

THE MAKING OF A MOUNTAIN BUM

by Harvey Manning

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PART ONE: FAIR SEED TIME AND FOUL

1938

Chapter 1

SOMETHING LOST BEHIND THE RANGES

The big black words were burned into a cedar plank way up on the wall of the mess hall.

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

After supper the first night the camp director, Mr. Walsh, stood under the plank and told how we could spend the main part of the week.

We could go on the Cruise and row Navy cutters along Hood Canal, exploring bays, camping on beaches, fishing and swimming.

Or we could take the Three Rivers Hike. The first day was up the Big Quilcene River and the Poopout Drag (the guys on the camp staff groaned) to Camp Mystery (a long time ago somebody disappeared there and never was found). The second day was over Marmot Pass and through headwaters of the Dungeness River to Home Lake (swimming was great if you didn't mind icebergs). The third day was up to Constance Pass and the top of Del Monte Ridge (some Scouts marked the trail there once with empty Del Monte vegetable cans) and then down Sunnybrook (the staff guys moaned, nobody ever has been able to count all the switchbacks, there are just too many) to the Dosewallips River and out to the road at Constance Creek.

It's sort of funny I didn't pick the Cruise. My plan was to get into Sea Scouts when I was old enough and someday sail my own boat around the world.

Camp Parsons was terrific if you loved the water. There were two swimming periods a day and a free time in afternoon when you could sign out a rowboat and go off by yourself. I joined the Royal Order of the Raw Oyster, which only a dozen of us had the nerve for. Initiation was on the beach at low tide. You found an oyster in the rocks, opened it with your Scout knife, and swallowed the slippery gray mess. The other guys laughed at the agony on your face. If you didn't keep it down they let you try again. Some kids had to swallow their oysters five or six times. If you finally made it stay down you could paint your name on the shell and nail it to a rafter of the boathouse. After that everybody who came to Parsons would see it.

The problem was, Parsons also was right at the foot of the Olympic Mountains. You couldn't ever forget it. The Mariners lived in a shack on the pier and the Rangers had a lodge up on the hill. (You had to be 14 and have been at Parsons twice before to get in those.) Except for that, though, the troops were all named for places in the Olympics. Mt. Constance was on a bluff above the Swimming Cove. Mt. Olympus was on Campfire Point, where everybody got together at night to sing songs. Skokomish was down in the maple trees near the boathouse. My troop, Copper City, was close to the parade ground. Each troop had a fancy cabin for the staff and four plain ones with four double-decker bunks apiece for the patrols. The patrol cabins were open on the sides so you actually were

sleeping out-of-doors. All night you smelled the saltwater. But you smelled the mountains too. I was really torn.

The Navy cutters were exciting as heck. I had saltwater in my blood and was crazy about boats. Dad had been in the Navy on the battleship New Mexico and before that on the ~~Constitution~~ Constitution. Just swabbing decks there, of course, to keep it clean for the tourists. His grandfather was captain of a Nova Scotia fishing schooner and traded salt cod in the West Indies for rum. Dad and Mother met at a bonfire on Puget Sound while the Mex was laid up in the yards at Bremerton. Mother sailed from Seattle to Los Angeles on the H.F. Alexander to be with Dad while he was waiting for his enlistment to be up. I couldn't really count that as my first ocean trip because I wasn't born yet and wasn't until they got back to Seattle. When I was little we lived on Bainbridge Island and were always riding the ferry to Seattle and going out in rowboats. I'd even been on a lumber schooner that used to carry lumber to Europe and ~~now~~ was moored at Port Blakely. A couple years ago I'd spent a night with Dad on the Standard Service while it was docked in Seattle before the next trip to Alaska. I read books by John Masefield and Josiah Slocum and Herman Melville and lots of others and could name every spar and sail on a clipper ship and a brig. My main hobby was ~~building~~ making model ships. I spent a lot of time drawing pictures of the flatty I was going to build, or maybe a catboat, for learning how to sail on Puget Sound, and also the ketch for my voyage around the world.

