

The snotty Eastern son of a bitch! He had a lot of nerve not dying!

We didn't wait but dropped to Index Creek and again faced a climb — to the pass and Tom — dear God, we hoped Tom.

With benefit of trench Franz caught up. I greeted him brusquely. "Why don't you kick a few?"

"Guess I have that coming," he gasped, "After the stunt I pulled."

What? No attempt to brazen it out? Was the haughty bastard apologizing? That didn't fit the pattern.

He wallowed a track — slowly, tangle-legged. All day he'd been the strongest of us and now was stumbling. He couldn't even hold the lead. Falling in the snow ^{for a} ~~resting~~, he told the story. The critical deviation from our scenario was that when he came to the first gap he pondered, and pondered, and refused the irrevocable leap.

"Doing pull-ups in the cedars, didn't think I'd make it ^{back up.} Arms giving out. Fingers still trembling — hardly can hold the ax."

No longer a stranger. Tom's instincts had been sound. Franz would be a friend.

At 9 o'clock we crept to the 3000-foot pass, day utterly gone but night not complete, snow reinforcing the fading light of sky. Tom materialized from darkness with smart remarks about hikers who aren't satisfied with two summits and a dozen miles of snowplowing and have to wipe out the whole countryside. We commented on his ancestry and sex habits.

Our elevation gain now totalled nearly 9000 feet, an incredible labor on the 4th of May, so early in the months'-long process of hardening bodies for summer's challenges. It certainly wasn't what Tom and I had in mind.

No leisure to marvel at godlike strength. We plunged toward the lake 500 feet below — and with the first step every muscle in my left leg knotted in cramps and with the next step every muscle in my right leg followed suit and I fell, helpless, writhing and laughing. There was no water to wash down salt pills, hadn't been for 7 hours, so hysterical Tom grabbed my feet and dragged me to the lakeshore, where I squirmed on my stomach to a lead of water cupped in blue ice, gulped pills, and was instantly cured.

We ran across the dimming white plain, ghostly walls of Index looming thousands of feet above in night, the enormous fan of avalanche snow sprawling over the plain halfway to the outlet — what awful thunderings sometimes shook this place now silent, solemn, holy.

Breathlessly to the edge of forest, walking from slop onto good brown dirt. We weren't home yet. Failure to find the boot-built trail, a ladderway of roots and rocks threading through cliffs, would still force a bivouac. We fanned out five abreast, searching dark woods for tread.

At 9:30 a shout. "I got it!" By flashlight we clambered down the ladderway and began the absolutely final ascent of Terrific Persdex, up a bulldozer track through a clearcut.

I was walking alone, the others having paused. So near a day of winter and danger, the spring night was poignant with perfume of flowers and pollens and new leaves, music of frogs and waterfalls. I buried face in

a creek and cold liquid flowed not into mouth but into me. I remembered
times past; being so hungry and dry blueberries exploded like tart bombs inside my
 brain, being so sun-blasted a sudden breeze blew right through flesh. The
 body must be tortured to the point of destruction for the spirit to ^{directly} know ~~the~~
 aromas and tastes and feel of Earth. Life is never lived so intensely as
 on the border of death.

At 10:30, ^{beside} ~~my~~ Paul's car, ^I ~~and~~ lay on my back and stared into stars,
 beyond stars.

22 April 1974

1952

Chapter ~~23~~²⁴

KILLJOY

I'd spent the morning on my favorite project, clearing brush from the railroad spur; next spring, when the kid was big enough to be wheeled around, it would be his or her first wilderness trail. Now, sweat drying in afternoon sun, I sprawled in grass by the 200^y-meter hut, tracing our skyline route from Persis to Index. Cumulonimbus billows were sprouting all along the Cascades — some of the guys ~~might be~~^{were} catching a bit of rain.

