

5 April 1974

1950

Chapter 13

THE WINTER THAT WOULDN'T QUIT

Cold September storms swept the hills and the climbing season seemed ended ¹/_M.
But the sun came out and warmed ~~the~~ yellowing meadows, and ~~the cliffs~~. October
snows blanketed the high country ¹/_M. And again the sun melted ~~the~~ ^{cliffs} ~~summits~~ dry.
November could muster ^{nothing worse} ~~nothing worse~~ than ~~occasional~~ brief drizzle ³/_S between
long spells of solid blue sky. Fall went on and on, far past normal limits,
and we ran all over the map from Snoqualmie Pass to the top of Baker, until
30 peaks bulged my 1949 bag. ¶ The day after Thanksgiving the natural order
was restored -- a try for 31 was thwarted by a sudden dumping of whiteness that
buried the heather ~~in minutes~~, and almost us as we fled to the road. Having
~~just~~ remembered how it's done, winter proceeded to make up for lost time.
Ski areas were operating ^{the next weekend} ~~within a week~~ and a couple weeks later we couldn't
reach them because of avalanches. December 30 the snowline fell to shores of
Puget Sound, canceling Dick's and my plan to ski in the new year on Blue
Mountain in the Olympics; as a substitute we skied out the old year on
1500-foot Cougar Mountain, closest approach of the Cascades to Seattle.
A quick thaw left the University District bare; immediately thereafter,
however, the thermometer dropped below freezing and stayed there.

¶

The morning of Friday, January 13, the temperature was in the mid-20s as I walked to work -- "too cold to snow," says the old Puget Sound adage. The wind was bitter from the north -- and the law of the land is our snow always comes on a south wind. But the ~~dense~~ ^{amorphous} gray ceiling sure as hell looked like a snow sky. And tiny flakes did indeed begin flinging through the air and so icy was the ground they stuck and as I entered Bagley at 8 o'clock the official word already had been received from Administration -- everybody who came by car, go home instantly. Too late. Stockroom customers ~~gloriously~~ ^{gaily} reported campus parking lots were a hopeless muddle of skidding and fender-banging and the streets were chaos, cars everywhere abandoned as panicked drivers scurried to shelter. The walk home for lunch took me 20 minutes instead of the usual 5, what with face-blasting wind and blinding white gusts, slick paths and deep drifts -- the only blizzard I ever saw in Seattle. Arriving at the apartment I discovered my ears were frozen -- the first time I ever suffered frostbite. For the return to Bagley I dressed in boots, parka, stocking cap, and mittens -- standard attire thereafter, because Saturday another storm unloaded even more snow for a total of some 2 feet, unmatched since 1919, and ~~the~~ ^{the} arctic ~~air mass stagnated over~~ ^{annexed} the Northwest and the city remained white for a month, ~~as we could see from the District, Sugar Mountain only turned green.~~

Often in January and February the Jeep skated highway-rinks to tow hills at Stevens Pass and Cayuse Pass. When passes were closed by slides we skied golf courses ^{by day, by night, half-boozed,} and sledged steep streets, ^{scaring the hell out of the} ~~frivolous~~ ^{frivolous} ~~it~~ ^{it} was strictly a time-killer and I was impatient to get at the serious business of the year. On March 5, therefore, I joyfully

¶ Many of my friends, notably Dick, considered skiing a worthy sport in its own right.

little kids whose sleds we borrowed.

sensed a hostility,
~~in the atmosphere~~
 looked around, and saw

traded awkward boards for honest boots and climbed Big Si with Chuck. The Haystack, sheathed in ice and battered by stinging sleet, was good and tricky fun. But the real excitement came ~~in~~ in Haystack Basin. We ~~found~~ ~~hostile~~ hostile eyes watching from rocks and bushes -- a savage face here, another there. We were ringed by a dozen ferocious ~~dogs~~ ^{beasts. Dogs!} They neither barked nor snarled, just skulked, ~~obviously preparing for some drastic action~~. We stood back to back, ice axes at the ready, imagining the headline: "TERRIBLE TRAGEDY ON SI -- CLIMBERS MYSTERIOUSLY TORN TO PIECES." And abruptly they broke the circle and in a yapping pack raced down the mountain. (Do dogs laugh?)

The Wild Dog Adventure was an auspicious beginning. March 19 Chuck, Tom, Red Jim, and I decided the ~~weather~~ ^{morning downpour} was not ~~black~~ enough to keep us from ~~completing~~ ^{stopping along} Nanga Persis. We changed our minds ~~hiking~~ ^{a tempest-drenched} the Proctor Creek logging road through ~~an~~ end-of-the-world clearcut, ~~and turned for home when sufficient~~. ~~Well~~. Well, mid-March admittedly was pushing the season. Come April and we'd get the steamroller in gear.

Like hell. April 16, in fog, rain, and snow, Lardy Bob and Marsh and Avalanche Ray and I plowed to treeline on Kendall; rumbles from surrounding dimness convinced us to quit. April 30 Vic, Tom, Ron, Betty, and I trenched ^{thigh} ~~high~~-deep snow to Melakwa Pass. There Vic advanced his watch to daylight-saving time, making the hour 3 o'clock, and since he was Cam's successor as Climbing Chairman we accepted the Maximum Leader's judgment it now was too late to continue toward Roosevelt. ~~Lack of~~ ~~being a success~~ ~~avalanche~~ ~~traps~~ ~~by~~ ~~the~~ ~~way~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mountain~~ ~~side~~.

