

*INCIDENT - AL ADVENTURES OUTDOORS
ACROSS EIGHTY YEARS
[OR]
HIKING AND MOUNTAINS - AN EIGHTY - YEAR
ODYSSEY*

*BY
THURSTON GRIGGS*

COMPILED BY HIS NEPHEW CHARLES RICHMOND

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CHAPTER 1 Washington State

Don't worry! We start here with Washington. Why? Because there is an *awe-full* lot of it, in contrasts and challenges, and because from 1916 to 1939 that was "home base". Another cause not to worry is that you will find this account to be comprised of anecdotes, explanations, descriptions, and occasional follies. So, some outdoors adventures, with physical challenge, here go on record!

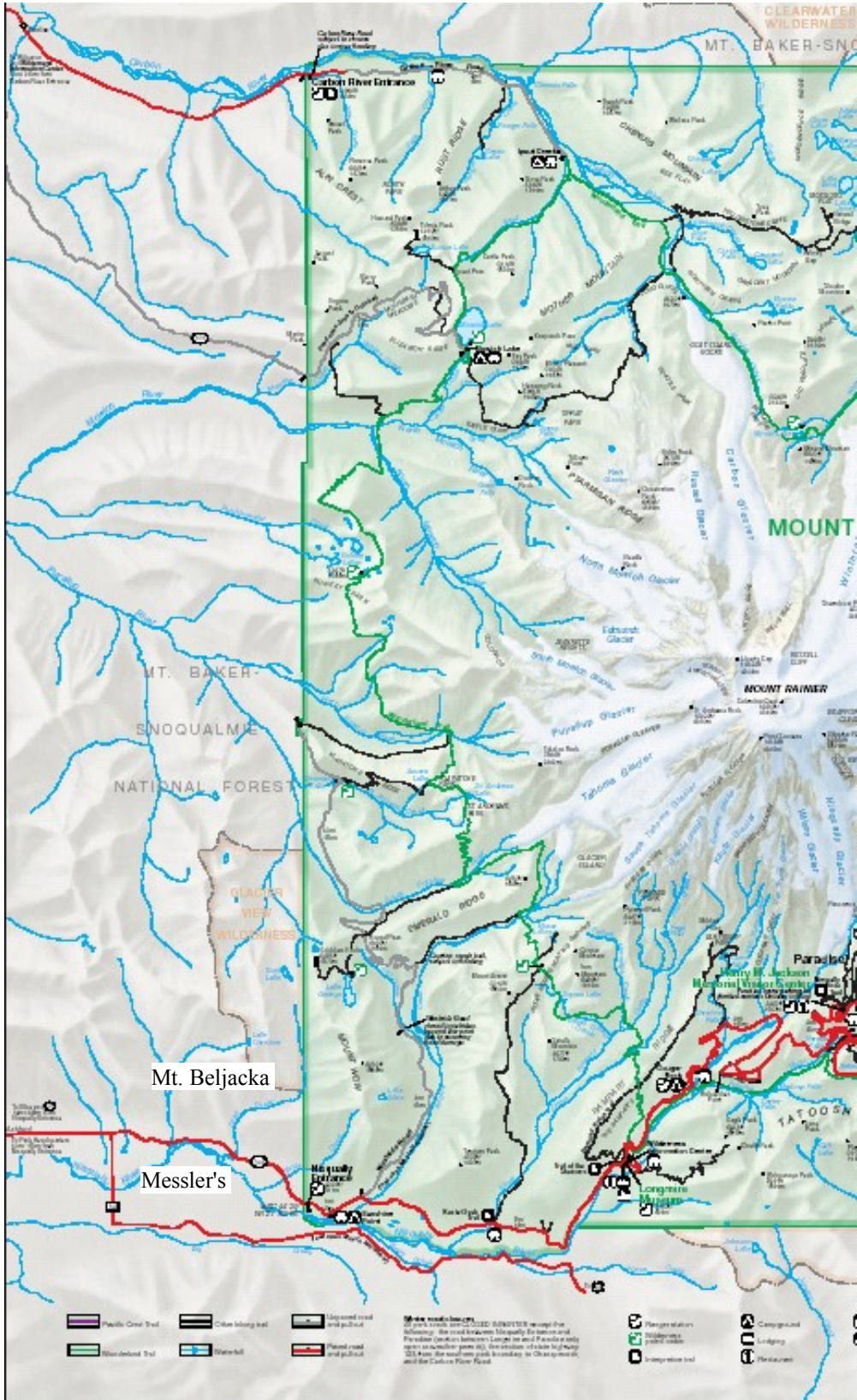
In 1936, on the arid flats of the upper Columbia River in eastern Washington, at a place called Grand Coulee - perhaps because nothing was there besides the desert - the federal government was constructing a huge hydro-electric dam. Wishing to take it in with my own eyes, I got out my three-speed bicycle for a 200-mile trek across Snoqualmie Pass from Puget Sound, to out near to the Okanogan Indian Reservation, to take a look.

The highway over the pass was not too steep; passable enough. The trip took three days; with a sleeping bag tied onto the bike; and with eateries available at a few roadside oases, it was a pleasant trip, first through orchards on the east slopes of the Cascade mountains near Yakima, and then into more arid, treeless terrain, still farther east. On the highways in those days traffic was light - and respectful of slow-moving vehicles. [In this same manner, three years later, I biked from Chicago to Detroit to get a pick-up truck from its birthplace, to deliver to a relative back in Tacoma. On that biking jaunt I slept mainly on the properties of rural churches. Breakfast consisted, routinely, of oatmeal and toast and orange juice, but not at the churches themselves. It didn't rain, fortunately!]

On another occasion, after my return from Germany in the summer of 1934, at their request I visited expatriate relatives of a family that had hosted me abroad a few months earlier. The relatives owned a ranch on the Washington side of the Columbia River between Mt. Baker and Mt. St. Helens. They were delighted to serve me genuine German, highly-spiced *lebwurst*, making a big fuss over it as if trying to transplant their ecstasy on the occasion, into my own brain. In that adventure my main satisfaction had been to locate their ranch after spending half a day because nobody could be found from whom to inquire how to get to the ranch. Following hunches, however, eventually paid off. But it proved to be my wurst experience in Washington state.

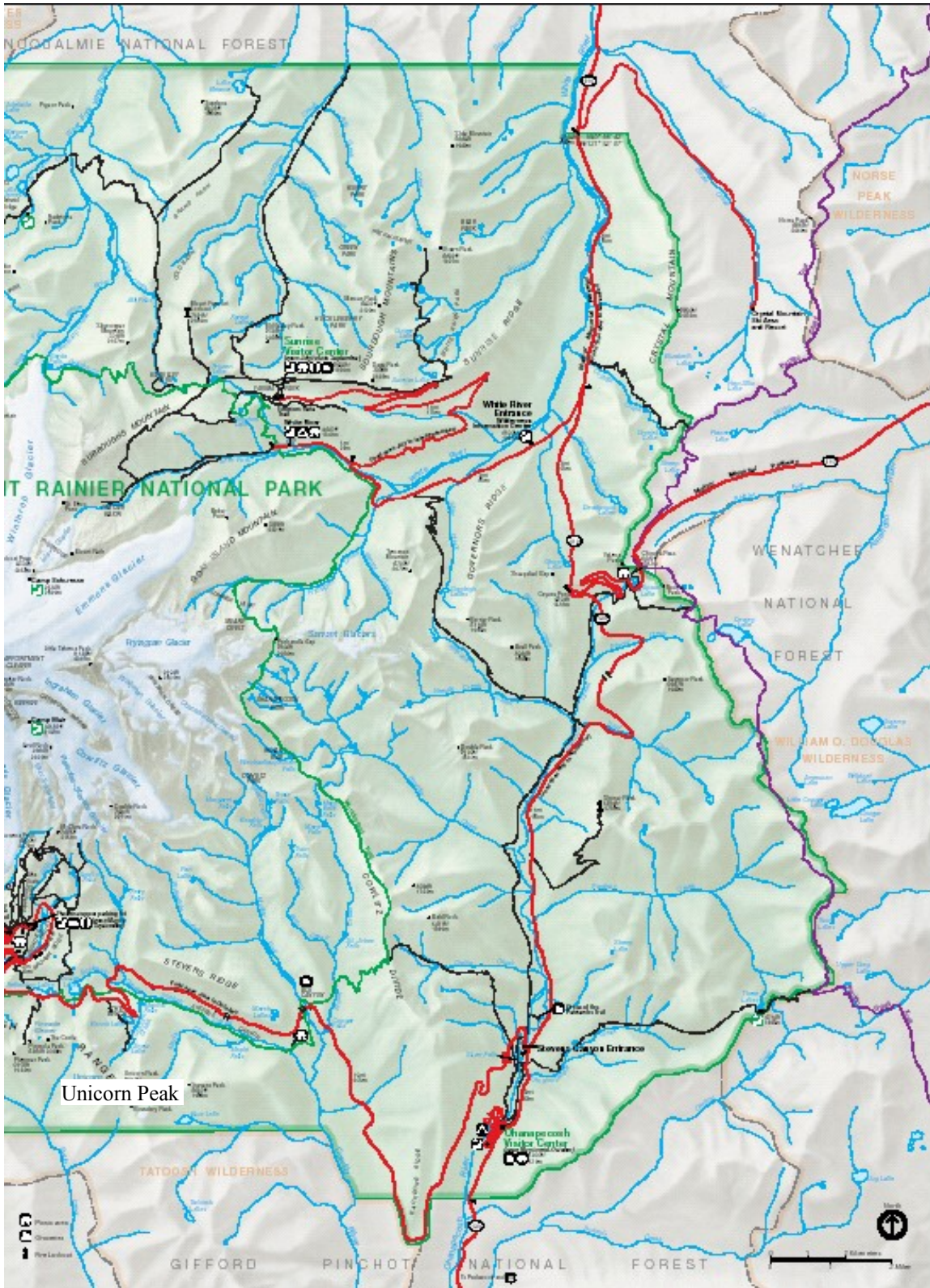
Through his contact with the horseback-riding concessionaire at Mt. Rainier, Dick Williams, my brother Joe was able take, over two winters, two of the horses that tourists usually rode, Snake and Mabel. We rented an empty carriage garage in the next block, and I fed and watered the horses and learned how to handle their saddles, bridles and halters. Mabel had a habit of kicking Snake viciously at night until we installed an old wagon tongue suspended between the two of them, from the ceiling. Naturally, age ten, I helped saddle, and ride them. There was a very athletic and winsome high school friend of both brother Joe (then 17) and my sister Alice who was a year younger than Joe. Monnie had a pony, and they often rode with Monnie. One day she came galloping down

9th street. approaching our house when she failed to see a car dashing down Ainsworth Avenue on her left. The two collided, and the pony's rump was split open for almost its full length. Monnie was not hurt. I remember watching the pony standing there on the parking strip. trembling in silence. It had to be euthenized.



Rainier National Park – west portion

Bennett Ranch



Unicorn Peak

Rainier National Park – east portion

A few years later, because of his experience with horses, Brother Joe took over operation of the horse trips for tourists at the northeastern White River Entrance to Rainier National Park, and where I went to visit him for a week. Somewhat unexpectedly there came a request for four horses for a one-day trip by officials from Washington, D.C. It turned out to be the Director of the National Park system; he and two others wanted to inspect work that was being done at Chinook Pass to build a road across the Cascade Mountains to which place the Park boundaries had recently been extended. We had only five ride-able horses available at the time, because a couple of others were o.k. when tied into a string of pack horses, but were not tamed enough to safely carry officialdom from the nation's capital. Joe then proposed that I go along on the six-mile tour by hanging onto the tail of **his** horse. It worked - in spite some doubts expressed by officialdom.

In the summer of 1934, just after I graduated from high school, the Bennetts, who had taken over the horse operations in Rainier park, allowed me to work for them for my room and board. They had some property in the national forest adjacent to the Rainier Park on its north side, on one of the roads over the Cascades between Tacoma and Yakima. It was not far from Cayuse Pass. The two Bennett boys "Stub" and "Jack", their mother and father, and a hired man stayed there seasonally. [Seven months of the year their 40-some horses were turned loose for forage for themselves on meadows high in the Cascades; then in the spring the boys would round them up, brand the new colts, and use the ranch to "break" them in for riding or carrying pack loads.

Early in June all of the horses, older ones and newly "broken" (trained) ones, were trucked away to Paradise Valley or White River for guided tourist trips; but in 1934 one two-year old horse was left behind in the corral at the ranch. It had an inflammation in its right front fetlock (ankle) just above the hoof. Presumably the cause had been a hunter's misdirected wild shot. For a few days I fed it, petted it, took water to it: in fact as a sentimental young adolescent I was adopting it. I visualized a recovery from its injury; and I named it "dawn" (or Don). I was going to "break" him for riding; train him. care for him - maybe own him some day, somehow. Don seemed to appreciate my special attention.

Consequently, after two or three days, when airing my concern about the animal at mealtime supper, and hoping to elicit some help, I said, "I'm worried about the colt's hoof; it doesn't seem to be getting any better; today I think I saw maggots in it. So I was wondering...." Pop Bennett said nothing as he arose; I thought because of "maggots" being mentioned at supper table. He went into the next room. We continued eating, first in silence. Presently we heard a gunshot, nearby. Phil, the hired roustabout turned to me and said waggishly, "Well, kid, you won't have to worry no longer about that horse!"

The next day Phil, Stub and I were assigned to conduct a burial at one end of the corral - right next to the "two-year" 's body. Now, a dead horse doesn't get moved around except by a tractor - or another horse. So this action was to be expeditious and practical, and bereft of sentiment. Working from two sides with mattocks and shovels, we got down about two feet when each side began to expose the sloping side of a boulder

Rather quickly we concluded that it extended almost the whole way across our “gravesite”! It might weigh almost as much as the dead colt itself! Lacking a crane and some way to grab or hoist that boulder, what could we do?

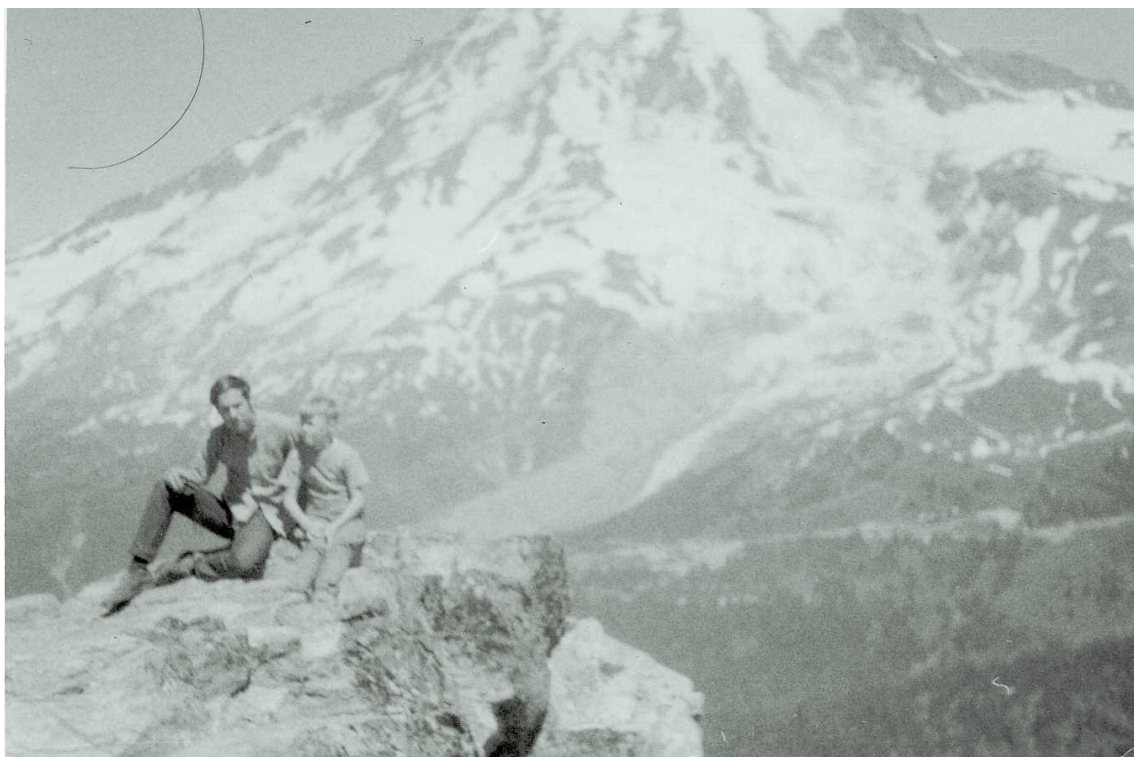
Stub suggested inserting a few sticks under the boulder so as to blow it to pieces. Fine! We dug little tunnels from three sides, planted 5 or 6 sticks strategically positions, lit the fuses and then scattered behind trees twenty or more feet distant, so as not to be showered by pieces of rock as they erupted like bombs bursting a wartime movie. Then, to our amazement, BOOM - and the whole big boulder, unbroken, rose in the air about four feet and -- oh-oh thudded back down. Miraculously, it had settled not back into the hole as we feared might have happened, but on the level ground on the opposite side of the hole from where the colt lay! So the gravesite was immediately ready for us to raise the colt’s feet, together, and let gravity complete the interment. I thought to myself, my buddy-colt’s grave would be distinctively marked by a tombstone of impressive size!*

This summer of 1934 the Bennetts were particularly busy because, in addition to their usual tourism business at Paradise Valley, as the snow faded out in mid-June, this year, four new fire lookout towers were to be constructed in four corners of the Park, and sand and cement and explosives, and tools and lumber had to be packed in by horses to those isolated and lofty locations.

* The Bennett ranch, its activities and foibles, was the setting for a play about a similar imaginary dude ranch that I published, after it was produced and performed at Baltimore, in Human Foibles - Six Plays in 2003



Condensation cloud hugs the mountain



Mt. Rainier (south face) from Pinnacle Peak – Aug. 1989

We worked from a cook-trailer that had some bunks and a table and stove in it; we parked it at the four different trailheads. I quickly learned to “throw a diamond hitch”

so as to load horses weighted the same on each side of their protruding loads. Usually they stood still during the process; but not always so. If horse-flies or bees stung them, we had to start all over again. We devised lumber “bucks” for 20-foot beams that needed to protrude the beams away from the horses’ sides and six feet ahead and behind the horse. But then, at switchbacks, sharp turns, we found that only a few of the horses were smart enough not to get “hung up” by the lumber. “Worst” was when bee stings forced “hang-ups” such that a complete reloading was needed. Working in the field in that manner, we turned the horses free at nighttimes, to forage for themselves, then in the morning had to go out with little bags of oats to “capture” them, by slipping a halter onto their heads while they munched their oats. I recall one time when a traveling horse-dentist came through with a large file and took sharp edges off of their teeth - “to aid their digestion”.

Keeping the horses suitably shod was another part of the job. Most of the time, they are willing to let you grab their hoof and sort-of crouch next to or under part of them to examine and monkey with it. We used soft iron shoes on the hoofs, amenable to shaping to the right size if you used enough pressure. First you have to remove the remnants of old nails. That part is like pulling teeth, I would guess, except that it doesn’t hurt the horses at all, because hooves are like our fingernails. Before attaching a new shoe, the bottom of the outer rim of the hoof must be perfectly smooth all the way around; so you hold the hoof between your legs and file it as if it were a finger nail. Occasionally a horse will shift its weight and want to use that leg. Then you have to drop it in a hurry, lest you get pulled off your balance. I still have a scar on my left leg from a horseshoe nail that protruded during a shoeing and ripped me open in a situation like that. To hammer the nails in, usual is easy enough; the leg can be put down between each nail, if necessary - as most often is the case. Finally, one has to twist off the protruding nail-points atop the hoof when the horse stands on that foot again, shod. Horses seem to take to this process almost instinctively; I think they like to be well shod.