I should be too. August 10 and not climbing! Blasphemy. Well, if it weren't for the forest fire we'd be on American Border. Actually, according to the master plan, I should be crashing through a Canadian jungle toward Sir Sanford or the Adamants, or plodding over glaciers of the Bugaboos, but I'd started at the Post-Intelligencer too late to earn a vacation. Next year a week, and two the year after. McKinley? He was a president of the United States who got shot.

Nobody could say I hadn't grown up. Though still wearing dirty cords and wool shirt on the inside, the outside uniform wasn't too painful. The System kindly relented and didn't require my brain; the most demanding hour of the workday was playing cutthroat pinochle at lunchtime with two fellow errand boys. However, I'd donned all the customary shackles: suit-and-tie

and try
to save
the nation
from General
Eisenhower
and
Mad Dog
Nixon.

job, a house and 3 acres and a mortgage. I'd even entered the feuds of "the greens and the blues," joining the American Civil Liberties Union and for the first time in my life registering to vote, in order, come fall, to support Adlai. A friend gave us a kitten which Betty, old proofreader, named Etaoin Shrdlu. At the ^{Humane Society} pound we bought a compromise puppy that satisfied Betty's desire for a fuzzy little doggy and shortly would satisfy my desire for a great tawny beast. His name? Tamburlaine, the Scourge of God. Breed? Scythian Shepherd. By Christmas we'd have a baby. Scratch one mountain bum.

Yet if tamed 40 hours a week, I'd still have a hundred days a year to go wild. Betty always had been glad to stay home a certain proportion of weekends while I went walking. Nor would she, either, be trapped; my folks were slathering to babysit their ~~for~~ grandchild. Come 1953 and I'd implement a revised master plan. The disaster that was 1952 — well, we could never forget but we'd swallow it and go on.

The May 17-18 experience climb of Pugh was a romp. Morning sickness gave Betty a welcome new excuse to poop out. The leader, Mustache Jack, and such other friends as Rebel and Tom and Chairman Ward sustained ^{the} hilarity. Weather was ^{splendid} ~~glorious~~ and North Cascades views magnificent, marred only by fresh clearcutting ⁱⁿ the Whitechuck valley.

But home that night, the radio, the news. Art was in a crevasse on St. Helens. As we were giggling atop Pugh a hole opened under his boots and he fell — unroped and carrying the party's only rope. Last Wednesday

evening, at the Climbing Course lecture, I'd been kidding him and his two buddies about the plaid tam o'shanter^s they'd bought on a Boy Scout trip to Canada, and the glissade patches of bright-colored awning canvas they'd sewn to their pants. They were "my boys," beginners during my term as Climbing Chairman and now being groomed for leadership. (In 1949, my own second year, I also had stepped into a hidden crevasse on St. Helens, also unroped. Betty and Chuck laughed; they'd never before seen the ludicrous expression on the face of a dying man.)

The investigation conducted by Cam as Safety Chairman compounded our shock: the death was not "clean." Seeking help, Art's buddies were lucky, they thought, to encounter another party of Mountaineers led by a fellow whose exploits in the Alps they'd often heard directly from his own big mouth. As the most experienced climber on the scene, Alpine Hero took charge of the rescue, quickly botched it, and ran down the mountain wailing all hope was lost. Later medical examination revealed Art lived many hours after being abandoned.

We could not merely mourn Art; the basic law that binds the climbing community had been broken. The Board of Trustees met in a series of special sessions to consider the outraged Climbing Committee's demand that Alpine Hero be expelled from the club. He denied any wrongdoing and threatened to sue, an idle bluster ignored by the Board until, queerly, ~~the~~ a certain Elder Statesman emerged as his ally.

For Godsake how could ~~the president~~ ^{Elder Statesman} — who, more important, was a former Climbing Chairman — take sides with so despicable a criminal? To be sure, ~~this president~~ ^{he'd} always ~~had~~ been ~~so~~ ^{current} hostile toward the Climbing

I didn't know him personally, had only ~~talked~~ talked to him once, in the spring of 1949, when I was pestering everyone for information about Chimney Rock. 334 He brushed me aside, saying he'd climbed the peak, it was nothing special. But as I learned, he'd not climbed the peak. Why should he lie?