In May, when we should have been sallying to grander mountains, we still were fiddling around Snoqualmie Pass. On foggy-cold May 7 Vic, Lardy Bob, Idiot Richard, Marsh, and I finally bagged a peak; it was only Lundin by the East Ridge but not altogether simple -- no rock was showing and a ~~spooky~~ ^{spooky} cornice covered the ~~Boiler Plate~~ Boiler Plate. May 14, ~~on the first sunny day~~ ^{basking in the first high-mount} ~~sunshine~~ ^{sunshine} of the year, Tom, Pete, Vic, Betty, and I climbed the slippery-dripping South Face of The Tooth. So treacherous were cornices of the summit ridge we didn't descend by the customary traverse but rappelled down the face.

Three weekends in April and May various combinations of Pete, Tom, Betty, Idiot Richard, Lardy Bob, Chuck, and I said the heck with slop and storm and escaped across the Cascade Crest to sunny granite of Tumwater Canyon, getting fingers in shape, and in the process developing a fondness for the rainshadow refuge. ~~On~~ ^{On} one trip we made the third ascent of Tumwater Tower; to deflate subsequent heroes in the moment of their triumph, Pete signed the register book, "Betty Manning, leader." ~~On~~ ^{On} another we watched ~~as~~ ^{open-mouthed} as Pete, in Bagley Hall merely ~~one~~ one more engineer but in the hills emerging as ~~one~~ the hottest of the young cragsmen, nailed a ~~route~~ ^{route} and terrifying route up Castle Rock; if I retained any crazy notion of achieving respectability on ~~the~~ ^{Yosemite-like} walls of ~~the Yosemite~~, that was the end of that; with ~~a ton of ice~~ and a winch I couldn't follow so thin a line of holds. Fortunately my ~~important~~ ^{central} goals lay elsewhere; I subscribed to Kermit's Law, "nein gletscher, nein gipfel." When I ~~walked~~ ^{strode nonchalantly} into a high camp a couple years from now I wanted to hear the folk whisper, "The iceman cometh."

The persistence of winter was frustrating. Many months I'd been studying maps and alpine journals and guidebooks, choosing objectives for the Big Third Year, and talking up projected trips with potential companions. There would

be explorations deep in the North Cascades and a bold first step toward the Far North, yet this higher level of endeavor demanded sterner preparation than wallowing in Snoqualmie Pass muck.

We ^{glumly} joked about the New Ice Age. Kermit, now a professor of chemistry and geology at the state college in Bellingham, had established a survey station to measure the retreat of Baker's Coleman Glacier. ^{Last} ~~in~~ October, ~~after~~ after our descent from the volcano's summit, he'd visited the station and come galloping back yodeling fractured German, calling upon gletscherliebhaber in to rejoice, for the Coleman had advanced -- the first break in the ~~century~~ century-long pattern of universal dwindling of Northwest glaciers. ("Hark! What is that dreadful grinding noise in the north? The reborn Puget Glacier? Returning from Canada after 12,000 years to obliterate Seattle? Don't make any rash investments in local real ~~estate~~ estate.")

Winter at last relented a ^{bit} ~~little~~, but peaks were so mired in white the climbs of June were those we should have done in May. June 3 Tom, Ted, Lardy Bob, Betty, and I drove the South Fork Stillaguamish River ^{road} as far as snow allowed, then backpacked a mile to the 1800-foot site of Big Four Inn, which had burned to the ground last September. The lonesome caretaker of the charcoal was thrilled by unexpected company and invited us to camp in the ramshackle tourist ~~x~~ cabins, built in the days when the railroad still ran to abandoned mines of Monte Cristo and some brainless entrepreneur thought Big Four might ~~compete~~ compete with Banff and Lake Louise.

Sunday we (minus Betty) set out to try Big Four Mountain via the easterly ~~x~~ ~~route~~ route. A log jam gave an easy crossing of the river and a ramp of avalanche snow led through lower cliffs. Rapidly -- and nervously -- we

kicked steps up the side of the couloir, whose center was scored by the largest avalanche gut we'd ever seen, ~~the narrow canyon~~ ^{a slot 3-5 feet wide and up to} as much as 10 feet deep. We were ~~very~~ glad the day was overcast and cold; snow patches hung above us on the cliffs and sunshine could have been fatal. At the couloir head we clambered over blocks of a collapsed cornice to the ridge crest and scrambled bare rock, decorated by the first alpine flowers of the year, to the snow plateau of the 6120-foot summit. We looked out between roving black squalls to white peaks of the Monte Cristo group, south to Stuart and Chimney, north to Glacier, Baker, and the Pickets -- and down to brown clearcuts pocking virgin green of the valley.

On the ascent we'd scrupulously avoided the ominous gut; to descend we jumped right in and rocketed 3500 feet ~~straight~~ down the groove. At camp we were greeted by Betty -- and again by the caretaker, who in honor of our conquest had baked a cake. Delicious.