Part of Cascade Range

When the fire towers were all supplied, they asked me to go up to help the two Bennett employees at Sunrise Park who guided tourist trips there. They had a barn about a fourth of a mile away from the tourist area, for reasons of smell - in the case of one of the two young men - as well as the horse barn. We wore cowboy clothes of course and we talked up our trips at the tourist campfires each night when weather permitted. Two incidents occurred there in the two weeks I was there.

The first involved a tour party of six or seven persons, one of whom was a boy about twelve years old, with his father. All of a sudden the boy's horse jumped and took off, bucking. [The cause was bee stings!] The boy had the good sense to hold on to his saddle tightly, and he seemed to have relished the adventure; but that was certainly not the case with his father who saw the boy disappearing in a cloud of dust, to almost out of sight. Only his relief at finding the boy elated, diverted the anger he might vented upon the horse guide. When my boss Snakey heard about it that evening, he said, "You dummy, you should have taken off like a bat out of hell after the boy and his horse even if there was nothing you could do about it!" I then told him the name of the horse I was riding: "Old Nigg" the slowest of our ten mounts. (I had chosen it because it was our biggest.) Snakey was in a hot spot because he had put me on that trip in order to philander around. His real name was Anderson and he was a blond; but he had a habit of advertising himself to women tourists as a "half-breed dirty-shirt Indian from the Muckleshoot tribe". On another day, he turned off his alarm clock on a morning when he was supposed to guide a "sunrise ride"; and when I got up at 6:30, he made me run up to the cabins and tell those two school-teachers that we had problems with sick horses. The

two of them had got up before dawn and, failing to see any horses, walked the trail on foot to see the mountain light up before the rest of everything. One of them commented to me, "Sick horses, my foot. Sick horse-guides, you mean!" They got a refund.



Tarp bivouac on the Wonderland Trail





Scenes in the high Sierras

The second incident occurred as I was returning to the barn by trail after giving the regular nighttime spiel at the campfire. Midway, I heard a scuffling about ten feet in front of me in one of the fir trees. Turning the beam of my flashlight up the tree, I saw its beams being reflected by two fairly close-together yellow spots belonging to a bear cub. In response to other scratchings in tree bark, I next saw about 20 feet ahead me on the trail, a single large reflecting object with a lot of black fur around it. There were also two other sets of narrowly-set eyes up in another tree, one above the other. At that point the mother sow charged toward me. I put out the light and backed up cautiously. That removed me from proximity to the first cub; nevertheless, the mother bear continued advancing toward me, snorting and making other disagreeable noises. I retreated, walking backwards about 20 feet before realizing she preferred to stay with the cubs rather than to chase me. Then I detoured in a wide half-circle around the bears, without trouble. In the Park where animals are protected, it is not unusual to see them at close quarters, because they are not hunted. Such is **not** the case with a protective mother bear, however. I recognized her from having seen a sow with three cubs in the meadow nearby a day or so previously; but nobody had realized that she had only one eye - one which, in this instance, seemed to think I might taste good. I was glad I had a flashlight.



We are not finished with horses yet; but it will be a while before we get there. The next summer I was hired by the National Park Service for a month (before I left for China), to help a workman finish the inside construction of a new fire-tower on Observation Peak in the newly created Mt. Olympus National Park, (now “Olympic National Park”. Ranger Preston Macy whom we knew as a stalwart and tactful public servant there, had just been made Superintendent of the Olympic Park on the opposite (western side of Puget Sound.). Preston was a conscientious Quaker from the middle of the USA; though he was supplied a house in Post Angeles by the federal government, all of his garden tools were his own, bought by himself! I was impressed.

The Observation Peak fire-tower-house was perched on an up-thrust crag where there was barely room enough for it. Its one floor was walled by windows, in order to allow a vector device to home in on the precise location of any column of smoke that might appear. There was a small outhouse perched on a similar up-thrusting pier about 20 feet lower; and it had been blasted in order to be pointless enough to support the privy. [I never learned how they expected to empty the pit when it became full; probably they would simply re-blast and put up a totally new one. The remarkable feature of this outhouse was its magnificent view - in all directions. Through its doorway one gazed upon all of Mt. Olympus itself including the bottom of its northern glacier. To the right, one could see the Pacific Ocean in the distance, and to the north, more of same; and to the east Mt. Baker about 10,000 feet high. Mr. Anderson and I discussed how great it would

be if the privy had been placed on a swivel, with a crank inside that you could turn to get the whole panorama - if that kind of inspiration were needed.

Mr. Anderson, a carpenter and old-timer in the area, was a meticulous man of habit: each day should be like its precedent, on **his** calendar. He could speak a few words of (Indian) Chinook dialect; the only one that sticks in my mind is “hy-as kloochman” which means, “good woman”. Charlie was building cabinets; he cooked for the two of us, and he was glad to see me bring in a pack of new food supplies. I found out later, that he had instructions to size me up as to whether I was tolerable company, whether I could follow orders, whether I had any initiative and reliability. That was why Charlie spent my final evening up there, painfully writing a message for me to carry back to Supt. Macy. I guess Preston wanted something in writing for the record, because he already knew know brother Joe, and my father had delivered the second of the Macy children.

About 140 feet below the fire tower was a meadow of about ten acres where a herd of elk, maybe about thirty head of them, cavorted and browsed usually in the evenings. I wanted to see them up close. Without confiding in Charlie my intentions, I told him I was going to take a little hike; and it took me down to the meadow. When I approached at about 70 feet, one of the outlying sentinel bucks brayed, and the whole herd started stampeding toward the opposite side of the meadow where a closely-timbered valley began, descending toward Lake Crescent. It sounded like thunder as those hundreds of hooves pounded the earth. I could feel it shake beneath my feet. When I got back, Charlie remarked offhand: “You stirred them up, didn’t you!” whereupon I responded, “So you heard them up here!”

The following summer Mr. Macy put me on a his trail crew. Given a tent, two horses, tools, explosives, a gas stove and a long-wave radio, two other men and I were to make a trail from the end of the loftiest road into the Olympics, Hurricane Ridge, not very far from Port Townsend, down the narrow valley of the Cameron River to the Dosemeadows trail. That would put us within reach of the place where as a boy scout I had met the young ranger we named “Spunkwood”, about five years before. We were to be re-supplied with edibles and other necessities weekly, as needed. The narrow valley of the Cameron river (where Spunkwood caught most of his trout) was full of interest: lots of wildlife in primitive un-penetrated terrain. At midpoint an already operating fire tower could keep track of our presence at times, because of our smoke, and could report it by radio. In those days power saws were unknown. We had long two-man saws that we would bend like a bow over and around the horses’ other pack loads. A split-open section of fire hose would enfold the saw’s teeth to as to prevent their sharp points and edges from doing damage either to the horses or to their loads - or to us.

We laid a lot of puncheon. On wet places where there was little soil or where it was soft or mushy, we constructed bridge-like walkways such that the hiker or horse was walking as if on a bridge that lay on the ground. We made them out of ever-present western red cedar - four-foot slabs like giant shingles, but at least two inches thick and not overlapping.

I was the cook and horse-wrangler, and those duties gave me two hours respite from digging, cutting and hauling while I did those two other tasks. At one point we had to use a lot of dynamite. . Of course we never saw anyone but ourselves - but there was one exception. One bright moonlight night when I knew that Ranger "Spunkwood's" station was only about three miles distant in a valley at right angle to ours, I decided to take a jaunty bushwhack hike over there to see if Jack was still there at the same post. No, I didn't get lost; but Jack had been replaced. There was a hiker at the Dosemeadows ranger station and he brought word that some "nut" had just got married on the top of Mt. Rainier. It was my brother Joe. He had taken along two pastors, in case one of them couldn't make it - which proved to be the case, and the license had already been signed. I later learned from Joe that the little green ribbon that he had used to tie the wedding ring onto his clothing prior to its use, and which he had released into the wind at the summit when the ring was needed, was found six years later by a climber on Emmons Glacier at about 9,000 feet elevation by somebody who knew him and happened to mention it at a gathering where he was. She had thought it odd that a ribbon would be found at that location; which indeed was a correct and true assertion..

The return hike to our tent on Cameron river was uneventful. Within a day or so, however, in mid-August a snowstorm struck us, overnight. When I went out to find the horses, one of them was standing still on a snow-covered rockslide pawing the air with a broken front leg! After catching the other horse, I hastened to the other guys. What should we do? It was close to the end of our work and probably we could get by with only one horse, perhaps even by making multiple trips, if necessary. But what about the poor creature itself?! We had no firearm with us. We knew it must die at our hands; but how?

Bill suggested we use dynamite. We were silent for quite a while. Then Bud spoke up. "Come on, then. That's what we'll have to do: tie a couple sticks on its neck up close to its head." And that is what we did. As I approached the poor creature, it tried to lean on me, and that made the task *so* much more difficult. I don't think I've ever heard a sound that seemed to be as loud and intrusive as was that explosion. I was annoyed even by the strength of its sound.

One of the men then remarked: "You know, the rule book requires us to bury it six feet deep." We soon concluded that in a rockslide like that one, such a burial would be impossible - working in the snow, moreover.. So we pretended there was sufficient depth as we made a mound of rocks over the sad remains. We didn't talk much to one another for quite a while afterwards.

I wrote a report of the incident. The poor creature had been rented from a rancher and the federal government would need to reimburse its owner for its loss. Preston was astounded; but he said he knew we had done all we could. He was pleased with the job we had done.



Inside Camp Muir Dormitory

When I was 60, in 1976, there came a belated opportunity to climb to the summit of Mt. Rainier, at last! Was I too old for it?, I wondered. Only ten years previous to that, I had been close to death with a colon cancer tumor nine inches long in the transverse colon just under my diaphragm. Surgery had been successful - without a colostomy. Recuperation had been satisfactory, so why not! My brother Joe (the former guide) invited me to bring my 25-year-old son Stephen and his cousin Tom Brown, 16, from Pittsburgh to be his guests. He proposed a “conditioning” backpack hike two thirds of the way around the base of Mt. Rainier on its circling Wonderland Trail. (I had already, years back, at eighteen, been on another third of it.) After that he would finance a guided summit climb of the peak itself.



Emergency Stream Crossing

We started at the Carbon River, (northwestern) seldom used entrance to the park, with food for four days, a tent-fly and sleeping bags and a small gas burner. We started out in four inches of snow; and on the first day we lost the trail several times, unable to see where it lay. Using landmarks, we dead-headed our way back to it from time to time; and the only real problem was needing to cross various little chasms and streams on fallen logs that themselves were snow-covered. After the first night Joe turned back, to drive his car to meet us at Sunrise Park (near Yakima Park) in the northeast corner section of the national park, three days later.

The views, particularly of Willis Wall along the north slope of the mountain offered ever-changing and breath-taking vistas; and everything went well as we left the snow-cover behind us. Summer weather returned.. When we reached Sunrise Park at the end of the third day and lodge's restaurant at around 7 PM, with Joe joining us, all eyes were on the TV and Neil Armstrong, on the moon, in a replay - as if to emphasize **adventure**.

Next day we undertook our last three days along the east side of the mountain, while Joe drove around to meet us near Cowlitz Box Canyon. At that point the outflow from the Cowlitz glacier runs through a long canyon - about a mile - that is only about 12 feet wide and 20 to 40 feet deep. There Joe drove us to Paradise Valley to hike to the summit "day-after-tomorrow". Tomorrow was spent in "school", out on the snowfields of a dead (no longer moving) glacier, practicing on slopes with ice axes (I had Joe's which

he has used for summit climbs some thirty years previously). Tom's and Stephen's were rented. We learned how to check one another's falls when roped together and strung out along it.

The next morning at about 9:30, with our small packs and crampons and ice-axes, we started out - by intent we only crept along, saving strength, as is the protocol. There was a white-out that made it impossible to see more than twenty-five feet in any direction; so we followed rock cairns and wands that had been placed in the snow to mark the route. Joe followed us half-way up to Camp Muir, which was almost 4,500 ft higher than where we started. Since Joe is eight years older than I, it surprised me to see him do that. Then about 4:30 p.m., in sight of the four dead volcanoes on the horizon behind us to the south - Adams, St. Helens, Hood and Jefferson - we reached Camp Muir. [I had been there once before, at age 13]. There we found the two rock shacks, one of them new to me, where employees had a supper ready, and the other an already antiquated, leaky, primitive bunkhouse for unguided climbers.

So far, so good. But, excited and in one's clothing and lying next to buddies on each side, sleep did not come easily. Moreover, on this occasion the weather report was not favorable; so they kept us past the usual 4 AM deadline for continuing (so as to avoid falling rocks that get loosened from their frozen sockets when hit by the sun), waiting to see if the climb would have to be cancelled after all because of a threatening storm. Finally, at 5:30 am, when it was just getting light, we lined up to ascend through Cadaver Gap (where one of the US Everest Climbers later met his death) onto Ingraham Glacier on the eastern face of our volcano. The "snow" was smooth and the footing secure enough on Ingraham; and there was only one crack that one had to jump over. We followed wands that had been placed in the snow - which was fortunate, because as we ascended, visibility became poorer and poorer.

I was first tourist on one rope of about seven persons, at the front right behind the guide because of my age, so that the Guide could pull me up to the top of the mountain as might be needed.

From the time we left Muir, the guide counted steps: at first we stopped to catch our breaths after each 50 of his steps; then, gradually, it got shortened to 40, then 30 and finally to 20 steps between those stops, as we neared the summit. Though the sun was up, we could see only a few yards distant. Increasingly I felt weaker and more careless where I was putting my feet. Breathing didn't seem to help much. I was beginning to think I might need to vomit. But just after the next ten steps, we reached the edge of the crater.

We milled about, to sign the register and have photos; but the wind was strong and the visibility only about ten feet, and it was indeed freezing. Tom and Stephen seemed lively and excited; and I envied them. The three guides (one for each of three ropes of 8 climbers each) had hurried us up (as I had noticed) as we approached the summit, because they realized that the storm was closing in on us. And now they were in a hurry for us to descend as fast as possible. That disappointed me greatly because I had cherished hopes

of seeing the steam caves in the crater and maybe going to its very highest point.



At the summit of Mt. Rainier

Our descent began at about 11 AM, and by that time the ambient temperature had risen to the point where the snow was getting a bit sloppy - maybe with the help of some moisture in air or wet snow. It kept packing up on my boot crampons; the guide kept telling me to knock off that snow with my ice-axe; but I couldn't make it work well, so my feet would often slip. That seemed to tire me in an unwelcome manner. My guide, incidentally, named Pete Whittaker, was a son of the first US climber to reach the top of Mt. Everest. I couldn't afford to quit or weaken drastically in his presence, could I!

We reached Paradise Inn and an atmosphere of comparative luxury, at about 4:30 P.M., if I remember correctly; and yes there indeed was a snowstorm that had moved in. An enlarged photo on one of the inside walls of the Inn showing a chain of boys sliding in "tin" (actually wax-coated) pants on the Paradise Glacier, which I suspect might still be there, displays me at its head, at age 13. So much for sentiment - and ego!

CHAPTER 2 How and Why it all got started



At nine years of age I took my first 20-mile one-day hike - secretly and alone. It was improvised in a whim, on impulse. I woke up at six, before anyone was stirring; ate my morning fruit and cereal, made a lunch of sandwiches and cookies easy to carry, and took off. About three blocks from our house on Ainsworth Avenue was a trolley-car line that extended about thirteen miles southward so as to accommodate country-dwellers on the prairies adjacent to Steilacoom and American Lakes. My plan

was to walk along the tracks, to a stop called Wildaire. The rails passed Steilacoom Lake [actually, three “lakes” that were interconnected when a 12-foot dam had been installed on Clover Creek to serve as part of a road, some 30 years before].

The family had built a “summer” cottage and tent-frame by the shore of the largest of the “lakes”, the cottage, being new, still lacked electricity and plumbing, but it would be my chosen destination. If I got tired, or if something might go amiss, I could take the interurban trolley back home - for 10-18 cents depending on where you entered it along the tracks. It had not occurred to me that intervals between trains could be as long as two hours on Saturdays.

There were three rather lengthy trestles that could be crossed only by walking on cross-ties: one, above a dirt road, another across a stream valley 20 feet below; but I had learned to put my ear on the track in order to listen for approaching rail traffic, knowing that, in that manner, you could hear train wheels from as much as 400 yards distant, getting louder and louder as it approached; that would give just enough time to get to one end or the other of those trestles.

It was a beautiful, clear, sunny day. The meadow larks broadcasted their calls with warmth. The yellow scotchbroom blossoms along the wayside glistened as if to show off their early growth in the season. Until I reached the rail junction of Manitou Park at South Tacoma, did I meet anybody at all, and only one railcar had raced past me, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake.

At the Wildaire cottage I ate lunch among the tall lakeside Douglas firs, watched some squirrels playing catch-me-if-you-can, checked out the cottage by climbing onto its roof as usual, and checked the dock at the water’s edge which served as a “garage” for our rowboat. Atop the dock was the splendid spruce diving board that I loved to use.

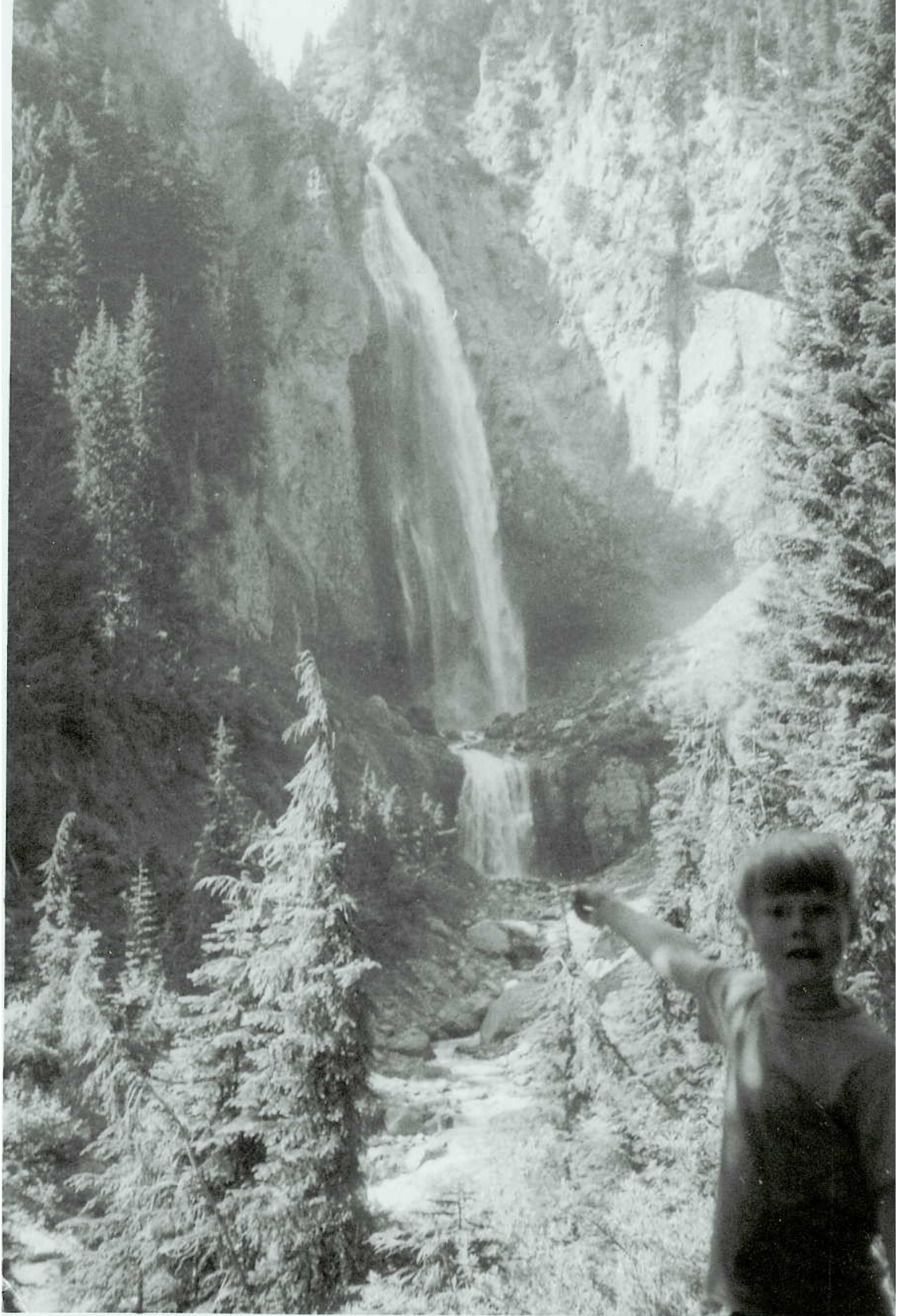
Then it was time to head back home, and I expected I might want to take at least part of the return journey leaning out the open window over the rails; but no, the sun was still at its highest in the sky; so a return hike of another ten miles was fully in order, and it proved as enjoyable as had the outbound hike. I reached home at 5:30 and pretended I had just been outside playing all day. I did not want to be reprovved for having put myself at risk. Nevertheless, two weeks later I did tell my sister Alice who was then a high-school freshman, whereupon she said, “You didn’t! Now tell me the truth!” A few days later when she revealed at dinner that I had made such a claim to her, Mother just said, “Well, I’m sure he had better judgment than to do a thing like that: probably just wished he could do it”. I was content to leave it at that.