Committee - that was irrelevant now, we thought. Old companions spoke vaguely of his "many disappointments" during climbing years, as if these somehow were an explanation, an excuse. The mind of ~~the president~~ ^{Elder Statesman} was a mystery; we only knew the issue of a climber's responsibility was submerged by his vendetta. At the final Board meeting, where the "trial" fizzled and Alpine Hero escaped scotfree, ~~the smirking president~~ ^{smirking Elder Statesman} gave canary-eating evidence of precisely knowing the prosecution strategy adopted by the Climbing Committee. Afterward, Cam and Ward and I walked in a daze from clubrooms to coffeeshop.

, leading the parliamentary maneuvering to overwhelm justice by a mass of procedural quibbles,

Cam said, "Well, we've got a fink on the committee."

Somberly we discussed each member and reduced the candidates to two first-timers. And just then one of them said hello with a phony air of "what a coincidence" and sat in the next booth, ears flapping. And Ward recalled seeing ~~the president~~ ^{Elder Statesman} and Fink in close consultation at the place they all three worked.

Art was dead. Alpine Hero infested our mountains and club. A former Climbing Chairman had gone sour. One of our supposed own had turned informer. I guessed that next spring, on receiving a notice to renew club dues, I'd find a better way to spend the money.

Memorial Day, ^{enthusiasm} spirit lacking to plan any grander venture, Betty, Yorick, and I hauled packs from the North Fork Skykomish to a camp in snow and dense fog on a wooded ridgetop knoll. He and I set out to mark a way to Lake Blanca to expedite tomorrow's ascent of Goblin. Sidehilling snow, we were surprised to intersect a line of fresh ice-ax holes and

bootprints. Two climbers, and they were wearing Bramanis and thus obviously were ^{our} friends, since oldtimers and outsiders and neophytes remained enslaved by tricounis. Who were they? We hurried to catch up and found the track joined by two more climbers, also in Bramanis. A lot of our buddies had the same idea, sadness was going to be dispelled by a jolly reunion. Then entered prints of two more Bramani-booted climbers — and Yorick and I stopped, stared at each other, and returned to camp, where Betty, ^{for the last hour} hearing our voices ⁿ now here, now there, now here again, had been wondering why we were marching around and around the knoll. The laughter was as good medicine as climbing Goblin would ^{ve} ~~have~~ been. The hills had taken one of us, the hills would be our cure.

However, June, when momentum should ^{ve} ~~have~~ developed, was a stand-still month. The only two weekends of decent weather I was, as boss of the practices, busy teaching. One free weekend Lardy Bob and I started off with Red Jim, whom we didn't see much anymore because he'd finished his forestry degree and was working in the woods south of Rainier, to climb Triumph, in the North Cascades. Clouds being ominous, we shifted to Little Tahoma, and rain beginning, to the Goat Rocks. In the Saturday night deluge we sacked out in the Paradise guide hut with the Whittaker twins, who had the ^{Rainier guide-service} concession for the summer, and drank beer and applauded ^{Jim's} ~~the~~ Rivoli routine.

June 28 Tom and Betty and I gathered at Lardy Bob's house for a new start, American Border the goal. Sky was black, the forecast catastrophic. Why drive and hike hours for misery? Cougar Mountain

brush was closer.

The 3-day Fourth of July holiday belatedly got the season rolling. Yorick (furthering forestry studies by spending the summer working for the Forest Service out of Darrington, but having the holiday open) and I joined Tom, leading an experience climb of Spire Point, and with a half-dozen others powered through Sulphur Creek brush and up steep forest to a camp in 6000-foot heather meadows. Snow began Friday night and pinned us under a liferaft sail until ^aSturday evening, when clouds parted and Spire and mighty Dome majestically emerged, sunset-glowing. Sunday we left camp at 3:30 in freezing wind, powder hissing over ice-hard crust, watched dawn pinken Gletschergipfel, and in bright sun crossed the ridge onto the Dana Glacier and scrambled up the granite splinter of 8264-foot Spire, climbed only several times before. Gazing north to Eldorado and Forbidden and the Pickets, east to Big Banana, which Lardy Bob was doing this weekend, I rejoiced. The wilderness here would last a few years, the great peaks would keep me content if I never went North again.