Next weekend, in bright sun, Loo and I climbed The Brothers, chief companion of Constance on Seattle's Olympic horizon. Though no more than a snow plod, the ascent satisfied an old Boy Scout ambition; fittingly, after the trip I bought a new factory-made Trapper Nelson and ~~happily~~ retired to my museum of treasures the one Dad lovingly hand-crafted in 1937.

June 17, the day before the Nisqually practice, Ted and Lardy Bob and I drove to Rainier Park and blundered around the Tatoosh Range in dense fog, eventually finding the saddle between Pinnacle and Castle and bagging both. That evening we drank beer at the Park entrance restaurant-tavern, joined by late arrivals from town -- Betty, Tom, Idiot Richard, and Marsh -- and

afterward razzed through the Longmire Campground ~~in the Jeep~~, rendering a public service ~~by~~ honking ~~the~~ horn^s and yelling out windows to the hundred-odd bag-bound Mountaineers it was mid^gnight and they'd better sleep tight because soon they'd have to get up.

Sunday the mob marched up the Nisqually Glacier in sunshine, accompanied by two New York City photo-journalists^x tagging along (tied to guides) to observe "American youth at play." Most of us had wands waving from rucksacks, part of an experiment to compare visibility of various red-to-orange hues of the newfangled fluorescent cloth. As customary on circus outings, there was a competition for the most outrageous lunch; the secret of the menu planned by me and my ~~some~~ buddies had leaked out and a score of other instructors played copycat. The Manhattan dudes were goggle-eyed at the ~~colorful~~ ^(with color photos as proof) spectacle; readers of Life magazine subsequently were solemnly informed that every Northwest climber carries a personal flag and the standard Mountaineer lunch is one entire watermelon per rope team.

Saturday night I laughed, and despite hangover, all day Sunday. Yet nagging at the edge of my mind was ^a ~~the~~ glimpse of eternity Saturday afternoon, on the descent of Castle.

Drifting fog had thickened to miserable drizzle and we were hurrying to get off the peak. The rock was so simple that despite gray emptiness below we didn't rope. My glasses were blurred by mist and I was blind-clumsy.

Traversing a ledge, I took a long stride around a bulge and in passing put a hand lightly on a lichen-covered rock for touch-and-go balance. Who would've ~~been~~ suspected so big a rock, its permanence attested to by ^{the} ancient symbiosis

of alga and fungus, ought to have been tested? It was a teeterer and dipped under my hand. My lead boot, aimed for a bucket, was thrown off target. One microsecond I walked on fog before the boot caught the outermost inch of the ~~bucket~~ mountain, of Earth.

On insignificant, meaningless Castle the North-dreaming hero was damn near killed.

18 April 1974

1950

Chapter 14

THE BATTLE FOR BIG BANANA

There it stood, a bold bright sculpture in ice, the crest just 1500 feet above. But lost. The months of planning, the five-hour drive to Lake Chelan, the two-hour boat trip to Lucerne, the 10-mile bus ride up Railroad Creek to the 3200-foot mining town of Holden, the 5-mile haul of iron-heavy packs to ~~the~~ 5300-foot, solid-frozen Holden Lake, and now the slog through fresh white fluff to 8000 feet on the Mary Green Glacier -- all for nothing. Yesterday's snowfall had done us in.

This morning of Sunday, May 28, the storm over, we crawled from Mountain Trooper tents into blinding sun and looked up, up, up to the high-thrusting peak that until now had been only a mysterious mass on the horizon and a vague description in an old climbing journal. It was real. It was near. Yet as insubstantial and remote as winter dreams. Purely for exercise we climbed the glacier to a col with views north to the Stehakin valley and the January-white achtausenders and ~~neuntausenders~~ neuntausenders crowded around Cascade Pass and

Park Creek Pass -- Boston, Buckner, Logan, Goode, Black, and dozens more.

The summit was close, tantalizing. Tom, crazy, said the ~~unthinkable~~ ^{unthinkable} -- what if we made a try? My companions, insane, took him seriously. ~~Then~~ ^{Then} spoke cool reason ~~provided~~: Avalanches were certain -- we could only hope they

wouldn't be big enough to sweep us off the cliffs. There was no chance of getting down before dark -- we'd shiver on some icy ledge until dawn. And cirrus was dimming the sun -- by evening there'd be more snow. Three of us had wives at home, and two, small children. The others had mothers. Forget it.

From their meadow camp on slopes of Dome, members of the 1949 Climbers' Outing stared fascinated, morning and evening, all week long, at the huge bulk to the southeast. Throughout the fall, back in Seattle, they systematically interrogated the entire climbing community: "Hey, what do you know about Bonanza?" Nobody knew anything. Odd, very odd. Climbers have a fetish about "highest" -- the highest peak in the world, the highest in North America, the highest in the Cascades or Olympics or whatever. Stuart was renowned and popular precisely because the received ~~wisdom~~ wisdom declared it to be the highest nonvolcanic peak in the state. Strange, very strange, that maps and Fearless Fred's ~~guidebook~~ ^{brand new} guidebook, both saying Bonanza was higher, should be ignored.