You might be wondering how such an adventure could come about for a child so young. Well, there are two explanations: for that: a pioneering atmosphere that still permeated the area of the far west, and a family tradition that stressed self-reliance and satisfaction of curiosity. For example, my dad was an M.D. (for four years he had been a medical missionary in China) had bought one of the first automobiles in Tacoma, a Reo,

During the great flu epidemic 1918-21 when he was seeing up to 40 patients a day, mostly at their homes, he would sleep in his new model-T Ford between house-calls while my brother Joe was at the wheel of the car at age 12! Let me speak about the far-western environment, however.



NE face – 1931 – bed of then-new Chinook Pass Hiway



Comet Falls – Rainier National Park

Seattle and Tacoma and Puget Sound, in those days, still had living residents who had pioneered the region, dealing with native Sywash Indians. The region still had a strong pioneering, enterprising and independent flair to it. The 1880's began the first period of the white-man's era. After another ten years, when railroads had pushed westward across the mountains and made their way up from California, only then did Washington become integral with the rest of the country. When I was a child, the railroads owned vast holdings of timber; and acres after acre of our surroundings were open to exploration and adventure. Puget Sound gave us the sea, as well; and Mt. Rainier, the Cascade Range and the Olympic Peninsula sported the timber, the wildlife, and the mountains. It was one enormous outdoor playground! Erstwhile strangers conversed like relatives; formalities were rare. Only the pontifical upper crust felt and displayed the refinements of their former eastern culture. Here, recreational activities were essential to life! We never locked our doors unless taking a trip out of town for a few days!

From the time I was five, I could roam an area of four to five blocks without supervision. At eight, I and my pals played kick-the-can (can-off), hounds and hares (the hares using different-colored chalk for each chase - on sidewalks or walls or trees - or traversing various obstacle courses. We visited fire houses where the men loved to talk with us: they would laugh as we descended their shiny brass poles, shrieking with delight. Often we would ride bikes to the sites of burning lumber mills, so as to help firemen move their hoses. People were good to kids. We could talk our way into factories; onto foreign ships in the harbor, into railroad yards. We didn't know, nor did we care what "no trespassing" might mean - some sort of legal technicality - maybe a euphemistic way of saying "don't pee here". People often gave us goodies to eat. Children had privileged status, we discovered. But to reach that status, you have to be able to talk up to the grownups.. Exploration and curiosity and spontaneity, all three, were encouraged. So, adventure permeated our situation and spurred our growth.

The first minor outdoor adventure that I can recall came when I was three-and-a-half, in 1919. It was a trip to the top of Mt. Constitution on Orcas Island in Puget Sound. Orcas was one of the larger of the Sound's islands, and it was not far from the Canadian border - not far from the city of Victoria on its Vancouver Island. Our family of five had rented a cottage in the village of East Sound, close to the shore, and we were augmented by having received a visit there by my maternal grandparents from Pittsburgh. It was rather primitive for them, for they didn't have an outhouse like the one we had. There were a lot of other things it did not have, which they missed.

I recall that one whole side of the cottage was enveloped by a large (to me, then) trellis covered with honeysuckle vines. How wonderfully sweet they smelled - until my first-in-life bee sting! The plan was to charter a buggy for eight and to take the grandparents up high for the view. I recall that the road was very narrow and so bumpy that some of us preferred to walk, behind the buggy; it was almost like a mere trail. Grandmother Van Gorder (we called her lao-lao, Chinese for maternal grandmother) deemed that SHE would ride, no matter what! Finally, when nothing appeared to be

holding up the right side of the buggy, Lao-lao declared decisively that she'd had enough of this imposition, so she imperiously ordered the driver to stop. If it would have been possible to turn the buggy around, it looked as if she would try to do it herself, on her own. (Later she did follow the rest of us in walking to the top.) I had never seen a vehement adult do its thing, and that's why I tell you about this incident right now. For me, she eclipsed whatever glow the view had to offer.

The next minor episode occurred six months or so later, located about five miles west of the SW corner of Mt. Rainier National Park, then about 50 miles from Tacoma. At that point, bared amongst the 200-foot Douglas fir and hemlock trees, was a clearing that accommodated a little ranch called Messler's Inn. Yes, a few upstairs rooms were available; but the main attraction was the dinners that two spinster sisters served. Messlers was widely-known, perhaps because it seemed miles and miles from anything else: so it was like a pioneer outpost. What I remember is how we got lost there. It was just supposed to be a stroll before the lavish dinner that we were anticipating. Nevertheless, Dad stopped in the woods to announce he had lost track of where we were: moreover he said he didn't know where **anything** was, and dusk was making things worse.

He found a somewhat clear flat spot and told my mother and me to wait for him there, while he went round and round our spot in ever widening circles, calling to us intermittently, in hopes of finding something recognizable. As soon as he was out of sight, Mother spread her coat on the ground and took me in her arms. Dramatically she declared: "I guess we'll just have to prepare to stay here all night - if we can stay warm enough". "What about food?", I asked. "Oh, maybe we can find some mushrooms or birds' eggs," she muttered. "RAW?" I protested. "I think your father has matches to light his pipe," she replied in consolation. This time Dad could not be heard from. But in a few moments he was with us again.

"I found the road!" he announced; "and it's only a few minutes from here". [It was a dirt, one-lane side road; but we knew it would connect us with Messler's - because a road in those days in a place like that would have no place else to go. So we didn't become cougar food, that night, after all.

The next day we joined a few other Messler guests to hike to the top of Mt. Belljacka which was across the road from Messler's, in the National Forest. There was a steep trail with switchbacks, about two miles long; and the view from Belljacka peak was said to justify its challenge. What I remember, besides hoping we might see a black bear that I could pet, was a ledge near its peak from which we could look almost seemingly straight down to see Messler's Inn and the ranch as if from an airplane. So we ate our picnic lunch there; and in doing so, one of the men took a small hand-mirror from his pocket and reflect the sun's rays as if by spotlight, down onto the Messler ranch house. To me, it was a miracle! Then shortly, the Messler sisters themselves responded by means of a mirror that reflected sunlight back onto us. (They later took it off the wall, to show us.) The man on our ledge was asked to send a message via Morse code; but

nobody in our party knew the code well enough - nor did the sisters.





Now, having been taken as close as this to Mt. Rainier, you might be ready to hear what happened there a few years later. First however, I want to tell you about a close friend who joined me and shared many hiking adventures with me until 1929. Tam (O'Shanter), a Scotch collie dog joined the family when I was nine years old. He hated baths but submitted to them stoically. Tam loved outings - and racing after cars; he even seemed to enjoy sitting in the rowboat while I trolled for trout at our lake place. But Tam was doomed by his inbred sheep-herding instincts; and one day he succumbed fatally after trying to bite the tires of a wayward (to him) "sheep" as it sped past our house. Also, still speaking doggedly, there was a Black Lab we later loved, possibly because I was able to write down a list of 85 words that it learned to distinguish. One time I was impressed by its behavior seven months later after my son Martin had taken the dog to Chicago to live with him, because when I visited Martin seven month later, the dog put its paws on my shoulder with its tail working like a propeller as it sniffed my hair. Why? Because it was assuring itself, from scents present in the hairs, that I was really me, and that I had belonged to the same past that it had known! As for a dog, can it smell an environment, whereas we can't?

Now we should return to search for further adventure . In 1924 my big brother

Joe, at 16 and when a junior in high school, was offered a job as assistant guide to tourist groups that would climb on Mt. Rainier. Because, except for summertime, the mountain was virtually inaccessible, it was a summertime vacation job. The boys' gym teacher at high school had spotted Joe as being mature for his age and as being athletically disposed. The next summer Joe was allowed to assist the two professional Swiss Guides, Hans and Heinie Fuehrer who led groups, rope-tied, to the top of the mountain and back. Because our father spent a week as doctor-on-call at Paradise Valley (5,500 ft. elev.), taking the family with him, each day I went with a group of tourist to the ice caves under Paradise Glacier, out onto crevassed Nisqually Glacier, even to Pinnacle Peak from which one can see Mt. Hood, Mt. Adams, Mt. Jefferson and (formerly) Mt. St. Helens then looking like Mt. Fuji in Japan. Each day was fascinating and challenging; and I relished learning the names of the various wild flowers that carpeted Paradise Valley, many of them, in June, rising up through the snow. Because of altitude extremes, the guides, upon returning to sea level, often slept deeply for several days at the end of each season.

In his third guiding year Joe was involved in a crucial accident. A new Swiss guide who climbed in the Andes in South America after working in lead mines there, was hired: Paul Moser [it evolved later that he was a cocaine user.] One day when tourists were not climbing, Joe and Paul got a day off. They decided to climb Unicorn Peak in the belief that it had never been climbed. It was about 7,000 feet high and was about two miles south of Paradise Valley. [Pinnacle peak, part of the same range, was about a mile west of Unicorn.] In order to reach the top of Unicorn, they had to ascend a "chimney" (like a chute standing up on end) where a climber alternates steps on each of the two sides, thereby climbing up ladder-wise on two different but adjacent ladders.

Paul was above Joe, and they appeared to be less than 30 feet from the top, when Paul stopped. "Joe, I can't go up; no place for feet."

"Hold on, I'll come up below you and maybe you can step on my shoulder," Joe suggested.

Joe moved up, and Paul put a shaking foot on one of Joe's shoulders. But then Paul swung out, hands free, and plunged down past Joe as much as 200 feet after first hitting a ledge on his way down. Joe, though shaken, let himself back down (aided in part by being able to sit occasionally so as to retain that much contact with the rocks). He did not pass the point where Paul's body lay because that was vertically steep. He continued as fast as he could in order to start rescue operations, in the unlikely event that Paul could benefit with rescue. He ran whenever the terrain allowed. At Reflection Lake he saw a boy who had been hiking toward Pinnacle Peak. "Boy, can you run?", Joe asked. "Yes, I can." Joe then asked him to go the Guide House at Paradise, then almost two miles away, and report that "Joe is coming back alone." [That would alert the staff that a rescue operation was in prospect; yet it did not involve public knowledge regarding the tragedy.] Joe then got two days off in which to regain his composure and self-confidence.

While we are on Mt. Rainier, you should hear about a far less drastic incident - this one connected with the Boy Scouts, when I was thirteen. The troop I joined was noted for its many outings, and we particularly liked our trips to Olympic Mountains between Puget Sound and the Pacific Ocean to their west. One time we took a three-day excursion that began at Lake Cushman where a dam had created an enormous and powerful hydro-electric plant owned by the City of Tacoma. From there we went westward, climbing gradually up to Dosewallips ranger station where we camped. The ranger was an amiable young man who fished each day for his dinner, picked and ate mushroom and edible funguses that he knew; he patrolled trail and sent in periodic reports. We nicknamed him "Spunkwood". That was because he showed us that the stumps of small hemlock trees, when they die for want of more sunshine, protruding one two to three feet above the ground, at their core have wood that though no longer alive, is rich with pitch - perhaps from efforts to continue growth in a losing battle. That pitch burns like mad; so if you want to start a fire from scratch, use shavings of it. We called it "spunk wood".

With respect to skiing, it was virtually unknown to us in 1933 in spite of the many mountainsides that surrounded Puget Sound. A few people had snowshoes, partly because they were indispensable at certain places and under certain circumstances. But I encountered skiing-for-fun first in Austria, at an Alpine village near Salzburg, named Fulpmes. (I was there for three weeks over Christmas season). Seeing me on borrowed skis for the first time and trying to remain erect, village children began to collect for an entertaining show. Blatantly they stood there and howled, even offering instructions at critical moments. But upon my return to my high school in Tacoma, I learned about the new enterprise, REI (Recreational Equipment Inc.), a cooperative, that had just opened in Seattle and Tacoma; and there I bought my own first skis, boots, poles, harness, waxes, and climbers.. Those skis were made of wood - and I didn't burn them up until one summer in 1965. Different wax-textures are for changes in texture and temperature of the snow surface, to be rubbed on or removed for a suitable traction with the snow; and "climbers" are like socks to be worn by each ski on its bottom (or back) half. As their name suggests, they make it possible to ascend more steeply going uphill by preventing some of the sliding back that otherwise would take place. Without climbers, the only way to walk up a slope on skis is to 'herring-bone' - leaving tracks resembling the underside of a feather but on a large scale - splay-footed.



Skiing soon caught on. It was available at a multitude of wonderful spots within an hour's drive - literally in almost all directions. Commercial ski-tows and chairlifts were yet five to eight years yet to evolve. So, there was plenty of climbing and exploring. I was all for it.

To speak thus of snow reminds me of a jubilant event that took place when I was about fifteen, a high-school sophomore in a scout troop known for its outings. Its most stimulating event was our 3-day outing at Mt. Rainier in the winter. It happened that an abandoned log cabin within Rainier Park, halfway between Longmire Springs and Paradise, was acquired (or preempted?) by the Tacoma Boy Scout Council, [Incidentally, the daughter of one of the Longmire brothers who developed the springs as a spa in the 1870's lived directly across the street from our house in Tacoma. in the early 1930's] Near Narada Falls, the scout cabin was on a little-used foot trail, almost a secret. (Eventually the Park Service removed it as a hazard.) It could sleep about 15 people however; it had a fireplace and a stove, a table, and an outhouse that was barely still standing. Each scout of course had his bedding and his share of the food in his pack. Another scout had insisted on wearing his father's "snow-pack" boots previously worn paternally in Alaska; but the soles were of smooth rubber. So, George took two to three steps to one of mine, and often fell down. Then he hung onto *my* pack, in order to not be left behind. Imagining myself to be in a noble, heroic role, I let him do it!

Just before suppertime we saw, approaching the cabin from the west, an old man with a long-white beard whom we immediately dubbed "Santa Claus". All he would say was "I am Forever Always; yes that is my name." He ignored questions. His equipment

was primitive and his clothing bordered on disreputable. How could he stay warm? We knew we had to let him share our shelter the moment he took over one of its corners. He remained taciturn, so we ignored him for the most part. At suppertime he joined us as if invited; but after that; being warmed near the fireplace, he opened up to our scoutmaster (who was an M.D.) and told him the days of the world were numbered. He then tried to tell the doctor how many things one has to be worried about in order to escape a Doomsday fate. Doc told us the next day that Forever Always was officially delusional; but that was not news to us.

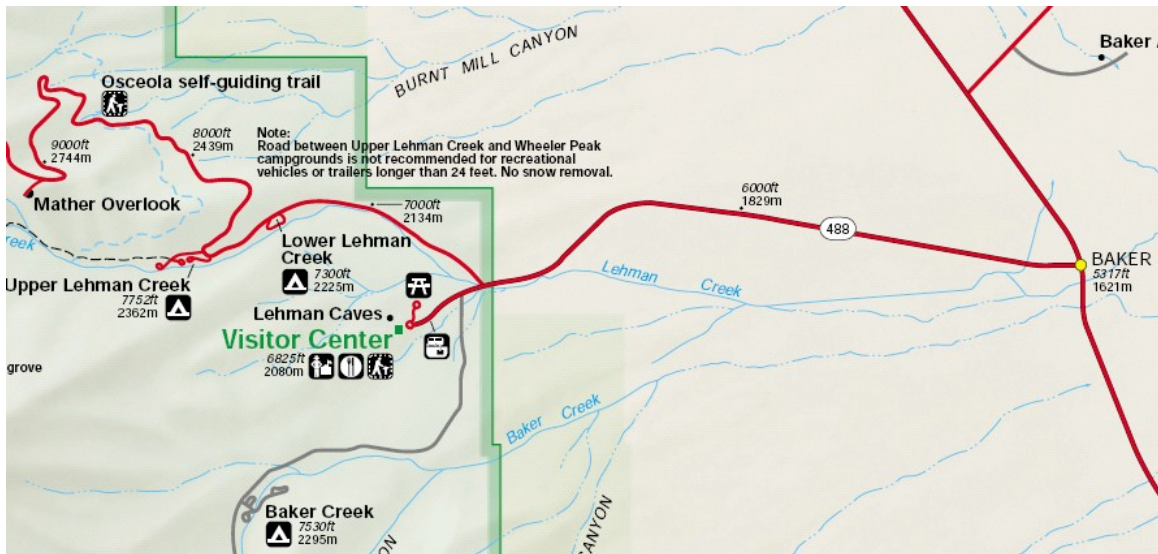
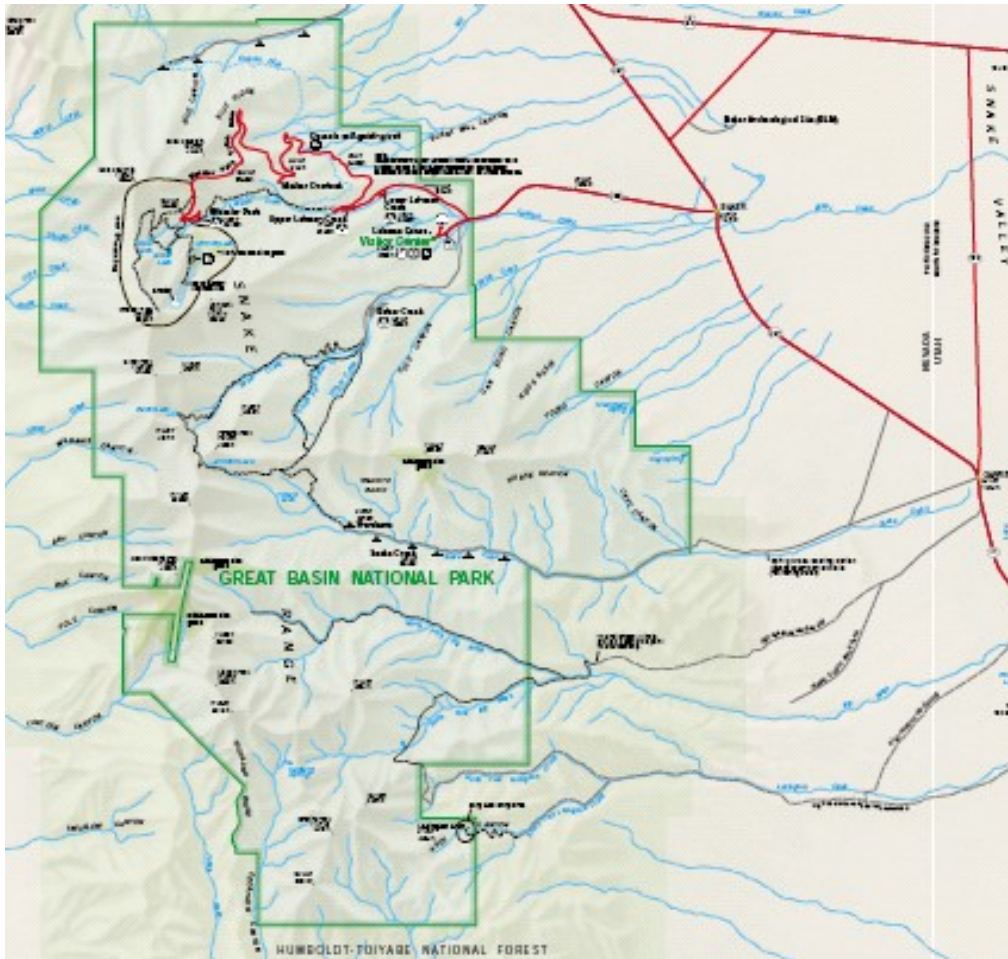
Despite Forever's presence and ominous prognostications, scout conduct continued true to form: one of the boys borrowed George's flashlight, to go to the privy, where the shelf you sit on was tilted badly. He set the round flashlight on its side, beside him, and then when he arose, it rolled into the hole! The light went out, but it was still down there, somewhere. There was a lively discussion about whose responsibility it might be to recover the flashlight, and by what means - with some fantastic suggestions but no volunteers. Finally George said he needed it and would go and get it if another flashlight and a pole and a broom could be made available. That provoked more crazy comments and discussion - including comments about witches and their proclivities - and finally the scoutmaster's flashlight and a pair huge improvised chopsticks put to use by George. Levity, at this point had reached such a low/high point as to provoke mention of a macaroni-and-baked-beans dinner so as to enjoy a pipe-organ concert....