Next Sunday, home from a practice trip, once more the damn radio. Tom and Fearless Fred and Dick Berge, descending in darkness from a weather-defeated attempt on the unclimbed Baring nordwand, were halted by a dropoff. Dick yelled he was checking a possible way down. Then silence. In the morning Tom and Fred found him at the base of the cliff. (In that last moment, treading air, did he feel the same surprise as I on Castle?)

Dick was new to our bunch and most of us barely were getting to know him, yet he was the sort one recognizes at first meeting as an instant

friend, to be ~~explored and~~ treasured over years to come; the loss was the more poignant because of memories we now would ~~never~~ ^{never} have. He left a young widow, and a baby. (A baby. Ours was due Christmas.)

A second sacrifice in 8 weeks numbed wills. However, the Course must go on and Lardy Bob was committed to lead Rainier. Saturday, July 26, Betty and I hiked with the crowd to Camp Muir; at this age of minus-6 months our kid made 10,000 feet. Aside from that, though, my 100th summit since joining the Mountaineers did nothing to restore joy. The route passed under slag and corruption of Gibraltar's hellish cliffs. Twice I was hit by falling rocks. A stupendous icicle collapsed above and a barrage of water-melon-sized chunks of ice nearly wiped out me and my whole team.

Nevertheless, Bob and I agreed at Muir to take another shot at American Border, in 2 weeks. Staying home, regrouping, the weekend after Rainier, I felt the old excitement stirring. Added to Spire and Persdex, the remote and rarely-climbed peak would give my 1952 bag a bit of respectability. We didn't call Tom; for him it was too soon.

The North Pacific High moved over the Northwest hot and dry and loggers began torching off timber. Monday, August 4, I read in the papers about the fire up Swamp Creek, our approach to American Border, but paid scant attention. Friday night I called Bob to fix a morning departure time.

He'd checked with the Forest Service and the Swamp Creek road was definitely closed and he was amazed I hadn't wised up to the fact. He'd already switched his ambition to the West Ridge of Stuart, 2500 feet of clean granite, and lined up a terrific party. Rover Paul, who because of a

job hadn't climbed in months, was free and eager. Dusty, companion of our beginner days until caught in the Korean draft, was freshly sprung from the Army and hungry for hills. A great group. But the peak?

"Christ!" I said. "Stuart? In August? The east side of the mountains is too bloody hot, especially in this heat wave."

"Where the heck you think you'll find a cool climb? Anyway, it's not so bad over there if you get an early start and carry lots of water."

"You'll scorch your fingers. You'll melt your tennis shoes. You'll shrivel up like raisins."

Lardy Bob and Rover Paul and Dusty went to Stuart without me. Recruiting a party for an interesting climb was impossible this late; instead of some dull scramble with a Mountaineer mob I'd sooner mess around on the logging railroad.

Sunday afternoon I lay in the grass teetering between contentment and restlessness. Despite 31 mountain days this year there'd been so many compulsory site-scouting and practice trips I'd climbed only 7 peaks, disgraceful after successive seasons of 20, 30, 23, and 20. Well, dammit, 10 or so weekends and maybe 6 or 7 peaks remained before winter and in 1953 I'd cut loose from the club and reach a new level of freedom. And to look ^{at} matters another way, in addition to the 31 high-mountain days of 1952 we'd had 171 Cougar Mountain days.

