in~~ in winter he cut ~~his~~ head and arm holes in a gunnysack -- in freezing weather, two gunnysacks. He had a garden, picked wild berries, and trapped mountain beaver, the largest local rodent. He kept no gun, however. Chinese pheasant roosters hooted in forests and fields, grouse exploded ~~from the brush~~, ^{from the brush}, quail paraded and flurried, deer cropped the daffodils, coyotes chased chickens, and bear crapped the community driveway.

He'd been a contractor in Seattle until World War I, when his German accent earned him a persecution that drove him to hermit life on the newly-logged mountain east of Lake Washington. We were told this by the area's next-longest resident, who'd bought property in the 1920s, over the years occasionally talked to the Hermit, in later years visited him periodically to see after his health, and was the one to find him in his cabin, many days dead.

It might be supposed that a person whose closest relatives were sixty years remote in Germany and who had lived alone and friendless forty years would pass from the earth obscurely. We learned differently from the police, for whom ~~it~~ ^{this} was old stuff. For many years our next-door neighbor had been closely watched by people he didn't know, people who didn't live on or anywhere near Cougar Mountain.

How did they know him? Perhaps by noting the ragged old man who periodically visited Seattle to pick up vegetables thrown away on Produce Row, ^{and too rotten for} ~~meat~~ ^{the} wholesale butchers ~~found to sell~~ to sell; trailing him to see what bus he caught and where he got off and where he left the Newcastle Road to go into the woods; checking the tax rolls to find his name; watching the death notices for his name to turn up. By this or whatever means, for weeks our forest was thronged at night by silent diggers whose presence we never suspected; the police, questioning a few caught by day, found they came from cities and hamlets and stumpranches in six or seven counties. Thereafter, we looked out our windows to the black night with a new sick feeling in the stomach. The ghouls dug up -- probably -- nothing. "Probably" because eventually an officer seeking clues to heirs lifted a loose floorboard in the cabin and found the Hermit's Hoard. Not yellow gold -- green cash, bankbooks, government bonds.

The neighborhood driveway from the Newcastle Road served -- not counting the Hermit or a loner who camped in a shack on weekends and was known as the Other Hermit -- three ~~other~~ families. They welcomed our arrival so cordially we were rather concerned, until one said, "We get along pretty good here. Mainly because we don't see each other much." Around New Years there'd be a communal drink or two, but the major social event ~~was~~ ^{annual} was the work party to rebuild the driveway after the season of snows, freezes, thaws, rains, and floods.

Immediately on taking possession of our three acres I commenced a general tidying. The former owner had let limbs and trees blow down and lie there, trees die and remain upright, logs and brush entangle in an impassable snarl. Every free day of winter and spring I went out in rubber boots and tin pants and sweatshirt, carrying ax and crosscut, reliving 1939 and my Pioneering merit badge. I piled brush atop old tires, splashed on kerosene, and ignited infernos that erupted clouds of smoke and steam so high above treetops that for miles around the other Dan'l Boones could see one of their brethren was doing his duty.

The second phase of bringing the acres to heel was the eradication of undesirables, notoriously the weedy alder and willow that stole space from such worthier citizens as Douglas fir and hemlock and red cedar, bigleaf maple and bitter cherry and madroan -- and my special pets, the dogwoods whose large white flowers made each tree a springtime sky garden and the cottonwoods whose seeding time in early summer filled the air with flying cotton.

A first year of hard labor gave hope the land might ultimately be tamed, that eventually we'd walk our acres on trails esthetically hedged, not rankly overgrown, by salal and Oregon grape and swordfern and bracken, red currant and goatsbeard and fireweed and ocean spray, baldhip rose and thistle and nettle, salmonberry and thimbleberry and snowberry and red huckleberry and wild blackberry and blackcap and red elder.

The compulsion to go in the mountains every weekend of the year waned; it was cheaper and more convenient to get wet, cold, bruised, abraded, fire-scorched, and exhausted fighting brush in the backyard. However, each spring the ^{impulse} ~~drive~~ to conquer ~~the heights~~ revived and each fall I'd find that while I was off on campaign the weed trees had grown like weeds and even good citizens had taken

liberty for license, littering the ground with deadwood, or themselves dying and toppling. In winter rains as I pulled on tin pants and boots and picked up ax and saw, I sympathized with Roman legionaries stationed on the Rhine -- cut down one German barbarian and three sprang up in his place.

As on the Rhine, confrontation led to dialogue, if that term applies when both parties are talking and neither listening. Never arguing, never obeying, never apologizing, the three acres proceeded with birth, growth, death, and decay as if I weren't there. In the end I had to be the one to shut up and listen. Willow stumps would not stay dead, bristled in spring with thickets of new shoots, so I let them alone, except to gather sprays in early March to brighten the living room. So fecund was the red alder that any patch of soil exposed by shovel or flood sprouted myriad seedlings, so I gave up pulling them, except now and then to examine the root nodules that fix nitrogen from the air, enriching the soil even as they feed the tree, making it the prime pioneer of raw land, at the foot of retreating glaciers in ~~the~~ wilderness mountains and on Cougar Mountain alike.

No longer a slave of ambition, sitting in the (no longer "my") woods, I noted wrens and towhees dodging into heaps of dead limbs, flickers and hairy woodpeckers rapping and pileated woodpeckers jackhammering snags, and the roostings and singings and peckings and wingings of juncos, nuthatches, bushtits, house finches, purple finches, chickadees, goldfinches, warblers, swallows, robins, varied thrushes, grosbeaks, pine siskins, white-crowned sparrō^os, golden-crowned sparrows, song sparrows, fox sparrows, hummingbirds, tanagers, stellar jays, band-tail pigeons, crows, merlins, Coopers hawks, and red-tail hawks -- and in the dusk the bats, and in the night the hooty owls -- and they all seemed to consider the woods esthetic enough as they were, littered and tangled and rank and wild.

For some years after I hung up the tin pants and turned the three acres

loose, Betty persisted, forever nagging to have a tree or two dropped or limbed or topped to let light into the house or her potato patch. I resisted as vigorously as if she'd suggested the noise level in our house could be lowered by eliminating a daughter or two.

Return to
Milley Way

COMING AND GOING

Sunday, August 10, I swamped out the chicken house, installed new leathers in the pump in a vain attempt to suck water from the well, gleaned the season's last sparse picking of wild blackberries, enough for a tart, and in afternoon lay on the lawn of the 200-meter hut and connected Cougar Mountain to ---

---To Whitehorse, second mountain (after Rainier) whose name I learned, in January of 1930, while keeping watch for a white horse galloping over the cliffs. To Nanga Pilchuck, first named mountain I climbed, in 1940, with Troop 324. To Shuksan, where in July of 1948 I first saw the Picket Range. To Baker, from whose summit on a winter-sharp October morning in 1948 I made out peaks far north, on the border of imagination.

---To the ridge between Persis and Index, a considerable portion of the Cougar Mountain skyline, where on the May 4th just past we were six hours from summit to summit, seventeen hours from road to road, and for a high point of barely 6000 feet gained 9000 feet, mostly in snow so soft we sank to knees and hips.

Lying on the burnt-out lawn (the well had gone ~~effectively~~ dry in June and we were hauling water from a gas station in a five-gallon milk can and had none to spare for grass, hardly any for chickens) I traced the white swamps of Persdex Ridge and made out the one where we'd been swept by a snow squall, from within which I'd made out Cougar Mountain in the blue-hazy distance. I couldn't see the spot, on the far side of the ridge, where at seven o'clock in darkening evening, the party having somehow splintered, one member probably dead already and another a ~~sub~~ candidate to join him, Rover Paul and I lay side by side, prostrate, exhausted, after escaping a vertical morass of shoulder-deep snow

by climbing a tree. Gasping for breath, Paul said, "All I want is to come home alive from every peak I ever climb."

As I lay on my lawn, connecting, white puffs poked up all along the Cascade horizon, an unbroken rank the entire hundred-odd miles of our skyline. They appeared to be erupting, an illusion caused by the swift westward rolling, at first appearance they already were thrusting high in the stratosphere. Mountains of earth were dwarfed by these mountains of sky. At this frightful speed they'd be on us in minutes.

They halted, hung high and heavy, twenty miles from Cougar Mountain. Later I was to remember that in my relief at our escape not a thought crossed my mind of friends inside the clouds.

That I wasn't with them wasn't my fault. In June, Tom and Lardy and I had assembled to set out for American Border Peak but the rain was so hard, the forecast so grim, we didn't leave town. July 27, at Camp Muir on Mt. Rainier, Lardy and I agreed to try again in two weeks. This Friday past I'd called to settle details. He told me a forest fire was blocking access to the Border Peaks and he and Rover Paul had decided to switch to the West Ridge of Stuart. I told him what I thought of a Puget Sounder who would cross the Cascades in August -- to the east-slope sun that scorches the tongue, dessicates the brain, fries the liver and lights.

I'd felt guilty, lying in bed this Sunday morning hours after my buddies had pulled on their boots and chewed up their corn flakes and lumps of powdered milk. But not too guilty. There were, and had been, other entertainments on the three acres.

--Such as scratching nettle bites and thorn scratches, which I didn't recall enjoying as a kid, but in those days I thought wild blackberry pie was a cheap Depression substitute for a genuine ~~pie~~ ^{good-times} pie, like banana cream.

Our first weeks on the mountain there'd been snow so deep that everybody submitted to the Lord's will and stayed home from work to build snowmen and throw snowballs.

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There'd been winds. At first sigh in the tall firs the lights would blink out and the all-electric house go dead for a day or two. We'd dine by candlelight on hooshes cooked by Primus, wear mountain sweaters, parkas, stocking caps, and mittens -- camping in the county.

The creek had quit about the same time the water dropped too low in the well for the pump to suck it up. The headwater marsh stayed wet ~~long enough~~ to provide frog songs through the summer.

Chickens: The prior owners abandoned them to us without a tear. Face to face, I recognized these as essentially the identical fowl I'd fled in 1943. However, after the first platter of fresh eggs I wasn't mad at them anymore.

Fresh peas, as I abruptly remembered at first ~~cooking~~ ^{picking}, were not the same vegetable sold in stores. I looked forward to fall, with potatoes new from the ground, corn brought to table ten minutes from the stalk after the quickest dip in boiling water. Agriculture, I decided, needn't be degrading, ~~unless~~ ^{if not} carried to excess.

In May a friend at her job gave Betty a kitty and since the job was in a printing plant it was unavoidably named Etaoin Shrdlu. In August we visited the Humane Society to pick out the sort of cuddly/puppy ^{little} Betty wanted; I agreed on one whose ^{huge} paws guaranteed he'd grow into the name I'd already chosen, Tamburlaine, Scourge of God. On July 26 Betty and I climbed from Paradise

Valley to Camp Muir, 10,000 feet, her carrying, in addition to an overnight pack, what in five months would be the baby.

After the Sunday playing hooky from climbing, Monday noon I was summoned from my office in Seattle to three days in Ingalls Creek, at the foot of Mt. Stuart, on whose summit Paul had been struck by lightning while I was swamping out the chicken house. He wasn't the first of our bunch to die. Surprisingly, nobody had on the Persdex Traverse but Art went into a St. Helens crevasse ^{in May} and in July Dick fell from a Baring cliff. Paul, though, was the first to be killed on a rope I was supposed to be tied to -- the rope ^{that carried} ~~along which~~ the current ~~flowed~~ to Lardy. Ingalls Creek also was my first experience of a helicopter, helping load Lardy aboard, and the first time I saw a newspaper reporter in the mountains. In years to come I was often to reflect on 1952 and the conjunction it foreshadowed of wilderness, technology, mortality, and show business.

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return to Mithy My

GO SNOW-KAWMIE MOUN-TIN

As our only child until the middle of her second year, Penny was an intent parent-watcher and, the better to be so, a precocious walker. She was an early talker, too, the better to influence parents. Any sunny morning I didn't put on swit and tie for the city or rig out in rubber boots and tin pants to manhandle the acres, she'd toddle after me, pluck at my pants, and say (a question? a command? an assumption?) "Go Snow-kawmie Moun-tin."

The old CCC road up the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River was our favorite picnicking. Virgin forests supplied deer fern for transplanting; ~~and~~ talus slopes, chunks of granite that would become a fireplace, when and if a bank could be induced to loan money on property so far beyond the "red line" that marked, on financiers' maps, the subdivision frontier. The creeks gave Penny pebbles for tossing, sticks for floating, sand for squishing, pools for wading or falling into fully clothed. Finally, the road was rough. The first year of her life, Penny never was put down for the night or a nap without instantly beginning to squawl and spit up. In the Jeep station wagon the colic was jounced out of her by the CCC chuckholes and she slept like a baby.

As Number Two, Becky was spared the relentless picking up and handing on from parent to parent to grandparent to grandparent and (therefore?) slept angelically -- except while jouncing along the CCC road, when she wailed by the hour. Penny having grown out of the colic, we shifted to the Carbon River, where the pebbles and sticks and sands and pools were equally good and the road was smoother.

Being a typical glacial river, overloaded at its source by the dumpings from Mt. Rainier ice, the Carbon was ~~constantly~~^{perpetually} unloading excess gravel and boulders, filling the bed, and forever braiding new channels back and forth across the valley. On each ^{of our} return^s the remembered sandbars and pools were gone, replaced by new ones. On sunny Cougar Mountain mornings of neither suit-tie nor rubber boots-tin pants, the girls would jointly suggest-request "the river that changes all the time."

Their inability to retain "Carbon" from week to week was a bit annoying until I recalled that at their age the only mountain names I knew were "Rainier" and "Snoqualmie Falls" (and of course, "Huckleberry"). After all, what did "carbon" mean to them? The coal seams were miles downstream from our picnics. So I adopted their name.

I've never read what the original residents called the river, nor if any European ever asked. The old-locals' name for another river has been rendered by some anthropologists, in perhaps the best approximation possible with our alphabet, as "Sdoh-kwahl-bu"; government cartographers ~~labeled~~ settled on "Snoqualmie"; a fair translation would be "Moon River," a name with meaning for the locals because the stream cuts the base of Mt. Si, which according to legend was the moon, before it fell to earth, ~~there~~. I used to speculate whether, if Penny and Becky chanced to be the locals when the next wave of invaders arrived, in ~~their~~ flying saucers, the new maps would carry some approximation of "Ribberthachainjuzallatime."

Near the snout of the Carbon Glacier there lay, when these picnickings began, a chunk of quarried mountain a dozen feet square at the base and almost that high; ledges ~~conveniently~~ permitted easy clambering to the summit, site of many a lunch. One spring the rock was missing. Penny and Becky were ~~enraged~~,^{enraged},

wanted to find out who took it and go kick them in the shins. When I explained the power of a river in flood they stared suspiciously at the river, their friend, and at me.

The summer they were seven-and-a-half and six I introduced them to backpacking. (Betty was home with Number Three.) They ~~was~~ were not up to it. Under packs containing merely sleeping bags and clothes, their little backs bent double. The first steps from Mt. Rainier's White River Campground they were moaning and by the end of the four miles to Glacier Basin I was afraid I'd hurt them. Upon emerging from forest to the meadow flat, a quarter-mile away they spotted a snowfield and a minute or so after the packs fell to the grass the world record for the 440-yard dash was shattered. The whole three hours to supper the tortured children were running ^{the snow} up and sliding down, [^] screeching like wild girls.

In the night I sat alone by the fire, comparing. My introduction to backpacking had come at twelve, near childhood's end, not in the middle, so Glacier Basin would not be their Marmot Pass. In any event, they'd already spent far more time in wilderness -- camping more nights on the edge, day-hiking on more trails -- than I at twice their age. Even their home was more country than mine had been ^{at} -- [^] Halloween, to fill their ^{treat} bags, [^] Betty had to put them in the car and drive miles from house to house.

Would Snow-kawmie Moun-tin be Penny's Huckleberry? Or would she and Becky share The River That Changes All the Time?

Often I'd dreamt of a mountain so beautiful that sheer joy awoke me. Lying in bed I'd work frantically to fix details of the landscape before they faded, so I could try to remember where the mountain was, and when.

Often, too, I'd rounded a corner in a trail to a view I surely and certainly never had seen before, yet *felt a catch in the throat.* ~~found myself on the verge of sobbing.~~

In firelight, only the three of us in the basin, I watched the two sleepers in their bags and wondered if this camp would be in their dreams, and what near-memories might bring them to the edge of tears when they were thirty-five.

return to Miller May

WILD WHEELS

The usual Cariboo summer climaxed in the Anahim Stampede, no Madison Square Garden rodeo but a genuine whoop-tee-doo of working cowboys and working (as cowboys) Indians. The year of our visit it shared top billing with the Grand Opening of the Mackenzie Highway, planned to link British Columbia's interior plateau to the coast and enrich both with the interflow of lumber and cows and fish and American tourists.

As things happened, neither of these organized mass events so stirred the Cariboo that summer of 1955 as the spontaneous solo exploit of the Tidewater Wildman, first person ever to drive a passenger car from Bella Coola up the highway, before it was open, through the Coast Range to the plateau. Some notice also was given the first American-operated passenger car to descend through the Coast Range to Bella Coola.

Vic proposed the trip to scout the possibility of a non-expeditionary approach to peaks of the Coast Range, substituting automobiles for boats and airplanes. I was interested because the clearcuts and multiple-abuse roads in the North Cascades were the U.S. Forest Service's way of telling us wilderness mountaineers it was time to be moving along -- and because the peaks of Vic's aim were those I'd seen that winter-crisp day from the summit of Mt. Baker.

I had to turn Vic down. I could handle a share of the gas and oil and busted tires, not of a whole hardtop Ford ^{sedan.} Vic accepted the entire risk. I'd have to ^{invest} ~~invest~~ nothing more than backpacking several days from the muskeg

that swallowed the car, wherever, to the nearest outpost of hitchhiking to Seattle.

On our drive up the Cariboo Highway, whenever buying gas or hamburgers we ^{routinely} asked for news of the Mackenzie Highway. Everybody was bored; there'd been half a dozen Grand Openings, ^{one} or two ^{every recent} summer, this Victoria politician or that riding a cat far enough on the old pack trail to get his picture taken. Everybody, however, was excited about the Wildman. At first and second and third hand we heard about the panels and windows dented and broken as by an avalanche of boulders, the missing fender and the wired-on door, the bumper and extra spare tires in the back seat, and the gas tank in the back seat, jury-rigged by copper tubing through the dashboard to the carburetor. Stopping ever so briefly for gas or coffee, the driver, redeyed from lack of sleep, raved against injustice, vowed revenge on scoundrels whose names and crimes were lost in translation.

At the metropolis of the plateau, Williams Lake, population 500, we turned off the Cariboo Highway, recently paved, west onto the Mackenzie, recently graveled. (On a try the summer before, Vic had quit on the outskirts of town, stuck in the mud.) Townsfolk we'd asked for news had snickered at the designation "highway" for what ^{they said} was just the same old wagon track that went 226 miles from Williams Lake to Lake Anahim, where the horse trail ~~was~~ began.

The evening of our second day from Seattle we stopped at Alexis Creek Inn for supper, served family style to us and two other customers, a cowboy and the forest warden. We asked the cowboy the whereabouts of the Gang Ranch,

reputed to be the world's largest cattle ranch, 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 hardly ever went beyond Lake Anahim, though -- nobody there. Mainly he used an airplane to patrol his thousands of ~~square~~ square miles of lodgepole pine and muskeg, larger than many states and a number of European nations, and inhabited by a few score "preempters." The principal means of improving the preempted claims -- and the adjoining Crown lands -- was setting the forests afire to make more ~~grassland~~ grass. We asked if that weren't illegal and he allowed as how it was but by the time he spotted the fires from the air, flew back to his Land Rover, and winched it through mudholes, he hardly ever found a fellow standing there with the match still in hand.

Vic and I had read Grass Beyond the Mountains, the personal story of an American who came to the western Cariboo to preempt open range and run cattle. The warden advised us not to praise the book to folks we met; most everyone we'd meet west of Alexis Creek was in it and had opinions about the author.

The plateau tilted imperceptibly upward to the west, bunchgrass and dust yielded to subalpinelike meadows still oozing -- in mid-July -- spring snowmelt. Gravel road dwindled to dirt ruts. Settlement thinned to scattered cabins. Every hour or so we'd see somebody by the road. He'd drop whatever he was doing to wave. We'd stop to talk, and learn that log cabins were too cold for this country, you had to use double layers of sawn planks with some sort of insulation in between, but it was hard to get real planks out of these skinny little pines. As for the condition of the Mackenzie ~~territory~~ ~~territory~~ in its western extension, we'd hear nothing new. The Wildman was

what they wanted to talk about -- the fellow was in such a rush ~~that~~ he didn't even ~~slow down to~~ ^{slow down to} say hello.