The next day, we gained 1,500 ft. of elevation to Paradise Inn at that time on top of 14 feet of packed snow, where we entered the Guide House through its second-floor window. One lone wintertime caretaker was there, lively, friendly and very talkative. He did have a radio to listen to. Photos testify to this account - except that we didn't get proof of Forever Always. So maybe he wasn't real, after all, just as he himself had implied!

The essence of the game is PIONEERING, for it is fun!

CHAPTER 3

Nevada, California, and the Rockies





Nevada involves two distinct settings: one is on the eastern boundary with Utah, and the other on close to the western boundary with California south of Reno and Carson City. It also involves two contrasting geographical regions: the desert; and a high mountain with a deep, long cave, almost adjacent . Both areas are only sparsely populated and in those days Las Vegas was only a sleepy little town.

Not long after the close of WW II, about 1950 when the Soviet Union had atom bombs, when school kids were taught to crouch under their desks in order to survive, Jeannette, my brother Joe's wife, went looking for a safe hideaway. She also wanted to make it a "retreat" with a philosophical library. About 350 miles east of L.A. she found an usual location next to the Utah border where there was also an isolated mountain, Wheeler Peak, that was 13,000 high and only 20 miles from long, deep Lehman Caves (so big that it was named in the plural). The area is now Great Basin National Park.

Both of those geographical phenomena were protected as national monument and part of a national forest, respectively; and both have since become part of one new national park. The village of Baker, Nevada, to which she went, was the home-base for a 100-square-mile cattle ranch, owned by a family named Baker. The town itself was a general store and post office, a gas station, and an irrigation network. About 20 families lived in the vicinity, some of them Mormons. There was a 95 mile stretch of road leading to it that bore warning signs that there were no habitations whatsoever to be found alongside, on that long stretch of desert.



Bristlecone Pines near Baker



Jeanette found an abandoned stone house close to the Cave's main entrance, with an adjacent stream beside it to feed the irrigation system, and bought it. She discovered it had been built as a prop for an early silent cowboy movie. It was a haven for hummingbirds; and Jeanette became the cave's official guide. Her son Joe Jr. soon arrived, as did her daughter Sylvia, who later married one of the Baker boys. Joe Jr. worked as a roustabout staff person for the National Park Service. It was he who devised a pamphlet for the public telling about the small, bristlecone pine trees unique to that area which had grown to be up to five-thousand years old. Other pines (pinion pines) in the area bore delicious little nuts that the native Indians used to rely upon before capitalism's advance had decimated the natives.

The first time I visited Baker, Jeannette took us into the cave for a couple of hours. Man! was it cold, deep and long! Caves have a constant temperature of around fifty degrees F., constantly, without variation. She had forewarned us, but we emerged

back into almost blinding daylight, shivering in our boots. On the second visit some of us climbed Wheeler peak, seven or so miles and to the north, almost as high as Rainier but totally bereft of snow in summer. Of course the view extended through a diameter of about 250 miles; but in each direction it looked about the same. No one landmark stood out distinctively. It had been fascinating to see the changes in vegetation and different kinds of trees that thrived at various elevations en route. The Wheeler Peak gambit took all of one day, and there were no problems over that.



Scenes in the high Sierra Nevadas



Scenes in the high Sierra Nevadas



Scenes in the high Sierra Nevadas



Scenes in the high Sierra Nevadas



Scenes in the high Sierra Nevadas



Starting a hike to Mt. Wheeler ~13,000 ft.

There was nevertheless a problem with the stream of clear water next to Jeannette's stone house: for it had become polluted because of sewage difficulties at the public campground a short distance upstream. The government man said it might be months before they could change the situation - possibly not before next year's funding. What to do? Joe, being an M.D., said, "We'll just crank up the thermostat on the (gas) hot-water tank in the house; that will take the temperature up to 180 degrees and kill the harmful bacteria." It took a while to forget what had been wrong with the water!



Baker Ranch, Nevada



Baker Ranch, Nevada

Joe liked to fish in the irrigation streams at Baker when he visited it from Claremont, near L.A. One time he absent-mindedly walked out of the general store without paying for some fish bait. The proprietor-lady, a few days later, asked him about it; and he pleaded innocence on the basis of forgetfulness. The argument that ensued ended harmoniously in her parlor that evening as she served him homemade apple pie. Jeannette, for her part, by leaning upon and cajoling the entire community of 70 or so, managed to get commercial electricity introduced at Baker. She knew how to be political, even in the desert..

In tragic irony, Jeannette, who had sought escape from nuclear holocaust by going to Baker, died from nuclear poisoning because of the atomic tests that the U.S. government had been conducting on the flats of Nevada north and west of Baker; it had occurred due to prevailing winds from the west.



The other side of Nevada, next to California, except for Las Vegas, is almost solidly desert. During part of WW II, I was posted just across the border at a former CCC camp site where a small sawmill was located. This was about fifty miles south of Reno and Carson City in latitude. The aim was to find a way to make use of loblolly pine timber as lumber. That particular wood had a habit of becoming twisted as lumber when the wood dried out; indeed, it was as if the dead wood would try to restore itself into a more relaxed shape, for its eternal rest. The foresters thought that if we cut and stacked the lumber in large enough piles, some of them would not twist because of the weight of the others upon them. Since this east slope of the Sierras hosted mostly that kind of pine, maybe some of its boards yet might serve as respectable lumber. So the work included logging, trimming limbs off of the logs, loading and trucking them, sawing them up and stacking the lumber.



Sawmill at Coleville – painted by the author

We also went to a couple of fires in the year that I was there. We got to the fires late, so we didn't have to cope with them head-first; but we did have to clear fire-breaks and mop up. Mopping-up meant going after smoldering roots or other little solo flames one-by-one after the hot fire had swept past. Shovels, dirt, and pulaskis (like smaller garden grub-hoes) were our tools. Water was out of the question, and no help from the skies was available then.

Six of us then were assigned to go into the desert to build "sheep troughs". The U.S. Forest Service lets out grazing rights for cattle or sheep, varyingly, in the west. In this case it was sheep. We first were sent to a small Nevada town, Yerrington. There Henry ran a somewhat philosophical office, for the Service, and his job was to get us started. Henry's place had a barn in back in which he kept a riding mare. But she was with foal and about to deliver. Well, we got the chance to be horse-obstetricians. The mare came through with practically all the needed work however, standing up; and it was interesting to see the newborn colt discover how to use his legs and then find out where the nourishment came from. We were able to watch it learn its way around for the next week. A few days after that, one of the six of us offered to capture some sparrows that played around the barn, in order to cook for us an old English sparrow pie. When we tasted it, however, Lennie became the focus of dumbfounded gazes, for he had neglected to clean the intestines out of the birds before baking them. It was a long time before he heard the last of that!



Four Corners – Where 4 States Meet

Then we were moved out into the desert. We were to build a cement water trough suitable for a flock of 50 or 60 sheep to drink from together, lined up on both sides, as they reached Parale Spring parched and weary. Henry had been lining up and “planting” the sand and cement, the mixer and four trailers at the site. Parale Spring was a tiny leak in the earth’s parched skin from which some partly colored water oozed; and in the course of a four days or so its output might be able to put a few inches of water into the 30-foot trough, and the sheep would make that water disappear in a hurry. (We used bottled water ourselves.)

The four trailers were a sleeper with bunks, a kitchen/dining room, a lounge, and a privy. We arranged them in a square so that we could walk from one to the next up off the ground. We had gas lanterns and a gas stove. There was no water for the shower, of course. We had to drive twenty miles to a desert oasis for our food supplies. Darwin ran

the mixer; he was raised as a ranch-child and could do anything and everything; he drove the truck. First we had to build wooden forms for to shape the cement; and that took about two weeks. Then came the mixing and pouring and smoothing. We played bridge and harts and chess and checkers, and we listened to the radio. We argued, trying to end each such event with a joke.

A desert becomes a marvel following a rain! There are strange and exotic scents; blossoms break forth in profusion from erstwhile “dead” twigs. Birds appear. Small animals lose their timidity: mice, chipmunks and lizards.

One day we took the truck to “town” for supplies, all of us, departing at the end of work. On the dusty, deserted highway we encountered an overturned car with a woman standing beside it. She seemed incoherent, whether from shock or alcohol or drugs, or an injury was hard to discern. In the car was the inert body of a man (who proved *not* to be her husband), unconscious, with head wounds. As quickly as possible we extricated him and loaded him into our truck, and then took off for the village five miles distant. She told us there was a doctor there with a dispensary that he operated. We tried to make our truck do what it couldn’t achieve, however, because, this being wartime, its carburetor had been regulated by a governor so as to disallow speeds exceeding thirty miles per hour. It was a very long five miles.

The doctor remarked, “Well, if I sew up his cuts, the undertaker will appreciate it.” The lady meanwhile was on the phone.

A month later, back at the sawmill, one day we were driving a truck to one of the logging sites when we noticed a piper cub airplane paralleling us, above, and following the road. It was bucking a strong wind, flying low just above the tops of the trees. I saw it attempt a turn to the left in front of us, from which point it dove into the woods. We stopped and rushed over to it, finding its wings and fuselage somewhat crunched, but we heard a voice inside. We helped the man get out, with gasoline blinding him temporarily as it seeped from a broken overhead wing-tank. He had been in the back seat. The pilot, his eyes closed and his hand still tight on the stick beside him, was not breathing. The uninjured man, it evolved, was the brother of the pilot. He seemed dazed - perhaps over not having been hurt, or maybe stunned by the impact. He seemed to have forgotten his now deceased brother as he followed us to our truck. After a while, en route back to our base, he inquired about his brother, and we told him.

At about 9,000 foot elevation the air gets thin. The plane had been caught in a “downdraft”, the kind that gets created when winds try to move rapidly over uneven land, close to it. The air gets spread out, thinned, and therefore loses lifting capacity. The plane also had slowed down because of head-wind pressures, so that its wings did not provide sufficient “lift”. I have no idea how or who took care of the pilot’s body, nor how the plane was removed.

When working on trails in this area, I killed three rattlesnakes.

And now - for California itself! - (and more rattlesnakes!) It began with an encounter with scrub oaks, chaparral and vines on the mountains NE of Los Angeles when I tried to climb up to the fire-break, alone, at age 14 near Mt. Baldy. Ill-prepared for that kind of terrain and vegetation, I emerged scared, marked with broken skin, and with clothes in shreds. But later, in those same mountains in 1942, I worked at a U.S. Forest Service research facility at altitude of about 5,000 feet, north of Glendora. The project was to measure rain run-off and subsequent water flow at various points. Water-flow gauges has been installed at selected point to measure and time the flow of water, There was a mass of data that had been collected but not yet analyzed. The work alternated between days indoors at the lab and days doing trail work in the field. There I learned, from an experienced old-timer, how to track down cracks in walls of rocks in order to drive rock-chisels into them and thereby gradually break up an entire wall of what had seemed to be solid rock. We did respond to one long-distance fire call - just east of San Diego, getting there in time to spend a day and a night out in the smouldering afterburn, mopping up. What stands out in my memory was long ride back in an open truck, fifteen of us, all wanting to relieve ourselves at considerable urgency but helpless to get the driver's attention to request a rest-stop.

Many years later, after visiting marvelous Yosemite where the cars and tourists go, there was an opportunity to use the trails in the Sierra mountains. The John Muir Trail seemed almost unique in what it offered. In those days, and probably also now, so as to backpack, one had to register in advance, getting a permit. That ensured against overcrowding and overuse. The high meadows and the waterfalls and canyons exceeded what photos simply imply. We met some commercialized horse-parties and saw many more left-over campsites than there should have been. Finally we reached the highest point in the 48 states, Mt. Whitney. What? A cement privy?. Some youngsters were climbing atop in order to "be higher, even than the highest point".



Privy atop Mt. Whitney



Scenes in the High Rockies

When it comes to the Rockies, there not quite so many flowers and trees as along the west coast, but there is a ruggedness that challenges a backpacker to lighten his pack if he can. Of course the Rockies extend up into Canada, virtually the whole way up to tundra and then into Alaska. Here one sees *more* wildlife roaming the terrain. In addition to elk that invade even the towns, almost like residents, to grizzly bears in more remote areas. A few summers ago, on one trail, I passed close to several grizzlies, coming upon them unexpectedly. They were in some brush adjacent to the trail; I heard noises and then I smelled them; and then I turned around with a changed mind as to how badly I needed to see them at closer range. I lost impulse to proceed further on this trail. That was in Canada, actually.



December in Canada



Dog bus



Racing sled-dogs on frozen lakes



Racing sled-dogs on frozen lakes



Racing sled-dogs on frozen lakes



Racing sled-dogs on frozen lakes



Inside snow house on Christmas Eve

I have made several trips to the Canadian Rockies as guest of some hiking friends there whose relatives live in Maryland. The Schindlers are scientists who spend most of their working days out in the field, much of it in deep snow. They are both environmental specialists, professors at Canadian universities, and David is internationally known, having been among the first to detect and study acid rain. At one point, David and Susan had close to ninety racing sled dogs; and it was quite a chore just to feed them all. Highly competitive yet interactive within their own group, the dogs were pretty much like other dogs when not harnessed. They loved racing - especially over the snow on frozen lakes, where level terrain facilitated speed.. Racer dogs don't "steer" readily; they need a pathway that already is clear to their senses. You stop a team, when you can, by thrusting a stick down into the snow, fastened securely to your sledge. If a rabbit should happen by, the lead dogs will take off! Whoopee! Through hormone and other injections only, does dog population get controlled. The best sled dogs have some wolf blood in their veins. As they are being hitched up, they become almost frantic, manic and rambunctious. After they have raced, their paws are bloody. Eskimoes, I have heard, and maybe a few other aficionados of dog-sledding, I understand, have trained some sled dogs to be steered, by voice.

In the Canadian rockies, one time, at a tourist parking place, about twenty ravens

attacked the roof of a parked car, eating the roof, where apparently it had been overhead-sealed with some sort of waterproofing that was rich with salt. I didn't have time to wait to see the owner's consternation. Well, this wasn't a hiking tale, but it *was* in the great outdoors!

CHAPTER 4

Japan, China, and the Nepalese Himalayas

I went into and out of Japan eight times - the first four times by motorship (ocean liner) twice; and the last four times by air. [The fifth time it was island-hopping right after WW II, via Honolulu, Johnston Island, Midway, Guam and Okinawa; then, after that via Anchorage and Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.]

Japan consist of three large islands - the main one, Honshu, is where Mt. Fuji and the biggest cities are, then Kyushu and Hokkaido, plus lots of little islands. So it is no wonder that products from the sea are food staples in Japan: fish, crabs, eels, clams, and seaweed, kelp, octopus. Fishing boats swarm off-shore. What I wanted most to see was the Japanese Alps on Honshu. [But they are not right next to Mt. Fuji.]

So, on the first visit, alone, at age 20, I decided to take local trains into and around the sides of the Alps, stopping at 3 PM wherever the train itself next stopped, to get off and find a hotel or inn. [I had done the same two years previously in Europe; and usually it resulted in interesting and occasionally, intriguing surprises. The minister at my home church had said: "I have only two words of advice: first, don't take more than you yourself can carry; and secondly, don't draw up an itinerary in advance and try to stick to it! Go with the flow!"] Well, in Japan, equipped the essential Japanese words for Inn and Toilet and "where is . . ."? I was on my own.