But ever since I could remember we'd been going in the mountains, too. My folks loved to fish and we went camping on the Olympic Peninsula and

up the Snoqualmie and Stillaguamish Rivers in the Cascades. Mt. Rainier was our favorite. Thanksgiving of 1930, after turkey dinner at Longmire Inn, we hiked way above Paradise. When I started school next year I wrote a story telling how we climbed Mt. Rainier. Teacher said we probably didn't go clear to the top. I was sore. My folks said we did. Later on I realized she was right, my folks were kidding me.

We hadn't gone camping much since the Depression. Dad finally had a steady job but he needed our car to get to work in Seattle and couldn't afford to wear it out on camping trips. That was one reason I'd joined the Scouts last fall. But nobody else wanted to use their car either and our troop only went to the mountains three times, and then just to Cascades foothills.

I'd learned a lot about woodcraft, though, even if our hikes mostly were through the woods to beaches near home. To make Tenderfoot I'd learned to tie nine knots and also memorized the Scout Oath and Law and the History of the Flag. In February I'd made Second Class. There were 12 tests. You had to be a Tenderfoot for a month, earn a dollar and put it in a bank, and get your folks and the scoutmaster to say you'd been living by the Scout Oath and Law. That was easy and so were tracking, safety, using a knife, and boxing the compass. It took ~~study~~ practice to learn first aid, the semaphore code with signal flags, and Scout's Pace, which was 50 steps running and 50 steps walking, doing a mile in 12 minutes. You flunked on 15 minutes or 10 minutes, it had to be 12.

Firebuilding was tough. I'd built plenty of fires but always with newspapers and cedar kindling in our fireplace and kitchen stove. For the

they only let you have
 test ~~you only had~~ two matches. Before you lit them you had to find dry
 tinder, like slivers from the bottom of a big log, and shave it small, and
 then look for seasoned wood. Squaw wood, ^{which is} the dead branches on standing
 trees, was best. If the day was windy or rainy you'd flunk sure as heck.
 Cooking was sort of fun. You couldn't use any pots or pans. The idea was
 to stab a green stick through chunks of meat and potatoes and roast them
 until the examiner believed you when you said they were done. The worst
 part was he made you eat the kabob, which always was charcoal on the outside
 and raw on the inside.

Just before camp I'd gone to the Court of Honor and got my First Class
 badge. For this you had to have 2 months in as Second Class, still be
 obeying the Oath and Law, bank some more money, learn some more first aid,
 swim 50 yards, chop down a tree, and send and receive messages in semaphore.
 Judging heights and distances and weights, and also reading maps, took
 practice. For nature study you had to describe ten trees or plants, six
 birds or animals, and find the North Star and three constellations. For
 cooking I made hunter's stew, which was potatoes and carrots and onions
 and meat. I also made twist, which was dough wrapped around a stick and
 baked over coals. The big problem was finding two forked sticks and jamming
 them in the ground so they'd ~~hold up~~ hold up the twist stick and the
 crossbar you hung the stew pot on. The ~~stew~~ stew was great but the twist was
 almost as bad as the kabob. I guess there could be disasters ~~was~~ where
 you'd have to live on that kind of garbage, so they were good to know.

The 14-mile hike held me up a while. Nobody in our troop had taken
 one for a couple years, which was why it was that long since anybody made