Finally several oldtimers were found who knew Bonanza by reputation. "Yeah, it's high, but that doesn't mean a thing on the east side of the Cascades. Over there people ride horses to 8000 feet. Bonanza is a big yawn, a walkup."

Though none personally had done the walkup, they'd heard of many ascents. Puzzling, very puzzling, because only one climb was on record, by a Portland party in June of 1937, briefly noted in Fred's book and fully described in a Mazama article. ~~By~~ ^{For a week} ~~after~~ ~~day~~ the group probed the mountain's defenses, seeking a route. When they at last tried the Mary Green Glacier (named for the wife

of an early prospector) an avalanche flushed them off; after digging out, most of the party quit. The undaunted three who renewed the attack suffered seventeen sorts of hell, climaxed by a 100-foot precipice of flawless rock.

It certainly didn't sound like a walkup. Well, one had to consider the source. Betty's accepted excuse for clumsiness was a lack of depth perception, but I suspected the ^{real} ~~same~~ explanation was being born in Portland. Whenever Mountaineers gathered around a campfire, a favorite entertainment was telling "Mazama stories." On Stuart, for example, we'd had convulsions watching them belay down a snow slope so gentle we couldn't even glissade. Still, the Portlanders who made the first ascent weren't Mazamas; ^{the leaders} ~~and~~ despite the handicap of his place of origin, ~~the leader~~ was respected even by Seattle climbers. Curiouser and curiouser.

Eventually the research team caught Fearless Fred between wanderings and he, chief scholar of North Cascades lore, dispelled the mystery. The Portlanders weren't lying -- Bonanza was tough. Yet the Seattle oldtimers also spoke truth -- Bonanza was a walkup. Years ago, whether by a mistake in field notes or careless drafting in Washington City, U.S. Geological Survey mapmakers had switched the names of two neighboring peaks. Simple 8000-foot Bonanza became North Star; 9511-foot North Star took over the name and ~~name~~ reputation of Bonanza.

Vic and Tom were ecstatic. What a coup, this late in alpine history, to make the second ascent of one of the state's grandest peaks! Bless the blundering mappers! Bless the incurious generations of Mountaineers who scorned both Portland and the east side of the Cascades! The excitement was contagious. Idiot Richard, a Dome veteran, was recruited, and Spick and

I.
 Jay and ~~me~~ At planning meetings Vic and Tom analyzed the Portlanders' route foot by foot, laid out a precise timetable, drew up an equipment list that included half a ton of pitons and bolts, carabiners and hangers, sling rope and rappel rope.

They refined the timetable and equipment list. And re-refined. The whole spring they fussed over petty details, ~~and we were~~ ^{almost as if} we were headed ~~North~~ ^{preceding} North on a genuine expedition. The week ~~before~~ Memorial Day the frantic intensity of last-minute preparations, the nightly barrage of phone calls, cracked my nerve. I began wondering what the hell I'd gotten into, ~~and~~ belatedly pondered the route ~~described by the Portlanders~~ -- and wished winter bravery hadn't made me so ~~soon~~ foolish-quick to accept the invitation. This was no several-pitch climb, a three-hour romp spiced by a scattering of cheap thrills. This was a thousand or more feet of continuous thin holds, a full day walking the narrow line between Here and There.

To grow, a climber must push his limits steadily higher by attempting steadily tougher peaks. Keep on doing the South Face of The Tooth and Shuksan and Rainier and that's all you'll ever do. ~~Yet~~ ^{however, sanely} Bonanza ^{was} no modest advance of my frontiers, it was a quantum leap. Perhaps in 1951 I'd be ready, or by the end of summer. But Memorial Day?

Christ, Bonanza wasn't so bloody important. Not to me. I hadn't stared at the bastard from Dome, I didn't hear any urgent call. It wasn't "my" climb ~~and~~ ^{immensely increase} that would ~~add~~ the difficulty. ~~Once~~ ^{And with} Once on the rocks I'd have no burning lust to get the pecker up. ~~With~~ Vic and Tom ~~were~~ the acknowledged leaders, ~~I~~ I'd just be baggage, denied the ~~up~~ up-front challenges that screw guts and will to the sticking point.

At the Blue Moon, deep in the fifth pitcher, I confided to the non-climber jolly boys I hadn't felt such numbing dread since Cruiser. A lot of sympathy I got from those fellaheen: "Well, you dumb asshole, you're not in the Army. Quit!"

I was glad when snow fell Saturday night. And sad to be glad. Ashamed. Despondent. The first ~~serious~~^{stern} test of the Big Third Year and I flunked. The South Face of The Tooth, Shuksan, Rainier by the dog route, they were my speed.

Monday morning, ~~the~~ snow clouds slowly clearing, we stood around a smoky campfire at the lake, silent-gloomy -- the others because they'd lost Bonanza, I because I'd lost everything, would soon be driven by humiliation from the company of heroes ^{to} back where I belonged, a mere super-hiker.

Vic, the perennial Pollyanna, sought to revive party spirits: "Well, the peak'll still be there next week."

Sure, but nobody could wangle the required three-day weekend.

"Well, what about the week after?"

Again no. And twice more. Then bingo! In late June everyone except Idiot could return. Now we lifted eyes from smoldering fire to taunting tower. Now we laughed.