One person with no story to tell was the man we awoke by knocking on his door at ten in the morning. We apologized, but after all, the sign on the door said "EATS." He was glad of the customers, built a fire in the stove, and routed his wife out of bed to cook bacon and eggs. They'd been asleep when the Wildman came through and missed seeing him. So had the folks at Nimpo Lake Lodge, off on a sideroad, where we had supper, served family-style to us and a couple of American trout fishermen. Vic praised the roast, knew it wasn't any sort of meat available in Seattle butcher shops, and asked what ^{it} was, in a region with much game, no refrigeration, and the occasional game warden, ^{that was} an indelicate question. Said our host, "That's meat meat."

Another person with no story to tell was the farmer who towed us by tractor across the flooded valley of the Dean River. He had Vic sign a chit so he could collect a fee from the B.C. Highway Department, which, having put the wagon track on its official map, felt compelled to keep it open, one way or another. The farmer wouldn't speculate on how the Wildman could have crossed a mile-wide, hipdeep lake without help of the tractor. Later we learned the farmer wasn't well-liked and his prosperity was envied; locals crossed the Dean as they did the many other floodwaters in the territory, under their own power, removing the fan belt in order not to drown the electrical system.

Vic's thesis was proved by a four-day sidetrip from the Mackenzie, Southwest to Lake Tatlayoka. From summits of the Niut, easternmost uplift of the Coast Range, we gained close views south to two-mile-high mountains that never had been climbed, never named, and ^{to} white sprawls generalized by the map as "extensive icefields." A scant dozen miles west rose the super-Alpine

thrust I'd seen from Baker that crystalline October morning of 1948 and recognized as Mt. Waddington.

Returned to the Mackenzie, we paused at the junction to decide whether to turn east or west. Twice on the sidetrip we'd been rescued from mudholes by a local preempter in a Model A. On the "highway" we'd been towed through a lake and for miles had seen no road maintenance or government presence, ^{nor any "EATS" or "GAS".} However, it seemed a shame, so close to the dead-end of the 226-mile wagon track, to go home without a look.

There was little enough to look at. We never saw Lake Anahim itself ^{or the Stampede grounds,} only a small clearing in the spindly forest, a cluster of log cabins and plank huts -- and the charred ruins of a much more substantial structure. We scouted a short way westward on the bulldozer gouge through the miserable little pines, around ominous muskeg meadow-marshes; mudholes in the "highway" were hundreds of feet long, the black muck studded with glacial erratics poised to batter and rake the bottom of a car struggling to squirm by. Vic felt he could wait another year to drive to Bella Coola.

The charred ruins were those of the new General Store of which we'd heard nearly as much as the Wildman. We stopped in the old General Store, reoccupied pending ~~re~~reconstruction. Pointless though it ^{seemed,} ~~was~~ Vic asked ^{old} the/question one last time -- and got a whole new answer. The clerk said there'd been a "steady stream" of traffic the past year or two, people driving up from Bella Coola to inspect the General Store, pride of the western Cariboo and envy of the coast. He hadn't seen the Wildman -- who could notice one more during a Stampede? What with the knack folks hereabouts had of figuring how to make wheels go around, he wasn't surprised a passenger car had come through, though the rigs he'd seen had been jeeps and weapons

carriers and pickups. However, bigger machines were "out there" now, preparing for the Grand Opening, four days away. This Opening was so Grand there were going to be dignitaries all the way from Ottawa.

Vic weighed the odds and threw his Ford in the pot. Two hours (fourteen miles) from Anahim it sank to the bumpers in a mudhole. We'd have got it out, as we had from fourteen mudholes already, but the engine quit. Reviewing the clerk's information, we realized "out there" could be anywhere along fifty miles of road; we recalled that he'd qualified "steady stream" with "most every week."

As we prepared to shoulder packs for the hike home, three pickup trucks arrived from the east and halted, blocked by the Ford. The trucks were new, traveling in convoy from Vancouver to the General Motors Garage in Bella Coola, inaugurating the overland route that would free coastal residents from the piratical freight rates of the ships. The three truckful of mechanics and friends joshed us for trying to get around this country in any vehicle but a GM, the only make with frontier clearance. They'd heard, though, ^{that} a Ford fuel pump could be fixed with a matchbook cover.

One hour (six miles) from the rescue we passed an assemblage of broken and stuck-in-the-mud bulldozers and trucks. The handful of men glumly wielding picks and shovels didn't promise an opening that was very Grand.

In two more hours (seventeen more miles), having come to the abrupt west edge of the plateau and plunged off the brink into the canyon of the Bella Coola River, the Ford buried its nose in gravel soup beside a metal culvert ^{waiting to be} ~~not quite~~ installed. Again by necessity, the convoy pulled us loose ^{then} and shepherded us to the valley bottom and what had been, for years, the deadend of the forty-mile ^{east} road from tidewater.

Twelve hours (ninety-five miles) out of Anahim we entered Bella Coola. Sixteen hours later, having slept in the schoolyard and waited for the GM Garage to heal the Ford's worst wounds, we left, in dread. The return, however, went off with ~~many~~ ^{few} hitches. The Ford again sank to hubcaps in the gravel soup but we dug drainage ditches with ice axes, camped overnight, and in morning it snorted ~~through~~ free. The following midnight, nearing Williams Lake, it quit, but in morning, no explanation, started. Nearing Seattle it burst into flames but a passerby ^{by shaking up and uncapping a quart} doused the flames ~~with~~ a bottle of Coca Cola and a tow truck hauled the Ford home, or close enough.

Our stay in Bella Coola was too brief to know the place. Unless a person watched the tides he'd have no sense of "coast" in the lakelike waters at the foot of steep mountains; open ocean lay farther west out the fiord than Anahim was east. Though the mountains fell short ~~of the height~~ of Mt. Waddington, their abrupt rise above sealevel pastures was very reminiscent of Whitehorse Mountain above pastures of the Stillaguamish River -- except these peaks were a quarter again taller and the extra footage was all ^{naked rock} ~~cliff~~ and glacier.

The memory that was to grow keener with the years was the drive to tidewater, down the forty-mile valley of old-growth Douglas fir and red cedar and western hemlock, virgin forest that was patched, near the end, by pastures, and, on slopes above town, by fresh clearcuts, ~~the beginning~~. This is how it would have been in 1855, had automobiles and a road ^{then} existed, to drive from Snoqualmie Pass to Seattle, in wildwoods the entire distance to the village on Elliott Bay where loggers were just starting to climb First Hill.

When we called for the patched-up Ford our GM friends reported the town was a-buzz with news of the "first American tourists." The evening before, at

the restaurant, the cook and waitress and half-dozen customers had so politely concealed their curiosity we almost failed to learn the conclusion of the Legend of 1955. We ~~never would~~^{wouldn't} have had I not felt the need of something for my nerves and asked the waitress the way to the "licensed premises." A fellow down the counter let out a yip and scooted along the stools to join us.

There were no licensed premises, he explained, because provincial law provided for local option and the local majority, preached into a puritanical fury, had voted no. A dissenting minority made imports by ship for private consumption -- quietly, behind drawn curtains. There was, however, a band of jolly boys whose defiant roistering was audible on the streets, scandalizing Norse dairy ranchers and fishermen whose most berserker joys were singing hymns and sticking a pinch of Copenhagen between gum and cheek.

On a recent warm Sunday our informant uncapped his first beer of the afternoon and stepped out the door of his house onto his front porch, where he was arrested by the constable for public drunkenness. He refused to pay the fine, demanded a trial. The town lawyer declined the case. The town judge set a trial date too early for counsel to be brought in by a scheduled ship or floatplane. He therefore drove nonstop to Vancouver and back and the Bella Coola court was so cowed by the big-city lawyer the case was dismissed. Thus it was that the highway of Alexander Mackenzie brought civil liberties and religious freedom into the wilderness.

THE SYNDROME

There was chuckling in the booths when our Rocky Mountain man fell off his stool and the bartender refused him another drink. He certainly wasn't drunk; the afternoon at the conference table had fully sobered him up from lunch. He was terribly scared, though. On hands and knees he quavered, "Damn thing just tilted over and dumped me off!"

He wasn't at conference next morning, to the amusement of travelers just getting on top of their Bloody Marys and badly needing something in the way of a joke. I wasn't laughing. Nine years before, the West Ridge of Forbidden had tried to pull the same stunt on me, and though I'd managed to hang on, it was a rough ride for part of a minute, my mortal flesh dangling out over the Cascade River, then ^{out over} the McAllister Glacier, back and forth. Four years after that I stepped out of an elevator onto a Seattle sidewalk and it began to heave and dip, perfectly normal in a major earthquake, such as Seattle and I had experienced on more than one occasion, except I was the only person ~~in Seattle~~ who knew this one was happening. Two years later I was hired by a company headquartered in New York. Having flown before, though not recently, I went blithely enough to the Seattle-Tacoma Airport and onto the plane. It lurched up in the air and the sky expanded in every direction, including below, and the craft was tilting and dipping and heaving worse than the earthquake or

the West Ridge of Forbidden.

--Yet, at the end of the day's long journey through terror, the DC-6 descended through the skyglow that had begun at the edge of the Great Plains and could be seen to extend far out over the Atlantic Ocean, and at two o'clock in the New York morning I had supper in Greenwich Village and knew that here was the culmination of the dreams of a childhood with the chickens, The Party for which the University District had been the merest minor-league preliminary.

This, and only this, was The City, as violent and bloody as Florence of the Renaissance. Each morning in my hotel, reading the papers over breakfast, I scanned the list of overnight murders, on the streets noting with satisfaction those I'd missed by half a block, half an hour.

Even in broad day a rapier wouldn't have been out of place on the sidewalks. Seattle pedestrians adjusted paces and directions to amicably share the space. Manhattan bodies were projectiles that so rigorously preserved the purity of their inertia a sidewalk was a billiard table, travel was by rebound, ricochet, and carom -- elbows out.

There was nothing personal in it. The Cariboo wilderness was so large and the people so few that everybody was a neighbor and to pass a person without stopping to howdy was to endanger the fabric of civilization -- in ~~the~~ that country, frail at best. The City was so totally civilized and so crowded that any intrusion on solitariness was resented, people rushed about trying to preserve personal little envelopes of wilderness, and strangers met only at points of elbows.

My first day I set out to explore afoot, gawking at buildings whose summits seemed higher above the streets than Sir Donald above the col, and at every gawk was bounced about by billiard balls. When time came to return to my hotel I made to enter a Seattle-like bus (the underground ^{was} far too spooky) and the doors snapped shut on my nose. Standing on the curb, waiting for the next, I turned to answer a nudge in my back and discovered myself at the point of a scrum. Oddly, my priority was respected, except by a tiny young woman whose hip cuddled mine (actually, my ^{knee} ~~thigh~~, she was very tiny) so intimately I glanced sidelong to see if she were up to something; her face was a painted mask from an Egyptian tomb, her eyes impenetrable black jewels, and I concluded the hip was not an offer, but more likely an appeal. Arrival of the bus explained why I was at the point; the doors opening ^{ed} precisely where the earlier ones had nipped my nose; ~~and~~ the game apparently ^{had} ~~having some antiquated~~ rules. As a chivalrous Westerner I stepped aside for the exotic little lady and it was lucky I did because I thereby caught her sharp little elbow going away and though sent staggering along the curb, missing the bus altogether as the scrum surged forward, was not seriously injured.

The reason our Rocky Mountain man wasn't at the conference next morning was that during the night his bed had thrown him out on the floor and he'd been taken to a doctor who told him he had The Syndrome and ^{should} ~~must~~ avoid subways and cabs and elevators and get the hell out of New York. He said he couldn't do that, he had a wife and three kids to support. The doctor shrugged, "So

okay already, half the people in The City got The Syndrome, so just learn to hang on to something."

I'd been doing that so long in the mountains and in Seattle it came easy to me in The City. A person couldn't go to bed at night without a high, swift elevator ride, but no traveler attending conference ever went to bed sober, everybody had to hang on. A person wouldn't go to a conference meeting in morning without another elevator ride, but nobody ever tried it without a snootful of Bloody Marys. The sidewalks shook constantly with the subterranean hurtlings. Getting onto the machines below or the buses on the surface involved buffetings by masses of billiard balls with sharp elbows. The alternative was to careen about in a cab whose driver's two joys were knocking down pedestrians ~~trying to jaywalk~~ and terrifying out-of-town fares.

Every bit of it was ^{glorious} ~~terrific~~. Over a period of three years I lived, cumulatively, two months in The City, and never lived two months at so high a pitch. We took risks; we knew we took them; they weeded out the cowards and the dullards, expanded consciousness, honed minds, enlarged spirits, sharpened wits. Also, The City threw the best parties since the later days of Rome and I had a standing invitation, twice a year.

The central risk was that there was no acceptable way in or out of The City without flying. A mere thirty years after Lucky Lindy flew the Atlantic, we put ourselves at the mercy of technology's flaws and man's fallibility, hurricanes of the East and anvils of the Midwest and mountains of the West; on every trip ^{across} ~~over~~ the arch of sky between West and East we journeyed with

Scott from One Ton Camp to the Pole.

That I, unlike him, always made it safely back to One Ton was owing to hooshes more potent than pemmican. While driving from Cougar Mountain to Sea-Tac Airport I took an Equanil and this enabled me to cope with parking the car and checking in. That done, I repaired to the bar for three double martinis, a grueling ordeal at eight o'clock in the morning, but they and the pill let me board the plane as relaxed as if it were Flash Gordon's spaceship ~~en route~~ ^{about to blast off} to the planet Mongo. Somewhere over the Rockies I'd become aware we'd taken off and would swallow a second Equanil so I could be suave at lunch, which included the first-class passenger's double hit of Scotch, supplemented by a couple extra shots from my attaché case. I never went to a third Equanil or finished off the attaché case ~~emergency supply~~ except when engines caught fire, the wings creaked and groaned, and the stewardesses started flying around the cabin like Peter Pan. Having left Cougar Mountain a sober, mild-mannered Dr. Jekyll, the Milky Way still bright in his eyes, I debarked at Idlewild a stoned and staring Mr. Hyde, eyes contributing to the skyglow, cackling at the frolics to come, elbows out.

Though I never felt her elbow again, I fell deeply in love with the exotic little woman (no lady). She was on the City Center stage with the Balanchine dancers, greatest in the world, ~~dancing~~ ^{performing} the Western Symphony, cowboys leaping and ya-hooing and kicking heels, dancehall girls flouncing to stage front, turning backs to us, bending over and squealing and flipping up skirts. For me, the soul of The City was saucy little women with black jewels for eyes

wagging their fannies, the wagglingest being Tanaquil Leclerc, twin of the Egyptian waif who tried to rupture me on Fifth Avenue.

For her sake I'd have continued going to The City, to the scene of sinning as much grander than anything known in the West as mountains of the West were those of the East. I didn't, for several reasons. First, medical opinion strongly condemned my flying technique. Second, thirty-three years after Lucky Lindy soloed the Atlantic, the American sky was/becoming as mean and elbow-jostling as Manhattan sidewalks. Third, though flying made a person feel brilliant, fascinating, skillful, and significant, plainly it was an environmental abomination. Fourth, the company had ceased permitting the gracious alternative -- a roomette on a Canadian train that paralleled the Cariboo Highway along the Fraser River Canyon and passed close beneath Sir Donald and crossed the Great Plains under, not in, the Big Sky. Fifth, the morning after I played the part of the bull in a corrida staged on a street in the East Village, I began to suspect I'd had about all The Party I could handle, was as whole a man as I ever could expect to be. Finally, I got fired.

MW

MOUNTAIN TIME

Sunday afternoon, as I left Cougar Mountain, my watch was on city time, and throughout the trip seemed to keep ticking routinely. I began wondering what drummer it was ticking to when I hauled a heavy pack up five steep miles in one of its hours, and when dawn came at twelve and dusk at two.

A person living open to the sun and ^{moon} ~~sun~~, to shadows of trees and rocks, has no need of a timepiece other than the eye. Even when cut off from the sky by dense clouds, he knows roughly how long he's slept, how recently he's eaten, and how many hours he's been standing upright under a fifty-pound stone.

Where I began to lose track was at the start of the Suiattle River trail, Sunday evening, and what did it was popping a couple of Betty's little red pills, supplied by the same doctor whose Equanil made air travel possible. I walked without pause until dark, plodded steadily up switchbacks by flashlight until the beam grew too dim to make out my boots, and left the trail to crawl on hands and knees up what smelled like flowers, to a cross-slope log above which I could spread my sleeping bag.

Eyes closed on the two-mile-high heap of Glacier Peak's glaciers glowing ghostly white in the brilliance of the Milky Way. Eyes opened on the two-mile-high heap glowing pink in the dawn. Eyes reclosed, to reopen on a stratocumulus sky that lopped off the heap of glaciers at the mile-and-a-half level; the sun might have been low in the east, low in the west, or anywhere between.

I hoisted pack and resumed the ascent. While I went up, the cloud ceiling came down. We met in the meadows of Lady Basin, a blur of gray rain. As I

swung around a shoulder of Miners Ridge to Image Lake basin, snow swirled in on a bitter wind and flurried the rest of ^{Monday} ~~the day~~, all the night, and an indeterminate amount of Tuesday.

Poking about monochromatic meadows, blinking snowflakes from my eyes, was entertaining for about five minutes. Sitting in the shelter cabin, staring at the monochromatic lake, shivering, was interesting for ten. Then I unrolled my bag in a bunk and crawled in to sleep away the rest of ^{Monday} ~~the day~~, all the night, and an indeterminate amount of Tuesday.

Strangely, there were no voices in the storm or in the night. Sunday dusk at Canyon Creek, where I'd intended to camp, there'd been howling devils in the waterfalls; ~~and~~ they, and the little red pills, had impelled me up the switchbacks. The absence of voices at Image Lake was, in a different way, more ominous.

Another oddity of the part-of-a-day, an entire night, and part-of-a-day was the absence of any real meals. In a trip-end calculation, my Sunday-through-Thursday food consumption totaled sixty ounces. My appetite was as screwed up as my watch.

If I lost track of hours, there hadn't been too many days to keep count. It definitely was Tuesday when I opened eyes on white meadows greening, leaden clouds whitening. After so long prone, when the body stood erect the eyes went spotty until the heart remembered how to pump uphill. Steps were awkward and risky until the hundreds of bones and muscles and tendons involved in walking regained the knack.

What of talking? If a person spoke aloud he might -- even in daylight -- be answered -- and by the Quiet Ones worse than devils. On the other hand, by remaining silent he risked losing the focus of sentience, the body

then separating into cell colonies, chemicals, protons and electrons.

The coagulation of matter-in-motion compromised by whispering to itself as boots teetered along the narrow lane of brown tread sliced in green waves rolling through the ~~steep~~ steep grass. Clouds shadowed the lump, a tottering Boris Karloff with head crudely bolted on. Sunbursts electrified it. The huge, clotted-up cauliflowers intimidated it, their lobes blossoming and dissolving, closing and opening windows on stark blue terror.

At Lady Basin the lump turned off the trail and lurched straight up toward the cauliflowers. Body and meadows were blown by the wind from one side of the perpendicular to the other, an erratic pendulum. Little red pills were raising general internal hell. Still, the clumps of subalpine trees ~~had~~^{kept} a solid clutch on earth. Nothing very bad can happen to a person in the trees, unless they catch fire.

There were flowers, too -- glacier lily and snowdrop, tiger lily and columbine, paintbrush and lupine and phlox. Beauty is truth, truth, beauty, that is all ye know and all ye damn well need to know.

Then, there were no more trees, and the flowers were red heather, white heather, and yellow heather, and they were not where flowers belong, down beside the boots, but up next to the nose. Red bells and white bells and yellow bells clanged in the wind that drove the clouds at hurricane pace. I dared not look up because my eyes then fixed the clouds, they halted, and their hurricane pace became mine. Neither dared I look down to the Suattle River, because it

wore the face of a Gorgon which would turn me to a stone to plunge without a bounce thousands of feet to the water, ker-splash. I blinked bells from my eyes and on hands and knees crept, then on belly slithered, to a rock prow and hung on as the summit of Plummer Mountain plowed through the raging sea, bowsprit on a clipper ship rounding the Horn.

At one o'clock (by my watch) in the Tuesday afternoon, as I loitered lakeward along the flowery crest of Miners Ridge, clouds shrank to puffs and turned brown and orange and rose. Glacier Peak's heap of glaciers glowed ^{sunset} pink.

Atop Mt. Townsend, in 1946, Whiskers Jack Conrad told of the year he spent alone in Montana's mountains. I should have asked how he knew it was a year -- and if he did know until he was walking down the streets of Missoula and everybody said so.

City time, maybe, wasn't the real thing. Real time, when it escaped the vigilance of a tight-assed civilization that thought it was desirable for a runner to do a mile in under four minutes, and for an airplane to cross the continent in half a day, might just up and quit. --Or, if time is necessarily motion, it might cease drudging forward and sometimes go skipping off sideways, as my watch was doing, or turn around and backtrail for the barn, the Big Bang.

return to
Milky Way

IN DARKEST SEATTLE

Sweeney grew up with the clams and the gulls, the barnacles and the killer whales, the dreaming eye gazing from Puget Sound to Admiralty Inlet and the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Pacific Ocean. So did we all, so did we all...