Japan



Japan



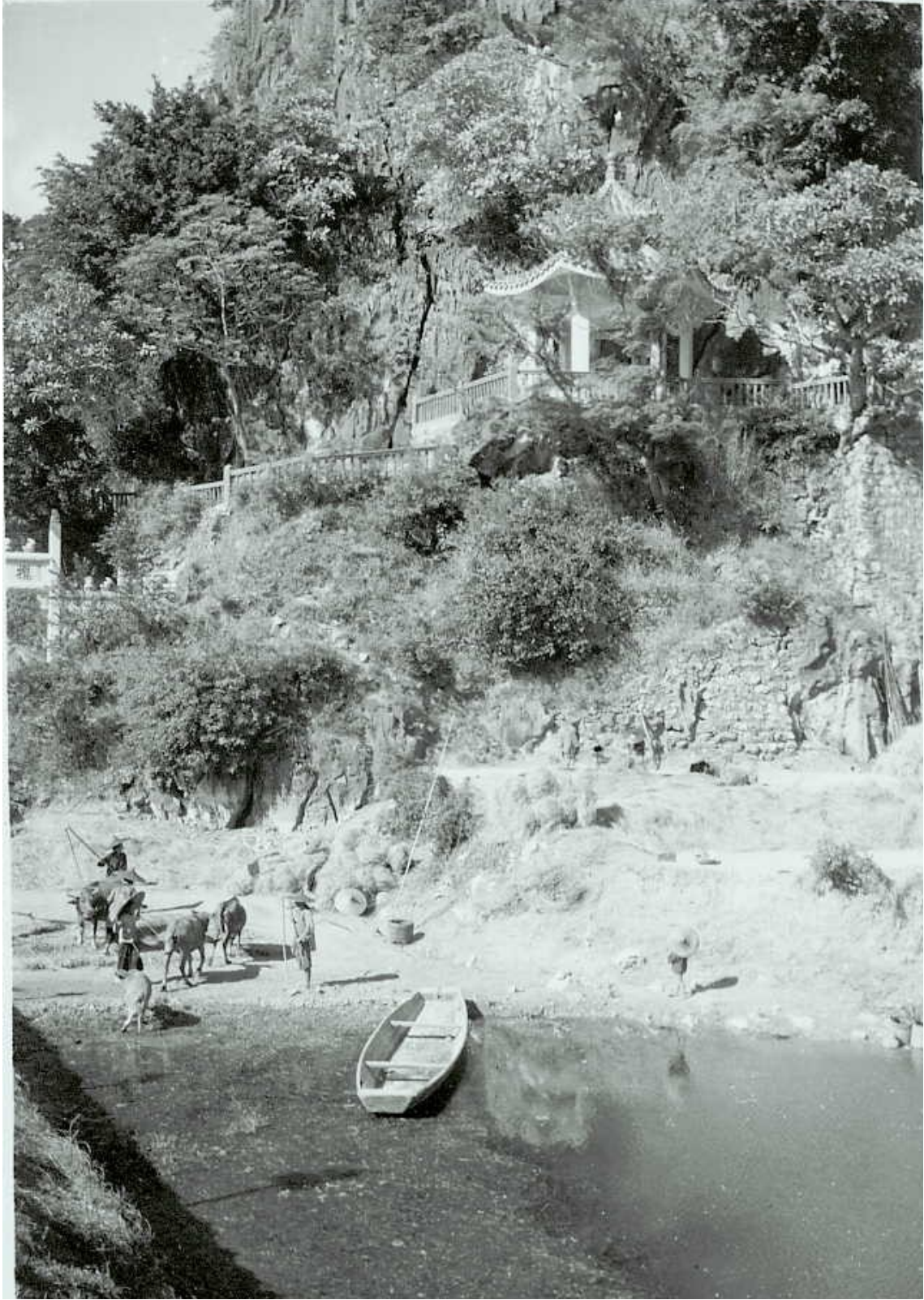
Japan



Japan



Japan



Rural China

In Japan, after first checking my bag at the three o'clock railroad station - to be reclaimed after finding accommodations - I was directed, this time by a young man my age, to an inn [he accompanied me, following customary Japanese hospitality practices], I was ushered into my room and immediately given a bowl of what I thought was soup. But it seemed pretty spicy. I didn't realize it was *sake*, of high alcoholic content. The bed consisted of mats on the floor. The young man who had met me spoke some German, and in that manner we had conversed. He invited me to leave the inn, however, paying a cover charge, so to speak, and go with him as his guest to his house. It was attached to a silk factory; and all through the night people kept getting up to feed the noisy silkworms on stacks of shelves adjacent to my "bedroom". What did the worms eat? mulberry leaves, from trees in the yard. It sounded like a rainstorm!

Next day, the train began to wind around, through tunnels and over bridges, as it climbed into beautiful heavily-wooded mountains. Just to analyze the engineering was a satisfaction, in itself. Next three o'clock was at a village with hot springs. One's initial qualms over nudity soon vanish; and anyway, everybody is in the water, so what?! I found a trail into the woods and soon was bowing back at the people using it, many with loads on their backs. Lots of staring took place - in both directions, because white-skinned persons were rarely to be found in these Alps.

When it became time to leave Japan for China on a local steamer, I found my way to my stateroom, only to discover to my dismay that the wicker basket in which I had been carrying my dirty clothes had become a playground for a village of ants. Immediately I opened the porthole, dockside, and hung the cotton pants on the porthole's fastener, dangling outside, so as to let the ants swan-dive away. Presently a cabin attendant knocked on my door. Pointing to the open porthole, he said, "Please to take in drawers!!" In complying, I discovered that on the dock below was an assemblage of school children and a band engaged in some sort of ceremonial farewell to an important personage. The Japanese love to take pictures; and these dirty, antsy pants of mine had disrupted the event! [Well, it *was* outdoors, wasn't it?!]

That was before WW II, in 1935, when Japan was neat and clean and orderly to an extreme. The next visit came, again en route to China, in the summer of 1946 when many parts of Tokyo were in ruins and people were somber under U.S. occupation.

On the following (third) visit to Tokyo, there for a visit to my son Martin (who had changed to his middle name of Pierce). He and his wife had bought expensive tickets to the Kabuki theatrical extravaganza as a welcome, only to find that my jet-lag snores disturbed adjacent members of the audience. We took some hikes in addition, to sight-see, and again we visited two hot-spring spas. At one point, in the snow, his wife and I got out to push the car up a couple of the hills as its wheels churned for want of traction. Martin Pierce was in Japan in order to collect material for his doctoral thesis at University of Chicago. His wife Weishen (Chinese) had a post-graduate research fellowship in theoretical physics at an institute in Japan.. Both were now fluent and literate in three/four

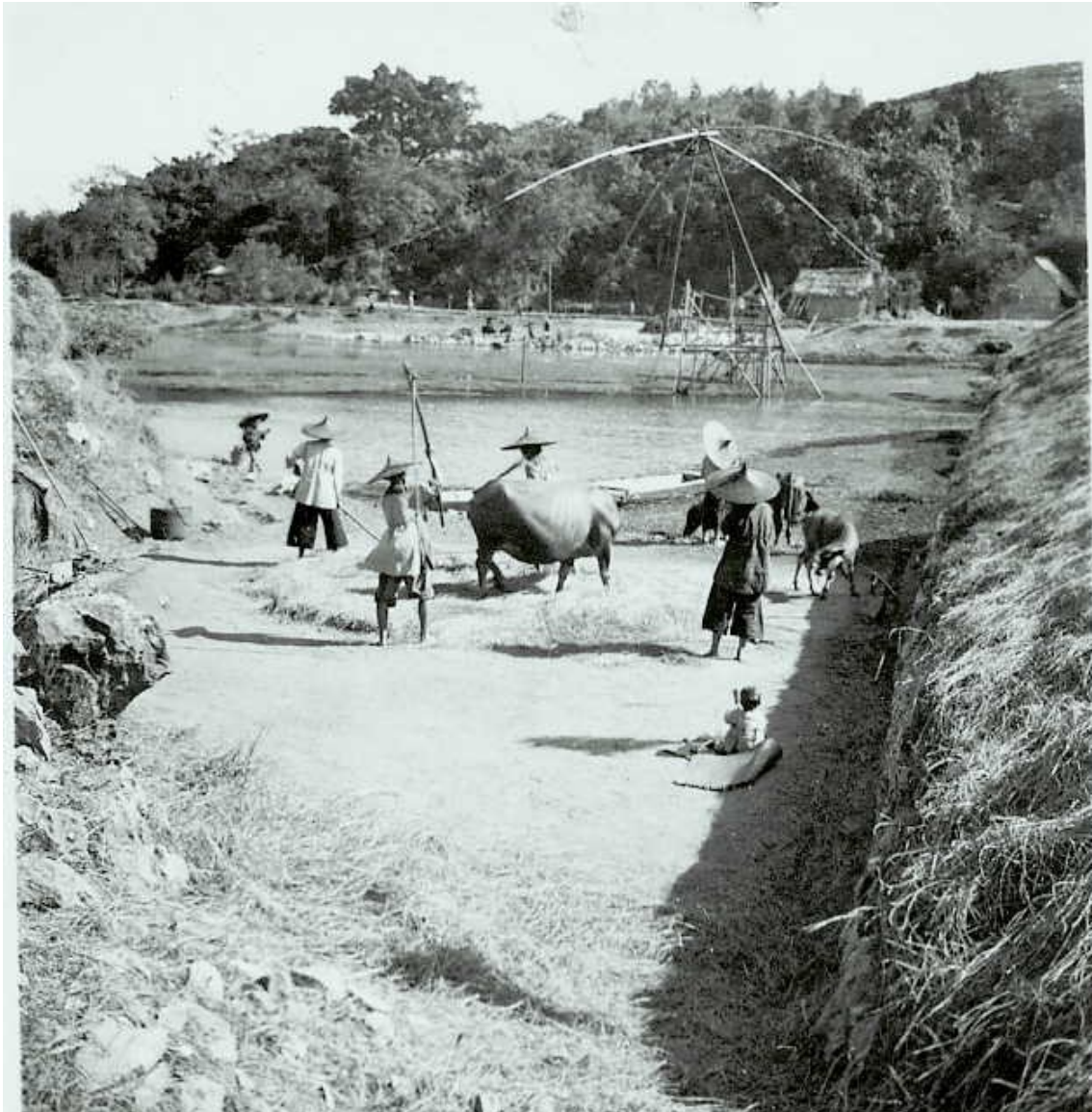
languages.*

Now, regarding the **outdoor** aspects of two separate years in China - to begin with, they were separated nine years apart, with WW II in between. During the first (the academic) one of those two years, the Japanese army already had begun to penetrate north China, after have taken control of Manchuria. In south China nevertheless we were able to travel up the West River and in the Yangtze and the Yellow River basins.



Marble Mountains

*Experiences in Japan and two years in China are related in detail (including diary excerpts about a college year that in China and another year under the US Dept of state), in my memoirs, “One Man’s Window on the 20th Century”, available both on the web and in print. Included in the *memoirs* is also a diary from three months in Germany in 1933 when Hitler came to power.



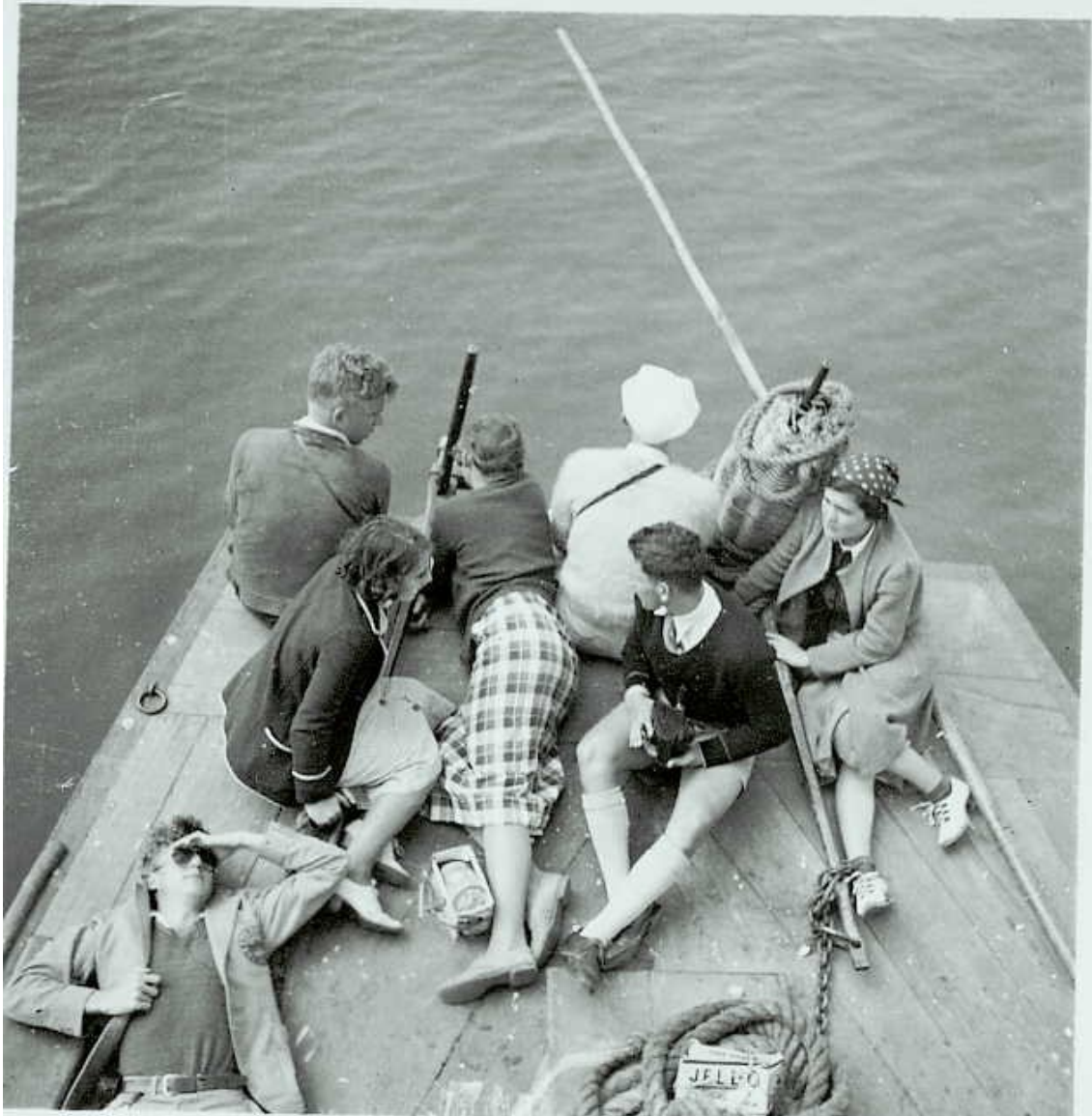
Flailing grain Guang-dong Province

Particularly interesting were vacation-trips taken to Taoist and Buddhist monasteries, because they were oases that were preserving undeveloped forest and mountain lands against development. In 1935-6 we took no less than five outings of our exchange student group up rivers and on antique trains - as described in detail in my memoirs. Most memorable was a trip on the West River in to Guangxi Province to its "marble mountains" that rise up like rambunctious warts on the flattened river valley, rich with wildlife, crags, and lush vegetation. The marble mountains are the ones that seemingly stand suspended out of the mist, with no footing, in Chinese landscapes. Within them are many caves, some which can be penetrated on small boats. Tourist expeditions after the Mao era used to cruise the river and stop there for side trips. Inhabitants working in agricultural fields on the river banks used to beg for tourists to throw to them fruits or cakes - despite efforts by the boat crew to prevent that kind of indiscriminate misuse of the resources that were intended for the paying guests. It was a

losing proposition - one that caused most tourist trips, nowadays, to concentrate upon the Yangtze river with its giant dam, instead of the marble mountains in the south.

Since China is as large as the U.S.A., and, climatically at a similar location on the globe, scenically it has much to offer - not to mention the cultural contrast that it displays. But most of it, where habitable, is so densely developed, it is not easy terrain in which to attempt explorations of a hinterland. Human beings have advertised their presence, possession, and needs at all accessible points. Except for Sikang, Yunnan, Gueizhou and parts of Szechwan in the extreme west, it was hard to find a frontier environment of any kind. Nevertheless, see it for yourself, if you can.

What about an anecdote! At one point on the West River. we hired a *wuban*, a wide, hand-propelled boat, for a dozen of us, after having negotiated its cost on an assumption that the proprietors would work hard to row us upstream. But it soon evolved that they knew that a prevailing wind would sweep them upstream as soon as they raised their sail!



River boat incident

We had hired a native guide, who stayed with us all day, solicitously, for an agreed price. Out of friendliness, we invited him to join us where we would be eating our supper - on the top floor [which in China is for aristocrats or officials, providing luxury foods.] After supper he had the nerve to ask for additional pay. The waiters and soon others began to listen as argumentation arose. The man, braced by some rice wine, having a once-in-a-lifetime revelry in luxury and privilege, was soon hooted down by one and all, and when it was pointed out that in addition the rarities on the menu, he had consumer **three** bowl of rice! That was the point at which, with loss of face, he got up and slunk away. It was a visual enactment of how aptly descriptive the phrase 'loss of face' can be!

One distinctive little expedition that occurred the year I was in Beijing in 1946-7, was a visit to Zhou-kou-dyan, the cave in which the paleolithic Peking Man's skull had

been found. There were no signs or fences to prevent entering and exploring the cave; so I rumbled around within, but emerged without any fossil bones to show for the experience.



The rest of what I can say about the two China experiences, if given to you here, would only be a replication of what appears in the *memoirs*.

Nepal, however, is a very different matter! I say that because in that case there was a trek into the Himalayas close to Mt. Everest.. It began when I got a phone call from Charlie Clarke, a former President of Mountain Club of Maryland which was our local Baltimore-based hiking club (that maintains part of the Appalachian Trail and four its overnight shelters). He said that Lute Jerstad from Oregon, a member of the first all-American team to climb Everest, would arrange a trek for a small group - in June of 1972, before the monsoons. Charlie was trying to recruit participants from among the stronger hikers in our Club.

My first thought was about the cost; my second was “forget the cost!”. It would mean a ten-day trek, and instead of going into the now-crowded base-camp and climbing route to Everest’s summit, we would aim for a lower elevation and mountains about ten miles to the west, near Annapurna. We would have a team of four Sherpas as guides and cooks, assisted by a dozen porters who would carry the tents, bedding and food. Lute himself would meet us in Katmandu at the start. For hiking or climbing in the daytime we needed carry only small day-packs. for our lunches and emergency gear. As things turned out, we became a group of six trekkers comprising two married couples and myself, and Harry Michel, who was a veteran hiker; and we were not still baby chicks.

We flew across the Atlantic for a quick fueling stop at London, then on to Beirut to unload a few daring passengers. At Beirut we had to remain aboard the aircraft

because of street violence - overflow from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. At New Delhi we changed to a smaller plane headed for Katmandu where Lute duly met us and introduced us to the Sherpas. Their English was limited but adequate, we so gathered, as they examined the equipment we had brought with us. Then, while the Sherpas attended



Water diversion for irrigation or utilization downstream

to their shopping for the trek, we had two days to look around Katmandu. There were Hindu temples to visit, and one of them had a glossy golden roof. One thing I had not expected was the large number of foreign tourists. In the middle of Katmandu there was one depression like an amphitheater at the bottom of which was a spring providing water for the poor. Vehicles of all sorts filled the streets, and bicycles predominated. Yes, cows roamed freely in some quarters. One evening we had dinner at a world-famous restaurant operated by a “white” Russian (old-time pre-revolutionary aristocrat) who made a point to circulate to all tables and thus to demonstrate his sophistication and linguistic skills. I found him to be proficient in Spanish, Italian, German, French, and Swedish - but not in Chinese.



Public water well in Katmandu



Possible spindle for braiding cable for bridges (?)



Banyan Tree



Tibetan Refugee Facility in Nepal



Tight spot for fat foreigners



4 P.M.



Trailside welcome



5 PM, with the Sherpas



9 AM, porters ready to go



A porter's life



Porters loading firewood in advance of snowfields

Our trek began with a bus ride to Trisuli Bazaar on a narrow, partly paved road with hairpin turns, over a mountain pass where we got out briefly to eat lunch, and, for a couple of us, to calm their car-sickness. Exhaust fumes had brought on some of it. Trisuli Bazaar could boast a magnificent highway bridge over a rushing river that ran through the town. There we disembarked. At a pre-arranged point we met our Sherpas who had gone ahead, hiring the porters we would need. Most of the porters were barefoot! Each porter carried around 70 pounds minimum, in a sling down to their hips and by using a headband to retain their loads upright at the backs of their necks. I tried out one of them, to the amusement of the porters; but I quickly decided not to go anywhere with it. Their loads included, their own communal food; they were only lightly clothed despite the cold; and were apparently inured to it. Barefoot in the snow and on the rocks? Yes.

The terrain included valleys, some steep ascents, broad rivers, hillsides terraced for cultivation, some cliff-edge passage-ways, yet all was wide enough for one animal to pass with its load. The hillsides, for the most part and except for one belt of forest at elevation around 8,000 feet (where a scrawny and tough wild chicken was purchased by the Sherpas) were under cultivation. The steep places all had slabs-of-stone steps installed at regular intervals - an accomplishment which must have taken generations of workers - working under what incentive, one could wonder. Passing other pedestrians or animals sometimes could be a tenuous problem.



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings



Bridges; water crossings

The bridges over rushing rivers were especially fascinating. Small ones often were cantilever-type; the longer ones were usually suspended from cables of dubious quality. In some instances some of the boards of walkway would be missing; and we met a couple of rivers where we had to descend to, and even into, the water, rock-hop, in order to climb up the opposite bank.



