

1 April 1974

1949

Chapter ~~10~~<sup>11</sup>

### WANDERING IN THE DARK OF THE MOON

The Rainier ax session spilled little blood. A bumper crop of beginners had survived the ~~same~~<sup>benign</sup> spring of 1949 and the route this year was the Emmons Glacier, much less demanding than the Kautz. The Climbing Committee approved a party totaling 69 students and leaders — thought to be the largest group ever to climb The Mountain — assuming we did, and in 14 years the Course had never failed.

When Betty's name came up the Committee awaited my judgment. Her reputation was solid: she ~~wasn't~~ the most incompetent climber in the history of the club, just the most incompetent climber still climbing. However, Adams, St. Helens, Stuart, Whitehorse via the glacier, and seven lesser peaks were more than sufficient qualification. I didn't bother mentioning the curses and ax-whaps and snowballs and rocks.

Friday afternoon, July 15, we and Monie and Dick drove in the Jeep to 4500-foot White River Campground, registered with the ranger, and hiked 4 forest and parkland miles to Glacier Basin, 6000 feet. We were early, for a reason — Leader Cam had appointed me routefinder and my plan was to continue <sup>directly up</sup> to Steamboat Prow in order to have all Saturday for marking the way above. But chill gray waves of rain swept the meadows,

rain that was snow a bit higher, a howling blizzard at the Prow. Had I  
 tried to push the bunch  
~~suggested proceeding~~ upward Betty and Monie would <sup>ive</sup> ~~have~~ sneered and Dick  
 would <sup>ive</sup> ~~have~~ plainly told me to go to hell. Anyway, the bunkhouse of the old  
<sup>was too damn tempting.</sup>  
 Starbo Mine ~~was so damn tempting.~~ In evening the mob gradually  
 assembled, miserably rigging tents and tarps. Unnoticed in our snug  
 hideaway we were lulled to sleep by roof-drumming rain.

Saturday dawned calm and clear and the soggy crowd blinked in  
 sunlight and started drying sleeping bags and parkas. I was outside the  
 bunkhouse door cooking breakfast on a primus stove when Cam spotted me.

<sup>the Maximum Leader</sup>  
 "Manning!" ~~he~~ bellowed loud enough for the whole basin to hear. "I  
 thought you were at the Prow!"

everyone staring.

addressed him with a few ill-chosen words

Guiltily I gulped mush, <sup>wanted to appeal the decision, go to court if necessary.</sup>  
 Dick wondered what the hurry was, I  
~~delivered a volley~~ <sup>strained</sup> that ~~did not quite destroy~~ our friendship. Before Cam  
<sup>volley I was</sup> could get off another ~~two were~~ running from camp, Dick following, muttering.

Above green lawns and bright flowers we <sup>two</sup> climbed, through moraines  
<sup>-waterfalls</sup>  
 by ~~meltwater torrents~~, onto snowfields and steeply up Inter glacier - unroped,  
 since the little icefield was crevasse-free.

<sup>the 9700-foot summit of giant</sup>  
 Atop Steamboat Prow, a ~~massive~~ wedge of volcanic rock, we stood  
 face to face with ~~the huge white mountain, and with~~ the biggest glacier in  
 the 48 states, flowing in a broad, ~~blinding~~ sweep of crevasse fields and  
 icefalls a vertical mile from Columbia Crest to <sup>the</sup> ~~Steamboat~~ Prow, <sup>which</sup> split ~~into~~  
<sup>the blinding-white vastness</sup>  
~~into~~ into the Emmons and Winthrop tongues, each tumbling nearly  
 another vertical mile to terminal moraines.

There was our route. Where? I hadn't the vaguest notion. Cam,

Dick, never  
having  
conquered  
Rainier,  
was no  
help.

~~apparently~~, assuming I'd climbed the Emmons before or was too sharp-eyed to need clues, had volunteered no information about the proper way to attack the enormity of fractured whiteness, and as apprentice hero I'd feared asking stupid questions. ↗

We descended rotten gullies of yellow, brown, and red garbage to the 9500-foot Foc'sle, a peninsula of rubble thrusting into the ice, selected a flat spot with windbreak wall for sleeping, and ate lunch. Then I lashed to my rucksack a bundle of "willow wands" (actually, at this advanced stage of alpine history, green <sup>-dyed</sup> bamboo garden stakes with red flags attached), roped with Dick, and led off the rockpile onto the snow.

I wasn't worried. So <sup>large</sup> ~~was~~ a glacier held <sup>an infinity</sup> ~~any number~~ of routes.

Which to choose? Mindful of the multitude, I denied myself the sort of brave line Kermit and Red Jim and I had taken a week earlier on the Ingraham Glacier, when we disdained <sup>the available</sup> ~~a simple~~ bypass of the icefall and <sup>out of sheer bravado</sup> forced a passage through the middle.

<sup>^</sup> This was a different weekend, a different party, and  
Seeking the easiest path, I began with a long traverse leftward to a relatively-uncrevassed glacier ridge; later I learned it is called the "Corridor" and is the customary beginning, and in fact any other start from the Foc'sle leads into baffling and usually defeating crevasse mazes. We ascended the smooth crest, planting wands at intervals, rising high above the Prow and its growing throng of pilgrims, topping Little Tahoma, on the far side of the Emmons.

"Little T," craggy remnant of an older and larger Rainier, was a friend from <sup>last</sup> ~~the~~ week ~~before~~, when <sup>I</sup> ~~we~~ used it to measure progress up the Ingraham,

carrying <sup>a</sup> full pack to stay a night in the crater, to make a home where in 1948 I'd expected to leave Earth altogether. So far had I come in a year! I'd spent my 23rd birthday at Paradise, tensing for the attempt on Camp Hazard; today was my 24th birthday and I ~~was a two-time veteran of Rainier's~~ ~~summit~~ <sup>ascend</sup> routefinder for what might be the largest party ever to ~~climb~~ The Mountain.

I'd climbed Rainier for the second time just seven days before and now was

Near the top of the Corridor, <sup>at</sup> around 12,000 feet, I decided we'd done enough for the day. At 4 o'clock we joined the Foc'sle crowd. ~~Comment:~~ "Back already? I thought you'd go for the summit."

I slunk off. Dammit, we hadn't been tired and were going so fast we could ~~have~~ <sup>we</sup> reached Columbia Crest in several hours and been down to camp by sunset. I'd considered it, wanted it, ~~but felt~~ <sup>Dick had suggested it, but I supposed</sup> that on the eve of battle the Leader would expect to counsel with his Routefinder.

After a hasty supper, <sup>Dick and I</sup> crawled in bag, <sup>together</sup> wrapped in tarp, and forced <sup>I</sup> myself not to watch the sunset pageant of high colors and low darkness, but to sleep, to store energy for the morrow's task.

At midnight, out of the bag into blasting-freezing wind. Dick, ~~and I~~ <sup>we</sup> ~~preferred to ease me gradually from sleep but~~ <sup>grumblingly</sup> ~~commenting~~ about goddam Mountaineers who don't know the difference between day and night, ~~and~~ <sup>grimly</sup> submitted. As for our third man, Krup, when I yelled his name he startled <sup>us</sup> ~~by~~ <sup>in the darkness</sup> leaping up ready to go. <sup>Cam</sup> had impressed him with the honor, as a beginner, of being on the lead rope and sternly warned he must under no circumstances delay Manning, a notoriously fast starter and a mean son-of-a-bitch. Fearful of disgrace, he got up at 10 o'clock, donned boots

(Only later was the magical promptness explained.)

Cam was looking glum, feeling poorly, and recognized our valor with a single blunt