(What, me laugh? Yes, at being granted a second chance. The way North was not closed. As for ~~the~~ perils of Bonanza, who's afraid of the big bad wolf when he's five weeks up the road?)

We ran down the trail to Holden, drank milkshakes in the company restaurant, and explored the town, ^{exclaiming} ~~marveling~~ at the ~~mountain~~ magnificently obscene garbage dump spilling into Railroad Creek, marveling at the enormous

vile heap of reddish-yellow tailings half-damming the creek, killing trees along the banks and no ~~doubt~~ fish in the waters, a patch of Hell in a green and pleasant land. Time remaining before the bus left, we climbed stairways in the hillside-hugging, tailings-spewing concentrator plant, Vic buttonholing everyone we met and ~~with no prologue~~ asking, "Do you know anything about Bonanza?" If his tactics were blunt, they were based on solid logic. For a dozen years several hundred people had lived virtually at the foot of the peak and ~~thought it was a matter of~~ ^{despite the} local ^{boast} ~~pride~~ that official State Liquor Board records showed Holden to have the highest per capita whiskey consumption in Washington, perhaps a few folk occasionally sobered up enough to go hiking, even climbing.

After many a blank stare and not a few ugly glares from red eyeballs, the quest was rewarded. ~~An engineer gave~~ ^{obtained} Vic ^{at the mine} the address of a former engineer/who used to fool around ~~at~~ Holden Lake and may have gone up the mountain. The ~~questing~~ engineer's answering letter told he had indeed made the ascent, and knew of another by Holdenites as well. He said it ~~wasn't~~ ~~anywhere~~ ~~was~~ the tiger described by the Portlanders, was so easy, in fact, he'd started up a second time with ^{a couple} ~~several~~ muckers who'd never done any climbing at all on the outside of a mountain. Unfortunately, one fell in the bergschrund, was impaled on his ice ax, and bled to death. Two conquests by nobodies cut Bonanza (and the Portlanders) down to size. That the peak was blooded didn't impress us; it was a freakish, not an "honest" kill.

In the dawn of Saturday, June 24, we again left Seattle, Idiot replaced ^{thus} by Avalanche Ray, Dome veteran and Bonanza fan; ~~and~~ Jay and Spick and I were accompanied by wives for the hike to camp. The weight of iron was much reduced

and there wasn't a tight nerve in the whole larky bunch. No daring second ascent was our goal, ~~just~~ ^{just} a fun fourth.

The drive across Stevens Pass to our springtime playground in Tumwater Canyon ~~by~~ was homey-familiar. Beyond there, though, following the Wenatchee River through apple orchards and sagebrush hills, then turning north up the ~~hood~~ gorge of the Columbia River, walled on the west by stark gneiss, on the east by stepped ramparts of naked basalt, ^{for a second time} alienation grew. On my ~~west~~ side of the Cascades the journey to highlands proceeded from green suburbs and pastures and second-growth forests ~~into~~ into the darker and denser green of virgin forests, more often than not beneath a gray and dripping sky. A desert baking under a California-weird sun was no proper approach to mountains. Granted, the Columbia drained the entire east slope of the Cascades and part of the west and belonged to the range as surely as Puget Sound, yet this arid waste outraged my instincts, ~~was~~ mocked the official motto of Washington, the "Evergreen State." Fried by hot sky I yearned for a kindly cloud, lost faith in the existence of snow. Moreover, the worst health menace of the west was chronic sinus trouble. The east was ~~was~~ poisoned country -- behind every tumbleweed I saw a coiled rattlesnake and all over my body felt ticks drilling, infecting me with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

~~Nevertheless~~ ^{Nevertheless}, ~~still~~ ^a there was ~~one~~ ^a ~~good~~ compensation for venturing into this dangerous foreign land, ~~Leaving the Columbia,~~ Leaving the Columbia, climbing a high, dry ridge, ~~and~~ dodging range cattle dumbly staring at asphalt wondering if it was good to eat, for a second time I felt a yell ~~trembling~~ in my throat as I looked down from brown-scorched crest to blue water rippled by wind -- clean water from the mountains, cool wind from the mountains. Lake

drowned channel of a Pleistocene glacier,

Chelan, though ~~submerged~~ its 55-mile-long ~~channel~~ "fiord" ^{extended} far into desert, was born of mountains and even here amid ~~mountain~~ sagebrush ~~and~~ smelled of mountains.

We drove the twisty shore road to the end a short ^{way} ~~bit~~ past Twenty Five Mile Creek and hauled packs to the dock. At 10 o'clock the boat arrived, an hour and a half from the town of Chelan at the foot of the lake. Memorial Day we'd ridden the "winter boat," the Speedway. Now we met the other vessel in the Chelan navy, the Lady of the Lake, ^{a bit} ~~some~~ larger but still a toy, poignantly reminding of the "mosquito fleet" that made a community of Puget Sound before the era of automobiles.