One day, though, Sweeney went out with the tide to Singapore and Marseilles, Liverpool and Rio -- not as dreams would have had it, in a tight little ketch, rather in a steel-hulled, oil-burning merchant ship. However, alongside his houseboat on Lake Union lay moored a cabin sailer that someday would carry him out the Ship Canal to the Sound and onward to the Oceane Sea.

I'd lived too many years inland and upland to dream of that anymore -- in water too deep to touch bottom I saw gray faces with staring eyes, hair entwined in green weedery.

Nevertheless, as much as in childhood I loved messing about in boats, and when the sailer's auxiliary engine broke and Sweeney needed a hand to help sail to the boatyard for repairs, I volunteered. It wasn't a trip around the Horn or through the pack ice, simply two-odd miles from Lake Union's Portage Bay to Lake Washington's Union Bay, and three-odd more miles south to Leschi. Winds were forecast for ten to twelve knots, brisk enough to push us there in an hour. At two o'clock, braced by a round of rum for the blue chill of the mid-October sky, we shoved off from the houseboat, waved bon voyage by Cliff, who would drive to Leschi to fetch us, and Bernice, who thoughtfully had stowed on board a thermos jug of whiskey sour, in case of emergency.

Winds that were gusty as we downed the run dropped near nothing as we hoisted sail, barely giving headway over Portage Bay. In the narrows of the Montlake Cut, connecting the lakes, we clawed impatiently, inelegantly at the concrete walls. On Union Bay, however, ~~University~~ students were dancing about in flatties rented from the University Boathouse, the white sails glowing in the low sun. Maples on the shore were flaming and new snow on the Cascades was shining as we joined the fleet of swift skimmers.

The cabin sailer was build sturdy for ocean blows and did not skim. Moreover, such airs as we could catch were easterly. We tacked south to Foster Island, north to Laurelhurst Peninsula, south and north, doing half a ~~mile~~ mile to net a boat length eastward. But then, who could want to be elsewhere? The company was jolly -- students on the water, workers on the approach span, under construction, to the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge, piledrivers going chunk-chunk-chunk. Beyond Webster Point lay open lake and there we saw vigorous waves, seeming the more so for being sidelighted by the near-horizon sun. Once there we'd dance like a flattie. Meanwhile, Sweeney had declared an emergency.

Playday ended and students danced on in to the University Boathouse. Workday ended and piledrivers went silent and the jolly workers waved us goodnight. When we arrived where the waves had been, the lake was a mirror. Two-odd miles netted, three-odd to go, with no wind and one paddle. Sunset was a hot passion on Cougar Mountain, where I was momentarily expected home for supper. Sky colors turned lake waters to a New England autumn. Sweeney passed the jug.

The single paddle would have propelled a canoe as swift as the wild goose flight, dip dip and swing. The ocean-going hull sat heavy and still. We measured our progress by shore lights. One house passed (dip dip), two (dip dip dip dip), ten (dip dip dip dip dip...), a hundred (oh arms, oh shoulders, oh aching back). Another two hundred to Leschi. The jug was empty.

Who'd have thought the old city had so much blackness in its heart? Ringed by a population of nigh onto a million, electrified by the Cedar River and Snoqualmie River and Baker River and Skagit River and Columbia River, overarched by the skyglow, in our private night the only lights were pale snakes squirming on oily water. The windows of homes were as remote and cold as the stars (of the first, second, and third magnitudes only, yet many, very many) whose ice was draining the whiskey warmth from our blood.

Who'd have suspected such a quiet within? Seventy miles of Lake Washington's shoreline are solid-pack inhabited and each of these miles harbors a hundred noiseboats; to these 7000-odd residentials are added, on a summer Sunday, an equal number based at marinas or trailered to public boat-launches; during the Seafair days of August a score of unlimited hydroplanes that serve as billboards for various brands of beer strive to outtroar on the water the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels in the sky, those acrobatic jets which in entertaining the beer-soaked, drugged-out mobs cause among infants and elderly of Greater Seattle an average of one cardiac arrest every eight minutes.

No noiseboats were abroad in this October night when we'd have swallowed pride and ^{gladly} accepted a tow and a beer. The city wasn't silent -- tens of thousands

of automobiles were pouring in two-way torrents along freeways and arterials.
lake,
Here on the ~~water~~ though, the din was so muted I wondered if sound waves are
sopped up and stifled by water, or if they are more subject to centrifugal force
flung to outer space.
than to gravity and tend to get ~~flung to outer space~~. Resting on the paddle,
I listened to the all-around megalopolitan hum. It seemed to be coming not from
the city but the skyglow.

I marveled how close we were to so many, and how alone. I'd have to ask
Tom if he ever looked out the window of his lakeshore home and saw the Milky
Way in Lake Serene, and Dick if he, sitting on his bulkhead feeding the mallards,
saw Chapter Four ripping our tarp to shreds and driving icebergs across White
Rock Lakes.

At ten o'clock a flashlight winked on the Leschi shore, proving Cliff was
faithful. As we tied to the dock a noiseboat thrashed out of nowhere and raked
us fore and aft with searchlights -- the Harbor Police, notified by Cliff two
hours earlier that we were, then, four hours overdue, maybe already become
gray faces with staring eyes, hair entwined in green weedery.

M W

return to
Milky Way

'SPLORING

From the hour she was let free from the playpen into the wide open spaces where Big Sisters roamed, life was hectic for Number Three. Sitting in the living room, I'd hear the stump-stump-stump of stubby legs on the run, would brace for the impact, and the little body would fly around the fireplace corner and hurl into my lap. No pursuit could be seen or heard but she would watch the corner sharply a moment before relaxing, snuggling up, and confiding, "Daddy, you are my buddypal."

Much of her early childhood was spent in my lap. On hikes she frequently attached to another trusted protector, ~~Dick~~, and along a trail would tell him lurid tales of assaults and batteries, concluding, "They would kill me if they could, Dick, they really would!"

Actually, Big Sisters were not homicidal and were sadistic only to a normal degree. The poking and pinching and menacing mainly was in fun, to set off fits of howling rage which were truly amusing, even to buddypal. It was I, during a discussion of the peanut butter sandwiches she ate for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks, who revealed to her that she hadn't come from the hospital like her sisters but from the factory, and that we kept a big supply of peanut butter in the kitchen because the instruction manual said to. Big Sisters then reminisced about the day the whole family went to the display room and decided on the peanut-butter model. The clerk stuck a spoonful of peanut butter in the robot's mouth and it started talking and hadn't stopped since. Half a minute's digestion of this news led to such a storm of wailing that Betty was the rest of the day convincing her ^{that} she was too a girl.

Number Three probably was no fonder of wilderness than Numbers One and Two, and possibly less, having been dragooned into backpacking younger, at not-quite-three; on an early trip, to La Bohn Gap, she took seventy-six mosquito bites on her face alone, an estimated body total of a thousand. However, as she approached seven and the Big Sisters, thirteen and going-on-twelve reacted to her growing sturdiness with sincerely hard thumping, mountains seemed not so fearsome.

A dark Sunday morning in May a general invitation to the family to go walking was accepted only by Claudia, with alacrity. The three of us -- Natasha, ^{sheep} the dog with the piebald eyes, was ever eager to go -- set out in the beetle. "Where we going, Daddy?" "Don't know, Cloddy, this is an exploring trip." She nodded comfortably and settled back, one arm around Natasha. Where we went wasn't so important as where we weren't.

The last two years the Literary Fund Committee, of which I was chairman, had been working, under Tom's direction, to publish a trail guide. From hundreds of favorite hikes of generations of Mountaineers we'd chosen those in the book that was due off press in summer, 100 Hikes in Western Washington. The sifting of so many years of wildland walking by so many people had opened my curiosity to a number of intriguing avenues. One was today's ^A subject, the possibility of there being overlooked hikes along Highway 10 near the Cascade mountain front, close to the warming influence of Puget Sound and therefore with a longer snowfree ~~season~~ season than the Cascade Crest.

Where the South Fork Snoqualmie River debouched on the North Bend plain, the two portal peaks, Washington on the south and the West Peak of Defiance on the north, struck me as having the potential to become as popular as their

neighbor, Si, the most-climbed peak in the Northwest. What the neglected companions needed were routes as easy as Si's trail. If such could be found, a bit of guidebook publicity quickly would distribute the pedestrians more evenly, reducing ~~the trail~~ congestion.

While driving by Washington I spotted a logging road on its flanks; a string of cars was riding my tail and the shoulder was too narrow to pull off; that ~~car~~ would have to wait. A logging road climbed prominently high on West Defiance; it started on the other side of the river and the timber bridge that used to give access was gone. So, the two portal peaks would not be explored today; perhaps something could be investigated a bit to the east; a mainline log-haul road south of the highway took us miles through clearcuts too dismal to be worth getting out of the beetle.

Lunchtime was upon us and past and the good things everybody knew were in the rucksack remained there, yet Claudia didn't complain or criticize.

Returning west on the highway, I chanced onto the concealed entry to a system of logging roads dating from a Forest Service timber sale in 1958, the forest fire ~~that~~ the loggers started, and the subsequent salvage logging of the charred forest. The beetle bounced and squirmed to the ends of several spurs before finding the uppermost, leading to a loggers' landing high on the mountain next east of ~~the main road~~ Defiance, Bandera.

The hiking route had no subtlety, went straight up the clearcut and burn. Charcoal gave the three of us the look of the black gang on a coal-fired steamship. The not-yet-seven body required a deal of boosting and pulling over logs. The buddypal had to confess that when he was her age this wouldn't have been his idea of ~~it~~ ^{sport.} However, when Claudia commented on the situation at

three o'clock it was not to recriminate but to offer sage advice drawn from her four years of mountaineering and half a day of beetling, "Daddy, you don't get no place 'sploring."

Soon thereafter we emerged from the top of the burn to low brush and new snow and skirted a lichen-gray rockslide. Claudia confidently informed me, "Marmots live ^{there}." "Well, more likely conies." A moment later she cried, "Conies!" They were four marmots. Score one for the kid.

Wind blew stronger and colder, snow deepened. Natasha went into her ~~own~~ dance, snaffling the white candy. Close beneath a ceiling of roiling black clouds we looked west between the two portal peaks to Si, Rattlesnake, Tiger, Squak, and Cougar, the mountain where the Big Sisters lurked. Snowflakes floated down around. Sunbursts spotlighted a silver snag killed by a forest fire of a century or so ago, set not by loggers but God. Dwarf trees on the ridge crest were ^{sculptures in} ~~the shape of~~ hoarfrost.

The cornice thrust too far leeward over empty air ^{to let} ~~for~~ us ~~to~~ view the basin. The expert nevertheless assured me, nodding emphatically, "There's a lake there." When a rock jut gave us a look down, it was, indeed, to the frozen plain of Mason Lake. That's two for her.

Sheltered within a white clump of shrubs we studied our beetle-and-boot route up from the sinuous thread of the South Fork Snoqualmie River ^{, beside it,} and the gray ribbon crept by bugs. At half past four the rucksack finally was opened on pumpernickel, butter, ham, mustard, mayonnaise, Milky Way bars, cans of root beer, and no peanut butter sandwiches. As the mouths of dog and girl got busy, I said, "See, smarty, you do get someplace 'sploring."

return to
Milly Wm

PEPSI COLA TRUCK

When the incipience of Number Four no longer could be concealed, our friends in Zero Population Growth chipped in to have a Planned Parenthood counselor come around and explain to Betty what was causing it.

I was distraught. Nine summers our all-family trips had been limited to car-camping and day-hiking, the backpacking confined to splinter groups. At last, with Number Three nearing three and Big Sisters becoming useful donkeys, we massed together on a modest effort, several miles and days up the Stehekin River, far and long enough to give basecamp the essential ingredient, distance from machinery. The following summer the Peanut Butter Robot did not glumly submit to a pack as Big Sisters had done, but in the name of equal rights demanded her own. The prospects for family adventure spread before me as rich in opportunity as China to the Mongol khans. Then Betty, collapsing on the frying-pan-hot, fly-deviled trail to Many Waterfalls Camp, revealed the guilty secret that she was three months gone.

The dimensions of the lost empire were delineated the summer Paul was a half-year old, when we were able to dump him on a friend housebond by an infant of her own. Our previous family approaches to the high country had been by easy stages up long valleys. To attain a higher freedom a difficult test had to be passed. The issue was very much in doubt as we left the White Chuck River at an elevation of 3300 feet, continued so at lunch as we emptied canteens, and on the hot lava cliff where, maddened by thirst, we fought over tiny strawberries, and in the sunbaked heather where we were

taunted by the roar of inaccessible waterfalls. When the three sisters, eleven-and-a-half, ten, and five, and Natasha, seven-and-a-half, and Betty and I dipped snouts in Glacier ~~Peak~~^{Creek}, elevation 5350 feet, we were no Tenderfoot family, we were distinctly First Class, bucking for Eagle. Next morning we carried our packs along the Cascade Crest Trail, ^{which} in this stretch, in this ^{was} wintry summer, /so snowcovered none but the most experienced or desperate hikers were making it through. Betty and I and the Big Sisters had ice axes and the climbing rope safeguarded the trickiest spots; ~~and~~ when we arrived in the basin of Pumice Creek the marmots were so amazed to see humans ~~that~~ they stared in shock, until Natasha set about chasing them into their holes. We erected the nine-by-twelve circus-tent tarp at One Waterfall Camp and from that base the girls took glissading lessons, walked on their first glacier (one of Glacier Peak's), climbed Pumice Peak, and helped me erect dolmens and Natasha keep the marmots whistling.

Paul's one-and-a-half-years summer I resolved at all costs to unite the family in wildness. We marched from the end of the Chiwawa River road in this deployment:

Under a load as heavy as I could carry without falling down, I set off ahead alone and walked until I fell down. Backtrailing to the gang, which was doing half my pace, I took the heaviest pack -- this being the one that Betty and Penny were exchanging back and forthth for Paul in the kiddypack. The four, having two packs and one kid among them, took turns at unweighted walking as I returned to my pack, where I dropped the one and hoisted the other, and repeated. Natasha kept the family connected, van to rearguard. For each net mile I walked three, she ran ten.

The afternoon of the second day we completed the nine-and-a-half miles to Buck Creek Pass, rigged the new twelve-by-twelve circus-tent tarp on a patch of mud ringed by snowfields, and settled in for a week of pancake breakfasts and ice cream desserts, under-tarp games of Fish and around-campfire Boy Scout stories and under-Milky Way discussions of infinity, and ascents of Flower Dome, Liberty Cap, and Helmet Butte. One midweek afternoon I dashed to the microbus and returned next morning under a load of baby food and disposable diapers.

To suppose the labor was intended to benefit Paul's soul would be as mistaken as imagining we took Natasha along to keep the marmots in training to elude coyotes. Wordsworth to the contrary, a child that age scarcely can make head or tail of what lisping sisters are saying, much less the voices of wilderness. On the first summit of his life, Liberty Cap, he idly dabbled in ^{finger} white heather bells, vacantly regarded the green gulf of the Suiattle River, and received with no perceptible interest the information that Mommy and Daddy had climbed to the very top of the heap of white glaciers across the valley. In a cirquelet with snow^wpatch and pool and bright sand of ground-up schist, he enjoyed the waterplay as much as, but not ~~notably~~ more than, Cougar Mountain's sandpile and garden hose. Betty and I surely wished we were home on Cougar Mountain the night of rumbling thunder and blustery winds and frantic showers, the lad crying ceaselessly, his forehead burning; with the other three we'd often enough called the doctor in the middle of the night, panicked by the exact symptoms, which by morning -- and this time too -- proved to be caused by a new little roughness just breaking the gums.

His two-and-a-half-years summer he was too much of a lump for any back but mine; as compensation, he now could propel himself, after a fashion. The new deployment:

Under maximum pack I tottered the Chelan Summit Trail four miles to Miners Basin, the first day's ~~campsite~~, and backtrailed to the gang. Their spirits were in the slough of ~~despond~~ ^{despond} from carrying heavy loads at the toddling pace, with long halts at every mudpuddle and beetle. In piggyback mode the boy and I made good speed, until he bent to put his mouth by my ear and whisper, "Put me down." I did, and we toddled hand in hand until his pace fell to nothing. He then submitted to another spell of piggyback. Repeat.

The second day two shuttles took us through headwater parklands of Safety Harbor Creek to the headwaters of East Fork Prince Creek, a broad meadow bowl. From the rim of the bowl the slopes rose to tundra ridges and rock crags. From the lip of the basin the outlet stream tumbled to Lake Chelan, unseen but felt below a broad emptiness of haze-blue air. Beyond the emptiness, trough of the ancient glacier, stood a row of ice mountains. Above them hung a line of Heaven-radiant cumulonimbuses, sublime to look upon^y in the distance. But a second look showed them to be rolling our way and their Hell-black canyons struck fear in the heart of a daddy responsible for the protection of four children and a mommy and a dog who dreaded lightning. To daddy's relief, the towers proved to be purely picturesque even before the circus tent was rigged on a knoll of subalpine trees, basecamp for a week of tundra-roaming and ridge-clambering.

--And taking the waters. Below the knoll lay a grass-shored lakelet. From morning to evening, for two days, Penny and Becky were swimming and

splashing and waterfighting. Claudia also waded and paddled, though separately and less boisterously, except when Big Sisters grabbed her one by each arm and dragged her to the middle of the lake, water to her neck, her shrieks echoing from the cliffs, to the befuddlement of Natasha, who barked at the cliffs just to be safe and found herself surrounded by barking as well as shrieking, and not a little hysterical laughing.

As for the boy who thus far in life had shown no special attachment to any specific portion of the planet, we couldn't understand what had gotten into him when he broke loose from Mommy's knee, toddled like a shot to the shore, pointed several feet out in the water to a grass tussock about as big as he, and when I bent down, whispered in my ear, "Put me there." Elsewhere sisters frolicked and Mommy sat reading. He made no move to seek their company, he who until now ~~never~~ ^{rarely} had spent more than a few waking moments beyond reach of a female's knee. Two days he spent on the islet alone. Not wading, not splashing. Just sitting. Looking.

When respectfully asked what he was up to, he whispered, "Sailing my boat."

The pursuit of our children's happiness was not Betty's and my motive for taking them backpacking. We enjoyed giving them birthday parties and Christmas mornings and Easter egg hunts. In the same way we liked introducing them to campfires, waterfalls, summer snow, marmots, Krap Dinner, Wheatena with brown sugar, Goteburg sausage, ~~metero~~ showers, bears, cuddling six in a tight row under the circus tent as Tasha walked over our faces in the night to let us know there was lightning somewhere in the world and she hated it.

We never asked if they considered these things worth the hot sun and hard rain, steep trails and sticker bushes, cold winds and bright lightning, mosquitoes and flies. Backpacking was what Betty and I did and the kids had to do it too, just as Catholic kids had to learn the catechism, Little League kids had to play baseball, and cannibal kids damn well better shut up and eat their missionary.

Paul's three-and-a-half summer he'd gained enough speed and his mother had lost enough for them to form a congenial rearguard and hold miles-long conversations on the trail. When the family was hiking in a close line he never opened his mouth, ^{being able to} as the darling of three big sisters ^{was able to} communicate his desires without words. If he appeared low in spirits they would sing songs or play word games. These failing, the family would become the Big Train, each of us a locomotive or coal car or dining car or caboose, making appropriate sounds. One rainy day on Sulphur Creek ^{we perceived the possibility} ~~there was an indication~~ that the personality brewing beneath the shy surface would not always be docile. Offered the choicest roles, such as cattle car, he shook his head. No suggestion pleased him and he stumped along the trail with lower lip thrust out. Asked at last if there were any part of the train he'd like to be, he answered in almost more than a whisper, "Pepsi Cola truck."

He remembers the incident because big sisters and parents won't let him forget. I've never gotten around to asking if he -- that is, truly on his own, deep inside, without exterior prompting -- remembers ~~the incident~~ Prince Creek. He was two-and-a-half that summer. For comparison, I truly and clearly recall exploring city sidewalks in company of a loving giantess whose purse

hung from her arm at the level of my nose and smelled richly of Juicy Fruit gum. The giantess was Mother's mother. She died before I was three. When Dad was preparing to leave his Cougar Mountain home after Mother's death, he distributed family treasures from her cedar chest. He gave Penny my Grandmother's wedding dress. I'd never seen it before. She was a tiny woman. --How large must have been the Prince Creek sea on which Paul sailed his boat...

OF NIGHT AND THE RIVER

1:15. Here I am at the five-mile marker, and here on the trail are two black plops of fresh bear crap. Rain from gray clouds is falling on gray cliffs and gray-green forest. Soggy flowers are soaking my pants legs.

1:50. The sidetrail drops me to Six Mile Camp beside Bridge Creek, which is roaring full of icewater. The woods are patched with snow. 'Tis bitter cold.