Belt of trees at 8,000 to 11,000 ft. elevation; last firewood

The native inhabitants were friendly enough and would salaam to us as we met or passed them. Children in particular were curious, and always circumspect. Many people had evidences of injury or untreated disease. At one place where there was a farm-shack, three retarded children were evident, and when one of our party aimed a camera, the pater-familias raised his hands in a protest - that was then duly heeded. To be utterly frank, I have to tell you that the trail showed hazard of being quite unsanitary, because people had relieved themselves along this route for centuries and for as short a time ago as earlier on that particular day, just before we showed up. Of course we had to follow suit; but too often found that the necessary privacy was not always available.



14,000 ft.



14,000 ft.



14,000 ft.



14,000 ft.

Eventually we made our way into snow-covered meadows, at about 14,000 feet. Across the canyon we could see the border of Tibet where there was doubtless a mountain pass. But we were not going that far. When I awoke the next morning my face was swollen to the extent that my eyes looked like little slits - it was edema from lack of sufficient oxygen. Charlie's wife Ella had a terrible cough and felt nauseated, a victim of pulmonary edema: it was essential to take her (and the rest of us as well) down to lower elevation, stat. Only us foreigners were victims, however. Ella's cough persisted for the remaining four days of the trek, and she kept it until as much as six months after we had returned to our homes. There was one other impediment. Bill developed gout on the



Bill's gouty toe

fourth day out, and there was no easy way to get him out, nor to give him any relief; aspirin was all that we had as an analgesic, and it is strongly counter-indicated for gout. What he needed was colchicine, intensively. But Bill didn't want to miss any part of the experience: he cut out the toe part of his shoe on that foot and wrapped it with pieces of his handkerchief - while it lasted. He never complained: he revelled in this as his experience of a lifetime. Indeed it was; for a year later Bill died.



First August snow

I failed to mention previously that the porter crew was changed about four times during our trek: new men were recruited, some by pre-arrangement perhaps, or recruited locally and paid off by the Sherpas. Most porters did not want to travel far from where they were based. But they were the focus for transportational needs in these mountains despite - or because of - defective bridges and hairy passages. I also neglected to mention the omnipresence of prayer flags along the trail and on some of the crags. The native people loved to build rock cairns, most of them commemorative. There were no yaks on the terrain that we traversed; and that disappointed me somewhat.



Scenes at 13,000 feet

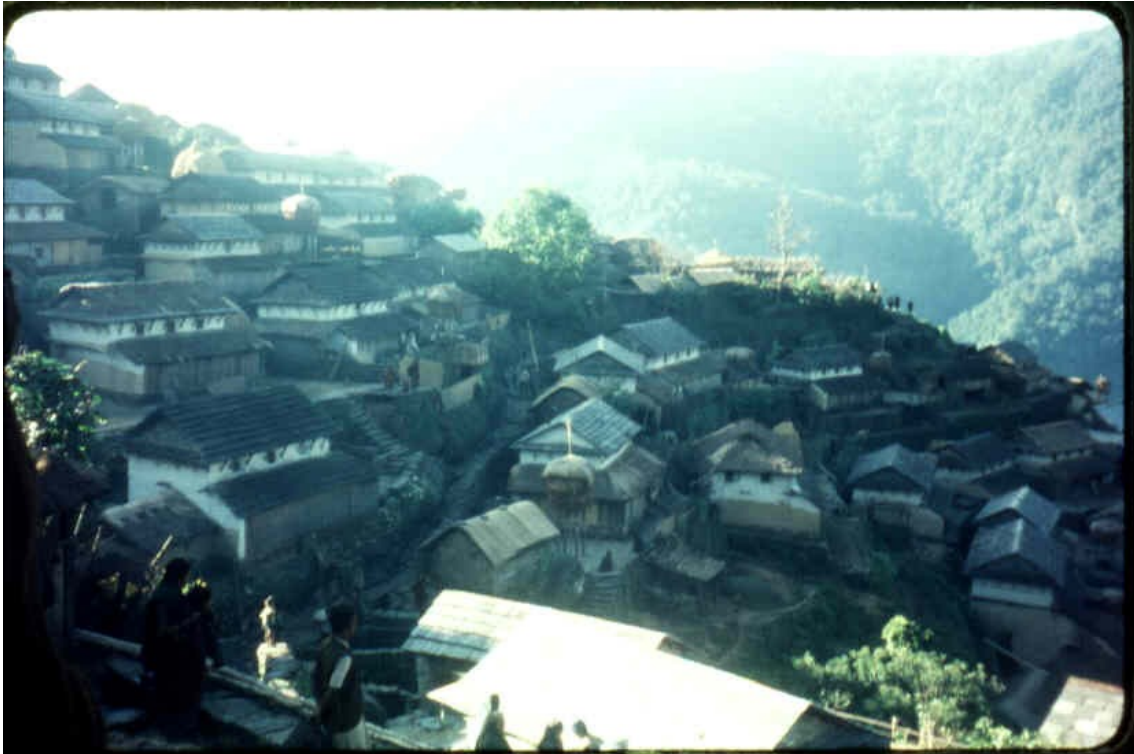


Scenes at 13,000 feet



Near Pokhara

Finally we came to Pokhara, a town that could boast a measure of commercial activity with a bit of modern goods available. I figured we had done a circuit of about 65 miles in about a week, in the lower reaches of Ama Dhablam and Dhalagiri, two peaks that rivaled Everest but stood to its west.



Mountainside village in Nepal

At the outskirts of Pokhara there was a municipal campsite where travel vehicles from all over Europe were gathered. It was in a pleasant location except that there were no lavatory facilities whatever, and everybody was trying to disappear behind a stone wall at one side of the clearing. It waswell, unmentionable - and almost unapproachable. Most of the residents seemed to be a new class of hippies or gypsies, young and heavy on drug use. From that town we took a bus back to Katmandu. We flew back to New Delhi and a clean hotel with an elephant ride available at its patio. There was also a hot bath, supposedly. I wanted not a shower, but a tubful of hot water, but there was no way to close the drain. By means of room phone, I asked for help but had trouble getting across exactly what I needed. Finally the voice said "Oh, a stoppah fo' the bahth." It had not occurred to me to use British English, nor to use a washcloth stuffed into the drain!

The next day, in India, I looked at the crowds on the river bank, the death-houses where people were taken to breathe their lasts, prior to cremation.

It had been both fascinating and exotic. And now we boarded a Singapore Airlines plane, headed first for Hongkong, then Los Angeles.. Adventure still seemed at hand because our plane had an anomalous, unexplained rattling sound in its underbelly, all the way across the Pacific.

CHAPTER 5 South America - The Andes



Two years later came another phone call. It was from Jack, a vigorous young man in our Mountain Club of Maryland. He and two other young friends were planning a trek to the summit of Aconcagua, the highest peak in the western hemisphere. It is located on the border between Argentina and Chile, about halfway down the continent, not far from Santiago. [We later discovered that “Aconcagua” is a name that in S. America gets replaced by various local names; so, its mention usually gets you nowhere!] Anyway, it was about 19,000 feet high, and the plan was to climb it not on the usual rocky trail, but on a glacier that ascended from about 9,000 ft. elevation where horses would have to be turned back.

Jack (who later became a glacier- and rescue-ranger at Mt. Rainier) had been in touch with a climbing club in Argentina that made a point of assisting outside foreigners in arranging for their ascents - permits, official inspections of their equipment, lodgings, and preparatory information. Up-to-date maps, however, were hard to come by, because Chile and Argentina were in a stalemated adversarial situation, politically, involving troops on both sides. Pinochet was in Chile.

Next, I met the other two guys: one of them was 6 feet four. None of them spoke Spanish, nor any Indian dialect; but they were clearly healthy and vigorous. It began to

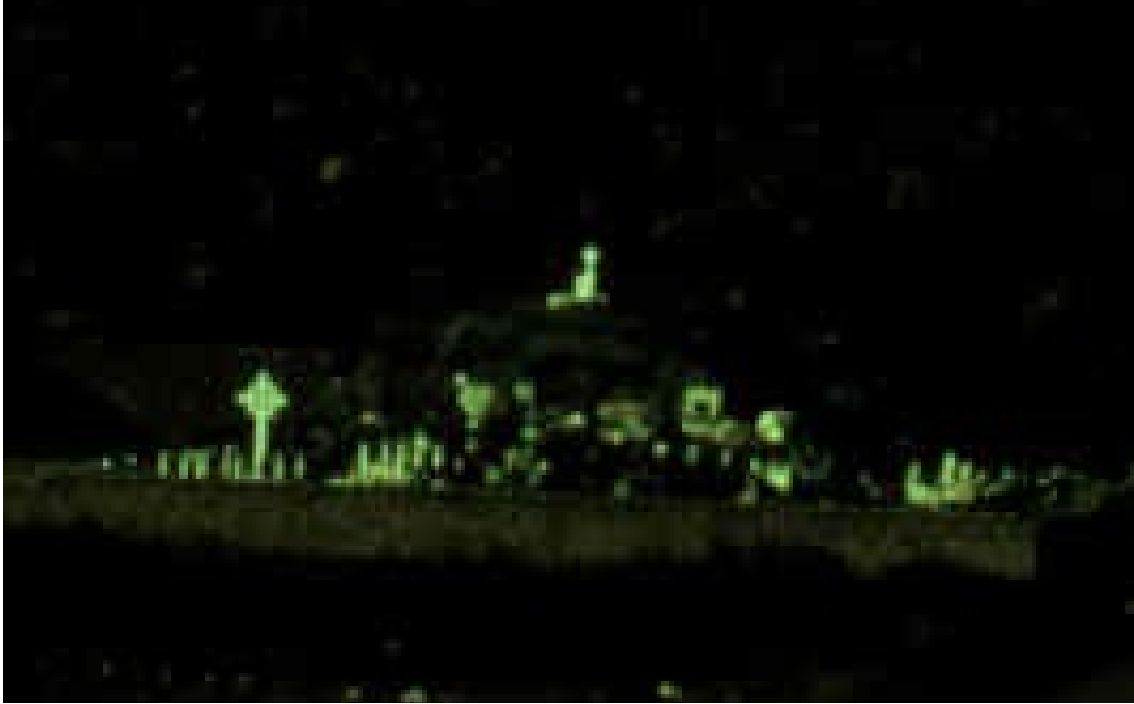
look as if my role with them might have to be that of an interpreter. So I hit a cousin of mine who worked in the then secret and unmentionable, non-existent NSA agency; herself a translator of several languages, asking her for some quick, bone-up materials on the Spanish language. There was time enough for only a month's cramming. Actually, when we got to the scene, I used German and English as often as Spanish, because Indian dialects seemed to prevail whenever we got off the beaten path.

Since we were going to glacierize our ascent, new boots and climbers and ski poles had to be acquired, not to mention padded clothing, mittens, tinted goggles, hand-warmers and a reinforced sleeping bag. We would buy the food at the point of start. My own boots, from Switzerland, cost more than \$200.

We each had personal stashes of travelers cheques - up to our limited capacities - and of course we ran out of funds before it was all over. Fortunately the transportation and most hotel arrangements were paid in advance - as later proved crucial for all of us. After a stop in Florida, we flew to Buenos Aires (no change of time zone in this instance), picking up our reservations at a fleabag flophouse in a crowded, run-down and noisy area where noise continued until dawn (above a dancehall!). Then we lugged all our gear to a bus station for an eight-hour ride through agricultural and semi-desert terrain to a less daunting hotel in Mendoza, . There, the next day, our equipment was inspected by two friendly men from the local hiking club. They had an arrangement with the military [Argentina at that time had a fascistic regime} whereby certification by the local hikers would result in issuance of a permit required by the (military) government.- if your politics was proper.

In these Latin-area places, all shops close from 12 to 2, and that made it difficult for us, because Jack, constitutionally, could not wake up, even though on his feet, until about ten A.M. - with or without coffee. We were trying to buy oxygen for climbing, for instance, with very little success. [Eventually we got some at a gas station.] There were important acquisitions to be made too, moreover; but fortunately the Latins, in order to compensate for their essential midday siestas, maintained full swing until 9 or 10 P.M., following the usual leisurely big meal.

The next and last day of bus travel took us to the starting point of our conquest, still in Argentina but at the pass leading down toward Santiago, Chile. An electric railroad traversed it, and the tunnel at the pass was shared by trains and vehicles, alternately and according to the direction of their respective headings of course. On the Argentinian side of the pass was a graveyard with about 70 interments and monuments, and it contained the remains of unsuccessful climbers of Aconcogua. Our *pension* was almost within sight of it. Ominous?



Aconcogua cemetery

It was a new, clean facility with good food. The proprietor's wife spoke German. Her husband showed us some slides of various places nearby and some maps that, like ours, were out-of-date. He told us that pack horses could be rented within reach; and we were ready to use them, next day. At that point the telephone rang, and it was the military with a message that our permit was being revoked and we must cancel our climb. [The reason given was that a hiking party from Los Angeles (other careless Americanos) had met with a tragedy on Aconcogua. One man had died, and a helicopter had been needed to evacuate other survivors.] Our proprietor argued on our behalf, without success. [Helicopters gobble up fuel much faster than do winged craft; and maintenance costs are "sky"-high.] I then suggested that we ourselves in person approach the military, whereupon the proprietor said the equivalent of "happy landing to you!" in Spanish; but he took us nevertheless to the local gendarmerie. An officer who looked like Errol Flynn dressed in an excessively-beribboned uniform haughtily rebuffed our pleas: For this season, he declared, "no mas Americanos de Los Angeles" or anywhere else in the USA! However, we did get permission to go **anyplace else** in the whole Andes! - "just don't climb Aconcogua".

Anyplace! That remark fired us up for adventure! Our proprietor told us there was an interesting nearby valley that pointed toward a snow-coned peak to the south on the Chile border, and a day's worth of packhorses could be hired for a starter. His map of it, however, proved pointless, because intervening earthquakes had changed the terrain drastically in some places - as we were to discover. The next day three horses and a man to ride one of them back with the other pack-nags at the end of the day, all appeared early the next morning; and we four trekkers followed the packhorses upon a road that soon gave out, to become an almost obscure trail with parts of it, even, totally missing. We

waded back and forth crossing the river; we climbed over fallen rocks, and we came to places where two different shack-like shelters once had stood on secure ground. One had become a pile of shambles; the other was now perched on the brink of a 30-foot cliff with



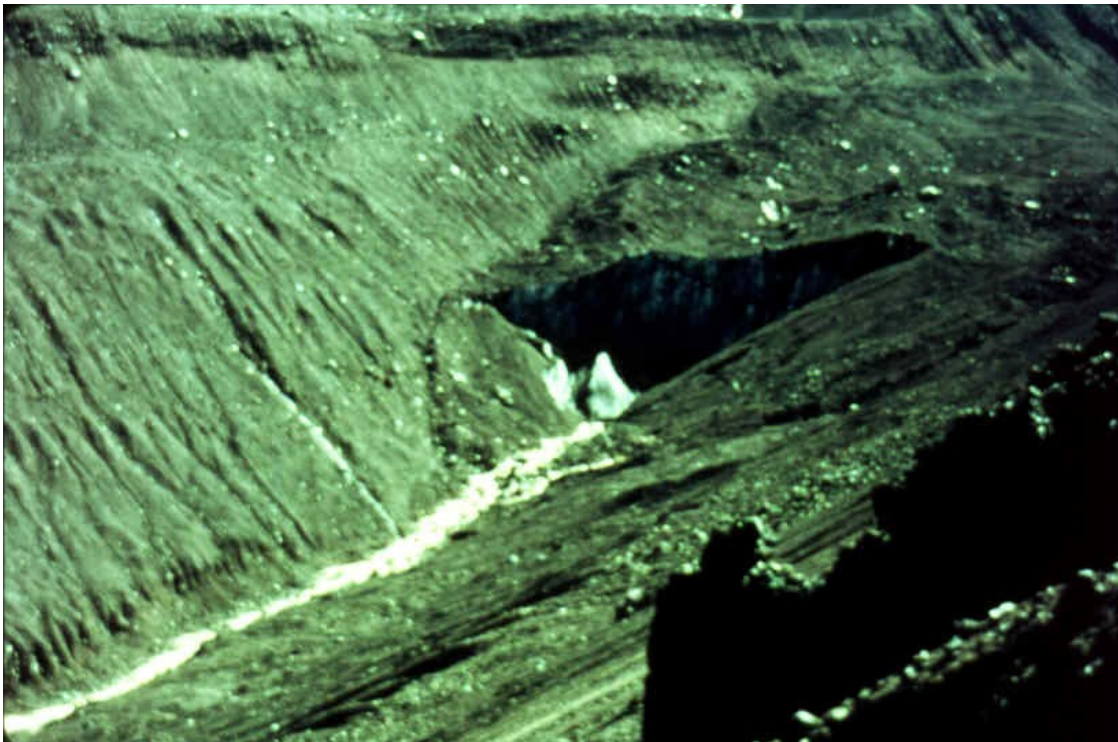
“shelter” on the brink

its front porch hanging out over space. Very many detours were needed. In one place we had to traverse a small glacial moraine. As for moving creatures, we saw only a herd of



Open to sky

Llama-like animals whose native name escapes me at the moment. Our altitude was about eight or nine thousand feet, I estimated.



Glacier's end

The horse packer, at about three p.m. declared he had gone far enough (maybe seven or eight miles) so we would have to transfer our horse's loads to "people with feet". Then he rode away leading his other two stock as we stood there wondering what had happened to the fee we had just seen fading into the distance away from our needs. He had left us on a flat where we could each grab part of all of our gear, including five days worth of food, most of it dried or canned. [Did we have a can-opener with us? No!] We moved our gear to a spot where there was a tributary stream, so as to give us water, and started to set up camp. By the time we had finished supper, it had become clear that we were engulfed by a swarm of lemmings! How had they got there all the way from Norway?!



First Day



Mt. Topungato

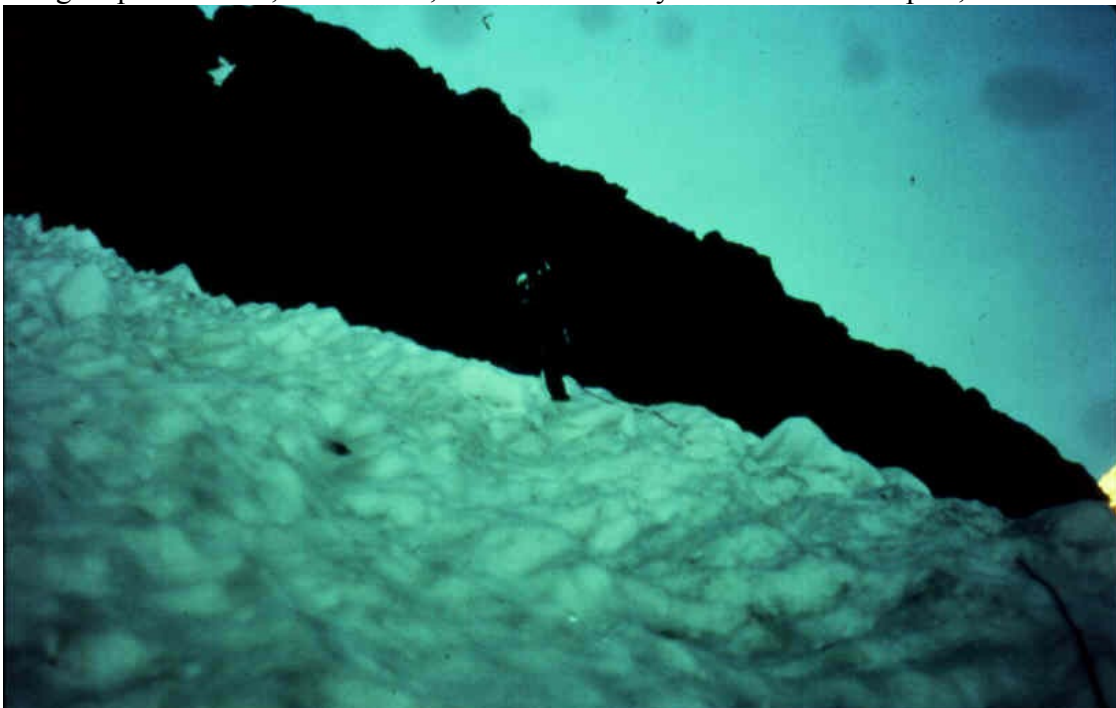


First Day



First Day

Early the next day, despite inroads the lemmings had made into our food supply, we moved camp a mile (in two trips) farther up the valley toward the snowfields. There, having dispensed with, and cached, our tents as bulky nuisances to transport, we laid out



danger spot

our sleeping bags under the stars. Ah! How different were the stars!: we must be on another planet, for the north star was gone, and the dippers had all-but disappeared, being supplanted by the Southern Cross.