Cumulonimbus billows swelled higher and I saw they were not actually growing, rather were pushing from the east. Three times the height of the mountains themselves, the towering white rank, gleaming

in afternoon sun against blue sky, continuous north and south as far as I could see, advanced to the edge of the range and hung stationary above Si and Phelps and Index and Persis and ~~Whitcomb~~ ^{Pitchuck.} I'd never witnessed such a spectacle.

Monday noon I was called to the phone at the P-I. It was one of the rescue alerters. A message had come from Dusty. Sunday morning he'd stayed in camp at Long's Pass. This morning Bob and Paul hadn't returned so he hiked out and drove to a phone. The word was: stand by.

In late afternoon, another call. Still no sign. Get ready, we're going.

Cam picked me up on Cougar Mountain and we drove over Snoqualmie Pass to the Cle Elum Ranger Station. A couple dozen people were there, half Mountaineers, half strangers from golly knew where. Ome, who'd been dragging the wounded off peaks since the 1930s, and Otto, a doctor and superb climber with years of experience in Alps and Cascades, were in charge. Only Wolf, third member of the triumvirate heading the recently-organized Mountain Rescue Council, was missing, away on a business trip.

The ranger said there'd been a hell of a thunderstorm yesterday. The scenario was ~~clear~~ ^{obvious}: hard rain, a rush to get down, wet rock, ~~precipitation~~ ~~visibility~~, a slip.

Somebody wondered about lightning — it wasn't in the picture. We'd all been scared by the flash and bang and some had known the stiffening of

feeling
too out
of condition
for the
climb,

ropes, hair standing on end, sparks leaping from ice axes, the "buzzing of the bees," but the Cascades aren't a lightning range, not like the Tetons, and a person always has plenty of warning. The Sierra Clubbers killed on Bugaboo? One could understand their taking risks on a famous peak to which they could ~~not~~^{it} soon return. Stuart, though, was close to home and nothing to brag about and Bob and Paul would start down at the first rumble. Perhaps not quick enough to escape the cloudburst.

We bounced along ruts of the North Fork Teanaway road, ~~which~~ at 4200 feet, below the little step into the headwaters basin, ^{it} deteriorated to a jeep track. Packs on backs we hurried upward in forest by flashlight, until, at 1 o'clock Tuesday morning, Ome decided we'd better sleep a while. Tom and several others continued to Long's Pass, 6200 feet, to watch for flashlights or a fire.

I didn't sleep, despite having unrolled my bag on a sponge-soft rotten log. The rising call took me from the fury of sharp-jawed red ants into groggy ascent of the miners' jeep-bulldozer track. Night thinned, flashlights blinked out. I'd been here Memorial Day of 1949, plugging steps in clean snow; these arid rainshadow slopes of serpentine scree ^sparcely dotted with parched alpine trees and browning grass were foreign, hateful. A damn athlete was setting the pace and I gasped and wheezed.

Shouts from the pass. The cruel pace ^yaccelerated. I staggered onto the crest, morning sky fresh blue, sun warming the world, saw serene Stuart across the gulf of Ingalls Creek, and knew nothing awful could have happened. A stumble, a disabling minor injury.

Confusion at the pass. Tom gone. People scurrying. Shouts from below. What's happening? Cam gone.

Somebody says Tom got a signal from somewhere. Everybody is dashing down to Ingalls Creek.

From below I hear the groan of a cow with the bellyache — Bob's patented mountain yell. Thank God! They're in the valley. Possibly with a broken leg. Couldn't be anything much worse. I'll have a few comments when we meet.

George, a top climber of a decade ago, was stationed at the pass with one of the two walkie-talkies borrowed from the police; he'd be our relay to the Coast Guard communications truck soon to be arriving at the Teanaway road to connect us to the outside.