First Class. I think they were scared. The trip had to be overnight with only one buddy. Well, I'd camped so much with my folks I was used to sleeping on the ground and had seen wild animals and wasn't afraid of them, or the dark either if somebody was around. But I had a heck of a time lining up a buddy. The best I could do was Filthy, who never took a bath and smelled horrible. He wasn't scared, though. The hike was easy and a lot of fun. We hiked back roads 7 miles ~~through the woods~~ to a beach a couple miles north of the Edmonds ferry dock. There was no creek handy but a nice farmer let us use his pump. Building a fire with driftwood is simple, especially if you cheat a little by bringing newspapers so you don't have to fool around whittling tinder. For supper I boiled a stew of noodles and hamburger and tomato sauce in a coffee can, which was Mother's recipe and way better than any in the Boy Scout Handbook. The tide came in so far we had to sleep next to the railroad tracks. Every couple hours I'd have a terrible nightmare and wake up with a freight train thundering by my head. For breakfast I fried bacon and eggs, which would have been fine except Filthy brought the eggs. They were fertile and not fresh and hadn't been kept cool and there were little tiny chicken heads on the yolks. I was too polite to say anything but darn near threw up.

I guess I'm lying a little. Even before I got to camp and listened to Mr. Walsh I was pretty sure I'd take the Mike. Nobody from Troop 324 had been to Parsons so all I knew about the place was the bulletins Seattle Headquarters sent out. They said Parsons was 330 acres of forest and beach and you could do more Scouting there in a week than in a year anywhere else.

That was why I had to go. The thing was, they mentioned the Cruise but always played up the Hike.

At first I did think mostly about the Cruise. Those Navy cutters inspired me all winter and spring while I was buying a 25¢ Parsons stamp every week at troop meeting and pasting it in my Parsons savings book.

I needed some inspiration. Buying those stamps was no cinch. I made 50¢ every Saturday, mowing Dr. Brown's lawn, weeding Mrs. Brown's flowers, raking leaves and trimming shrubs and doing anything else they wanted until I'd put in 4 or 5 hours. That wasn't bad. Mother worked like a fool all day Saturday cleaning up their house and got a dollar. The Browns were the only people in the neighborhood with any money and they didn't throw it around.

My Shopping News route paid better, 75¢ a delivery, Wednesdays after school and Saturdays before starting at the Browns. The paper was free so I had to deliver to every house 3 miles along Aurora Highway and a ~~half-mile~~ quarter-mile into the woods on both sides, as far as anybody lived. My route covered 175 houses and was 12 miles long and with the load of papers took 2½ hours of hard pedalling. When the bottom went out of the roads during a thaw I had to walk my bike a lot of the way and it ~~■~~ took 5 hours, a real nightmare on a winter night with the rain pouring down and 175 dogs chewing on my legs.

I earned quite a bit, around \$9 every month and a lot more in summer, when I picked wild blackberries and sold them and dug ditches and did other odd jobs. Mother was my problem. Just let me build up a ~~good~~ ^{healthy} bank balance

and she'd decide I had to have new overalls for school or get my shoes soled. If it wasn't her it was my darn bike, wearing out a tire or the chain busting. One time I was complaining to Dad how it seemed you never could get ahead of the game. He said I wasn't the first guy to notice that. I ~~was~~ ^{was} ashamed for sounding like a crybaby. I remembered how sad he was when he had to buy the two-by-fours and shiplap and roofing paper to build our privy. He looked discouraged for weeks when our 1929 Plymouth broke down for good and he had to borrow money to buy the '33.

Saving up \$8 for a week at camp was bad enough but that was only part of the Parsons expenses. I already had my uniform, of course. I didn't buy the official hat and shoes and whistle and other fancy stuff that wasn't required. Even so the regulation khaki socks and shorts and belt and shirt and the red-and-blue neckerchief (those were the North Shore District colors) and the emblems wiped out \$5.

Headquarters wouldn't let you go to camp with blankets, they said you'd freeze in the mountains, so I had to buy a wool sleeping bag (kapok was cheaper but they said it was no good) and that was \$6 at one shot. Like everybody who lived in the country I ~~had~~ ^{owned} boots but Headquarters said the soles had to be nailed or you'd fall off the mountains. Dad took my boots to a shoemaker he knew who worked mostly on loggers' boots but also was an expert on hiking. He put in slivers, ~~which~~ which were square chunks of iron, and hobs, which were rounded, and rosebuds, which were like hobs only squashed on top for better traction, and ^{sharp} caulks in the instep for good grip on logs. The ~~my~~ boots were beautiful, nobody in ~~the~~ 324 ever had

seen anything like them, and he did it all for a dollar.