3:00. It's raining harder, but the trees give good shelter. Within the hour the decision must be made whether to confront the night here or elsewhere. Three nights ago on Cougar Mountain, considering this journey, I looked out the window and shivered at the memory of childhood nights when I woke up screaming and Mother turned on all the lights to push the blackness out of the house and it lay waiting on the other side of the window, pressing against the glass.

3:45. Where's the sun? Where's the yardarm? A pint's a pound the world around. Malt does more than Milton can.

3:55. The rain is steady. It would be silly to continue to Fireweed Camp. Nobody is there. The ranger at Stehekin Landing said nobody is anywhere in the North Cascades National Park this early, no more than anybody was anywhere in Olympic National Park that June week in 1946. The thing to do is build a hell of a big fire. In this season at this latitude the night is only seven hours.

4:15. The Bible tells about the fellow who lived in a desert where it never had rained. One day he was walking around his acres kicking up dust and the sun faded and the sky turned gray. He killed his first-born and the sky got darker. He killed all his children and the chickens and his wife and goats

and mother-in-law and even his dog. The sky began to fall. Raindrops splashed his face and he hollered "Thank you, Lord!" and had an ecstasy and toppled over dead in the mud.

4:35. The rain has practically stopped. There's still plenty of time to get to Fireweed. But I've made a neat pile of the tin cans and rotten plastic from the days before the national park, when the Forest Servicicers let musclebutts razz through on their motorcycles, and I've heaped up enough seasoned wood for a regular John Muir fire, and it's very tidy and homey here.

5:30. The river is doing to my ears what the lumber mill used to, with the saws and planers and sanders and shapers all going at once. When I came off shift onto the streets the pavement underfoot was shaken by trucks, but they made no sound; ~~and~~ I'd drive halfway back to the University District before my Model A would begin to whisper. When I came on shift, along about the second hour in the massed roar of the machines, when I could no longer hear them or anything else, there'd be a little cooing sound inside my ear, EE-00, EE-00.

6:25. No rain for an hour. Bright white sky. A patch of blue! Put the pot on the grate. Drop drop drip go the trees. I'm fifty hours from the electrified security of Cougar Mountain, where the windows of our 200-meter hut keep out the blackness and add their mite to the skyglow. Night is three hours off. What do I expect from this journey? Not, as up the Dosewallips River in 1946, absolution for sins. ~~I haven't got any. Nobody does anymore. Nobody has any virtues, either.~~ That's entropy. Did I come to take risks? Knowing I took them? To see if things would come out against me, or with me? There was a notion, I think, of bringing the inner blackness and the outer face to face. The darkness inside the skyglow and the darkness outside the Milky Way.

6:45. A dozen feet from my camp table the snowmelt-crazed river is blasting by. Above me rise spiketop firs and tangle-limbed alder. The ground is carpeted by last year's cottonwood leaves, ^{fallen into} ~~in~~ the sere and yellow. The smoke is rising straight up, bluing the trees, browning the clouds. I've spent many nights at identical camps, but never alone. What I sought today and didn't find was an airy spot on the high slopes of the valley, ~~with~~ plenty of sky to shorten me to the night and a creek just big enough for/drink and not big enough for it to talk.

7:00. On the trail today I heard footfalls, looked back, nobody was there. Three times. That happened to me ~~once~~ on the way to Hannegan Pass. ^{the June} ~~once~~ I had a crazy idea of hiking alone into the Pickets; ^{deserted} when dusk and a storm came on together I lit out ^{from the pass} for the road and was running when I got to the car and they were running behind me, the little hashish fiends from the Sax Rohmer story about the Old Man of the Mountains, the same bunch that used to chase me along country roads on winter nights and wouldn't give up until I was halfway through the orchard and my dog, Jeff, would start barking at them. This tuppeny ⁿ has no heat to it. Makes a person shiver. The Stehekin Valley shuttlebus let me off at Bridge Creek Camp, a mere six miles away, and it's notoriously infested with rattlesnakes. Better safe than sorry.

7:10. I bring the pot of chunky soup from fire to table, crumble in pilot crackers. Delicious, if I do say so myself. Verging on alacazam.

8:00. I sit at the table reading Goodbye Columbus. It's incredibly complicated, being Jewish -- or being a Jewish novelist, anyhow.

9:20. EE EE. By golly, it's here -- my little birdy from the lumber mill! It's in the river! In my ear! Bless you, birdy.

9:35. I turn on the flashlight to continue reading. Wi' usquebae we'll face the devil, wi' Hudson Bay rum we'll stare down the bum.

10:05. Why is the river not chuckling, growling, snickering, threatening, speaking in tongues? It's not yet said a word, just continues an unmodulated roar. No more EE EE, even. My birdy is gone.

10:40. I put down the book because of the pressure on the back of my neck. Night is here. It always was. Night never leaves a mountain valley. At midday it dims and shrinks and hides in holes but when the sun crosses the yardarm it commences deepening and expanding and coalescing its scattered parts. The sun sinks behind the ridge and the valley is all shadow. The sun sinks into the ocean and the valley is all blackness. This is the hour. Inner blackness, may I intrude you to the outer? Oh, you already know each other! You are, you say, the same thing? I was wrong to imagine you might cancel each other out? Together, in fact, you form the critical mass of madness? Now is the hour of infinite terror in little room?

11:00. I flick the flashlight here, there, a rapier fencing with a steamroller.

11:10. And now the sky is going black. I scarcely can make out silhouettes of tree tops. Two nights ago I lay in an orchard at Lake Chelan listening to the dark songs of the owls and the racket of crickets, seeing the dark wings of bats and the sliver of a moon. Tonight the old moon is dead and the new is powerless to be born. Pile more logs on the fire. Entropy, entropy, entropy -- thinketh it dwell in the dark o' the moon.

11:20. What is thumping? I stab the blackness -- a hit, a palpable hit! Two balls of green fire! Take that and that! Thump me no more ^{thumps}.

11:30. Fire is a better companion than a dog. Dogs see and hear things a person would rather not know about. ^{Dogs} bark at things, then hide behind you in case they bark back. A fire glares steady defiance to all points of the compass. Poke it with a stick and it leaps out in every direction and bites the night in all its asses. How do you like my bright-eyed hound, Mr. Black?

11:50. Years after the lumber mill, in moments especially lonesome and sad, I'd listen for my little bird and be comforted by the EE-00. ^{Two hours ago} ~~it returned to me~~ ^{it returned to me,} ~~in the twilight~~ then went away. Come back, little birdy!

12:00. John Muir climbed a hill and set the forest afire and capered and ^{lept} and whooped to see what wildness he had wrought. A flashlight is a poor thing, a billion of them would not a skyglow make. However, a-ha! The musclebutts have left piles of rotten plastic the park rangers haven't gotten around to cleaning up. I'll help them. It's a volcanic eruption! It's the Big Bang! Who now joins our circle of bright primeval light? Is it you, Mr. River? Welcome, sir! Speak up! Bellow me your best, your worst!

12:00. I sit on a log to lace my boots and fall off. Like they say, it's easy. Especially when you've got The Syndrome. There has to be a better way to deal with the nights. Well, I notice the river isn't saying much, either. Just lying in bed moaning. What won the shouting match? I have been to Ludlow Fair? I know that I am bound for a ^r journey down the Sound in the midst of a refuse mound? The world is an unweeded garden? Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow? As for me, I walk abroad o' nights and kill sick people groaning

under walls? The preacher's daughter she was there, sitting down in front?
I don't remember shouting all those, but usually do.

1:10. Sunshine and breezes and cloud tatters are frolicking across the blue. I see, not feel, how exhilarating they are. This cold hole is very boring. The river is flushing highland winter down the sewer to Lake Chelan and the bustle of water winds is bluing my nose with the icy essence of googols of tons of snow and my brain is very boring. Stiletto Peak might be less boring. But the ranger said the bridge to that trail, at Fireweed Camp, is out. Bridge Creek will be up to my crotch there, going a mile a minute. A person needs a level head when the water is racing ~~past~~^{by} a couple feet from his eyes and semicircular canals. I can't even sit on a log. What a boring day. I better have some coffee before setting out for Fireweed, though coffee, too, is very boring.

2:00. The clouds are solid, now. Pesky winds are nipping through the woods. Showers are falling of almost-snow. I have a good book to read about Queen Elizabeth. It was incredibly complicated, being Elizabethan.

3:00. An ominous black cloud is rolling up the valley. It would be the act of an absolute ninny to hike to Fireweed. There's plenty of wood here for me and John Muir. I do remember something the river muttered last night: "Wait till I get hold of your crotch at Fireweed ford, pilgrim."

4:00. A deer saunters through camp, as if it had something on its mind. A bit ago, gathering more wood, I found a pile of bear crap that wasn't there yesterday. The night is already seeping out of the brush. Nobody believes in werebears, weredeer. Not at four o'clock. I just don't want to see any gangs of elk around here.

5:00. Yes, it definitely was almost possibly a snake I heard rustling in the cottonwood leaves. I must hasten to put a snowball in my Sierra Club cup and add the preventive, a good dose, in case there were two snakes, and lace in the lime juice, which is very good for the scurvy, and I may have a touch of that, too, best not to take chances, look what happened to Scott on his return from the Pole. It's sovereign for frostbite, too, already my toes feel cozier.

6:00. Another thing I just now remember the river saying: "Hey booby, do you notice how much higher my riffles are than your silly sleeping bag? I'm running too fast to turn, so blast straight on through. But if a tree happened to drop in me just so, maybe because my floodwaters undermined it, I'd veer and pick you up and roll you over in the clover and that would be number one and the fun just begun."

7:00. I bring from the fire to the table a hot pot of corned beef hash and splash it with ketchup. Very tasty, if I do say so myself. Distinctly alacazam.

7:30. 'Tis a beauteous evening, calm and free. Languid clouds are softly tinged by the coming sunset. The sky is a milky blue. The rain falleth as gently as Heaven's mercy. It is thirty-four hours since mine eyes last beheld a human. I don't note any changes within me. Would have to give it more time, I suppose. They say Simeon the Younger stood on a pillar sixty-eight years. You'd think he'd have got the benefit sooner than that.

8:00. There are Beethoven rivers and Mozart rivers and Vivaldi rivers and Schubert and Schumann and Schonberg and Wagner and Prokofieff and Stravinsky and Debussy rivers. This is a rock river. Rock paralyzes the ears so kids won't have to listen to history roaring by. Is the reason they smile so vacantly that ~~they're stupid~~ they hear the EE-00 of their personal birdies?

8:05. A stupid river is the best kind at night. No muttering, no whispering, no cracking wise, no threatening to utter the Name a lone person dreads.

8:15. My nose is filled with the aroma of burning cottonwood. It is a lovely tree altogether, the large leaves flipping over in the wind to reveal white undersides. When the June air is full of ~~the~~^{the} drifting cotton one knows summer is a-coming in, lewdly sing, cuckoo! In a campfire it softens the blackness with its perfume. Betty wants to cut down ours on Cougar Mountain to let more sun in on her damn radishes. I'll cut her down first.

8:20. EE EE EE. My bird is back! EE EE EE. It's not in my ear anymore! Where is it? Everywhere in the twilight.

8:30. My entropy is bluing the whole valley, for miles. If I were a lone hiker and smelled cottonwood smoke I'd home in on it. Maybe other lone hikers avoid smoke. Because they have no inner darkness, never notice the outer. They also ride airplanes and trek to Nepal and sleep in sissy tents and eat freeze-dried beef stroganoff.

8:40. SPEEDLE-DEE. EEP-SPEEDLE-DEE. EE-SPEE-WEE. EE-EE-EE-EE. Is this what I came for?

9:00. The trail up the valley was solid color. I recognized paintbrush, lupine, penstemon, glacier lily, stonecrop, strawberry, red heather, phlox, Oregon grape. I faked one unknown as "blue columbine," though there's no such ^{around here.} thing. I lumped an entire bunch as "marigolds," another as "dandelions." I jotted down "star-shaped flower," and "teeny-weeny yellow mustard," and "violet

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bells from carrot-like leaf," and "balls of delicate blue," and "clusters of tiny white." What this means is that after years of accepting ~~Monte's~~ ^{the Nazi climber's} dictum that there are only two mountain flowers, Indian paintbrush and the other kind, I'm beginning to break apart the ~~fields~~ ^{categories} of White Flowers, Yellow Flowers, and Blue Flowers. How can a person spend the most important hours of thirty-five years in a place and not know who lives there? I realize, now, that the EE bird has always been here, I've heard it for years, and never listened. I wish I could look it in the eye and ask the meaning of EE. It must be incredibly complicated, being a bird.

9:40. Now we have the first serious rain of the day, or night.

10:15. It is total black on the earth and in the sky and raining nicely. Thank you, Lord, excuse me if I don't fall down, I've seen it before.

10:45. River, you roar as mindlessly as if Seattle City Light or the Chelan Public Utility District or the Bonneville Power Authority already had run you through a turbine and plugged you into a teenage guitar. You are a idiot.

11:00. They say Simeon stood on a pillar sixty-eight years. They don't mention sitting. Must have been incredibly complicated, being a stylite.

11:30. I'm not growing sharper, like the Milky Way would if it were here. I'm getting more diffuse, like the skyglow, the hydrogen cloud at the end of entropy, entropy, entropy. River, I, too, am a idiot. Let's you and me go on concert tour, walking abroad o' nights under the skyglow, ~~the~~ groupies flocking after the wereriver, the werehiker.

12:00. Being here serves no purpose. Being anywhere serves no purpose.
Being nowhere would serve no purpose. It is incredibly complicated, being.

12:01. I've not confronted the outer darkness, I've dodged it. The inner
blackness is intact, pickled. Terence, this is stupid stuff.

12:05. I do not regret this journey. I took risks, I knew I took them.
Things have come out at sixes and sevens, exactly where they started. My birdy
has gone to bed but sings on inside my ear. EE EE. EE OO. EE EE EE.

return to
Milly Day

THE LAST GREAT BUFFALO HUNT IN THE WEST

big
 Claudia's present her eleventh Christmas was Cailin, a Shelty of the mahogany-sable variety, her coat a rich brown streaked with black, her chest, snout, forehead star, collar, and boots a gleaming white. From puppyhood she ruled the Cougar Mountain acres as firmly as her forebears had the sheep pastures of Shetland, herding the family around the house and the banties around the yard. Slender nose and ever-harking ears and bright black eyes maintained ceaseless vigilance. She would brook no violence, nor close contact that threatened it, and barked and nipped as needed to enforce her strict rules on sanitary separation. In her presence, children could not wrestle nor adults embrace, banty roosters were permitted neither to duel each other nor to ride hens. It was for our own good, she loved us all so. A member of the family returning from work or school rated minutes of lyric soprano and gymnastic dancing; an absence of days earned a half-hour aria and pas de uno.

Paul, seven, showed no more interest in Claudia's new puppy than in our old Natasha with the piebald eyes and the dread of lightning. When at length he came home with a puppy, he didn't bring it; Barbara, at whose house he'd spent the afternoon playing, dumped the two off together. The three sisters shrieked with laughter and named "his" puppy for the most squalid female they knew, a character in the movie Little Big Man, Buffalo Wallow Woman.

The ugliness was the more striking for Buffy's being roughly the same size and crudely the same colors as Cailin and having a forehead star (blurred), a collar (a half only), and boots (sloppy) -- the tragedy of Shelty blood curdled by miscegenation with a spaniel. Burly torso, round head with rag ears,

snub snout with obscenely pink button nose, red-rimmed eyes under clownish white eyebrows, slobbery tongue, oily hair with a musky odor that made the hand that petted want immediate washing, a groveling rear end -- in failing to commit puppycide had Barbara truly been merciful?

Cailin wasn't our dog, we were her people. Buffalo was an outsider, beyond our standards of good and evil. If we carried groceries from the car and went back for another load, in that unguarded moment she'd have ripped open the sacks, strewn the contents, and gotten off with a loaf of bread, pound of bacon, wedge of cheese, or dozen eggs. Leave the dining room to fetch potatoes and gravy from the kitchen and she'd jump on the unwatched table and leap out the window, roast in jaws. Reach to the bookcase to the hiding place behind the three volumes of Gibbon, find the box of chocolates missing, punish the kids despite their denials, discover the empty box under a chair, Buffalo chewing a hard center. She understood that such behavior hastened her end; she shrugged; eat hearty today because tomorrow you'll be thrown away anyhow.

Within the sniveling cur smoldered an inferno. Her baleful eye would fall upon Cailin, innocently asleep, and the bile of envy would rumble in her throat. In a voice as different from Cailin's as a zoo is from grand opera, she whined, snarled, screeched, and bellowed against any invasion of her space by human, dog, cat, banty, fly, or flea. Cailin, when she sought entry to the house, politely scratched at the door and patiently waited; Buffalo hurled her full body weight at the panel and if denied went off in the woods for a battering ram.

It was the constant, haunting fear of the ultimate throwing-away time that made her so hysterical at a barred door. And it was why she tried to win me over with presents. I'd climb the ladder-stairway to my office, deep in

thoughts of the day's work to be done, and step in the latest offering. I'd curse, swat, kick, banish. She'd conclude she'd failed to give enough. One day I caught her in the act and in a rage flung her by the tail out the second-storey window and she screamed all the way to the ground and howled as she thumped and hid under a chair all night and next morning crapped by my desk twice.

Would Paul care -- or even notice -- if "his" dog vanished? There was no guessing the depths of a seven-year-old who knew the dimensions and Latin names of three score dinosaurs and was so familiar with their appetites he had the menu precisely planned for the party he was planning for them. My crimes against children were already numerous and heinous, at every family crisis recited in full by the Three Sisters. Safter to barricade the ladder-stairs, guard the food, periodically repair the door.

Since I couldn't get rid of her, I exploited her special talents. When company came I put her on show, tickling and poking to demonstrate that with a proper agent she could outsell the singing whales and crooning wolves and the whole Audubon birdery. On the trail, or off, she was a world-class backtracker. No companion of hers would go astray on a return through brush jungle, foggy tundra, or featureless snow. Also, nobody ever would pull a Hansel and Gretel on her.

With me were Claudia, a few days short of fifteen and grown from sister-terrorized stubbornness to the great friend and protector of little people; Paul and a neighbor, Robby, both ten; and Cailin and Buffalo.

At Camp One in the lower valley of the East Fork Foss River the flowers of spring were blossoming as July was ending; we heard the trill of the varied

thrush and the EE of my twilight bird. At Camp Two, 4500 feet, the river was silent under deep snow, no flowers bloomed, no birds sang. At the outlet of frozen Emerald Lake, on a knoll of heather and beargrass, I lounged in the shade of mountain hemlocks while Claudia led boys and dogs to riot on an iceflow. Paul returned soaking wet and bursting with pride; he bragged (and I had him write it down in my notebook for posterity) that before falling in the lake, "the international hero of Nogoan and Sen freed The Invicibuls and the captain and king." I cooked a supper of dumpling soup and lemon pudding. The kids then torched the marshmallows and crawled in their bags, dogs crawling after. I watched the sunset's rosing of the granite of La Bohn Peak and the three-quarter moon's silvering of the frozen plain of the lake. The only sound was the splash of a waterfall from a cirque ^{scooped} in the valley wall.

At eleven o'clock in bright morning, the last pancake shared by the dogs, we set off plodding in the snow up Necklace Valley. The next gem, Opal Lake, also was entirely frozen, except at the inlet, where the creek flowed between banks white with anemone, yellow with buttercup, pink with bog laurel. From there we alternated between forest shadows and snowfield brilliance to the valley head, beneath La Bohn Peak. While lunching in a patch of snowfree heather, we entertained ourselves by slipping circles of salami wrapper on dogs' snouts. Cailin patiently waited for us to have our fun and remove the indignity. Buffy did backflips and cartwheels and out-shouted the waterfalls. The Hobbits and the Hobbit Mistress set to work building rock castles to refight battles from The Lord of the Rings. I climbed to the ridge for views and glissaded back down to the scene of slaughter. At four o'clock we returned to Opal Lake

meadow. What had to happen there seemed obvious and inevitable to Claudia and Cailin and me.

Betty's and my first Cougar Mountain dog, Tamburlaine, was murdered by a neighborhood poisoner before he could go hiking. The tradition therefore started with Natasha. Whenever on a hot summer day we came to a cold alpine tarn, it seemed to me a swim had to be infinitely appealing to a body covered with hot hair. Tasha was too bashful. So I threw her in. She climbed out, shook dry, and hid behind the girls to conceal her joy. On sunny days I tossed her in every tarn, snowmelt pool, creek, and small river. When I could catch her.

I also threw her in the ocean -- until Thanksgiving weekend of 1970. The preceding summer we'd left her home from a week-long mountain hike, fearing the dutiful old dog would hurt herself running back and forth to keep the party connected. On this brilliant yet wind-chilled day I doubted Tasha really needed to be cooled off. Actually, the dips in the surf were the only part of the ocean experience that she didn't openly enjoy. Now, as she was chasing crows and romping in the sand, abruptly she broke off frolics, turned toward me, and the laugh on her face said that she'd realized [^]HE'S NOT GOING TO DO IT! I'M FREE, FREE! For the first time at the ocean (or near any body of water) since puppyhood, she danced up to me, we embraced, and the rest of the day she dogged my heels. That's the memory I like to hold rather than the morning several months later when she staggered to my bedside and fell over, the piebald eyes spinning in a whirlpool more frightening than lightning.