Of course, to the ^{300-odd} ~~several hundred~~ citizens of Holden and the 70 or so other ^{people} who lived uplake from Twenty Five Mile Creek, ^{"the boat"} (Speedway ^{and} Lady), ^{making one round trip a day} ~~making one trip daily~~ in summer, three ~~times~~ a week in winter, ^{was} ~~was~~ no toys, ^{was} ~~was~~ their main connection to the "outside." (The alternatives? Mountain trails. Or when in a hurry, the float plane based at Chelan, flown by a guy ^{for reasons unknown} who ~~for some reason~~ hadn't drifted off to the Alaska bush, ~~where he belonged~~.)

everyone on the Lady, the two dozen

But for old settlers and hungover muckers ~~returning to hard labor~~, as much as ~~for~~ us climbers on holiday, ^{the} leaving-behind ^{of} the nation's highway network was ^{an open and obvious} ~~a visible~~ declaration of ~~of~~ independence, reflected in a general smiling ~~and~~ exuberance.

The last ^{irrigated} ~~green~~ orchards fell ~~behind~~ behind, sagebrush steppe yielded to parkland of grass and Ponderosa pine, warm-fleshed hills grew taller and steepened into rugged cliffs of gneiss and granite rising 7000 feet ~~from~~ to ~~high~~ white winter. ^{Now and then} ~~Several times~~ the Lady nosed into shore to deliver mail and supplies to isolated cabins, apparently summer ^{or retirement} ~~homes~~ ~~of~~ ~~pieces~~ of ~~retirement~~, since they had no visible means of support.

The wide alluvial fan of Railroad Creek was our voyage's end. At noon, together with most of the ~~several dozen~~ passengers, we debarked on the Howe Sound Mining Company dock, beside which ~~road~~ ^{lay} barges laden with huge buckets of evil-gray copper concentrate. In pines across the creek were weatherbeaten buildings of Lucerne, a ramshackle resort whose name recalled early years of the century, the golden age of Lake Chelan tourism, when the Great Northern Railway was vigorously publicizing the "Switzerland of America."

The Lady continued ^{up the narrow blue lane} toward the lake head, ~~about~~ a half-hour ~~time~~ distant. From other climbers I'd heard a settlement of 40 or 50 year-round inhabitants was up there where the ~~St.~~ Stehekin River entered the lake. What sort of people chose to live so deep in the mountains, so far in the past? Someday I'd have to go see. ~~But~~ ^{Having} ~~you~~ discovered this new way to the ~~Willx~~ Cascades I'd ^{certainly} return, ^{and often.} ~~many~~ ^{time.} The water road was strange as a dream, yet instantly felt more natural, ^{homelike,} ~~than~~ ^{than} strips of sterile concrete designed for the explosion of a hundred gasoline bombs a mile. Surely ~~no greater entry~~ ^{Lake Chelan was the} to the hills ^{mob of} ~~as conceivable~~ ^{of} ~~machines~~

^{grandest conceivable entry}

Again the bus carried us ~~up the steep road~~ to Holden, and again, packs on ^{muckers'} backs, we hiked by the commissary-restaurant, ^{row of} dormitories, and family houses to the baseball diamond, where road narrowed to trail. Two kids who'd jeered our ropes and axes in May were playing the same games in the same place. They ~~just~~ yelled, amazed, "What the heck brought you back?"

The bus had transported us miles from ^{Ponderosa} pines and rattlesnakes, close to clouds above the Cascade Crest, yet not quite all the way "home." Summer-lush alder and willow and maple were familiar but not the ^{profusion} ~~beilderment~~ of aromatic shrubs -- sun country reeks of perfume. Strange trees grew here too. ^{Ascending} ~~stimulating~~

the side-trail into the hanging valley of Holden Lake, we passed groves of aspen, white bark shining in ~~the~~ shadows of breeze-quaking leaves. ~~They~~ scattered among ~~the~~ firs ^{of the basin} were groups of spidery black trees that a month ago were bare-limbed, ~~victim~~ ^{victims of a} blight ~~victim~~, I supposed; ^{they} now ^{Incredible! rumors} were mysteriously sprouting fresh green needles. ^{I'd heard of the} larch, a conifer that loses needles in winter, an evergreen that is not. The rainshadow was eerie. I could understand, though, how a person might come to like it as well as soaking-wet west-side jungle.

Ethereal green glow of larches said the long winter was ending, and so did blue leads of meltwater streaking lake ice. Our Memorial Day fire had melted a four-foot pit in the snow; now the ashes crowned a three-foot pillar. From a ^{cozy} ~~comfortable~~ camp on an island of ^{bare} ~~snow-free~~ ground, in calm evening we ~~gazed~~ ^{gazed} up the cirque wall to glacier and peak and out over the air gap of Railroad Creek to other neuntausers -- Copper, Fernow, Seven-Fingered Jack.

Sunday at 4:30 we left camp, wisps of pink cirrus flecking blue sky, climbed a snow gully to the glacier and continued up simple slopes to the bergschrund, 8500 feet.

8:30 and a mere thousand ~~+~~ more feet of mountain. Mere? Looking up -- straight up -- I felt the spouting of the old cold sweat. The engineer called this a ~~scramble~~ scramble. Doubtless it was when he made his ascent -- in summer. Never mind the hot sun on Lake Chelan, ~~the~~ larches needling at Holden Lake -- our season, up here, was winter. The thousand feet was ~~+~~ all cliff and virtually all white.