My packboard was an even bigger bargain. Dad borrowed Uncle Bill's Trapper Nelson which he took deer hunting and used it as a pattern to make one for me. He worked on it after supper for weeks, steaming oak slats for the horizontal pieces and putting them in a press to get the right curve to fit my back, screwing the slats to the two fir verticals, rigging the canvas that rides against your back, and riveting on the shoulder straps. Everything came to about a dollar. In a store it would've cost \$5.

In July I finally pasted in the 32nd stamp and checked off everything on the Parsons equipment list. The week before I left was a mad scramble. I had to train Filthy to substitute on my paper route. I had to do the Browns' yard early and pick the ripe blackberries in my secret patches and the raspberries in our garden or they'd go to seed. I had to mow our own lawn, and split enough wood for the kitchen stove for a week, and clean out the chicken house and get everything organized so Mother would just have to feed my chickens twice a day and collect the eggs, and give the corn and peas and potatoes and onions and beans and carrots and radishes a good weeding and hoeing so all Mother would have to do was let the hose run in my irrigation ditches an hour every night.

In the morning my folks drove me the 10 miles south on Aurora Highway to town and down the Elliott Bay waterfront to the dock. The place was jumping, 50 or so Scouts from all over King County. They were all strangers to me but I knew they were the cream of the crop. ~~Everybody~~ Everybody in the Seattle Area Council knew Parsons Scouts were the first team.

We boarded the Tyee Scout, and that was a thrill. It was one of those little passenger and freight boats that before roads were built everywhere, and even when we lived on Bainbridge Island, made up what they called the mosquito fleet. We pulled out from the dock, yelling and waving, and steamed out around Magnolia Bluff, north along Puget Sound past Richmond Beach and Edmonds, west through Admiralty Inlet, which is between the Kitsap Peninsula and Whidbey Island, then went around Foulweather Bluff at the tip of the peninsula and headed south on Hood Canal to Dabob Bay. Late in the afternoon we pulled into Jackson Cove and tied up at the Parsons pier. This was the greatest boat trip of my whole life and the week was only starting.

The third morning the 25 of us who'd picked the Hike piled into the Big Red Truck and drove north on the Olympic Highway, yelling and laughing. We were the best of the best, we hadn't been chicken and gone on the Cruise. At the ~~Quilcene~~ Quilcene Fish Hatchery the truck turned off on a narrow and twisty dirt road and started grinding up steep hills through the forest.

I had a good idea what to expect. We'd hike a trail to the highway at Marmot Pass, then another trail to the highway at Constance Pass. The assistant leader asked if we'd brought money for candy and pop at Marmot Pass. Some of the kids believed him but I knew he was joking. A long time ago I'd been to Snoqualmie Pass in the Cascades and there was no store there or anything else, just the highway crossing the mountains.

The road ended at Bark Shanty ~~Shanty~~ Shelter, which was 1500 feet above sealevel. Until the CCC built the road a couple years ago it was

quite a hike from Hood Canal. We hoisted packs and fell in line behind the leader. In a half-hour he called the first halt. I whipped out my notebook and pencil and wrote down the exact time we rested and how long. To be a Silver Marmot you had to name the major peaks and rivers of the Olympics, go on a Parsons Hike, get a rating of Satisfactory, and keep a hike log. Back at camp you wore your clothes backwards one whole day and every time you met a Silver Marmot you fell down and rubbed your nose in the dirt and yelled, "Hail to thee, o mighty Silver Marmot!" That night at Retreat Mr. Walsh called you out in front of formation and pinned the silver insignia to your uniform and from then on you were respected all over the Seattle Area Council. Only three of us were trying for it.