The following day, believing mistakenly that the snowfields now ahead of us would bring us closer to the snowy, dead volcano, Volcan Maipu (17,000+) we had now





ascended to about 11,000 feet, on packed snow. As we proceeded diagonally up the side of a tilted snowfield the next morning, as the sunlight hitting the ice and snow, loosened rocks of various sizes, loosened by heat of the sun, the rocks began to tumble or careen down toward us from the cliffs above the tilted snow field. I lost my camera by just



Second day Volcan Maipu

dropping it down the snow slope. I was shaken, though we were roped at the time, A rock the size of beach ball passed over my head, missing it by about a yard. It was then that I realized: altitude and its oxygen deprivation had been affecting my judgment. We should not be there; we were in danger - foolhardy and vulnerable!

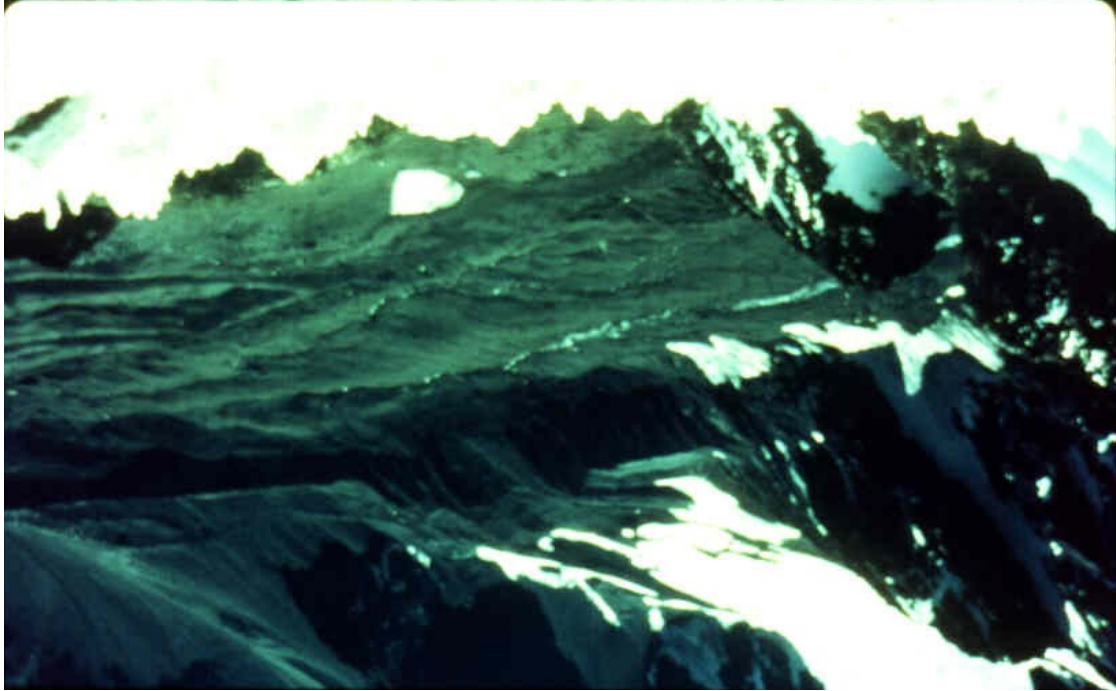
We quickly decided to call it quits - to make an end to this dreamy adventure. Moreover, we would have to leave the Andes completely: and we had spent our wad! Oh, for those horses, now!



Andes Peaks



Breaking Camp



Retreat



Retreat

In two days however, we made it back to the pension - but not until we had abandoned a lot of things: I, my precious Swiss climbing boots - plus a lot of cold-weather gear, and even the tents. By extreme good fortune, however, we were given a

ride over the previous initial mile of driveable road, but this time at the return end of our trek, We rode in a pick-up truck that happened to be there on government business of some sort. Looking for us? Probably not. Nothing was said.....nor did we think to ask if a new map was about to be made.

But now we were “inn” deep. We owed several hundred dollars to the pension. We gave its proprietor our oxygen supply and its container. [On the air flights, it had to be empty, until Jack had filled it in Mendoza]. Our proprietor accepted it as partial payment, but Jack had to promise to send a remittance via credit card, from the USA. The farewell was not a happy one. So the three boys went back into eastern Argentina where they sold ice-axes and other mountaineering items in order to sustain themselves until reaching the Rio airport and use up their return-trip tickets. For my part, I headed off into Chile because I had made hotel reservations, and had also prepaid my travel costs in Peru and Bolivia;

Now we come to the most unexpected aspects of the South American odyssey where I was on my own, almost without any negotiable cash in hand.





Because of the prepaid hotel reservations, with the first one at Santiago; I did not have enough cash for the bus trip down from the pass. [Mention of that area causes me to digress momentarily regarding the jet-stream. It was close to this pass that a jet plane heading to Santiago a few years later had crashed into peaks adjacent to Aconcagua because, navigating without adequate radio aids in those days, it had confronted and unknowingly combated the jet stream, the airplane's ground speed was half of what the pilots thought they were making, resulting in the crash: the attempt to descend, flying "blind" to Santiago was fatally premature.] Several years later, on a commercial flight, I had a chance to see the jet stream in action - the same phenomenon that had killed many climbers on Everest through the years. It could be seen because clouds were being sucked up into it from below, and the environment surrounding our plane was moving faster forward vis-a-vis the ground, then was our plane!]

The bus ride down to Santiago [it left me with less than \$25 in cash!] was pleasant and it afforded many views of the Pacific. Santiago itself reminded me of San Francisco: abundant flowers and greenery; old buildings; a relaxed atmosphere; a feeling of maturity. It had had even enough time to get a bit dirty and run-down in some quarters. There was a beautiful, large central park; and people were friendly. A funicular car rose up to the peak of a hill in the park. I wanted to tarry there, but the hotel reservation was simply overnight. Then began a series of flights along the Pacific coast northward, first to Bolivia. To gaze down upon the coastline with its small seaports and ocean traffic and, at

the same time, from the opposite side of the plane, to look for road and mines in the heights, engendered a "detached" feeling in me almost as if I were looking at the earth below, from space itself. In Santiago I had an opportunity to replace my camera.

Next stop was La Paz. We circled over it before landing; and it struck me as resembling a toy village perched on top of a stool. After the plane landed on a high plateau, we drove down to that "stool" where many of the inhabitants were Indians whose womenfolk wore fedoras above their long braided locks. The hotel's restaurant was on the top, 12th floor, and it seemed to bring La Paz almost up to the level of the higher plateau where the plane has just landed, at about 12,000 feet. La Paz may be the highest large city in the world. The hotel's restaurant was crowded, and a lady patron had just passed out for want of oxygen as I entered. Perhaps I should not have been surprised to find that a cart carrying an oxygen dispenser, was permanently available there - and now I saw it being put to use. People fly up there to get a "high" without realizing instead they might get laid low.



Huanaco



Huanaco



Huanaco



Huanaco



Huanaco



Huanaco



Huanaco



Huanaco



Huanaco

The purpose behind the La Paz visit was to see the pre-Inca ruins at Huanaco near Lake Titicaca up on the plane, reputed to be the world's highest lake of its size. The lakeshore itself is full of reeds, being shallow; it could have once been a volcanic crater, perhaps. Some boats made of reeds apparently carried fishermen. We stopped at an isolated house where coca (cocaine) leaves were brewed into a tea, and, without realizing such was the case, I experienced a brief "high"; but that explained why there were no signs on it like a tavern: it was disguised, catering offhandedly to tourist trade.

Huanaco, perhaps a thousand years or more ago, had been quite a town, extending over half a mile diameter, apparently supplied with water and boat docks outlined by enormous stone slabs, some which still stood, even outlining doorways. There were also some stone statues of human figures. Where had the large stones come from? Not present in that area the way it looked today! How were the stone slabs moved or raised, to be fitted? And who might have done it? As for moving those slabs, maybe they could have been pushed over ice that I winter time might have coated the implied canal routes.

The flight to Lima, Peru, revealed more of the high, sparsely penetrated Andes, but less of the coastline. Again the hotel reservation saved the day. Whereas La Paz had been under a cloud of intermittent civil disorder, Lima was dirty and somnolent, even conveying a sense of morbidity. It was here that, upon finding a Chinese restaurant, I depleted my cash stash down to \$15 in anticipation of giving myself a familiar treat on

that evening.. Alas, I discovered that the Chinese, shrewd business men that they are, adapt “Chinese” food to the habitual taste preferences of native residents, wherever, worldwide; and what was offered was no longer the real thing! Incidentally, in Lima I got diarrhea as an unadvertised “extra”.



Cuzco

Next came a bus ride to Cuzco, a town of unusual architectural interest. Created by the invading Spaniards, it had a definite medieval sheen that was capped by its enormous cathedral. Scads of felt-hatted Indian women filled its streets, selling corn with kernels two times larger than what we know; enormous beans, giant squashes of varied shapes and colors, and flowers. I had been warned that there were pick-pockets in Cuzco, but I felt confident that I could remain sufficiently alert to protect both my passport and my remaining \$7. Then, a large-hatted Indian woman with her head turned away bumped me hard, as if by accident; I checked, but nothing was missing. “I’ve got it licked,” I



Market crowd

thought. But (maybe) only fifteen minutes later I entered a narrow street for pedestrians only, bustling with stalls and buyers.. At one point I felt a man groping at ground level in the crowd, seemingly trying to pick something up that had been dropped; I knew he was looking for a leg-cache for passport or money, in my case, in vain. The crowd at that time was very thick. My wallet was in my chest pocket where I could keep track of it visually. I've outwitted them, I confided to myself. But when I emerged from that street, my wallet was with me no longer! Then, when I turned back to that street to view the scene of the crime, somehow nobody was on that narrow street any longer: nobody! The shops, even, were abandoned!

So I went to the police station, to report it. A polite attendant took down information about what was missing and where it occurred. Then he said, "that will be ten pesos" But now I have no money, I reminded him. He said, "After three days, bring back the form and you will get another one free of charge". Fortunately I already had a round-trip ticket to Machu-piccu and reservations at its Inn, for supper, breakfast and overnight.

Upon return from Machu-piccu I was able to get a certificate to use as backup for income-tax loss-declaration, as back-up. And when doing that, I met a Canadian tourist en route to Machu-piccu, asking me about what it was like. I also told him, by way of warning, about the pick-pocket industry and what can happen. He offered to lend me \$15 Canadian, and I wrote down his address and promised to reimburse him after I had repatriated myself.



Machu-piccu



Machu-piccu



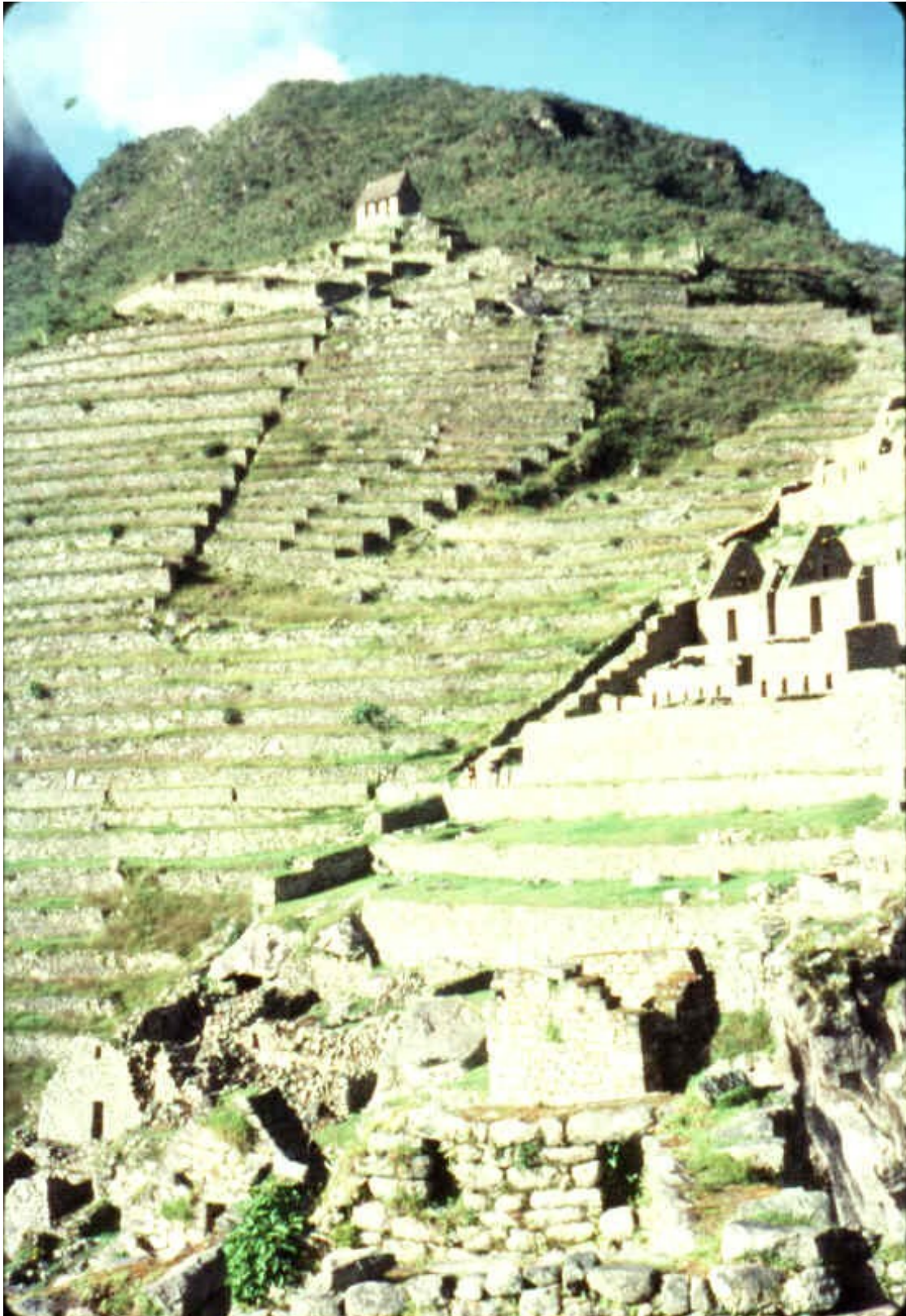
Peak Wayna Piccu in the background - ½ mile distant



Machu-piccu



Machu-piccu



Machu-piccu



Machu-piccu as seen from Wayna Piccu peak. End of Inca Trail and M-P Guesthouse in the distance



Machu-piccu



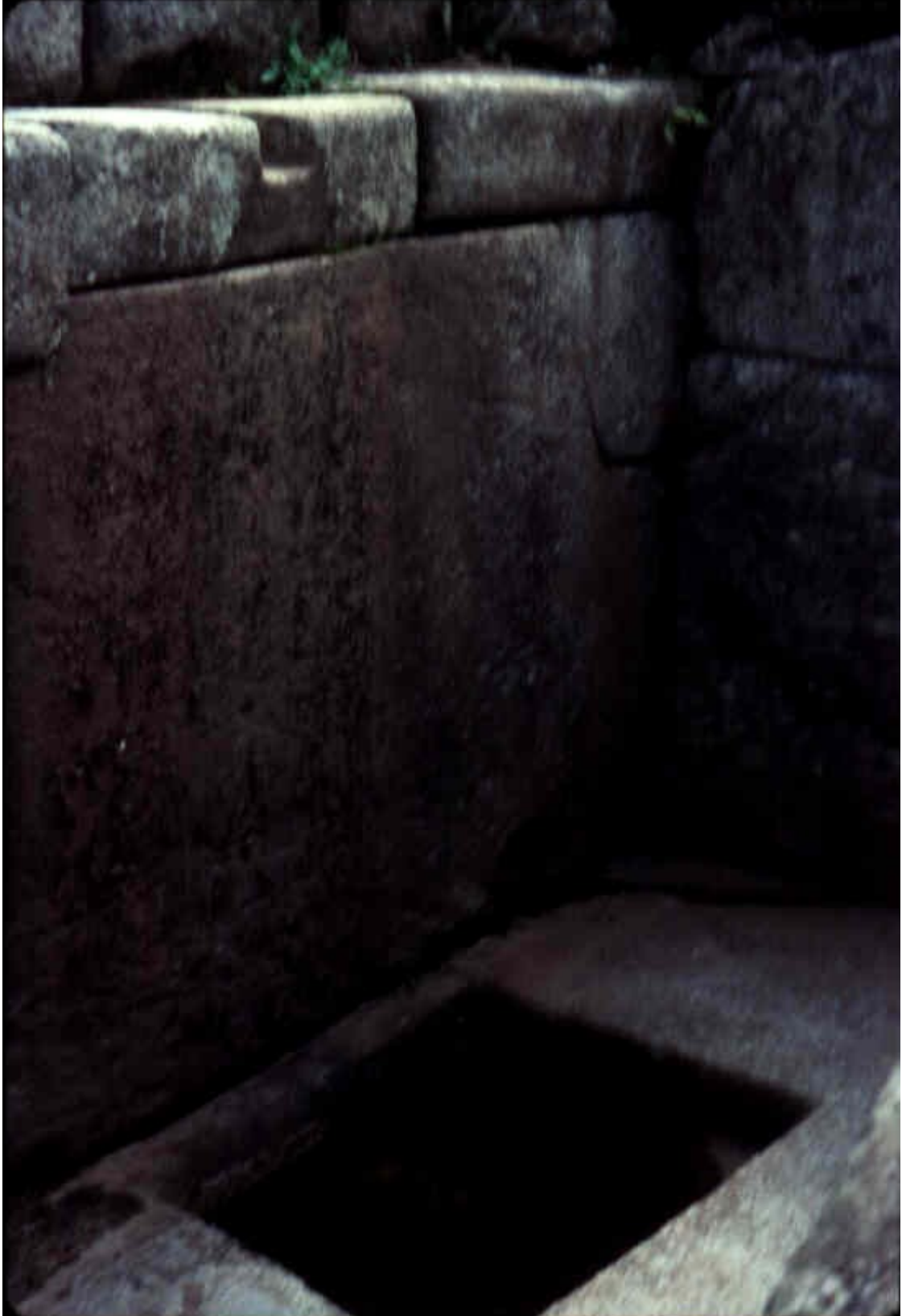
Looking down at river and railroad from Wayna-Piccu