Through three summers as Tasha's heiress, Cailin had submitted stoically, accepting the ritual as one of those burdens, like salami wrappers,

that go with having a family. Buffalo hollered bloody murder and if strangers were in the vicinity fled to them for sanctuary.

At four o'clock, at Opal Lake, Cailin was flung, clambered to the meadow, shook the creek all over us, and carried on with life. The next minute, when through Claudia's connivance I got Buffy in my clutches, Paul commenced a denunciation of wanton cruelty, a protest against injustice, a plea for mercy -- the very echo of the dog. But he was ten and I had many years more than he of making dogs happy; moreover, thanks to innumerable gifts by my desk, Buffy was more my dog than his.

All but one of us laughed to see the splash and hear the ^{"EEK!"} and watch the frantic dogpaddle. Laughs softened to smiles which froze ~~laughter~~ in horror as Buffalo swam not to our side of the creek but the far bank, ran not downvalley toward camp but upvalley toward La Bohn Gap, stayed not on the valley floor but turned to the valley wall, scrambled up the snowfield, plunged into forest, and was seen no more.

My son ran after, screaming, and rejoined us wailing, "I told you not to do it! You went ahead and did it! YOU KILLED BUFFALO!"

The champion backtrailer wasn't headed for home, she was finally fed up with being compared to Cailin, goaded to song to amuse visitors, kicked in the ribs for eating a cake abandoned and obviously unwanted on the kitchen counter, thrown out the second-storey window when she tried to do something really nice for a person, flung in every body of water along the trail. This was one dunking too many. As she had lived now would she die, alone, running to the summit of Mt. Daniel, sliding down the icefall of the Lynch Glacier into the deep mercy of a crevasse.

"You did it! You did it!" sobbed the boy, formerly my son. A determined effort had to be made if I hoped ever to be his father again. I despatched Claudia and Robby up the slope to the forest where Buffalo was last seen. Paul and I proceeded down the valley floor, to intercept the refugee should she circle around. Three years Paul never had glanced at the mutt and now The International Hero of Nogoan and Sen was inconsolable. When in future dreams he sailed the seas of Prince Creek, conquering ogres, the face of one would be clear.

Paul and I found no tracks; even those we'd made in morning had melted in the sun. I climbed to the woods and met Claudia and Robby, hastening along tracks of a Buffalo -- or coyote -- or bobcat -- or marten. I glissaded to Paul ("I told you! I told you!"). Claudia yelled that they'd lost the tracks. At five o'clock, an hour from Opal Lake meadow, we'd done all we could. The revenge of the dog too homely to love was a guilt that would haunt me through many a middle of the night, divide father and son, cloud the future of the family.

I've often wondered how it was, arriving on the camp knoll, we were preceded. She did not backtrail to camp, did not follow her own scent, or our scent. The nose didn't figure in it at all. Her talent was larger.

Buffalo never again was flung, not even in the ocean. I envisioned her swimming straight out to sea, racing across Eurasia, swimming the Atlantic, racing across America to Cougar Mountain, battering down the door and dashing up the ladder-stairs and depositing a gift saved up from all those years.

BEN WHEELER AND MOSCOW

The first Footsore (Walks and Hikes Around Puget Sound) volume hitched the Issaquah Alps to peaks of the Cascade front from Grass to McDonald, and to the White and Green and Cedar Rivers, and to the saltwater shore from Tacoma to Everett.

The second volume connected the Issaquah Alps to Cascade-front peaks from Si to Index to Sultan to Stickney, and to the Snoqualmie River's three forks, the Tolt's two, the Skykomish's two, and the latter's large tributaries, the Sultan and Wallace and Miller Rivers.

The third was in progress, ⁿliking peaks of the Olympic front from Jupiter to Walker to Zion, to saltwater beaches of the Quimper and Kitsap Peninsulas and of Bainbridge, Marrowstone, Whidbey, Camano, and Fidalgo Islands, to the saltwater shore from Everett to Bellingham, to the Stillaguamish River, both forks, and the Skagit and Samish Rivers, to peaks of the Cascade front from Pilchuck to Olo and Wheeler and Frailey and Cultus and Chuckanut.

Concurrently in progress, the ^rfouth was hooking Olympic-front peaks from Webb to Down and South, to the between-the-ranges uplifts of the ^{Blue}~~Green and Gold~~ Mountains, Black Hills, and Bald Hills, to Cascade-front peaks from Stahl to Busy Wild and Mashel and Sparpole Hill and Three Sisters, to the Skookumchuck, Deschutes, Nisqually, Puyallup, and Carbon Rivers, to the saltwater shore from Tacoma to Olympia, to the sea-in-the-forest fingers of Eld and Totten and Skookum and ^{er}Hammisley Inlets, to the beaches of Hood Canal.

The Sunday, April 9 objective was Wheeler Mountain. Seventeen forest-road miles from the Mountain Loop Highway a washout stopped the beetle, several miles short of where I ^d hoped to be able to drive. However, the sky was cloudless blue, pioneer violet and skunk cabbage were blooming yellow and coltsfoot white, snow bits hid in nooks, spring sun gave the warmth that stimulates but not enervates, winter shadows the chill that stirs the blood but not sludges. A pile of miles were to be walked but the legs were mightily in the mood.

At 11:15 I shouldered rucksack at the washout, elevation 2100 feet, and struck out westerly on the logging road that rounded the side of Mt. Ditney. The way descended to 1700 feet, a sorry start for a climb, and swung north in the broad valley of Big Jim Creek to a first sight of Wheeler. Its sprawl seemed more plateau than mountain. Nearby to the east, Three Fingers and Whitehorse had been sculpted by alpine glaciers to horns and aretes, cirques and cols. On the west tip of the same ridge, Wheeler had been ridden over by the Canadian ice sheet, not sharpened and steepened but rounded and gentled. At 12:30 I crossed the shallow valley of Big Jim Creek, onetime course of meltwater from the continental glacier, to the base of the East Peak of Wheeler. ~~These slopes~~ I traversed ^{its slopes} into another shallow valley, where at two o'clock I crossed Little Jim Creek to the base of the West Peak, the highest.

I was now three mountains from the beetle, had seen no human since the Mountain Loop Highway, and since the beetle, no track of human foot or wheel, though many tracks of cats that never meowed for milk, mice that never nibbled cheese, and dogs that licked no master's hand. Remoteness was a dimension of the air, lonesomeness of me. I spoke to the grouse ("whoomp!") and the frogs ("rough-it").

And to myself. The Granite Falls quad, surveyed in 1954, showed Wheeler to be entirely virgin forest. ~~About~~ ^{About} halfway between then and now it had

been skinned. The hemlocks that had been spared were too shrubby to hide the stumps, the tens of thousands of stumps, flooring the valleys, clothing the slopes, ~~topping~~ ^{capping} the summits. They were middling to small stumps, of a diameter that trees on Cougar Mountain attain in forty to sixty years; up here, as I learned by pausing to count rings, the time span was hundreds of years. On fifty square miles of Wheeler, Blue, and Olo Mountains the tall-tree, deep-shadow forests that had been centuries in the growing had been reduced in a dozen years to sky-open bush.

For a dozen years a hundred-odd loggers and millworkers had made livings for their families off the skinning, and that ~~is~~ ^{was} a good thing. The equivalent of about one-third of a Whispering Heights had been built with the wood, and that ~~was~~ ^{was} not all bad. A handful of stockholders vacationed in Palm Springs on the coupons clipped, and God bless their gin-and-tonics. All these benefits, in the aggregate, seem ^{ed} ^{to me} a small tradeoff for the growth of centuries on fifty square miles of the American earth.

A visitor from an older, sadder world likely would be horrified by so fundamental and swift a transformation of so much of God's creation, as fraught with unknown and unregarded consequences as the ponding of the Columbia River, the plowing of the short-grass prairies. No complaint ever has been voiced in the Puget Sound lowlands, where the clearcutting has been normal and customary since the arrival of European settlers and in many places, such as the Tolt River, has occurred twice, and in older areas three times. ^{down there,} In my own life, I've seen a virgin forest cut, a second forest grow ^{in its place} and be cut, and a third make good progress toward the next harvest. Up here, though, is a difference. The clearcutting has only been underway several decades or less.

The species are different, the soil thinner, the climate harsher. The forests that in the last quarter-century have been casually mowed, and are ^{still} being mowed, ~~were~~ were seeded when the loggers' great-great-great-great-etc.-grandfathers were scything barley in the Old Country. Nobody has lived in Puget Sound country long enough to understand these highland ~~life systems.~~ ^{life systems.}

--I talked to myself about this but walked on ~~meanwhile~~ meanwhile, having seen highland tree-mining often enough, ~~to get over the initial shock.~~ There'd be hell to pay when the enormity of the deed penetrated the Puget Sound mind. On other occasions than this, I'd raise a little myself. Today, though, my feelings toward Scott Paper Company were rather kindly; ~~because~~ by locking the gate on the main entry road from the Mountain Loop Highway it had preserved the glorious Sunday from racketing turdery. Neither did I mind the lack of a true trail; the road was no further threat to the peace because the trees were all gone, and it happened to be of just a nice width for horses and wagons. As for the dun-brushy knolls and vales, under the big sky they uncannily resembled the moors where Richard Hannay eluded henchmen of the Kaiser's spymaster, the sinister chap who could hood his eyes like a hawk.

At 2:40 I came to a landing on the brink of the 3000-foot drop to ~~the~~ ~~the~~ the North Fork Stillaguamish River. Cows dotted the floodplain pastures. Bugs crept the highway from Arlington to Darrington. For the work in progress I'd walked from Arlington to Darrington, not on the highway but the quiet railway (one train a week) beside the river. In the enthusiasm of an earlier period of my life I'd climbed the shining glaciers of Whitehorse. Before that, carried along by an enthusiasm of my parents, in January of 1930, from our

cabin by the river, which they were fishing for steelhead, I'd scanned the heights for the white horse. I doubtless scanned Wheeler, too, on the chance the horse had strayed.

The reversing of that forty-eight-year-old river-mountain sightline had been my prime objective. The summit made other connections; to the long arc of the winter-white North Cascades, partly a national park these past ten years; and north across the valley and beyond the green summits of the Cultus Mountains ^{to} the two-mile-high whiteness of Komo Kulshan -- which happened to be ~~leaking~~ ^{doing} steam today, as it was [^] on my first ascent, thirty years before.

From the landing on the brink I climbed to the summit plateau, 3700 feet, for a westerly view to lowlands, to Whidbey and Camano Islands and the Olympic horizon, and to silver-shining Skagit Bay, Port Susan, Saratoga Strait, Admiralty Inlet, and Puget Sound.

A sidetrip on a spur gave a final view, south, over Blue and Olo mountains to Nanga Pilchuck, and along the shore from Everett ~~past~~ past Edmonds and Hidden Creek to Seattle; I also made out in the blue haze the familiar humps of the Issaquah Alps.

At 4:05 my eyes were full enough, my web complete enough, for my brain to listen to reason. The sun was low, the saltwaterways were turning from silver to gold. Before regaining the beetle I'd have walked twenty-four miles, and at the very end waited that 400-foot ascent. So much the better, said happy legs.

I'm forever climbing mountains,
Shaggy mount^aains one by one...
^

Evening shadows were cool in my nose. In a meadow-marsh of Little Jim Creek, marsh marigolds were blooming. Atop my tracks were f^resh ones of cats and dogs and mice.

At 5:30 I crossed Big Jim Creek, one more mountain to run. At 6:30 a sudden darkening made me turn to see the sun slip behind Blue Mountain. Though now completely in shadow, the valley of Big Jim Creek shimmered with a pale blue glow. Eerie. I wondered if it was an effect of ionization, from the six parallel wires draped through the air one-and-a-half miles from Blue to Ben Wheeler, transmitting commands to submarines on station around the globe.

Dad was a bluejacket on the U.S.S. New Mexico when the battlewagons' fourteen-inchers were trusted to keep our nation free from foreign entanglements. A family affection for the Navy lingered. Several fine movies had nurtured an admiration for submarines. Today, feeling somewhat ionized myself, when passing marshes and mudpuddles I'd startled the frogs by relaying messages overheard from the wires, "DIVE DIVE DIVE."

So alone, so remote, on so ravaged and abandoned a mountain, so unknown to any civilians but me and a few loggers, so at peace with my legs and innards, and ^{with} the past and the present and the animals, it was odd to realize that on the other side of Earth a map marked the precise locations of Wheeler and Blue by means of vectors from the Milky Way and rendered their names (or at least that of Jim Creek Naval Reservation) in Cyrillic characters.

ON THE BEACH TO BANGOR

The frost on the driftwood had no sparkle. The water lying still and silent on the sand had no color. Before dawn a gray sheet had slipped across the sky, commingled with the night's fog and the smog cooked up by days of sunny stagnation, and the three had intercrept to form a universal clammy murk. Another reason not to be here was the stage of the tide -- the morning low would be at 11:05, the afternoon high at 4:19. To set out to walk six miles of unknown beach on an incoming tide was to take risks, especially on an uneasy November 15 with the potential, said the weatherman, for eighteen kinds of hell.

However, one final day would do it. These two years I'd walked a thousand-odd miles on Puget Sound, Possession Sound, Bellingham Bay, Samish Bay, Padilla Bay, Skagit Bay, Elliott Bay, Commencement Bay, Sequim Bay, Minter Bay, Oakland Bay, Henderson Bay, Useless Bay, Liberty Bay, Shilshole Bay, Browns Bay, Holmes Harbor, Eagle Harbor, Quartermaster Harbor, Port Blakely, Port Discovery, Port Gamble, Port Gardner, Port Madison, Port Townsend, Port Orchard, Appletree Cove, Penn Cove, Admiralty Inlet, Henderson Inlet, Budd Inlet, Eld Inlet, Totten Inlet, Skookum Inlet, Hammersley Inlet, Case Inlet, Carr Inlet, Sinclair Inlet, Dyes Inlet, Burley Lagoon, Saratoga Strait, Rosario Strait, Strait of Juan de Fuca, Pickering Passage, Colvos Passage, Hale Passage, Dalco Passage, East Passage, Rich Passage, Cormorant Passage, Agate Pass, Deception Pass, Balch Pass, Pitt Pass, Drayton Pass, Peale Pass, Dana Pass, Port Washington Narrows, The Narrows, Nisqually Reach, and associated waters. One more day, my fifth ^{spent} tracing the Kitsap Peninsula shore of Hood Canal, would finish the

route northward from The Great Bend to Bangor and complete my survey of the Whulj, as the original settlers called "the saltwater we know."

I'd rather have had it all yet to do, ~~to be sitting out on the first day.~~

At 10:30^{AS} I struck off north from Big Beef Harbor, a great blue heron comment^{sd}ing, "gark! gark!" On October 19, walking in the sun nine miles south from Holly to Dewatto Bay, and returning, I'd been "garked!" the livelong day by hundreds of herons -- or was it a dozen who wouldn't leave me alone, wanted me to understand this was their shore, not meant for people?

In four days and twenty-seven miles (times two) of Hood Canal beachwalking I'd met just one person, and it ^{was on} ~~happened~~ that sunny day. As I marveled at the Stars and Stripes displayed from a pole in the middle of uninhabited nowhere, he came hopping over the driftwood, not to miss the chance -- very rare, he told me -- for conversation.

He was 77, had lived since 1938 on this exact spot, a narrow terrace of fossil beach, several feet above the highest reach of modern tides. In 1938 the terrace was totally occupied by a chicken house that supplied eggs and friers and roasters to the entire south Canal. Neighbors came by rowboat or canoe to buy or barter. The rancher delivered by kickerboat to the general stores of Tahuya, Union, Potlatch, Hoodspout, and Lilliwaup. Chicken feed arrived from Seattle on the weekly freight boat that steamed south along one side of the Canal in morning, north along the other in afternoon, tying up at docks or, as here, nosing up on the beach.

Fewer people lived in these parts now than then, when easy transportation by the mosquito fleet hadn't quite ended, ~~when~~ shores closely linked by the

water road to cities of Puget Sound hadn't slipped back to frontier isolation. Even more people, he said, lived here before his time, in the 1880s, when fifty logging camps were at work assembling rafts of logs to be floated to mills, ~~when~~ every spit and delta and fossil beach was the headquarters of a woodcutter who stacked cordwood on the beach for sale to passing steamers, and wherever room could be found for a garden somebody had settled in to grow potatoes and cabbages, dig clams, pick oysters, catch fish, and shoot ducks and deer.

The encounter briefly broke my wilderness solitude. ("You'd better not let me keep you," he said. "The tide is turning, you'll be running out of beach.") It enlarged the dimensions of my ~~historic horizons~~ ^{return} by forty years, a hundred. Rusty ironware now spoke of bullteams dragging logs on skidroads to the brink of the drift plateau, ~~hundreds of feet~~ ^{far} above, for fluming to the beach. Boards and shakes of collapsed cabins recalled woodcutters and oysterpickers. I paused to sample a ripe apple of some forgotten species and the flavor was so ~~rich~~ ^{rich} I harvested a dozen for the rucksack and made note to stop by in summer for the cherries. A few steps from the beach, in a deep ravine, the time dimension was enlarged far more than a hundred years by a glacial erratic in which a pictograph had been chiseled.

Another day of sun had been May 17, when I walked the seven miles from Dry Creek, at The Great Bend (the far south of Vancouver's 1792 exploration), north to Dewatto Bay. It was a ~~day~~ ^{day} of every color but gray. The sky and the water-mirror glowed blue; forests of the bluff bloomed with the white of dogwood and madrona and evergreen huckleberry and the pink of rhododendron; and the naked walls of glacial drift were speckled with the white of

serviceberry and thimbleberry and blackberry and strawberry and candyflower and spring beauty and alumroot and the pink of Nooka^t rose and the blue of vetch and forget-me-not. A jut I called "Valerian Point" was a wall-hanging^g of Scouler valerian's white, paintbrush's red, and lupine's blue. Creeks rippled from green ravines over deltas whose ~~granite~~^{rocks} were the iron-orange of the "Skokomish Gravels" dumped by an ancient glacier from the Olympic Mountains. Great blue herons "garked!" A snowy-headed eagle flew over, hounded by black crows and white gulls. Rounding a point I halted, stood quiet, to watch two tawny deer nibbling green seaweed.

The southern shores I walked these two days of May and October, the seventeen miles from Dry Creek to Holly, were more wild than not. Only in the middle of the stretch, at Dewatto Bay, did a road -- gravel, ~~rustic~~^{potholed}, lonesome -- break through the bluffs to the water. In those seventeen miles I'd spotted some two score houses in the woods, which for the most part were virgin forest, ~~whatsoever~~ the loggers having mainly stayed atop the plateau. A half-dozen houses appeared inhabited, as evidenced by sailboats moored to dolphins, dogs coming out to bark me by. No wires brought in the means of skyglow and overcommunication. Had a canoe of the Skokomish people come paddling by, they'd have felt comfortable.

The transition was abrupt at Holly, a small old settlement, the end of the paved county road and, until recently, the end of any road whatsoever. November 2, walking north from there to Hood Head, I'd found the bluff low and frequently breached by valleys that let man and machines to the water's edge. Though the season, and the drizzle of the day, kept the people hidden and quiet in their houses, and few of these were visible from the beach, the feeling was not of

being in a wilderness, alone, but alone in a crowd.

It wasn't a begrudged crowd. because it was a crowd of beach people, part of my extended family. I'd begun my remembered life as a beach person; ~~and~~ Dad had become one again, having left Cougar Mountain after Mother's death to become caretaker, handyman, gypo logger, and oysterpicker at a resort on the Olympic Peninsula shore directly across Hood Canal from Holly. Unless they squat on spits and bars where they don't belong, dredge lagoons for stinkpot moorage, or commit similar abominations, people who live on a beach are more likely than not to be worthy of the privilege, and to contribute to the interest of the shore. The herons and eagles and deer to the south had given me no more pleasure than a vale near Dewatto that had been cleared, long ago, for garden and orchard and lawn; the pilings and boat ramp testified that until recently the well-kept and obviously beloved old house had known no other road than the water. A valley in Frenchman's Cove, near Hood Point, was a working farm, with cows in the pasture, old red barn at the edge, and smoke curling from the farmhouse chimney. The cormorants posing atop pilings, the grebes swimming swanlike by, the kingfisher scolding "ti-ti-ti" were no homier than the gaggle of watchgeese who waddled up onto the driftwood to hiss their protest of my trespass. Weathered cottages of Nettleton recalled summer weeks of the 1930s in the beach cabin on Vashon Island. As often ^{happened} in these two years of systematic beachwalking, I ^{felt close to} ~~was~~ my first remembered home, at Eagle Harbor on Bainbridge Island.