I also made nature study notes. The trail climbed through a dark old forest of big firs and hemlocks and cedars. It wasn't like the second growth around our house, it reminded me of Rainier. You couldn't take a step off the trail because of the sticker bushes and ferns and devils club and all sorts of green junk, a real jungle.

At Old Trail Shelter we stopped for lunch. What a feed! We each got a circle of Sailor Boy pilot bread, a chunk of cheese, a slab of chocolate, and a handful of raisins. Better than a party. I washed it all down with a cup of cold mountain water that really hit the spot.

Then disaster struck. At the first rest after lunch I realized I'd forgot my cup. I told the leader and he looked at me like I was a Tenderfoot and said that was too bad but he wasn't going to hold up the party. I dropped my pack and ran down the trail to the shelter, found my cup, and ran up the trail to my pack. Everybody was long gone. I had to

completely unpack to put the cup away. The pack bag that went with the Trapper Nelson was too expensive for me to buy and too complicated for Dad to make so I carried my gear by rolling it in my sleeping bag and lashing the bag to the board. While I was unlashng the bag and unrolling it and rolling it up and lashing it on again the gang was hiking. Maybe I'd never catch up. I was sure they all were faster than me. I'd just turned 13 but was ~~xxxx~~ sort of short for my age. Everybody was taller. Most of the guys were 14 or 15 and some were even 16. The leader and assistant leader were grown men, in college.

I hiked like crazy and couldn't get my breath and had a stitch in my side. I was about to almost die when suddenly there was the assistant leader! He was resting with a couple kids. I thanked him for waiting and he laughed and said, "Waiting is my job. I'm the rearguard." After a good rest we started out together. I happened to be ~~xxx~~ in front and set as stiff a pace as I could. After a while I looked back and nobody was there. Where did they go? I was worrying that I'd somehow got on the wrong trail. Then I saw a kid resting by himself. He just watched me go by. Then there was another kid, and then two more. The gang had broken up and everybody was going at their own pace. The great news was that my pace wasn't the slowest. I might have a real chance to make Silver Marmot.

Some big guys were soaking their feet in the river at the Shelter Rock lean-to. There was a huge boulder there that had fallen off the mountain and had an overhang people used to camp under before the lean-to was built. I flopped on my stomach in the soft moss and stuck my face in the river. I could've gulped down a gallon, it was so cold and delicious, but you weren't supposed to drink too much.

Shelter Rock was wonderful. Cool and peaceful. Six miles from Bark Shanty and only 2 miles from Camp Mystery. It was 3600 feet up so the trees were a lot smaller now and so was the river. I was very happy. Too happy, I guess, because when the big guys were leaving one of them said, "Enjoy yourself, son. All you have left is the Poopout Drag!" That wiped the smile off my face.

I lifted the Trapper Nelson. Funny, it was heavier than before. I tried to keep up with the big guys but couldn't. Funny, even my feet felt heavy.

The trail went straight up a ~~patch~~ patch of brush, a kind of slot in the forest. At the top I climbed out of woods onto a rockslide. The sun hit me like a club. My mouth was dry as dust. There were no creeks and I had no canteen. In camp that morning the leader made us spread our gear on the ground and went around kicking out all our extra clothes and other stuff. "We go light at Parsons," he said. "That's how we make miles." When he got through you had practically nothing left but your sleeping bag and cup and spoon. Then he handed out shares of food to carry. If you were lucky he said "You have just been elected to the Camp Parsons Marching Band" and gave you a Number Ten Can. You tied it outside your pack and when you walked it rattled and clanked.

My Ten Can was making darn slow music. The sun was blazing and sweat was pouring in my eyes and the air had a smell of hot brush that made me sick. My breathing was noisy and sounded like "poop out, poop out, poop out."