Everybody else was ^{excitedly} joyously running down, leaving packs, which would interfere with stretcher duty; we'd not be gone long anyway. However, the hasty group forgot an important detail. Someone had taken the head-and-shoulders half of the ingenious two-piece aluminum-tube carrying-straps-attached stretcher invented to replace the traditional steel-tube-and-mesh Stokes, but no one the longer and more cumbersome hips-legs half. Ome asked if I'd mind. Certainly not. What I did mind was that to share the labor he assigned me as partner none other than unspeakable Fink, suddenly attached to Ome like a barnacle. Ome was too sweet a guy to believe evil of any man; he'd have to learn for himself. Realizing he was washed up on the Climbing Committee and, discovering ~~the president~~ ^{Elder Statesman} was a loser, Fink obviously had transferred hopes for fame and respect and power from climbing

to rescuing.

We started down and Ome, needed on the scene and unhindered, left me behind. After about 10 seconds, so did Fink. Though no trail led to the valley the slopes were easy and open — except every damn boulder and every damn tree and every damn log grasped tubing and dangling straps of the damn stretcher. I fell, and rose to fall again, and again.

Smoke rose from the forest beside Ingalls Creek. If Bob and Paul had a fire they couldn't be in bad shape. A sprained ankle would explain the bivouac. Which of the idiots would get a free ride home in the stretcher? I'd make sure it wasn't purely free, I'd burn their stupid ears, I'd remind how I warned against Stuart.

The stretcher and a tree lovingly embraced and I yanked viciously to part them — and dove off a cliff and smashed on a slab and skidded headfirst into banging boulders and clawing thorns. Jesus H. Christ! What's busted? Nothing. Pulsing lump on head. Blood on cheeks. Scraped hands and elbows. All-over bruises and contusions. Alone, abandoned. Dammit, I'm mortal too! And maybe hurt worse than Bob or Paul.

I smelled smoke and hollered. No answer. I hadn't seen anybody for a half-hour, didn't know which way they'd gone through the forest. I boulder-hopped Ingalls Creek and the goddamn stretcher grabbed a snag and threw me in the water. I crawled to the bank and shoved through brush, cussing the whole shithead bunch enjoying the reunion with Paul and Bob while I shrieked and bled alone.

Above murmur of water, a babble of voices. The bastards were

having a party. I lurched from tree to tangling tree, in tears from pain and rage and self-pity. I was squirming over a log when Cam, once my friend, came walking toward me cool and nonchalant.

I was struggling, eyes full of sweat, heart full of hate.

He said, "Paul's dead."

Bob was in the center, Otto dripping a bottle of plasma into his arm, friends offering bits of food from pockets, ghouls clicking cameras.

I wandered away, sick, into a patch of shade, and fell down. Cam followed and I asked details.

What happened?

Struck by lightning on the summit.

How did he get down?

By himself, that's all we know. ~~He doesn't feel like talking~~

How is he?

Dehydrated, in shock. Legs paralyzed. Terribly burned around the waist, where electricity ran along the rope from Paul. Ghastly hole where the knot was. Feet no doubt badly burned too — they'll have to cut the boots off in the hospital.

What are we waiting for? Why don't we get him out of here?

In the stampede from town a critical portion of the newfangled stretcher, had been forgotten, the device that held the two halves together, ↓

No worry, ~~thanks to the MRC syndicate, to which everybody belonged~~

None other than the U.S. Air Force would deliver the missing part.

Sure enough a Flying Fortress appeared in the stratosphere. Above a distant ridge we spotted a midair flash, as of sun reflecting from a scrap of falling aluminum. The Fortress went away. "Pilot to base. Mission accomplished. Stretcher unit successfully dropped on the Cascade Range of Washington State." So much for pinpoint bombing.

George, up at the pass, told us a Coast guard helicopter was en route from Port Angeles. The stretcher was ~~blacked out~~ haywired together, Bob loaded aboard, and we carried him downvalley in forest to a meadow judged by the experts suitable for a landing.

Ome's thoughts now turned to Paul and in scorching noon he led 20-odd unquestioning folk, with the stretcher, from the 5000-foot valley up sunbaked slopes toward the summit of Stuart, 9415 feet. Madness. Paul was in no hurry.