Gray was the color of this glum November 15, as I set out from Big Beef Creek, ^{just north of} ~~the~~ Seabeck, the largest settlement of the shore.

A ferry, the Lake Constance, used to cross the Canal from here to Brinnon. It could carry eight or nine cars in a pinch but was happier with four or five, and seemed content with two or three, and would make a special trip for a busload of Scouts headed for Camp Parsons, ~~just across the water~~. In August of 1942 Dad and I, on the way to a hike to Lake Constance, stopped at the restaurant ~~for coffee~~ and asked when the next ferry was due. "Oh," said the fellow, "In October, maybe, or maybe not until the war's over."

The Seabeck country was old. Not older than the south Canal, but unlike there the people never had packed up and moved away. ~~On the shore north from~~
~~Beck~~ Houses were ~~just about~~ cheek-by-jowl continuous, some were in coves and vales beside the water, most ~~was~~ atop the low bluff, linked to the beach by paths, wooden stairways, or electric trams.

Today the murk was keeping people off the beach. The weather forecast was keeping boats off the water. The expectation of something awful about to happen was keeping the dogs quiet. ~~_____~~

At 11:45 I glanced south over my shoulder -- and flinched. From the Kitsap shore to the Olympic shore the Canal had been swallowed ~~in its~~
~~_____~~ by a ~~mountainous~~ blackness, the stuff of childhood nightmares.

The gray of this day's dawn had seeped through the walls of our hut, through my skin, and I'd awakened eyeball to eyeball with the end of time, and that was another reason I was out walking today.

At the beginning of time ~~there had been~~^{was} that day in May, when the Olympic skyline -- from Ellinor to Washington to The Brothers to Jupiter -- lay uncreated in the white of winter, even while flowers in the soft air by the still waters promised an eternity of beginning.

In time's middle course there'd been the day in October. The low sun of Indian summer was dimmed by smoke of loggers' slashfires ~~that~~ ^{that} subdued ~~the~~ rough contours of the brown Olympic peaks, gave the sky a coppery hue that beame, too, the hue of the motionless water, and blue-hazed the shore. ~~Walk~~ ^{Walk} from shallow indentation to bulging point, and again, and again, ~~and~~ ^{hour after hour,} ~~more~~ more of the same ahead, and behind, ~~seemed a progress through~~ ^{seemed a progress through} ~~instrument in an orchestra performing~~ ^{recurring} an adagio with a ~~recurring~~ ^{recurring} theme, the more heard the more beautiful, the more sad.

The walk of November 2 had been under low clouds that drizzled, loosed flurries of hard rain, ~~chasing~~ ^{that} me under overhanging ~~maples,~~ ^{then} ~~and~~ let me go on. There was nothing personal in it, though, the atmosphere was ~~benign~~ benign, enough of time remained for the enjoyment of loneliness, no need to come to terms with what would come after.

Today no birds sang, or flew, or swam. No smiles or barks greeted from bluffs, no faces peered from windows. In the murky air and the sullen water was an immanent malignance that would have to be met alone.

The murk thickened to blot out Mt. Walker, the home peak of Camp Parsons, and the Toandos Peninsula, around whose tip the Virginia V (or Tye ^{Scout,} or other) ^{into} made the turn north ~~times~~ Dabob Bay, aiming for Jackson Cove and the camp dock.

With not the least preliminary stirring, at 11:55 a roaring in the trees of the bluff threw yellow leaves ^{far} out over the Canal, churned the glassy water to whitecaps, and flung a surf across the beach to the bluff. ^{The blackness of} World's end was a quarter-mile away, then a stone's throw, then I paused to pull the garbage bag over my rucksack and hoist the umbrella and instantly the sky came crushing down upon me ~~with all its weight.~~

At 12:45, ~~of the defenses~~, I crossed the gravel berm of King Spit and huddled behind a drift log, ^{Sadden and} shivering, to eat kipper snacks and a Milky Way.

Also sheltered by the spit were the relict pilings of the Bangor dock, port of call for the mosquito fleet, and of no mean importance, having ^{long ago} been singled out to bear the name of a port in Maine which itself remembered a port ^{major} in ~~Britain~~ ^{Wales.} Of the three it was in process of gaining the greatest ^{significance} ~~importance~~ in the history of the world, inasmuch as the remnant of the dock was closely adjoined by the Cyclone Fence that guarded construction-in-progress of the home port for Trident submarines.

The White Train, its turret cars manned by marksmen armed with rifles, handguns, and what the Pentagon called "special weapons," had been for a dozen-odd years rolling the rails outward in various directions from Amarillo, Texas, final assembly site of nuclear bombs. Soon it would begin deliveries to Bangor, watched in passage by the Ground Zero Center for Non-Violent Action. At Bangor, as the base was building, some members or allies had been doing more than watching.

At 1:05, snow mixing with the rain, ~~a~~ sorry promise of a day-ending trudge up the hill from Eastgate to the 200-meter hut, I turned south for Big Beef -- on the county road, having lost the beach to the tide and the wind. I was sorrily certain that no miles of road-walking would be saved by the thumb. Beach and water had been deserted and so, now, was the road.

The county road, that is. With umbrella lowered over my face against the sleeting, I was slow to notice ~~that~~ I had companions in grayness, that my foot pace was being matched on the far side of the Trident fence by the wheel

pace of a gray jeep. Two gray uniforms were keeping gray eyes fastened on me, now and then speaking through the gray air to a gray vigilance at Ground Zero.

A jumper had told me how it went. The first time, she and her companions had been handcuffed and detained through the winter day in an unheated warehouse, seated on the cold concrete, permitted no exercise of numb arms and legs and butts, no food or water, no toilet relief, and after dark had been driven to remote gates and turned separately loose on deserted backroads. That was the worst of it; at the trial they'd been let off with suspended sentences.

The second time a carefully selected judge had given the repeaters months-long sentences and they were shipped to prisons carefully chosen as too distant from families and friends for ~~them to provide~~ close emotional support and the prison officials carefully gave the jumpers no protection from patriotic criminals.

The Navy saw a whiskered old man wearing a garbage bag and carrying a red umbrella, walking alone in a November snowstorm -- obviously a crazy. I wouldn't argue with that. However, I wasn't crazy enough to be a jumper. The United States of America might be, as some observers said, making the Soviet Union nervous; it was scaring the hell out of me.

THE GHOST ROCKS

The rumbling of earth and sky and the creaking of ~~the~~ timbers of the
 halt
 Cougar Mountain hut didn't ~~interrupt~~ my typing. Sounds that once would have
 emptied houses and filled churches are accepted, in these concluding decades of
 the second millenium of the Christian era, as ordinary background. Wind in
 treetops goes unheard, drowned out by the backyard tuning-up by the neighborhood's
 dirtbike racer. Thunder and sonic booms alike are submerged in the yowling
 of electric mandolins. Many a sinner will burn in Hell for lack of a last-minute
 prayer because he'll take the crack of doom to be just another gasoline truck
 blowing up on the freeway. Shortly after the rumbling and creaking, however,
 the TV evangelist I was using for Sunday-morning white noise was interrupted
 by the news flash. I nodded, gratified that what we'd been ~~expecting and~~ craving
 since March 20 had happened, and resumed typing. In afternoon, the day's desk
 work done and the TV frantic with alarms and excursions but no pictures, I
 walked to the Far Country Lookout to see what might be seen.

To the south the heavens and earth were divided vertically in two. The
 western half was bright spring -- the sky a vivid blue, Olympic peaks sharp
 enough to spot climbing routes, the Black Hills exceptionally distinct in the
 gap between Olympics and Cascades, and the ASARCO smelter stack on Tacoma's
 Commencement Bay as stark as the finger of fate.

The eastern half was -- wasn't. No sky, no earth. Rainier didn't exist,
 nor the tip of the other volcano that used to poke above the crest of the Bald
 Hills ^l_m and these, too, were gone. The usual foreground to Rainier, the White
 River plain, was lost in black void. At the next closer river, the Green, the

landscape was murkily visible. ~~but~~ ^{however,} Only at the Cedar River, three miles from where I stood, did ridges and ravines come in clear focus. The cloud reached farther still, its overhang jutting above May Valley, a halfmile from the lookout. I was in sunshine under springtime blue. Houses so near I ~~could~~ ^{could hear} the dogs barking were in the shadow of St. Helens.

Many of us local folk, that day in May, came ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ^{the closest we ever} would to the semi-eternal verities of the planet. As the weeks wore on, though, the awe wore off -- was eroded off. Had the "media" of the ~~ending~~ ^{conclusion} of these last two millenia existed at the beginning ^{of} ^{it} the era ^{Crucifixion and} couldn't have become "Christian"; a month after the Resurrection [^] the world would have switched to reruns of chariot races and Dionysian revels.

The same trees endlessly crushed the same pickups, the same hardhats repeated the same prognostications, the same farmers kicked their ash. The old alkie who earned the right to be the first person blown away, and the geologist-mystic who achieved his wanted union with the infinite, and the rubberneckers who came to see the elephant and got stomped, and the freeway gypsies who were marooned in restaurants that ran dangerously low on gin, grew as tiresome as wads of stale chewing gum.

Science (or to be fair, the public tip of its iceberg) did no better than the press. Pundits and ~~their~~ ^r apprentices congealed [^] from five continents to jostle for space in front of the camera. Between interviews they competed for helicopter rides to the blast zone -- the bull's eye, the ten ring, the hot center of the game where the points were scored, the grants obtained.

Cumulatively, the professional disseminators and gatherers of knowledge devoted ninety percent of their indefatigability to ten percent of the story. In the stampede to the crater, no scientist spared an afternoon, nor reporter a phone call, to verify that ash fell on May Valley, a dozen miles from downtown Seattle. Nobody who was anybody in the knowledge establishment realized that this was potentially a far graver matter than damage to the 1980 hay crop in Ritzville or depreciation of real estate along the Cowlitz River.

for all the skilled efforts

Nevertheless, the event was impossible to reduce to banality. A subsequent eruption, ~~causing~~ when the wind ~~was~~ ^{then} blowing from the north, ashed Portland, across the Columbia River in Oregon; and when an earthquake shook Mt. Hood, next door to the city, the populace was reminded that several hills within the metropolis were volcanoes that were not necessarily extinct. A professor of geology commented that in the extraordinarily regular spacing of Cascade volcanoes ~~along the range~~ from California to British Columbia, there was a notable gap between Rainier and Glacier, ~~and~~ ^{that} the "missing" volcano belonged next door to Seattle -- and the approximate site was marked by Goldmeyer Hot Springs! ^{that} ^{claimed to have} Another geologist found evidence that Glacier, which had been thought quiet since it ashed three states and three Canadian provinces 12,000 years ago, had erupted violently in 1800. Baker continued steaming. More hot spots were discovered on Rainier and speculatively correlated with such events of ~~the~~ very recent ~~past~~ ^{years} as the Kautz Flood and the Little Tahoma Collapse, and of ^{the} not-so-distant ~~past~~ ^{inhabited} Osceola Mudflow and Electron Mudflow, both of which swept down valleys to the saltwater. For land speculators ^t and chambers of commerce

these were the worst of times, endangering the prospects for a new Silicon Valley, whose high-tech knick-knackers require above all else, even a friendly tax assessor, an atmosphere free of dust. For old volcano-walkers who had prayed to be privileged to witness in their brief lives a shattering of the long quiet of geologic uniformitarianism, these were the best of times.

I could have wished for the ~~extravaganza~~^{show} to be postponed to 1981. The summer of the seventh year since I'd buckled down to do something serious about flowers was ~~to have~~^{planned to} feature a full month in Conrad Basin. ~~at~~^{In} the beginning, the marsh marigolds, glacier lilies, spring beauties, and snow buttercups would be bursting blossoms from brown ground at snow's edge. In the ending, ~~the~~^{the} fields of yellowing grass would be blued by the gentian, whose flowers bloom so late, ~~in the~~^{time of} ~~lengthening~~ nights and heavier rains and resuming snows, ~~they~~^{that} conserve plant energy by never opening petals except when there is sunlight to warm things up for the pollinators.

May 18 didn't cancel the plan. My goal was neither the crater, nor Yakima, nor Moses Lake, nor Spokane, of which we'd heard so much from the media, but a place they'd never mentioned. My base lay forty-five miles northeasterly of St. Helens, and though Yakima, ~~was~~^{not yet finished} sweeping its streets, was on the same line ~~at~~ twice the distance, I hypothesized that the ash might have shot cleanly over my camp before starting to fall.

June 12, I wrote friends in the Forest Service to apply for a permit to travel in the Goat Rocks Wilderness, stating "I and mine hereby absolve the United States ~~from~~^{of America} from any blame for grit in my soup." June 26, my friends

issued the permit with a covering letter, "The Conrad Basin is covered with a layer of sandy-textured ash... The worst-case scenario of the USGS would deposit up to three feet of hot pumice in this area... Have a good trip!"

A month is a lot of pots of soup. A reconnaissance seemed advisable.

Monday morning, June 30, driving the highway past Rainier, I entered the gray. The forest floor beside the road was not ~~the~~ ^a normal duff-brown but the color -- the non-color -- of St. Helens. The higher ~~slopes~~ ^{glaciers} of Rainier had been snowed on since May 18 and were the usual gleaming white; the lower ~~slopes of the~~ glaciers were ashen. I parked the beetle at White Pass and climbed gray snowfields to ~~the~~ gray rocks of Hogback Mountain and an appalling close view of my destination. A night at a highway-side campground grayed my sleeping bag, shirt, shorts, hair, whiskers, eyebrows, and soup.

Next morning, nerves screwed tight, I drove the South Fork Tieton River road, looking ^{ahead} through the windshield to the sinister gray blanket and in the rear-view mirror to the valley-choking gray cloud; ^{behind} had a car been ahead of the beetle I'd have had to park and wait an hour for its cloud to settle, lest it destroy my engine.

At nine o'clock of the forty-fourth day after the Big Blast (and considerably fewer days since the ^{most recent of the} frequent Lesser Blasts), at the Conrad Meadows trailhead, I hoisted rucksack. The trail was inches deep in the gray, eerie to the eye accustomed to brown humus. However, the largest valley-bottom subalpine meadow in the Cascades ~~was~~ was a fever of color not known for a near-century, not since the cows were ^{brought} ~~lost~~ in -- as they'd not been this summer lest they sneeze themselves to death. The new growth that usually was cropped and stomped

and flopped to a fly-swarmed stubble rose pristinely clean above my knees, a green sea with waves of yellow (sticky cinquefoil, slender cinquefoil, and five groundsels and cousins), and blue (common camas, larkspur, and lupine), and white (death camas, bog orchid, and strawberry), these colors repeated and others introduced by shepherd's purse, long-stalked clover, polemonium, spring gold, yarrow, dandelion, chickweed, elephanthead, white hellebore, gooseberry, phlox, crazyweed, vetch, and littleflower penstemon.

The path entered trees and the back of my neck prickled. A picture in my childhood Bible-study book showed a holy man in the woods being tempted (with what, neither text nor picture told, ~~making it all~~ ^{the situation therefore} ~~the more~~ ^{mysteriously} (dreadful) by a sinister fellow, doubtless the Devil in civilian clothes. There was a time when I never walked in the woods without ~~keeping my eye out~~ ^{watching} for that fellow and now the prickling made me glance over my shoulder. ~~He'd dodged~~ ^{He'd dodged} off, out of sight in the gray ~~of~~ ^{of} the forest floor, the stumps, ^{of} the logs, ^{of} the sagging branches. I paused to section the blanket, some two inches deep, and found three distinct layers: on the bottom, a dark-gray "talcum" powder that formed a cohesive cake; in the middle, a layer of loose "beach sand"; on top, a cake of light-gray "talcum." No flowers and only a few ~~tentative~~ blades of green broke the ash surface. The air felt gray and became so when a branch was brushed, as did I, sneezing.

Meadow openings resumed the color ~~and~~ ^{with} added species: arnica, Johnny-jump-up, meadow parsley, spring beauty, arrowleaf groundsel, prairie star, bigleaf avens, American speedwell, common paintbrush, Merten's bluebells, rock cress, ~~common~~ waterleaf, common monkeyflower, small-flowered paintbrush, Mariposa lily, white thistle, star-flowered solomons seal, western long-spurred violet.

At eleven o'clock the trail split. The left fork ^{forded} ~~crossed~~ the river to begin the climb to Surprise Lake; the record in the ash told that six pairs of boots had gone that way in six weeks. I took the right fork -- no lake, no trout, no boots -- and ascended slopes of the ridge that divides the river from its tributary, larger than it is, Conrad Creek. A first gray meadow was sparsely dotted with glacier lily and spring beauty and round-leaved violet, the next with marsh violet and ballhead waterleaf. In the forest ^{atop} ~~at~~ the ridge crest the trail disappeared beneath a gray that was not, as below, light and dusty, but dark and muddy. A skid of the boot scuffed through wet ash to reveal snow.

I was not the first to climb so high. Two had come before, one set of tracks very large -- an elk -- and the companion tracks similar but smaller -- a little elk.

I was not alone. No squirrels scolded, no birds flew, no bugs buzzed or whined, but red ants hurried in and out the vents of brown volcanoes erupted in the gray. Larger brown mounds spoke of other life underground, gophers busy at their gardening.

The ridge crest slanted steeply upward, then leveled out, and the forest broke up in parkland. Clumps of subalpine trees, isolated and exposed, had been blown clean and green by high-country winds. Meadow openings were mosaics of light gray (dry ground beneath) and dark (snow below). A traveling eruption of dust gave away a marmot's ^{subterranean security} ~~dash for~~ ^{the creature} ~~dash~~. On May 18, had ~~it~~ been still in hibernation? Emerging to greet 1980, did it perhaps whistle to the effect of "Oh my golly!"

I dropped off the ridge to an open bench, through a screen of trees, and at one o'clock stopped short and whispered words to stronger effect than "golly."

We usually camped here in August. The meadow, flat as the lake it had replaced, was then a broad green spattered and splashed with every color in the spectrum between infra-red and ultra-violet. Any ordinary year the plain would have been, this early, a single white gleam. Today it was gray. All gray.

The dissected roots of the ancient volcano -- the lava walls of Moon Mountain leaping up from the meadow edge, the ridge of Tieton Peak to the north, and the Dark Tower to the south -- normally were, respectively, rusty to black, yellow and orange and brown, and glowering black. Today the cliffs and ridges, cou^ol_Alirs and cols, peaks and pinnacles, rocks and snows were gray. All gray.

The water for our camp was the Meade Fork of Conrad Creek, issuing from the Meade Glacier, too stagnant to mill rock flour and ^{its melt} thus always sparkling clear. Today ~~it~~ ^{the stream} flowed mainly beneath the snow -- the gray snow -- but where open to view was gray. Turgid gray.

Our camp clump of firs and pines had been greened by the winds. They didn't fit the neighborhood. The fire-ring boulders were buried in gray. The spot where I always unrolled my sleeping bag would require the shoveling of some quarter-ton of sand and talcum powder to avoid silicosis in the night.

The back of my neck prickled at the sound of a horrid roaring. I whirled to face it and was blinded by a dust devil. Vicious little tornadoes

were roving ~~and~~ the meadows of the Ghost Rocks, running the crests of Moon and Tieton and Le Gran Plateau of Mt. Gilbert. The sky that had been blue in morning was graying toward the nullity at the completion of entropy.

St. Helens exploded!

Boots jittered! Started running in place and ~~getting~~ no place! Three feet of hot pumice!

A silver speck crept across the sky. A person never could sleep here, not with St. Helens erupting every hour of the night.

Was the day safer? Suppose there had been no jet speck to explain that explosion? Along about now, before jittering boots could get traction, the Darkness (so vividly, oh Lord so vividly described by friends who'd been on downwind trails that day) would roil over the crest of the Goat Rocks, to be briefly mistaken for the most terrifying lightning storm of my life. Three feet! The contorted skeletons excavated at Pompeii indicate the townsfolk were asphyxiated considerably before the ash piled that deep.

It occurred to me that the "worst-case scenario" would be as fatal anytime in the next three-four hours as the next three-four minutes. I might as well spend a few moments examining the gray plain.

The "beach sand" was familiar; wherever Cascade creeks and trails cut soil profiles they reveal layers of the same gray, many much thicker than two inches. Bottom sediments of Seattle lakes have gray strata.

A very dark day it was for the Klamath River people, 6600 years ago, when Mazama blew its top. There was a bad day for the White River people, 5800 years ago, when a steam explosion on Rainier melted glaciers and sent the Osceola

Mudflow howling down the valley, and another for Puyallup River people, a mere 600 years ago, when Rainier blew out steam on another flank and dispatched the Electron Mudflow down their valley. In the dozen ^{millenia} ~~years~~ since man arrived in the Northwest (contemporaneously with the Big Blast of Glacier Peak which ~~perhaps~~ ^{perhaps} set some of the pioneers to wondering why they ever left Siberia), there has been, over and over again, from Lassen to Baker, grit in the soup.