I came to three kids resting in a terrible pile of hot rocks with no shade, worse than a furnace. I was amazed anybody would stop there. Then

I noticed they had nothing on their packboards. The big guys had taken their loads. They'd pooped out. Poor kids. They couldn't even look me in the eye.

I kept struggling up the brush patches and rockslides. There were scary brown cliffs above the trail. Across the valley was a line of peaks as sharp as knives. The mountainside was so steep that if you fell off the trail you might never stop rolling until you hit the river. The ~~big~~ river was a heck of a way down. The water wasn't roaring, just sort of whispering. A little while ago I'd been drinking that water and wished I was now. The handbook said if you sucked a stone you wouldn't be thirsty. That's a lot of baloney.

I was ~~barely~~ ^{hardly} moving but still was passing ~~the~~ kids, some with empty packboards. I didn't know how much longer I could go on. The worst part was wondering how far it was to camp. The Poopout Drag went on and on forever. You couldn't see any end to it. I quit writing in my log. I was going to poop out anyhow and along with forgetting my cup that would get ~~me~~ ^{me} an Unsatisfactory rating and I'd never make Silver Marmot.

Suddenly I smelled smoke and heard laughing. I put everything I had left into chugging up the rockslide ~~to~~ to the trees. It was Camp Mystery! I hadn't pooped out on the Poopout Drag!

The leader and the big guys had a half-dozen Ten Cans hanging over the fire on a wire strung between two poles held up with piles of rocks. After I dropped my pack and washed the glue down my throat I went to the fire, acting like I wasn't at all pooped. The leader handed me a stirring stick and said, "Congratulations! You've just been elected to the Camp Mystery Kitchen Crew!"

Cooking rice at 5400 feet takes forever. You stir and stir so it won't boil over the top or stick to the bottom. You gulp smoke and cry your eyes out for hours. I didn't care. I felt sorry for the poopouts dragging in with their empty packboards.

Finally the assistant leader showed up. He had a mountain of sleeping bags on his back and sang, "Hail, hail, the gang's all here!" The leader said, "We better eat this beast of a supper before it gets up on its hind legs and eats us." He opened cans of salmon and dumped them in the Ten Cans. Everybody lined up with cups and got one slop apiece. The assistant leader took a spoonful and pretended to puke and then yelled, "But good! But good!" The rice was black on the outside and hard on the inside. It was like eating burned sand. The chunks of salmon were delicious, though.

One of the Ten Cans was full of chocolate pudding and we got a dab of that, also burned and full of black lumps. Then a cup of tea tasting of salmon and chocolate and charcoal and that was supper.

I was still hungry. But also a little sick. Mr. Walsh had warned about this. We were a mile above sealevel and the air was thin, which was why it took so long to cook rice. Also it gave you mountain sickness, which wouldn't kill you here, the way it might 2 or 3 miles above sealevel, like on Mt. Rainier, but could make you poop out.

I was hungry and sick and tired. Cold, too. The sun had dropped below the ridge and the campfire was out because Mystery is a regular stop on Parsons hikes and we couldn't waste wood. I was wearing all the clothes they'd let me bring and was practically naked. Boots and two pairs of wool socks kept my feet warm. Cotton shorts did nothing for my legs and the

sleeveless cotton shirt and light cotton windbreaker and wool watch cap not much for the rest of me. Mother wanted me to take wool underwear and long pants and a sweater but everybody would've laughed and the leader wouldn't have let me anyway. Well, it wasn't all fun discovering the North Pole, either.

It was only 7 o'clock, ~~and it was dark. The poor~~ ^{but the} poor puppouts already had crawled in their bags and were shivering. Off where they couldn't hear him the leader said, "There's no way you can stay warm in a wool bag up here. The best bet is making the nights short. Keep moving until it's too dark to see and get up at first light and hit the trail."