Tom and Dusty and I stayed. The MRC was a noble idea whose time had come and it was swell for climbers to be coordinated with the police and the military and their marvelous machines but we'd feel better ~~actually~~ ^{personally} seeing Lardy safely home. We gathered branches for a ^{signal} fire and hid from punishing sun to wait. Wounds concealed by clothing, Bob seemed normal — except for vague eyes, slow speech, general lassitude. Mainly he slept.

At sound of chop-chop-chop we lit dry branches, heaped on the green, and thick smoke rose to show our position and the direction of ground winds.

A toy it was, high in the sky, then bigger and louder, then a

roaring mass of dangerous metal swooping above treetops, circling and returning lower, and lower. The flailing monster dropped below treetops and crazily hurtled down a lane between tall firs, rotor blades inches from branches on either side, and slipped over tips of trees beyond the meadow.

Three plunges down the narrow alley, and one more — but now it went into a convulsion and stopped dead in midair, the hurricane from invisible blades driving ~~wilderness~~ grass and trees and smoke to a frenzy. One second only the enormous shuddering machine hovered, teetering from side to side, threatening to crush us four cowering in forest, then blasted off drunkenly and disappeared over a ridge. Bob, minutes from hospital, remained at the foot of Stuart.

Tom called George who called the Coast Guard Com Truck which called the helicopter — so close a minute earlier but not on our frequency. George relayed back the bad news. This meadow wouldn't work. The chopper could get in but not out. The pilot wanted us to move down the valley to another meadow. He'd try again in morning when the air was colder and thicker and not so cruddy with thermal ~~air~~ winds.

A third night for Bob without hospital care — and without sleeping bag and without food, all our gear at the pass.

Which meadow did the pilot have in mind? The sole description reached us through the miracle of modern electronics was "down the valley on the side of the ridge." There couldn't be more than a thousand meadows to choose from. Well, better worry about the destination later and meanwhile get started.

How? A travois was just the ticket. We'd never made one but had seen drawings in the manuals. With pocket knives we whittled off two creekside willows ^{and found} they were too limber to support a body. We selected the two smallest dead firs available ^{and found that being} sharp-tapered and thick-butted at this elevation, even unloaded they were too heavy to drag. Where in the mountain world exist ~~the correct~~ materials for building the famous ~~do~~ travois?

We pondered the prospect of the three of us, between now and tomorrow morning, hand-carrying the Lardy lump a mile, 2 miles, golly knew how many miles to the meadow of the pilot's heart's desire. Ome's bunch didn't have a walkie-talkie, we couldn't tell them to get their stupid asses down here.

Tuesday afternoon. We'd not slept in 32 hours, not eaten since last night's supper. The valley was an oven, baking enfeebled brains. We stared at the lump. The lump slept.

Voices woke us from a fugue. Three kids dashed into the meadow, a trail crew knowing there dang sure had to be a special reason for a helicopter performance like that. Now we were six and the pictures in the manuals were not totally unrealistic.

One of the crew, hearing our plans and looking at the sleeping lump, hesitantly suggested there might be a better way. Their employer, a Wenatchee Valley rancher and packer with a sideline as trail-maintenance contractor, had supplied them with a burro for carrying tools.

Tom and Dusty and I cheered.

The other kids were dubious. The animal never had been ridden,

though some had tried and maybe that was why he had the habit of glowering at people and grinding his teeth. Actually, he was no bargain as a cargo carrier — trouble every morning, trouble all day long. In the last month they'd had many occasions to recall the twinkling eye of their boss as he gave them the burro and told his name — Killjoy.

Tom and Dusty and I hoped. The three kids discussed. Killjoy was cantankerous, Killjoy was tricky, Killjoy was proud. But Killjoy wasn't mean. They agreed that for all the agony they sort of liked the surly beast.