Yet here we were, still, we and our companions. Momma elk and baby elk ^{ambled} had ~~proceeded~~ north toward Tieton Peak. A coyote recently had taken a quick trot across the flat on the lookout for mice and marmots. The white flowers of marsh marigold and spring beauty, and the yellow of glacier lily, were erupting from the gray. Lupine leaves were greening ~~the~~ banks of the creek, to become in weeks ahead a pasture the marmots would graze and a field whose blue would catch the eyes of some pollinators, and whose perfume would draw the noses of others. Sprigs of Cascade huckleberry (Vaccinium deliciosum) poked through the ash on ~~the~~ knolls and opened pink-white blossoms; in late summer the delicious blue fruit would bring the birds, and -- next year if not this -- the people.

The world hereabouts had been gray many times, and always had become green again, and white and yellow and blue and pink. The gray in the long shadow of St. Helens was more uncreated than winter, yet from it the world would be created again. It was a different gray from Bangor.

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WALKING THE WHULJ FROM TACOMA TO SEATTLE

Monday, May 16

9:40. Hoist the Kelty, hitch the pants, and walk out the driveway, attended by four dogs. Cailin, the old Shelty, and Buffalo, the old joke, and Petrouchka, Becky's Keeshundt, accept my command to stay home, sorrowing. Myfy, the Shelty pup, is consternated. It's not natural, she yaps, for man to go walking without a dog. Low clouds slide swiftly north on a brisk breeze, the sun dodges in and out, the sky watch has begun. Later today will begin the water watch. I'm heading into the teeth of spring tides, -2.0 in midafternoon, meaning plenty of beach for walking, but 12.0 at night, meaning not much, if any, for sleeping.

10:05. Down the hill to Eastgate as the Metro 210 arrives from Issaquah. Passengers glance askance at the Kelty. And at me? Recalling Penny's descriptions of Mexican buses I'm minded to try this trip with a crate of chickens and a suckling pig.

10:47. Off the 210 in downtown Seattle at 4th and Pine, walk to 2nd and Pike, and at 11:08 board the 174. Metro is way ahead of me! A sign says, "Live animals allowed in a secure carrying case; dogs in laps." The crate of chickens will pass. How about the piglet in my lap?

12:23. Off the 174 at Federal Way, onto the 181, off at 12:34 on the King County line. No Pierce County bus connects. The Whulj, "the saltwater we know," is miles distant. From its shores drifts the privy stink of the St. Regis pulpmill. The clouds on the southerly wind are darkening.

4:03. Six-and-a-half hours from the 200-meter hut on Cougar Mountain, I at last set foot on shingle and sand of Commencement Bay. Betty^{had} offered to drive me, saving five and a half of those hours, sparing me the buses and the wearisome plodding on highway shoulders to the edge of the drift plateau, down the bluff to Hylebos Waterway, along Marine View Drive past factories, warehouses, yacht clubs, and marinas. But that would have missed the point.

4:20. The rotten old barge is beached exactly where it was in 1977, when I first walked the shore from Tacoma to Seattle. It's now six years more rotten, but who isn't? A wall of iron-stained till pushes Marine View Drive up and away from the water, leaving the beach alone. Where a concrete bulkhead at the end of the bluff announces the start of beach houses I sit for a final moment of solitude. Across the bay lies downtown Tacoma. At the mouth of the Puyallup River, entering the head of the bay, the pulpmill erupts its cloud of steam and fumes. Near Point Defiance, whose peninsula^{separates} the mouth of the bay from the entrance to The Narrows, the brick finger of the ASARCO smelter stack thrusts so high we see it from Far Country Lookout. A container ship enters the bay and is met by two tugs. A tug tows a log raft toward the mill. The sky is glum.

5:07. The green lawns and white lighthouse of Browns Point (Pierce) County Park mark the rounding of the shore from Commencement Bay to East Passage, the waterway between the mainland and Vashon-Maury Islands. The beach is all cobbles -- barnacle-rough, seaweed-slippery, slow going, hot and thirsty. An hour ago I drank my last can of Pepsi. The park has no drinking fountain. Eight miles I've been on the hoof. Two more miles to camp. On these damn cobbles a mile an hour is a fast pace. Feet are sore. Ankles are sore.

5:57. Dash Point (Pierce) County Park has drinking fountains. Dry!

6:05. From a park bench I gaze across Puget Sound to the mouth of Quartermaster Harbor, between Maury Island and ^{behind it} the southern extension of Vashon Island. Water water everywhere nor any drop to drink. My kingdom for a Pepsi, my soul for a Seven Up. But there is no grocery store and the sole restaurant, the Lobster House, has a posh look. Through the windows I see people at table, drinking, and the women are gowned, the men suited, everybody saturated with deodorant. I'd be as welcome in there as an unwashed grizzly bear. But they say that drinking salt water drives you mad, mad, mad. "Do you sell liquids to take out? Any liquids at all? In bottle, can, or bucket?" They're very sorry, their license won't let them. "But we'd be glad to fill your water bottle." They do, and with ice water, such an ecstasy as when I came down off Nordgipfel and stuck my head in Lake Serene. I hand over my soul and promise to ship my kingdom by parcel post but they refuse all gratuities. The maitre de happened to have seen me as he was driving to work along Marine View and is happy to have the mystery explained. The staff is intrigued that somebody is walking from Tacoma to Seattle, is as delighted to have been of help as if they'd contributed money to send a climber to Mt. Everest.

6:23. The tide is on the flood, gulping the beach. A damn bulkhead invades my rightful path, forces me out to an ankle-deep wade. I leave the beach, sit at a picnic table in the valley of Dash Point State Park. The ice water is gone but the drinking fountain is turned on, I will not perish. To be truthful, I wouldn't have anyway ^{because} at the last grocery on Marine View I bought a supply of emergency liquid. The thing is, had I opened a can at the county park there might well have been such an emergency as would prevent me from hobbling to the state park.

6:25. Just like that the soreness goes out of legs, the weariness from eyes. Across the miles of Puget Sound lies the coast of Maury Island; I walked that on a spring tide, too, but not on cobbles, rather on firm sands of wave-built terrace, clipping off three miles an hour, circling the whole island in a day, the sun shining, the north wind blowing.

7:32. The air is still, the water calm. The last picnicking family drives away home, leaving me alone, except for a great blue heron on the creek delta, pretending to be a stick in the mud. A diesel-throbbing tug thrashes swiftly north. The lighthouse on Maury Island's Robinson Point blinks in the darkening. The tide creeps in on little cat feet. My thermometer reads 57 degrees. I pull my stocking cap down over my ears.

While nearing the state park I saw the Issaquah Alps all in a row, from Cougar Mountain to Squak Mountain to West Tiger Mountain to East Tiger. I'll not see them again until I'm in them because the rest of the way north my views eastward will stop short at the shore bluff. As the summits were slipping down, out of sight, I paused to distinguish the Far Country Lookout, where I stood eyeball to eyeball with Mt. St. Helens, and Wilderness Peak, where many a day the Malignant Deceiver and I ^{have} played chess, and West Tiger 3, on whose summit I've lain in a summer night amid the blue lupine and littleflower penstemon and spring gold and oxeye daisy, ^{listening to the evening of old Coyote.} Awaking there at dawn, from atop that 2500-foot summit of the "Old Mountains" I've traced the oval of ranges that circumscribe the Puget Trough: the Cascades, running south from Mt. Baker to Glacier Peak to Rainier to St. Helens; their offshoot westward from Rainier, the Bald Hills, the Black Hills, isolated in the gap at the south end of the trough; the Olympics, running north from South Mountain to The Brothers to Constance to Marmot Pass to Mt. Zion; and the San Juan Mountains, in the gap at the north end of the trough.

In that dawn hour before nature's plants and man's machines ^{have} exhaled the haze and smog that dims ^{the} the lowlands to ^{of full day} a blue blur, I've also run my eye along the ~~the lowlands to the~~ Whulj from The Narrows north to Skagit Bay and Admiralty Inlet, and its islands from Vashon-Maury to Bainbridge to Whidbey to the San Juans. All that circumscribing oval of ranges I walked for Footsore, connecting one front peak to the next, one range to another, mountains to lowlands. All those shores I walked as well, and the banks of rivers connecting shores to mountains. And ^{on the summit in} ~~the~~ morning I've thought of the night, ~~when~~ the "Old Mountains" intruded ^{ing} their peninsula of darkness far into the galaxy of electricity continuous from Olympia to Tacoma to Seattle to Everett to Mt. Vernon. I've seen that the Great Big Green and Quiet Place, destined to become the Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, does lie beneath the skyglow, yet also beneath the Milky Way.

7:57. Across the water on Maury Island, blue vapor lights mark Gold Beach, a worked-out gravel pit become a subdivision. North on the mainland, yellow vapor lights mark the streets of Des Moines.

8:17. No wind. A motorboat pulses past. A sailboat stands bow-on off the south tip of Maury. House lights of Des Moines are winking. The heron goes "WAAAK!" as if it got hold of a bad fish.

8:30. A homely little workboat passes. The sailboat is running south under lights. Farther south, opposite Point Defiance, blinks the light at the mouth of Gig Harbor.

8:45. A pickup truck rumbles down the valley road and the park ranger gets out to lock the toilets. I retreat from the picnic table to the foot of the wildwood bluff south of the park, where the driftwood line appears to be a bit more than 12.0 feet above mean low tide. Eight feet from lapping waves

I sit on a log to watch the final hour of the flood, just in case. Clouds are solid but thin, slow. A tarp might be seen by the ranger and put me in great danger. I'll chance sleeping open to the sky.

The lights on Maury are few because the only water is from rain and there's not enough to slake the thirst of subdividers. Des Moines has plenty of water, piped in from the mountains, and therefore is vividly electric along the beaches, atop the bluff, and on the drift plateau which separates the Whulj from the Big Valley. A star slants down from the clouds to the plateau, a jet landing at Seattle-Tacoma Airport. In the alder-maple forest of the bluff above my log the herons are going "graak wark ark ook!" -- muttering in their sleep.

9:05. Des Moines has brightened to a minor nova. Somewhere in the sweep of dark bluff beyond to the north, above the grasp of the spring flood, must be found tomorrow's camp. Four stars are in the sky at once, two falling, two rising. I used to wonder about the distant roaring we heard at our Cougar Mountain hut, louder and more frequent by the decade. Then I stood at Far Country Lookout and saw the source, just across the Big Valley, atop the drift plateau whose bluffs drop sharply to the Whulj. I didn't realize until I placed that observation in the context of the roarings at our hut, and the roarings over the University campus that made every professor in every lecture hall pause to wait for silence, that half or more of Puget Sound City lies beneath the Sea-Tac incubus. Here on the beach, ~~seeing~~ ^{watching} the stars rise and fall, ^{note that} I ~~realize~~ Des Moines is ground zero.

9:07. To the north and east of Maury the low clouds are a uniform rosy glow -- a full quarter of the quadrant is lit by the intense skyglow of downtown

Seattle. Puget Sound under the glow is pink. Waters to the south, under Tacoma's lesser glow, are sober gray. Between me and Des Moines^e the water is a-dancing[^] with columns of light from houses and highways. A third skyglow is taking form beyond Maury Island. Bremerton! There, of old, the U.S.S. New Mexico arrived from the Oceane Sea, bluejacket Dad borrowed a naptha launch, and by a Bainbridge Island beachfire listened to the sisters singing close harmony and decided to ask the alto to marry him.

9:15. The wake of a tug washes the beach, erases my bootprints, restores the virginity of the sands, a miracle. The jets abruptly cease and for a moment I hear no sound ^{but} ~~the~~ lapping waves, ^I ~~the~~ close my eyes in order to see no lights. and briefly it is now as it was before.

A jet skyrockets toward the clouds -- the Milky Way -- the Pole. Just about everybody in the world has been to the North Pole. except me and Cook and probably Peary. Just about every scientist has not only helicoptered over St. Helens but drunk martinis at the south Pole -- a good buddy of mine ^{pissed} ~~is~~ ~~on~~ on it. Everybody has been everywhere. and that's why nowhere is as much worth going as it used to be, except here.

10:00. A little hole opens in the clouds, revealing a cameo crescent moon. That is from before. I unroll plastic sheet on the sand, spread Therm-A-Rest mattress and sleeping bag, and crawl in, lulled by waves lapping, young herons squawking. I'm not afraid, I'm at peace. Odd, very odd.

Tuesday, May 17

6:10. "Spat-spat" goes the rain on my bag. I scrape ^{Europe's black} ~~the~~ slugs from the bag and the insides of my boots, pack up, and make fresh tracks in virgin

sand to the park lawn and the big-leaf canopy of a maple tree. I spread the Therm-A-Rest, lie down, and pull the bag over me as a blanket.

8:00. Clatter clatter clatter! I sit bolt upright, blinking. It is the ranger, rapping the picnic table with a big stick. "No camp on beach," says he. Say I, "I'm not camping, I'm resting, waiting for the tide to go out. See? I've got my boots on." The ranger frowns at the effort of translating ~~and~~ this into his native tongue and of trying to perceive the distinction. "No camp on beach," he repeats, but goes off to unlock the toilets.

9:25. The high, a 9.9, was at 7:44. Soon there'll be walkable beach. The clouds have a mean look today. The breeze is raw. Last night was number one and the fun has just begun. Where will our wandering boy next lay down his bones?

10:35. The ebb lets me pass a derelict house on pilings at the park boundary. Inhabited houses squatting their fat asses on beach-invading bulkheads push me out to start the day with wet feet, ankles, and knees. Put those bulkheaders on the list. None of them will be missed.

10:44. This morning's waves are splashers. I'm forced out into them by a clump of trees slid from the bluff. They, however, have the right.

11:05. I round the bulge from wild bluff to Dumas Bay. A brilliant April morning three years ago I walked here from Dash Point. Glassy wavelets lapped shingle, barely lifting pairs of mallards and me~~as~~anges of goldeneyes. In the lagoon marsh behind the driftwood line, redwing blackbirds rasped in the reeds, choirs of miscellany outshouted the frogs. Where the outlet fanned over the

delta, hundreds of black brant floated, dipping bills to suck good things that grow in the mingling of fresh water and salt. At the north end of the bay, on another delta, another crowd was dabbling the mud -- more mallards and goldeneyes, a solitary waddling-^{gabb}~~ling~~ white-fronted goose, as outsize as a Brobdingnagian. A great blue heron flapped overhead. Cormorants posed on offshore pilings, relicts of the docks to which the mosquito fleet of my childhood used to tie. Amid the usual rabble of gulls and crows, killdeer squealed, a sandpiper ran, a kingfisher bulleted along the forest wall, crying "chee-chee-chee" as if to scare the fish to death. On my afternoon return, surf scoters drifted on mirror waters, and a pair of mergansers, and a scattering of unidentified divers and dabblers. At Dumas Bay there was a dramatic new arrival, hundreds of Caspian terns. A puppydog on a solo romp ignited white explosions that half-covered the sky. As gulls and crows drew his splashing and yapping, the terns settled back to sip the estuary soup.

11:17. ~~██████████~~ The gravel mines of Maury Island are ~~██████████~~ ~~██████████~~ scotchbroom yellow. The day I walked around the island they were also blue with vetch and orange with ~~California~~ poppy, reminding of the sea meadows of California.

11:26. Tucked in a green ravine ^{is} an old ~~██████████~~ house ~~and~~ newly ~~██████████~~ ^{bright} painted red with neat white trim. Piling stubs preserve memories of the steamers. These folks may stay.

11:39. I round the bulge at the north end of Dumas Bay. "Plop plop" go the raindrops. A dark cloud, its bottom ominously bumpy, is sliding northward, barely missing me to the east. The beach is cobble, the bank is low, the houses and big-ass stinkpots are cheek by jowl. Take down that name, sergeant -- "Lakota Beach."

12:11. I sit on a log overhung by maples billowing from the bluff. This is a King County park, left wild for the birds and me. The marsh of Dumas Bay is another. Amid the amoebic mindlessness of the builders ~~there~~ are glints of non-builder intelligence, ~~there~~. To the north, in the slot between the ~~bluffs~~^{juts} of Point Robinson on Maury Island and Three Tree Point on the mainland, I see Alki Point, two nights in my future. Between here and there, how much intelligence, how much love?

1:00. Solitude ends at Redondo Beach, where the bluff ~~backs off~~^{retreats} from the water to permit a strip of housed -- and the first beach road since Marine View Drive (and the last until Beach Drive, at Alki). The beach here is sand, ~~so~~ ~~so~~ so sweet after the miles of cobbles.

1:25. The ventilator fan of Salty's Seafood Bar pumps the air and my nose full of maddening aromas. I've had no complaint about the simple meals of this trip: for breakfast, breakfast bars, guaranteed tasty and nutritious by the Men in the Moon; for lunch, nuts and cheese, Pepsi and Milky Way; for supper, avocado and fresh lemon, sandwiches of English muffins and ham and lettuce and mayonnaise and mustard. All exceedingly alacazam. Nevertheless, I belly up to the bar and order fish and chips.

2:00. Descending from street to beach I pass a sign, "Private Property Next 5 Miles." It's a ~~damn~~^{lie, a} lie, a ~~damn~~^{and worse than that,} lie. There's no such thing as a private beach. The strand beside the Whulj is a public footway, legislated so by half a century of my feet, a century and odd decades of other European feet, and a dozen ~~centuries~~^{millenia} of Asian feet.

2:10. As I clamber down past the sign I spotted this fellow sitting on his driftwood, watching and waiting. In the nasal whine of an inlander he ~~was~~^{is} going to say, "Get off my beach!" And I ~~was~~^{am} going to have to pick up a cobble and chase him back to Nebraska. "Where you headed?" he asked^s, smiling and eager. Yesterday, driving the highways, he'd wondered at me (as had the maitre de and how many others?). My explanation sent^s him into a rapture. He ~~was~~^{is} a beach person, has^s been all his life, and he describes^s his walkings along this shore and all around the Whulj, as excited as if he were a Rainier climber meeting a comrade on the way to Everest. He goes on my list -- not to be eliminated but to take charge of cleaning up the neighborhood.

2:51. Many are the houses, many the bulkheads, and thus many the cobbles. A pale white sunball is trying to burn through the clouds. It is bitter hot and I am sick at ankle. Where is that ~~breeze~~^{raw} breeze of morning, now we need it? I stagger onto a broad plain of sandflats swarming with clammers and flop my bottom on a bench in Saltwater State Park.

2:54. I wonder at the mob surrounding a little box and realize it is the food stand, ~~I~~^I stagger up, and belly up, and order an ice-cold root beer. Alacazam. Reviewing the situation from the bench: Point Robinson is directly opposite across Puget Sound. Dash Point is far south in my past. The smelter stack is shortening, dimming, in the saltwater haze. Between here and camp -- where I hope to be able to camp -- are three-and-a-half miles. I return to the food stand for a giant double Pepsi. I slip the leftover cracked ice inside my socks, onto my ankles, oh woe is them today.

3:17. At the north end of the park I descend from the path atop the seawall to a sandy beach. The bluff here is a vertical wall of layered sand, black peat, and a rock-clay, capped by iron-stained till. Staircases climb the eighty-foot wall to houses. Down here it's just me and the herons, "gark gark."

3:40. In 1977 I walked this far north from the park, to close views of the Des Moines opolis, but was stopped -- on a medium tide -- by deep water lapping a bulkhead. The beach now is wide, though mainly cobbles, and I veer this way and that to follow sand corridors, a mercy to my sad ankles. From a house that looks like it was cast up by a storm a woman yells, "Hi-yah!" She can stay.

4:07. I should've gone up to howdy with the driftwood lady and then detoured off the beach to the street to pass the gigantic Port of Des Moines, a full mile of jetties and docks. For fear of terrifying her I proceeded ahead on beach that remained open to my feet. ~~It~~^{but} was fenced off from the street by a row of warlike houses. The Des Moines Y¹⁵acht Club ~~was~~ my hope and I hoped a creek and clambered riprap to its parking lot and turned inland to the public street -- and ~~was~~^{am} stopped dead by a locked gate. My fingers gripped the mesh, in the snarl of a 1930s prison movie I damned the screws, and I wilted into the blacktop. The gatekeeper ~~had~~^{has} been watching me blunder into the cul de sac and he ~~came~~^{comes} out of his house ~~now~~ to gloat about how many fools he's taunted as he now ~~was~~^{is} taunting me. I ~~didn't~~^{don't} do the Jimmy Cagney bit, I just ~~stand~~^{stand} there taking it, and I guess that's why he -- no ~~youngster~~^{youngster} himself -- ~~falls~~^{falls} silent at last, ~~took~~^{takes} pity on the sweat-soaked, sore-ankled, whiskered old man with the sad eyes and let^s me out of the trap.