He and the big guys ran out of camp to climb Iron Mountain. That was way more than I could handle, the 8 miles and 4000 feet of elevation to Mystery had wrecked me, but I couldn't stand ~~and~~ around shivering. I walked up the trail through scrubby forest, going just fast enough to keep warm and stopping a lot to look at the view. The peaks were still sunny. The valley was all shadows. I wondered what happened to that man who disappeared here. They were still looking for his bones.

Suddenly I walked out of the forest on a big green lawn with a million flowers all over, red and white and yellow and blue, and little Christmas trees scattered around on knolls. I wasn't tired anymore!

Ever since I was 9 I'd been mowing Dr. Brown's darn lawn and weeding Mrs. Brown's darn flowers and trimming their darn shrubs. I hated grass and flowers and shrubs. But this wasn't a garden grown-ups invented to torture boys. You'd never have to mow these lawns or trim these shrubs. Up here even the weeds were flowers.

Everything was strange. But everything looked familiar, too. I'd seen this ^{place} a thousand times. I don't mean because of our trips to Mt. Rainier. I used to think the rangers did the gardening there. I knew now that wasn't so but somehow Paradise wasn't at all like this. Where I saw these meadows before was in storybooks. They were the kind princes ride through on the way to save princesses from goblins.

I left the trail and followed the creek uphill. Way below in the valley it turned into a river. Here I could stand with one foot on ~~top~~ each side and look down at water splashing over rocks and making little breezes that kept the flowers waving.

I came to a boulder. Above the boulder there wasn't any creek. I'd found the source of the Big Quilcene River! I wouldn't get famous, like I'd found the source of the Nile, but it was a thrill anyway. This was the first river I ever knew from one end to the other.

What a day! Beach in the morning, then big old trees at lunch, spindly trees in the afternoon, and now alpine meadows. I put my face where the water jumped out from under the boulder and for a second caught the whole Quilcene River in my mouth!

Meadows stretched up toward Marmot Pass. Behind the pass the sky was pink. I felt soft and relaxed, the way you do after spending all day bucking logs into stove lengths or digging a ditch in hardpan. I was too tired to move a muscle but it didn't take any strength to walk. I sort of floated through the flowers.

I'd hiked right into my favorite old book of fairy ~~tales~~ tales, which I didn't read anymore but still ~~had on my bookshelf.~~ ^{had on my bookshelf.} Nothing was messy or boring. Everything was neat and perfect. You could believe in fairies, almost.

I couldn't help thinking about God. Actually He was always on my mind nowadays.

When I was little I mostly thought about the Devil. In the first grade I wet my pants and the teacher found the puddle and asked who did it and I kept my mouth shut and another kid got the blame. Once a guy made me so mad I called him a red-assed baboon. When big kids told dirty stories about grown-ups I didn't run away like I should. Once I tried to kiss a girl I was in love with. ~~But~~ Because of all those things and a lot more I had awful nightmares about the Devil coming out of the furnace in a house we used to live in and chasing me around the basement. ~~I woke up one night~~

~~and I was standing right by my bed and didn't go away until my folks~~
~~came in and turned on the light~~

Well, even if I dreamed about him I didn't really believe in the Devil anymore. That didn't mean there wasn't some kind of Hell, though. And I was really sinning now. Sometimes I talked back to Dad and once I shouted at him and ran off in the woods and didn't come ~~back~~ home until dark. I couldn't help letting Mother know sore I was at her for spending my money on clothes I didn't need. I pretended to be like everybody else but on the inside I was stuck-up about being the smartest kid at Ronald Grade School and Captain of the Schoolboy Patrol. The worst thing was that ~~the~~ girl in

7th 8th
 the ~~seventh~~ grade. I was in ~~ninth~~ and didn't even know her but all year I'd been having dreams about her. I just hoped that now I'd be going to Lincoln High School in Seattle and not seeing her ~~at Lincoln High School~~ the dreams would stop.