They fetched the burro. At the sight of four strangers, Killjoy stopped. Flapped ears. He'd been forced to tolerate three — now seven? Perhaps discouraged by sheer numbers, he stood still, trembling, as one of Them was lifted onto his back. Eyes were wild, snout snorting steam. We held Bob tight, expecting Killjoy to buck.

What transpired in burro brain and soul? Was this the first time he'd been treated as "one of us"? The kids marveled. Killjoy accepted Bob.

Slowly down the trail moved the caravan. One kid scouted ahead to warn of rough spots. Another led Killjoy. Atop the little burro towered half-awake Lardy Bob, grasping horns of the pack saddle. On each side walked ~~two~~ of us, steadying Bob and guarding him from buffets by trees and brush. In a mile we passed the large meadow where the crew was camped — tempting, but in the valley bottom, not "on the side of the ridge."

At the edge of a black morass Killjoy balked. The kids explained he was mortally afraid of muck, they doubted he could be made to cross. Yet with friendly whisperings in ear he consented to try. In the middle of

the passage all four legs stuck. Up to calves ourselves we gripped Bob, expecting a panic. No. Eyes wide with fright, muscles quivering, the noble creature sank to belly, stoic in the moment of ultimate terror. We carried Bob over and gently extricated Hero Killjoy, expressing our gratitude and respect and love.

Down the valley into solid forest. Where, or where, was the meadow seen by that alien from outer space? The kids had been shyly insisting their camp was in the last large meadow they knew anything about. Afternoon was going fast. Bob was as brave as Killjoy but winces spoke of pain; he couldn't ride forever. We returned to the trail-crew camp. A huge meadow. Surely the Coast Guard could get in and out. Tom told George.

Tenderly the kids bedded Bob down in ~~the sleeping~~^{the} tent, all their mattresses and blankets under and over him. Suppertime embarrassed them. The boss was a couple days overdue with supplies; food was mighty low. For Bob they dug out secret personal goodies — a can of peaches, a chocolate bar, a can of sardines. For the rest, including themselves, they emptied the pantry, filling a big pot with ^{and} Number Ten cans of stewed tomatoes ~~and~~ loaves of stale bread. The watery hoosh was much better than the nothing we'd brought.

In twilight the hoosh pot found other customers, drawn by campfire smoke. Singly they straggled in from above, having learned Stuart was no ~~simple~~ stroll on an August afternoon. Most were total strangers and I was astounded and dismayed to discover few were climbers, mainly they were hikers and fishermen. One was virtually barefoot, boots tied together with

string; he said he hadn't been in the mountains for years but reading about Art and Dick in the papers made him feel so bad he ~~joined~~^{enlisted in} the MRC. That the likes of him should be on a rescue was discouraging. There are those who run after fire engines. And now, apparently, those who run after alpine corpses. Wolf and Ome and Otto had their work cut out eliminating thrillseekers and nuts and ghouls and bleeding hearts and Finks from a group they properly envisioned as the elite of Northwest climbers. Nearly half the summit party ~~joined us~~^{arrived} by nightfall; I wondered how many more were scattered over the mountain, how many with sprained ankles, broken legs, fractured skulls. I wondered if we'd ever escape the valley, if we might be here until winter on a perpetual self-renewing rescue.

In darkness I found a cozy nook under a tree ~~and gladly~~ curled up to sleep. I shivered awake, oven day followed by refrigerator night, and joined the trail crew by the campfire. Again shivering, a body blocking radiation; squirm to a new position. Again awake shivering as the entire gang crept from cold nooks to form a snakelike coil around the flames, writhing and wiggling, briefly dozing.

Dawn. Instant heat of another lung-blistering day. Up to await the chopper. Wednesday, was it? Lightning Sunday. Phone call Monday. Killjoy Tuesday. Yes, Wednesday. At least we'd had some naps, if not real sleep. No breakfast, though — the kids had shot their wad.

Two hikers burst onto the scene, a reporter and photographer from the P-I (not that I knew them, nor they me) come 15 miles up Ingalls Creek in the night. Sickening to learn we were front-page news — why couldn't