4:30. I leave Johnny's supermarket with eleven pounds of liquid added to the Kelty and barely can stand erect, but it's worth it: a quart of milk, a pint of half-and-half, and quantities of root beer, beer, and madeira. Two lads eye the towering Kelty and ask, "Are you from the mountains, mister?" "You bet -- Cougar Mountain." "Wow-ee, cougars! Where you going?" "Seattle." "Gee, Seattle! When will you get there?" "Day after tomorrow." "How long you been gone?" "Two days." "Holy cow! Where do you sleep?" "On the beach." As baffled as the Sherpas when the first sahibs came trekking over the la's, they ^{say} ~~say~~ in parting, "Hope you make it!"

4:45. I walk off the street onto a wide expanse of shingle. Below the bluff are eleven ramshackles-on-pilings, built before there were such things as building permits. Access is by boat and trail. In 1977 I was joined here in morning by eleven dogs who surveyed the shore north with me, then back in afternoon, a daylong riot and scandal. The whole row stays, dogs and all.

5:16. The last of the ramshackles wittily flies an enormous American flag. That must make the local patriots twitch. The beach now is lonesome under wild bluff. However, a ravine I fondly recall and ~~supposedly~~ supposed might be a park has been newly violated. Put that fellow on the list. Raindrops splash my forehead. The situation is verging on a predicament. The bluff jungle is so steep that even to get off the beach would be a monkey-clamber. What then? Hang by my tail? Whether to sleep or to gibber and screech and scratch my armpits, I must get off the beach, which in tonight's flood will go entirely under the waves.

5:38. Around a bulge from the violated ravine, a concrete bulkhead of great age lies tight against the base of the jungle wall. I remember it from 1977, had it in mind, but feared what might have happened since. Nothing has, and that is progress. Lord, give that developer of long ago, who surely has been burning in Hell going on half a century, fifteen minutes off for good behavior. Atop the ancient bulkhead is a narrow terrace of storm beach. I rig the tarp over the sand and shingle. The rain quits. Life is sweet.

5:42. A pint's a pound the world around. Fie on the spring tide! Sitting on a log on my elevated beach, I defy the Whulj -- restless though it surely is tonight, not quietly slapping the beach but aggressively washing it. The bulge of bluff to the south cuts off Des Moines, and bless thee, bluff. On the other side of the water road, Point Robinson winks at me, and I wink wink back. The bulge of bluff to the north is purely wild. One good pint deserves another.

6:27. A hard shower chases me under the tarp. The rattling quits. I emerge to sit on my log. How about a touch of madeira, m'dear?

6:50. Across the water road lies Portage, a general store and bus stop on the spit that ^{barely}~~thinly~~ separates East Passage from Quartermaster Harbor, ^{thinly} connects Maury Island to Vashon Island. The day of my Maury walkaround I parked the beetle on the spit. Another day I got off the Metro bus there to begin my walk north on Vashon Island's east shore to the ferry dock -- never having taken the beetle onto the island at all. That was an ingenious journey -- precursor to this. On the way I passed the cabin where, in the 1930s, Mother and I and an aunt and two cousins waved at Will Rogers and Wiley Post, flying north to Alaska. We liked airplanes, then.

7:00. A ^{gray} whale lies huge and gray on the horizon south, and another to the northwest. Between them, west of Maury, a pile of cumulonimbus fluffs high in the sun. A surf-slap has begun: "ka-choop! ka-choop!" The water between me and Vashon-Maury is sky-white, ~~but~~ flecked with dark waves: "ka-choop!" A strong longshore current is running north. Hmmm... Longshore currents are generated by waves striking the shore obliquely, a portion of the wave energy being converted to an along-shore slide. The currents, and the waves, derive from the wind. But there hasn't been a breath of wind since morning. I, Caliban upon the beach, murmur "Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos..."

7:40. The rambunctious little surf is splashing on the beach a dozen feet from the base of my wall. The high is at 10:51, and it's a 12.0. Three more hours the tide will be flooding.

7:45. The thermometer reads 54 degrees. Sunlight is streaming over the top of a gray whale, is mirrored by a broad yellowing of water. A rain squall dims Dash Point. A tug labors by, shoving a barge; I see it's working hard but don't hear because of "ka-choop! ka-choop!" The sound of water drowns out even the noise of jets, lets me listen to ^{the} before.

8:10. Puget Sound, the Whulj, reflects the brightness of the sky onto my dark visage, the warmth of the sun into my cold soul. The madeira and God and I are all One, that may remain. Waves are eight feet from my bulkhead. "GA-LOOF!" They are zero feet! In the distant gloom I spot the three-derrick freighter. *that done the deed.*

8:30. The surf is ravaging four feet from my rampart. I ponder this: The sand and shingle and driftwood of my elevated beach were not dumped by man. A 12-foot high pushed by a gale would slop over the top. Make note never to camp here in a spring tide in a winter blow.

8:45. The southern sky is pale blue. Here, it's graying. The "ga-loof! ga-loof!" is continuous now. and no ships to explain. Yet there still is no wind, not here. Somewhere there must be a wind. Entropy, entropy, and entropy...

8:50. To the south, Des Moines is hidden behind the bluff. but casts a glow out over the water; the tip of Dash Point, by the Lobster House, has a lone streetlight; the lighthouse on Browns Point blinks. South and north, the mainland shore is entirely a-glitter, save a few small Dark and Green Places, this among them. The shore of Vashon-Maury is entirely a darkness. save for a few scattered houselights. There, now is still then, almost.

9:00. The northwest sky is sunset orange. and so is the water all the way between there and me. Clouds to the south are rosy with Tacoma's skyglow, minor league compared to Seattle's and nearly equalled by that of the Big Valley, behind the bluff. Beyond Vashon is the Bremerton glow. From summits of the Issaquah Alps, and ^{from} camps in the meadows of Mt. Adams, they are all one.

9:05. Waves smash against the concrete and splash up the wall nearly to my boots -- and two hours more this spring tide will be springing up. What if the Antarctic icecap has melted since last I caught the TV news and the tide is going to keep coming in for a month? The hour of the dragons is upon us. Beneath my boots I see water and rock as purely mineral and lifeless as the Milky Way. Where is my EE-EE bird tonight?

9:12. Launch the empty bottle, ker-splash, into the longshore current, briskly northering, ^{God knows why or how.} ~~driven by a wind felt only in the beyond.~~

9:20. The waves pounding my wall mimic ~~the dragons~~ the Oceane Sea. ^{unfelt} driving the currents. The wind moves through the mythic ether of ~~the~~ Columbia Crest.

9:25. To enlarge the world, go slower. To make it infinite, sit. So enormous has the Whulj grown in these four hours that not all Queen Isabella's jewels, nor King Ferdinand's, could finance a ~~trip~~ ^{trip} to Vashon.

9:30. Far out on the big water -- or far up in the big sky? -- I ~~spot a~~ ^{spot a} tiny light. Supported by no hull or wings the eye can see, it floats. Making no sound the ear can hear, it moves -- slowly, very slowly, that its voyage may be the longer, may be forever. I crawl under the tarp, into the bag, for my long night's journey, two sleeps deep in the Whulj.

Wednesday, May 18

9:10. While I slept the water quieted. The occasional "ip" is its loudest. I sit on my log to eat a pint of half-and-half mixed cold (this being a venture both dogless and fireless) with two packets of instant oatmeal. Alacazam. The beach is insufficient for feet so sit on, muse on. In 1977 I walked the Tacoma-Seattle shore in daily segments over a period of two weeks and thus it's always been a grab-bag in my mind, no unity. My need has been to string the points and bays, the parks and wild spots, on a strand of consecutive days -- and more important, to tie the days together with nights.

9:40. A north breeze abruptly stirs. The glassy water instantly is a swarm of south-running ripples, ~~ripples~~ and this I understand, but the new ripples are moving across the old waves, and these continue their motion northeast! Oh, Setebos...

10:17. The sun breaks through clouds that are as heavy as those of yesterday but sluggish and sickly. I lower the Kelty down the concrete wall to a beach as gray as the Bangor Navy, as St. Helens ash. I photograph the

camp for the archives. Nobody ever has camped here before, or, if so, the memory has been erased by many years of Three Day Blows. The beach perched atop the wall is the same size as the heather bench above Luna Cirque. Last night my sleeping ear, ^{which} ~~that~~ there listened to avalanches from glaciers of Phantom and Fury, here listened to waves of the Whulj, and they were One.

10:55. I walk around the corner of the bluff from Luna Cirque to a series of three little valleys which in 1977 were the choicest bits of the entire route. The first valley then was purely wild; now it has three large houses; put them on the list. The second remains as it was: a broad marsh, closed off by a baymouth bar; a house far inland, snuggled into the ravine at the far edge of the marsh, letting the reeds and blackbirds be; an oldtimey summer shack on the bar's driftwood line, seeming driftwood itself; they pass. The third valley formerly held two modest houses, ^{off} to one side, letting the creek be; now it has what I've never seen close-up before, a ^{brandnew} million-dollar house; ~~it has~~ three brandnew million-dollar houses; put them at the top of the list, ^{underscore,} and add !!!!!!!

11:10. The Boeing hydrofoil, by means of which the company hopes to do to the water what it's done to the sky, has been let out of its cage and is racketing and raunching around the Sound, doubtless being demonstrated to the ^{main} ~~only~~ customers for the miserable craft, the operators of Portuguese gambling casinos ^{who} ~~which~~ cater to Chinese opium merchants.

12:30. At Three Tree Point I sit on a log for lunch. The population hereabouts is so dense a person would be hard up for the privacy to pick his nose. The beach is solidly lined by decks and patios and people, some glowering, preparing to call the police. But two have waved, smiling, and

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one cried out, "Good morning!" The community is old, has grown gracefully into the landscape, has a belonging feeling. A person doesn't seek to enwiden the whole world. Grizzly bears and spotted owls are poor conversationalists. One wants a balance. Here, weed out a few aliens, the sort who come out to wave American flags at Boeing hydrofoils, and it'll pass.

1:15. In the brief solitude of a short stretch of wild bluff I pause to pick my nose. Cool breezes flow from the north. Above is a huge blue hole. Waves are smartly slapping the beach. I see a ferry shuttling from the north end of Vashon Island to Fauntleroy Cove, ahead of me on the mainland. That was the ferry I employed for my east-shore walk, north from Portage to the ferry dock. Two days ago I watched the ferry shuttling from Tahlequah, on the south end of Vashon, to Point Defiance in Tacoma. That ferry permitted another ingenuity: I left the beetle at Point Defiance and walked on the ferry, just as if it were a steamer of old. Walked off at Tahlequah, where the mosquitoes used to call. Followed Vashon's west shore north a half-dozen miles, past remnants of old docks, including the one at Camp Sealth where the Virginia V once brought Troop 324 to do good deeds for the Campfire Girls. Climbed the bluff on a county road and crossed the island, descended to Quartermaster Harbor, and walked the beach back south to the ferry.

1:30. There now are three levels of compact habitation -- on the beach, in the mid-bluff, and atop the brink. In 1977 it appeared to me that the frontier time was long since over, the time of civilized mellowing had settled in permanently, the time when the community ~~would~~ had come to know who it was and would defend its history and identity against the barbarians. But six years have passes, six years of speculators and builders, engineers and architects,

lawyers finagling for variances and government officials granting them. Old summer cottages are being demolished, old clapboards and shingles, old sleeping porches and verandas, homes that remember ukeleles around the beach fires by the light of the silvery moon, that watched steamers racing from Seattle to Tacoma for the sheer glee. I can't believe how much money there is in the world and how little taste, to junk the mellow old to make room for cedar-and-glass boxes on steel stilts.

2:30. I sit on a bench at the north end of Seahurst County Park, where people and dogs are romping amid clam geysers as the tide ebbs toward a -1.0 at 4:07. An elderly couple politely inquire about the Kelty; when I explain, their eyes widen as if they were reading a National Geographic story about climbers in the Himalaya. Room must be allowed for such couples who can't afford glass boxes and steel stilts, or even old clapboards, because ~~the~~ taxes are assessed specifically to get old people and ~~old~~ old houses out of the way of the speculators. ~~business~~. Community planners stress the urgent need for "affordable housing." That's what beach parks are, for people who need the water in their lives but can't afford ^{to buy} ~~the waterfront~~ waterfront. That's why the ~~crime perpetrated in the~~ Three Splendid Valleys next to last night's Secret Camp must be ~~dehoused~~ dehoused.

3:40. In 1977 the supreme ^{beauty} ~~wilderness~~ of the route was the tall green wall south of Brace Point; one of the largest madrona forests of the Whulj, it was the grander for lying within the megalopolis -- a wilderness, yet not a wilderness apart. A stately pleasure dome has newly been decreed. High above the beach the guts of the forest have been ripped out to implant a million dollars worth of cedar, glass, and steel.

4:52. Brace Point, at weary last, saddened to sickness by the loss of remembered cottages along the way. ^{the loss} and of jungle walls that in times past were judged unbuildable and let be for the birds and the wee quivering beasties, and to enrich the texture of the neighborhood but now have been solved by the engineers and architects and lawyers and speculators. Those who fail to cherish the past can have no future.

5:11. I walk ^{under} ~~through~~ the Fauntleroy ferry dock, between the pilings, into Seattle's Lincoln Park.

6:05. I detour to a grocery for medical supplies, descend to the beach at the north end of the park, and sit on a log to ease hot head and sore ankles with a pint of cold tuppenny. Eleven miles done today, dang few on soft sand, most on hard cobbles. The Tacoma-Seattle shore is a flagrant example of a "starved" beach: a longshore current wants to use up all its energy by doing work, transporting loads; the bulkheads ^e ~~pr~~vent waves from sluicing down the bluff's glacial drift to feed the currents; they thus hungrily glean the beach, carrying away the sand and small shingle, exposing cobbles, cobbles, cobbles. Eleven miles! I think I've hurt myself. I'll not be satisfied with deporting the criminals to Nebraska, only a general massacre will do, let the Whulj run red.

6:30. To the back of me there ^{are} joggers on the beachside path, little less objectionable than motorcycles -- why don't they get their exercise on a handball court and save this park for quiet walking? To the front of me the Boeing hydrofoil is screwing around on the Whulj, as wicked as a 747 flying over the Pole -- why doesn't the company convert to bicycles, rickshaws, wheelbarrows, and rowboats and save the world for quiet living? More anesthesia, nurse.

8:13. The Olympics are palely clear, though the sun is dimmed by residual clouds. It appears to be setting directly behind the summit of Constance.

8:30. No, it's sliding north, to the right of Warrior -- in fact, ~~to~~ to Marmot Pass. The water is oil-smooth. The waves are small and slow. The joggers have gone home, as have the speedboats which argue so persuasively for legalized adolescenticide. The sole companion of my solitude is a rowboat fisherperson, a black silhouette in orange water, framed by two moored sailboats.

9:02. From Zion to Constance the Olympics are a black ^{Summits of the} ~~line drawn in~~ ^{sky} ~~a~~ of pale orange, this being also the color of hundreds of square miles of water. Above the black peaks, serenely in the blue, the moon has waxed ^{driving} my journey from a crescent nearly to a half. There is no wind but waves still are lapping from the north. They have at last extinguished the stubborn waves from the south. O Setebos! You so entertain this Caliban with your magic tricks. Three barges, in succession, occlude and then release the twinkling lights of Vashon Island and, beyond it, the Kitsap Peninsula. ~~Blake~~ Island, a state-park wildland, is a black lump in orange ^{water}. Bainbridge Island is a light-sprinkled darkness above the orange water, below the ^{smoke-blue} ~~black~~ Olympics.

9:12. Far north of where the sun set, the sky is rosy. Why particularly there, Setebos? The rowboater, homeward bound, rattles oarlocks -- the sound of my childhood on the islands, a sound as much from before as bare feet crunching ~~through~~ the sand. The evening star! First star of the night -- of this trip. Was it in Lake Serene? Lights are moving between water and sky! They slide behind the dark bulk of Point Williams into Fauntleroy Cove ^{and} ^{are} belatedly recognized as masthead lights of the Vashon ferry. Other ferries are shuttling from Seattle's

Elliott Bay to Bainbridge Island's Eagle Harbor, to Bremerton's Port Orchard.

9:30. Dear ^{Lord} ~~Seattle~~! Eagle Harbor has a skyglow of its own! In the 1920s, homeward bound from dinner and a show in Seattle, we needed a flashlight to walk up the hill from the Winslow Dock, where we got off the mosquito Winslow. The jumbo ferries have done it -- too big, too fast -- as pitiless to The Island as the floating bridges of Lake Washington were to Cougar Mountain. ~~Ironically, there were no more lights in Port Blakely than when we drove there to catch the ferry to Seattle, the Sambridge, had the speed and ~~was~~ a twentieth century jumbo.~~ Vashon-Maury has fought off jumbos, bridges, the hydrofoils Boeing has tried to foist on them and therefore is still an island, not a skyglow.

9:45. ^{On a} night ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{wartime} blackout I knew the Whulj of the before, walking the shore from Hidden Creek to Richmond Beach under not skyglow but ~~the~~ Milky Way, walking alone between whisperings in the forest of the bluff, sparklings of stars and flashings of phosphorescence in the waves.

10:10. Meager beach is left! However, there's no surf. I hide behind a log. Three sleeps deep.

Thursday, May 19

7:00. The thud-thud-thud of joggers awakes me. I sit on a log to drink a quart of milk and marvel how tranquil these three sleeps have been. Would I, now, jump ~~off the log~~ into the stars of Lake Serene? Certainly not. Any of these three nights I could have waded out into the Whulj, into the Oceane Sea, into the Milky Way. I'm no more ready ~~for it~~ than I was on Nordgipfel.

However, now that Mother has been out there these seven years, joined by Dad two months and eleven days ago, I wonder if I'll ever again be afraid of the night.

7:30. Hoist the Kelty, photograph the oblong of sand where my sleeping bag rested, and set out north.

8:30. Hobble over cobbles. ~~Earlier, the cobbles have gotten worse.~~ The tide is coming in. Ahead lies the jut of the bulkheads that starve the beach, ~~and~~ destroying my ankles, ~~and~~ invade the beach ^{and} wet ~~my~~ my knees. Houses here are squeezed so tightly together they leave no gaps and I know from 1977 that Beach Drive is fenced to foil sneak-throughs ^{and from} to the beach, ~~and~~ The only way is ^{via} ~~is~~ somebody's front door and ~~back~~ back. That could be a penitentiary offense, except I have a house in mind, the first ever built on Beach Drive, before there was a Beach Drive, the materials brought in by barge. The first American ~~to~~ to climb Mt. Everest sits soaking in his hot tub. He spots me on the beach and yelps, "What are you doing here?" He climbs from the tub, I explain, and he serves me a cup of coffee and offers congratulations. ~~Hundreds of Americans since him have climbed Everest.~~ But though ~~he~~ an inveterate beach walker, ^{himself} ~~never~~ he ^{never} has backpacked ~~the beach~~ from Tacoma to Seattle. ~~Probably~~

10:23. I exit through his house. (He will stay, ^{on the beach} I'd already intended that.) The sidewalk leads to Alki Point, whose lighthouse has been ~~seen~~ winking ^{at me} so many miles past, so many nights.

10:52. Aromas are driving me wild. Into a restaurant for hotcakes ^{and} little pigs, ~~and~~

11:48. My ^{wish}~~intention~~ was to ~~formally~~ tidy up the trip ^{end} by walking to Duwamish Head, at the mouth of Elliott Bay, but another halfmile of foot-grying sidewalk carrying a load of hotcakes and piglets and Kelty is more than these cobble-wrecked ankles deserve. I drop the Kelty at a bus stop and sit on the curb. A procession of guys in pickups and jeeps and ^{sports} cars and muscle vans and motorcycles rolls slowly along the street. A procession of dolls in short shorts and bandana tops bumps and grinds along the bulkhead walkway. Do ever the twain meet? According to the police they do after the sun goes down, when Tarzan gives his yell and Jane screeches at the moon and Cheetah starts throwing ~~beer~~ beer bottles.

12:00. A person walking the lonesome Whulj to Bangor worries about ~~the~~ all ^{that beach} being blown away. A person sitting on the curb of Alki Drive worries about all this ^{beach} not being blown away.

12:15. During that half-hour atop Sir Donald I thought my destiny could be Denali. All along it was this. Well, there've been worse -- eh wot, Old Coyote?

12:30. I board the 37 to downtown Seattle.

1:23. Board the 210.

1:53. Get off at Eastgate.

2:20. Climb the hill to the 200-meter hut, ~~and~~ proving my ^{thesis.} ~~original points~~ Old Cailin sings me into the three acres. Young Myfy yaps. Buffalo wags her rear end. Petrouchka barks at the Eastern gray squirrel in the fir tree.

3:00. The ankles need extended ~~but~~ rest. Odd, it is to be under a roof, no eyeline to the sky. To be in a bed, no sand in my hair, no slugs in my bag. To be inland, no sound or smell of water. Three nights I slept with the water. Time is divided into night and day. Night is the wilder half.

3:05. The tiny light moving ~~slowly and silently~~ across the face of the night guides me over the waters of the Whulj to the Oceane Sea, to Arctic ice floes and Antarctic glaciers, to the Poles. I sleep, therefore I am.

-- end --