~~These~~ Teams ~~hadn't~~ hadn't previously been discussed, As ropes were uncoiled it became apparent Vic and Tom, naturally enough, would form the lead rope and Spick and Jay, close friends, the second. That left Ray and me for the third

rope, which was okay by us. However, during a piss break Tom got me aside and apologized. (Apologize? For what?) He was sure I could handle the situation. (Situation? What situation?) That day on Dome, Ray probably was just off his form, that was why they had the trouble. (Trouble? ~~For what?~~ ^{well,} This was the first I'd heard of any trouble.) Those two ~~other~~ times he came home in a basket stretcher (What? What?) could've been plain bad luck. (Yeah?) All the same I'd better keep an eye peeled. (Peeled! It'll ~~be~~ bulge!)

As we tied in I suspiciously studied Ray, and the white wall, and Ray again. Avalanche Ray we called him, thinking it a joke, only now I learned he had a lousy habit of falling off mountains. And now I was tied to him for the grimmest thousand feet of my life. Ray was a buddy, but no true friend if he killed me. A week ago on Castle I'd nearly killed myself with no help at all.

The ~~bergschrand~~ bergschrand was easily passed with an end run. Messy-wet ~~gneissic~~ gneissic granite, ~~downslab~~ downslab as slippery as greased shingles, forced us rightward to a long slope of steep snow. Giggling Vic boosted morale by announcing, "Here's where the Portlanders avalanched!" The slabs pushed us still farther right, until the runout of a slide would not be the friendly bergschrand but a rock cliff plunging to a lower bay of the glacier. If we avalanched now we'd rocket over the brink singing our last song: "YAH-AH-AH!"

Forget the avalanche -- there wasn't enough substance to the slope. ~~Boot~~ Boot toes kept bumping ice-coated rock. The snow was a loose winter veneer, too thin for thank-God steps, too thin for the ax pick to dig in for self-arrest. We must not fall. Yet every several seconds the rope tightened on my waist,

I teetered backward, as Ray slipped. Lord, if he pulled me off I'd fly through the air with the greatest of ease, the daring young man who forgot his trapeze. I should belay him -- from what? The ax shaft is no anchor in a foot of slop.

After three harrowing ropelengths the snow deepened. Now we could ^{securely} bury boots and ax shafts. Exhale. But not relax. Because now an avalanche was possible. And now we were standing more than climbing, listening to Vic and Tom, far above, shout back and forth. A friendship seemed to be disintegrating up there. Tom's language was normal for him in a time of ^{trial} ~~frustration~~ but to hear such words from clean Vic was frightening. Close above, Spick and Jay further contributed to rubberizing my knees: "Holy cow, this sure doesn't look to me like it'll go!" and "It's ~~even~~ a lot worse than the Portlanders said!"

Often I glanced down to Ray, trying not to look past him to the far-below glacier bay into which we'd dive if he had an attack of "Dome trouble." He was smiling. Of course. He was always smiling. Ray's delight with Earth was totally indiscriminate, he found joy in the rottenest moments of life, the cruddiest corners of creation, that's why we ^{were so fond of} ~~loved~~ him. He'd probably smile, if not laugh out loud, during ~~through~~ his final trouble. Pray God I'd not share it today.

Leaders aren't the true heroes; fully occupied by solving problems, they've no ~~leisure~~ leisure for brooding. Followers suffer most, especially on the third rope, hundreds of feet from the action, waiting and worrying. I couldn't see any passage through those ^{awful} ~~terrific~~ icy cliffs Tom was cursing, not with any amount of iron. Which raised a question -- why wasn't he pounding iron?

Because it wasn't necessary. He ~~had~~ dodged around a ~~rib~~ rib corner and found a rock wall with a more southerly exposure and thus mainly snowfree. Were

we out of the woods? Not to hear Spick and Jay. They battered my nerves with a punning exchange of warnings and wails: "Watch out -- bad spot here!" and "How the heck did you get up this?" and "Keep your belay tight, I might go on the rope!"

They must have been playing private games, ~~perhaps~~ because once I gulped my panic the wall resolved into a staircase. I'd scramble a 20-foot pitch offering an embarrassing abundance of holds, find a dandy ledge precisely where I'd have put one if I'd designed the mountain, belay Ray, scampering like a goat, and run up the next pitch to the next ^{broad} ledge. The sole problem was the Spick-Jay roadblock; Ray and I began sharing chuckles at their moans.

The staircase led to a snow-and-gravel gully ^{which} ~~was~~ just-like-that took us to the summit ridge. Tom and Vic disappeared, followed by huffing-puffing Spick and Jay. Number Three rope decided to wait for the track to clear and meanwhile ^{enjoy} ~~was~~ the first comfortable sit-down since the schrund.

Enjoy but not rejoice. We'd done much, were very high, surrounded by sky. Yet the summit was not in sight. The Portlanders' flawless hundred-foot precipice remained. Tom and Vic must be working on it now -- or perhaps staring in despair.

A distant howl! Oh Lord, who's fallen? How badly hurt? We'll be two days, maybe three, getting a rescue party from Seattle.

We flipped away fags and jumped up a ridge step that had given Spick and Jay fits and dashed along easy felsenmeer. Yelling ~~was~~ continued, closer. Topping a rise I stared, bewildered -- where was the rest of the mountain? There wasn't any more! And the yelling was Vic's triumphant bray, repeated over and over, "Bo-NAN-za!"