I did my best not to sin. I read the Bible and tried not to break Commandments. I never used swear words. I said the Lord's Prayer every night and confessed about the girl and everything. I went to Sunday School at the Ronald Methodist Church and that sure was proof how hard I was trying. I hated dressing up. I hated wasting half of the best day of the week, the only day that wasn't all school and chores and earning money. My folks didn't go and I didn't think that was fair but they said they'd gone when they were kids. You sat on a hard bench with a bunch of stiff old people. The ~~hymn~~ hymn books had a rotten smell and the hymns were stupid and an ugly old woman banged on a piano and nobody could sing right. I always put a dime in the collection plate and that was more than I spent on candy in a couple weeks. The minister put us to sleep and then I went upstairs to a room in the attic with a bunch of kids I didn't know or want to and a poor old lady with terrible grammar talked about the Holy Land. Church was a pain in the neck. It didn't seem to me the sort of place God would ever be but I couldn't afford to take chances.

Actually ~~wasn't~~ most of the time I felt I was doing a pretty good job and wasn't ~~so~~ ^{too much} worried about Hell. The problem was, sometimes at night I'd look up into billions and billions of stars and break out in a sweat, thinking about infinity. In bed I'd start thinking about eternity and couldn't go to sleep. What would Heaven be like? After you'd done

everything there was to do and done it a billion trillion decillion times? Think of the biggest number you can and that's just the start of eternity. How could you stand it? If an angel got bored could he go to sleep for a billion years? That wouldn't help. When you woke up there'd be just as much eternity as before.

I wasn't just praying to God, I was talking to Him, asking Him to tell me Heaven was nothing to be scared of. I didn't need a big sermon, just a sign. It would only take ^{Him} a second.

There weren't any more Christmas trees or lawns, just rockslides with patches of short grass and bunches of little flowers. The ~~sky~~ sky got bigger and bigger, ~~and finally was everywhere~~. A signpost held up with rocks said "Marmot Pass, 6000 feet."

Rocks and flowers and grass dropped off steep on the other side to shadows and then to trees that were just a blur. ~~They were everywhere~~ The Dungeness River was way below, so far off you could barely hear the roar. Down there it ~~was~~ was already night. That was amazing, night and day at the same time, so close together.

I felt weird being so high above the valley. It was like standing on a beach where the ocean was full of air instead of water. Off west were a bunch of peaks called Mt. Mystery, Mt. Deception, and The Needles. The sun had set and they were pure black. ~~against~~ ^{out there} The sky was purple and red and orange and yellow and blue and green. I never knew the sky could be green.

It was like a painting except if you watched ^{close} it kept changing.

There wasn't any highway at Marmot Pass. This was the second pass I'd been to and it was sure different from Snoqualmie. Suddenly I realized there wasn't a road anywhere out there. This was what they meant by wilderness. I'd thought all the wilderness was in Africa and South America and places like that. I didn't know there was any just 30 miles from our house.

I looked ~~along~~ ^{at} the trail we'd be hiking tomorrow. It crossed a snowfield! In the morning we'd walk on snow! In the middle of summer! The trail went toward Mt. Constance, which was a huge mess of cliffs and snowfields with a sunset color. Somewhere under those cliffs was Home Lake, where we'd camp tomorrow night. Above it was Del Monte Ridge, practically a mountain, and day after tomorrow we'd climb clear to the top. On the other side were all those Sunnybrook switchbacks down to the Dosewallips River, but they'd be a cinch after the Poopout Drag. Then it wasn't far to Constance Creek, where the Big Red Truck would take us back to Parsons. Gosh, those were going to be terrific days!

I was all by myself. There wasn't any sound at all except for the river. No wind either. The flowers looked ~~funny~~ ^{funny}. So did the rocks and grass. Everything was colored by the sky. The night was coming up from the valley. The colors got brighter, everything was on fire.

~~I'd never seen wilderness before~~ I'd never really looked at a sunset before. I felt like somebody else, some character in a fairy tale, under some kind of spell.