For all the months, days, hours required
to get here, we'd not be able
to stay long —

At 1:30, five hours from the bergschrund, we gathered on the summit, ~~and~~
~~no~~ ~~see~~ ~~the~~ ~~top~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mountain~~, ~~gap~~ ~~filled~~. Though we'd paid scant attention
while concerned with matters at hand and foot, dawn cirrus had ~~it~~ thickened
~~into~~ ~~a~~ solid overcast, black squalls were roaming.

Hastily we scanned the register book -- and were stunned, then overcome by
hysterical laughter. We expected the names of the Portlanders, and of the
~~engineer's~~ engineer's party, and a third entry too. But ~~not~~ ~~page~~
nor 6th nor 10th. For God's sake, it was a 16th!
after page. No 4th ascent ours, ~~but~~ ~~what~~ Who the hell were all these
strangers? Mainly, a close reading showed, a single fanatic ~~mountain~~ mucker
who during ~~several~~ several summers at the end of the 1930s, start of the 1940s,
climbed the peak repeatedly, by three routes, often alone. Dammit, why
couldn't he have ~~developed a taste for~~ whiskey instead?

~~We~~ We sure wouldn't go home and brag about a 16th. ~~Still~~ ^{However,} we had some
claims on history. Since most of the ascents were by the solitary freak, fewer
than 20 people had ~~preceeded~~ preceded us to the top, and none at all for a decade.
And ours was only the second "mainstream" ~~ascent~~ (non-Holden) ascent. Most
important, we'd rescued Bonanza from limbo, assured the peak ~~a~~ long-overdue
recognition
~~as~~ as a Cascades classic.

At 2:30 we started down. Cold sweat instantly resumed -- the stuff we'd
climbed would be twice as treacherous to descend. Ray and I, bringing up the
rear, again were terrorized on the staircase by Spick and Jay. But when I'd
belay Ray down one of their scenes of ^{protracted} anguish he'd calm my nerves by taking it
at a run, laughing, "This is nothing!" ^{in heck} the ^{alluded to?} "problem" Tom ~~talked~~
Maybe the problem was Tom's. Though
Ray's grizzled beard suggested he was very ancient (35? 40? 50?) and
^{though} he certainly looked like a war-surplus avalanche, ~~but~~ he flowed liquid-easy over
difficulties. We dispensed with belays and moved in unison, hard-put to
conceal our amusement at the ~~agonies~~ agonies of Spick and Jay.

hostile mutterings
about "no place to
be reckless."

So we were Number Three rope? On the steep (deep and secure) snow, where Number Two and sometimes even Number One slowly backed down, facing in, jamming ax shafts to the hilt, we quickly ~~plunged~~ plunge-stepped, facing out, trying not to smirk at ^{glowerings} ~~mutters~~ ~~hostile glances~~ from below, ↓

Ray and I could've been off the mountain hours earlier -- perhaps in an avalanche, but in high style. However, dinnertime was long past when we ~~we~~ assembled at the top of the veneer pitch. Number Three ^{declared} ~~said~~ that with proper ~~plan~~ ^{outvoted us} ~~plan~~ we could heel down the tricky snow in five minutes flat. Numbers One and Two ^{ing} ~~seemingly~~ agreed we must shun the slop and rappel the ^{solid} ~~solid~~ rock slabs.

Tom searched for an anchor point, found ~~no~~ no piton cracks, and therefore pulled bolt kit from rucksack and began drilling. ^{A burst} ~~Announcement~~ of obscenity announced his drills were dull from our last picnic in Tumwater Canyon, an eruption of blasphemy that he'd forgotten to bring a sharpener. Nearly an hour he pounded tough granite, making a pretty melody resembling the ♣ Anvil Chorus; the lyrics, though, were shockingly depraved for a teenager.

A snow squall rattled my bones; had I not been laughing so hard at Tom's Song I might've frozen to death. I ran out of cigarettes and borrowed from Ray. Then we both ran out of matches and borrowed from Jay. Twilight was thickening and another squall was approaching and we were soaking wet and half-killed. I loved Ray, the dirty old animal, and Spick and Jay, the ~~two~~ terrorists, and Vic and Tom, semi-efficient leaders. Here we were, crowded on a ledge, night near and ^{a storm and} maybe eternity. ^{worry} ^{and} a band of brothers.

I should ~~worry~~ ~~and~~ fret, death and I will coquette, there's a dance in the old cat yet, toujours gai, toujours gai. I've passed the test, have done the Big Banana, ~~and~~ am on my way North.

The hole was deep enough, the bolt driven, two 120-foot climbing ropes and the 240-foot retrieving rope tied together and thrown down slippery slabs. Jay, descending first, was a half-hour unsnarling the two lines, but at 7:45 we'd all completed the 240-foot creep, the longest and slowest dulfersitz in the annals of Northwest mountaineering, and were at the schrund we'd left 11 hours earlier. Glissading and skating and plunging ~~down~~ glacier and snow gully, at 8:45 we galloped into the wife-full camp shouting "Bo-NAN-za!"