Road switchback (for buses) in the foreground



Machu-piccu



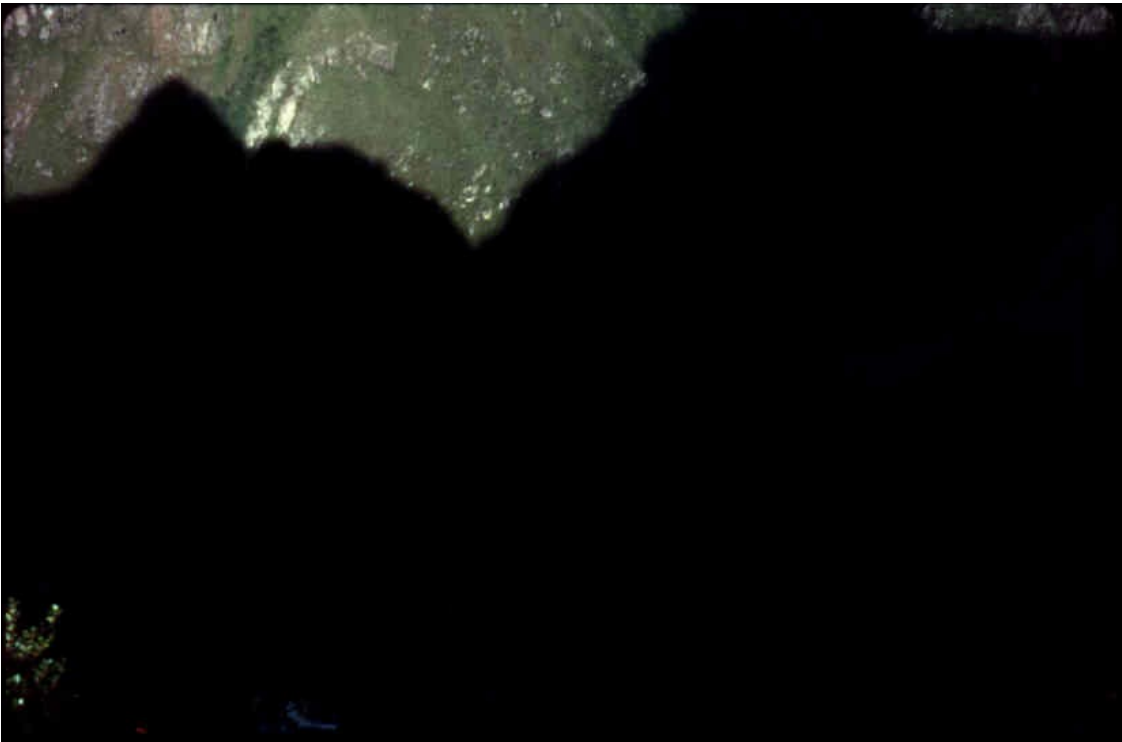
Bathtub in the foreground



Machu-piccu



Machu-piccu



Machu-piccu



Machu-piccu

Next comes the Machu-piccu incident itself. Having missed the morning train, I took the late-afternoon local, crowded with animals and Indians, and it was fascinating - not alone because of the countryside but because of the human activities aboard. Presently dusk fell and station signs seemed to disappear. I told those around me that I wanted Machu-piccu; but I did not know that a different local station bore that same name. Consequently, when I got off, in the darkness, and the train had pulled out, I found that I had gotten off one station too early. What to do? Carrying my bag, I walked along the rails after the departed train, hoping there would not be an unmarked junction of some sort, ahead. There wasn't. But at the real Machu-piccu tourists' station all was closed down; nobody was in sight where buses usually take tourists up a seven-switch-backed, narrow road, to the mountaintop phenomenon itself.

There were a couple of houses, presumably for people employed to handle the buses and tourist facilities and station. It happened that some boys saw me standing there. I showed them my meal ticket and hotel reservation and indicated my intention to hike up the road. I also told them about being pocket-picked. One of the boys wanted me to accept a few centavos from him, as consolation, and I was touched. Pretty soon one of the boys, after some discussion with others - too rapid for me to unravel - told me to wait there: it wasn't safe to go up on foot alone. Soon he returned with a man in a pickup truck who offered to take me up to my destination. I really enjoyed that dinner; I had made it by 8 P.M. just as meal service was closing. The next morning I had the whole Machu-piccu preserve virtually all to myself, for exploration. Only about twelve people had stayed overnight, and the daytime tourists from the train would not arrive until about 11 A.M. What I saw of that ancient Inca town and its layout amazed me. When the buses

came and took the tourists down, I saw those same boys. They were running down from switchback to switchback on the steep slope, waving at the visitors and relishing the visitors' amazement at seeing the same kids again and again at each U-turn that the buses made. Some gifts were thrown to the kids, both en route and at the bottom where the train station was.

The homebound trip by air, prepaid, was uneventful.

CHAPTER 6 The Appalachian and Other Eastern Trails

Pulling my wits together, now, still attempting to focus on adventures, with anecdotes and incidents, I have to conclude that these last 46 years, lived out in the middle of the east coast states, I have found the nature of “adventures” to have shifted..

The shift has been from frolic toward fervor; from light to more serious, and away from casual entertainment, to issues pertaining to conservation, to preservation - to concern for perils to the woods, forests, glaciers, bays, rivers, winds, and our natural resources. So, it is less about good-time abandon, and braving the elements, than becoming involved in survival of the vast global garden that sustains human existence.



Stream crossing - rock-to-rock



White Mountain N H Trail



Crawford Notch



At timberline





During the last 50 of the 80 years (proclaimed in our title), maybe we have been doing more playing, more mischief, even, than we realized. So conservation increasingly matters. I have become involved in a social movement that has some of the earmarks of a religion. It is to follow pathways; and it has manifested itself, for me, in two activities: hiking clubs (partly continuing the scouts tradition) and in stewardship to the Appalachian Trail Conference, (now named Appalachian Trail Conservancy). Actually, the Conservancy is a federation of hiking clubs that maintain the Appalachian as the first “National Scenic Trail”, now supervised under joint agreement with the National Park Service.

To begin with, I joined one of those maintaining hiking clubs, Mountain Club of Maryland, based in Baltimore, MD. That was in 1958; and through its program of weekend outings, came exercise and fellowship and exposure to features and places of unusual beauty and interest. Outings included skiing, canoeing, camping, exploring, caving and trail-working, not only in Maryland but also in four neighboring states. It was a group endowed by the presence of specialists in biology, geology, dendrology, botany, bird-watching, caving, and cooking - all out-of-doors, of course. On our excursions and in our operations and planning, costs were kept to a minimum and pro-rated. Behavioral commitment was at an almost religious level: members qualified by reason of recommendation from an already current member, and from having a requirement to participate in at least three hikes as a visiting guest. When mentioning “religion” I mean a sense of purpose and goodwill. As with marriage, “commitment” and “dedication” were the watchwords. Soon there were also hikes in the middle of the week; there were

special work trips on trails and on overnight shelters on the Appalachian Trail. This club was maintaining 45 miles of it.

In its first fifty years MCM had a spotless record with regard to casualties or accidents. Then a sixteen-year-old suffered a diabetic attack while on a long hike in New Hampshire snow. It came during an attempt by a handful of club members who were adding mileage to their attempt to “do” the whole Trail. The boy began to lag; then he became unresponsive. Suspicion was that he was suffering from frostbite. [Yes, that, too!]. He was put into a bevy of sleeping bags along with two others, all of them disrobed for the occasion, to warm him up. Presently a way was found to summon help, and suitable medical attention at a local hospital saw him through.

In the late '70's MCM decided to re-institute the all-day HAM hike (Hike Across Maryland) - forty miles from the Pennsylvania line to Virginia, starting at 5:30 a.m. and finishing at around 8 pm, by most. Biennially after that, it has been repeated ever since. Sprinters make a race of it, which is not encouraged; but they do it sometimes in only seven hours! As for me, I started at 5:30 a. m. (after a restless night on the floor of the fire station at Blue Ridge Summit in PA), and finished at about 8 p.m. - truly worn out, creaking and ailing, at Harpers Ferry, W.V..



Red Creek, Dolly Sods, VA



Appalachian pioneer's cabin 1967

About six years later my youngest son, Martin Pierce G., then a student at Johns Hopkins, decided to do the HAM hike, and I, with my car, waited to salute him at the Virginia end of the highway bridge that, at that time, was the terminus of HAM. [Nowadays it ends at Harpers Ferry, WV.] At around six pm at the Maryland end of the bridge, was a figure that might have been Martin, looking around and then apparently retracing his route - and disappearing. Our radio communication and spot-checking network had reported Martin as having passed the last check-point (on the C. and O. towpath) prior to that. But then he seemed to have vanished - victim of some injury?

So we scoured that section of the route, calling his name and looking in wayside brush for his body. The state police were called and their spotlight helicopter swept the relevant terrain, to no avail. Finally, at 3:30 a.m., the search was abandoned.

At around 8 a.m., back home, the phone rang and it was Martin Pierce. He had not listened carefully enough to initial instructions that mentioned the end of the hike was to be at the Virginia end of the long highway bridge, not its Maryland end. Finding nobody at the Maryland end, he had back-tracked about a mile to the hamlet of Weverton (about eight houses and a country church), had knocked on the door of the preacher's house, and had been taken in for the night! It had not occurred to them to telephone authorities.

In 1973 I had attended the biennial week-long national meeting and hikes of AT Conservancy, held in Connecticut, and when the next meeting was held in 1975, I was sharing its concern over trespass onto the trail and problems with property owners in the middle states over permissions to cross their land holdings. Second home-buildings had begun interfering with continuity of the Trail. Our local mountain club was one of the clubs that was working on a 200-mile possible relocation of part the Trail on that account, between Shenandoah National Park and state woodlands near Harrisburg, PA.

Then, simultaneously through the Congress and through legislative assemblies in New Jersey, New York and Maryland first, and then through the White House, legislation was passed to nationalize ownership of the whole trail, successfully, and federally funded. At that same time, a 250-mile detour from mid-Virginia to mid-Pennsylvania became the present Tuscarora Trail. Our local club then had started relocating sections of its part of the Appalachian Trail that were being intruded upon by off-road vehicles.

When I became the Club's Supervisor of Trails, the National Park Service's team of land-acquisition specialists started its program of land acquisition to provide a national park more than 2,000 miles long, from Maine to Georgia, in a corridor averaging 200 feet in width. At this writing there are only about two miles that have not thus been permanently preserved. It has taken more than twenty years. When it began, I volunteered to assist the NPS land specialists by contacting landowners from whom we wished to buy some of the land: it was thought that rapport with them from many previous years by non-governmental people like us, could expedite this effort.

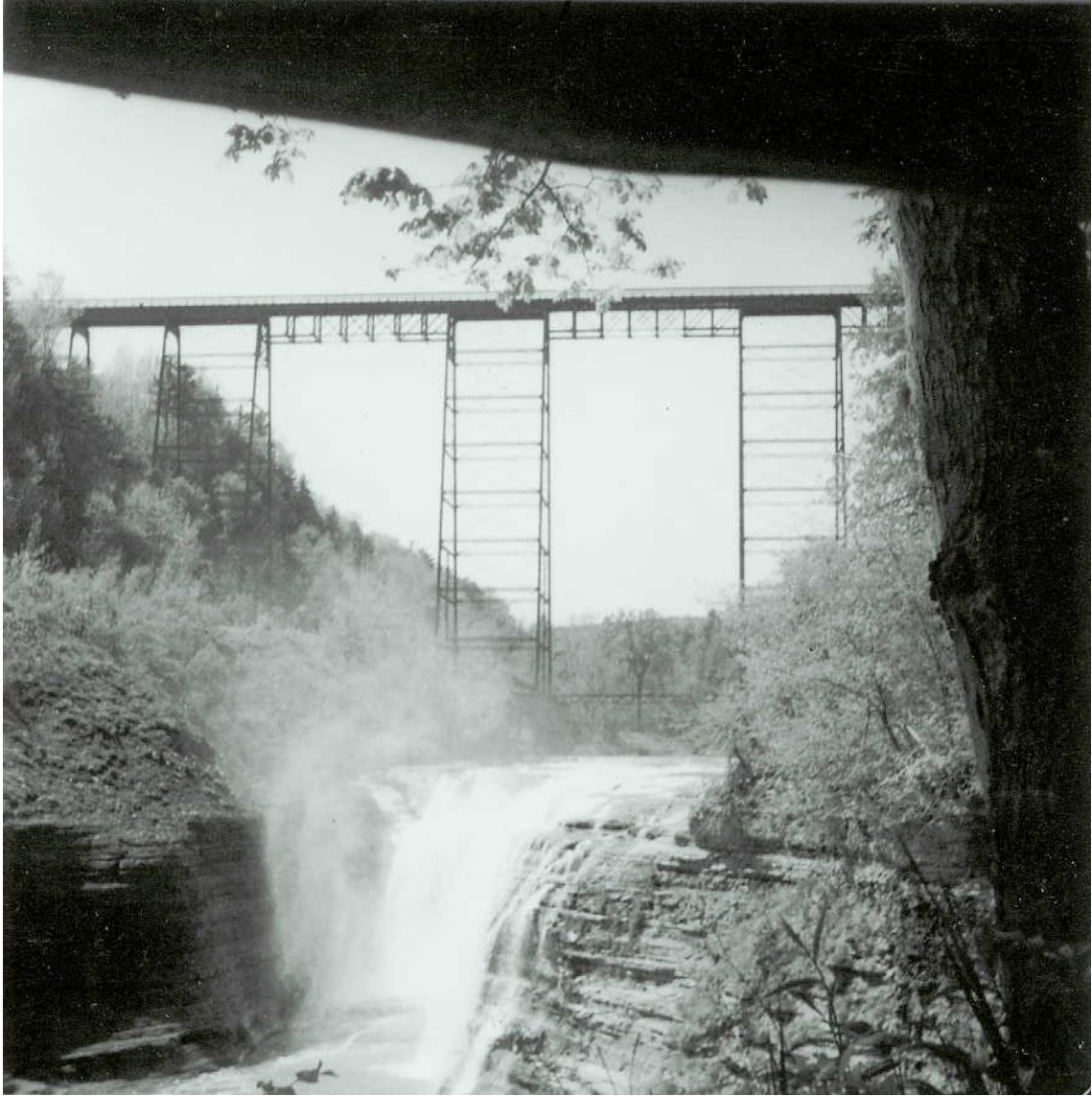
Well, it backfired, partly because a rumor was spread that land was being condemned without payment, and at one point a group of four or five men with a pickup truck approached me at one landowner's property and said that if I didn't leave, I would be carried out "in a box". That was in the Cumberland Valley where for twelve miles the "trail" was on the shoulder of a paved road and therefore had to be relocated. It took NPS almost ten years to clear its rights of way across the Cumberland Valley.

For twelve years I served on ATC's Board of Managers, and I maintained a 3-mile section of the Trail personally for twenty years. It was a section full of poison ivy - to which I was not allergic. When I retired from the university and returned from the Andes trek, I began an eleven-year stretch as "Ridgerunner" on the 40 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Maryland.

Prior to that, at the urging of one NPS bureaucrat, and after having retired from the university, I undertook to lay out the route for another national scenic trail that the Congress had proposed: the Potomac Heritage Trail. It was to follow the Potomac riverbank from south of D.C., up the Potomac River (using the old Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath to Cumberland, and then proceed west to Pittsburgh. [A very fine PA trail already existed near the western end of the proposed route.]) A small part was intended to follow an old railroad bed. Making repeated trips averaging 140 to 160 miles or more, each, and talking to as many as fifteen landowners, I laid out a route that required only four owners' permissions if rights-of-way could be purchase from them. Then a critical impediment appeared: there were no trail clubs close enough to manage and maintain the route. A vehicular "trail" route on old railroad properties, however, has since been under consideration. But old-railroad walking is boring and somewhat unsafe because vehicles soon take it over. Besides, it offers no challenging climbs and too much sunlight.



Choo-choo done gone fo' good



Upper Falls Genesee River, N.Y.





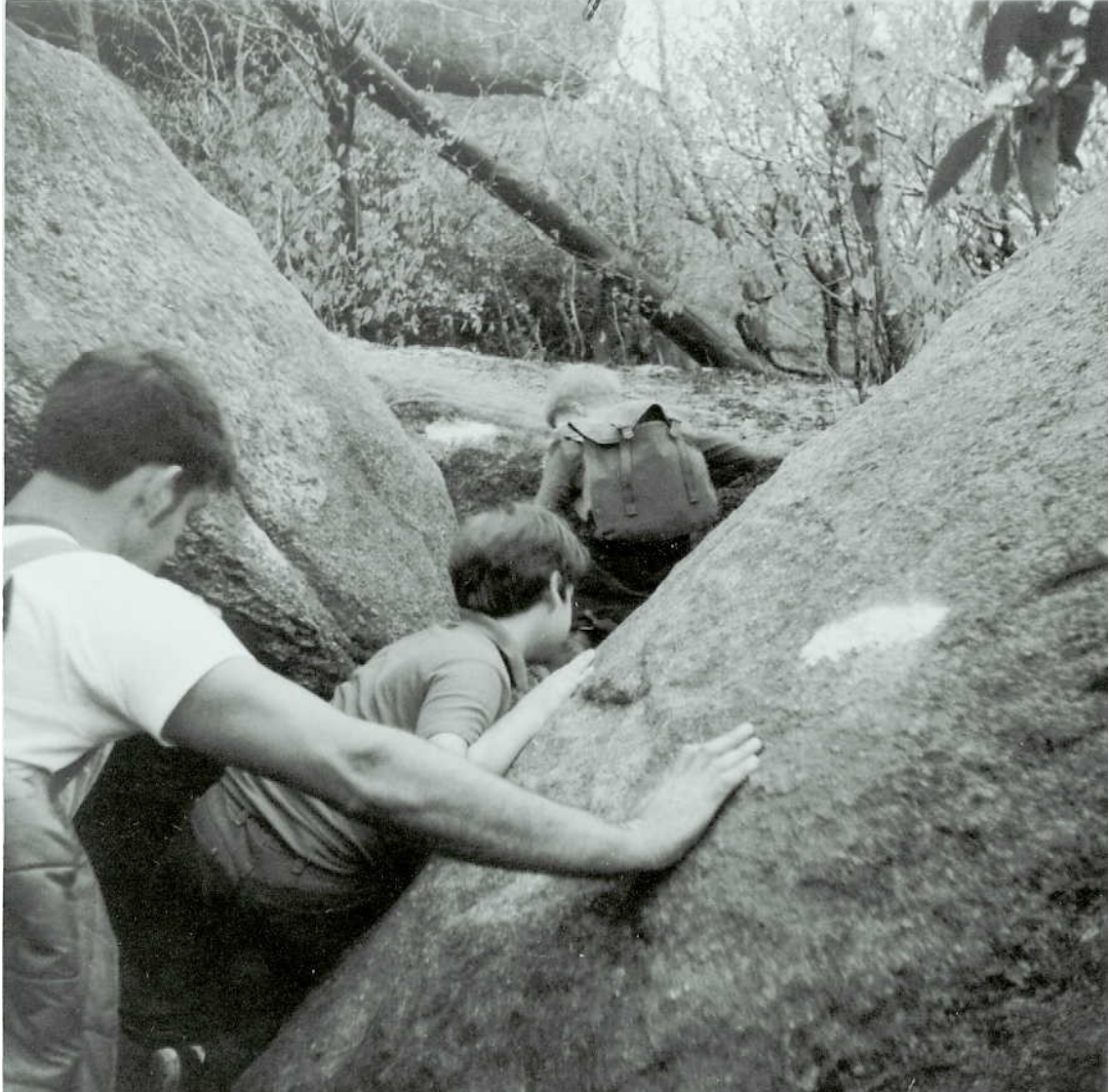
Yes! It's for real!



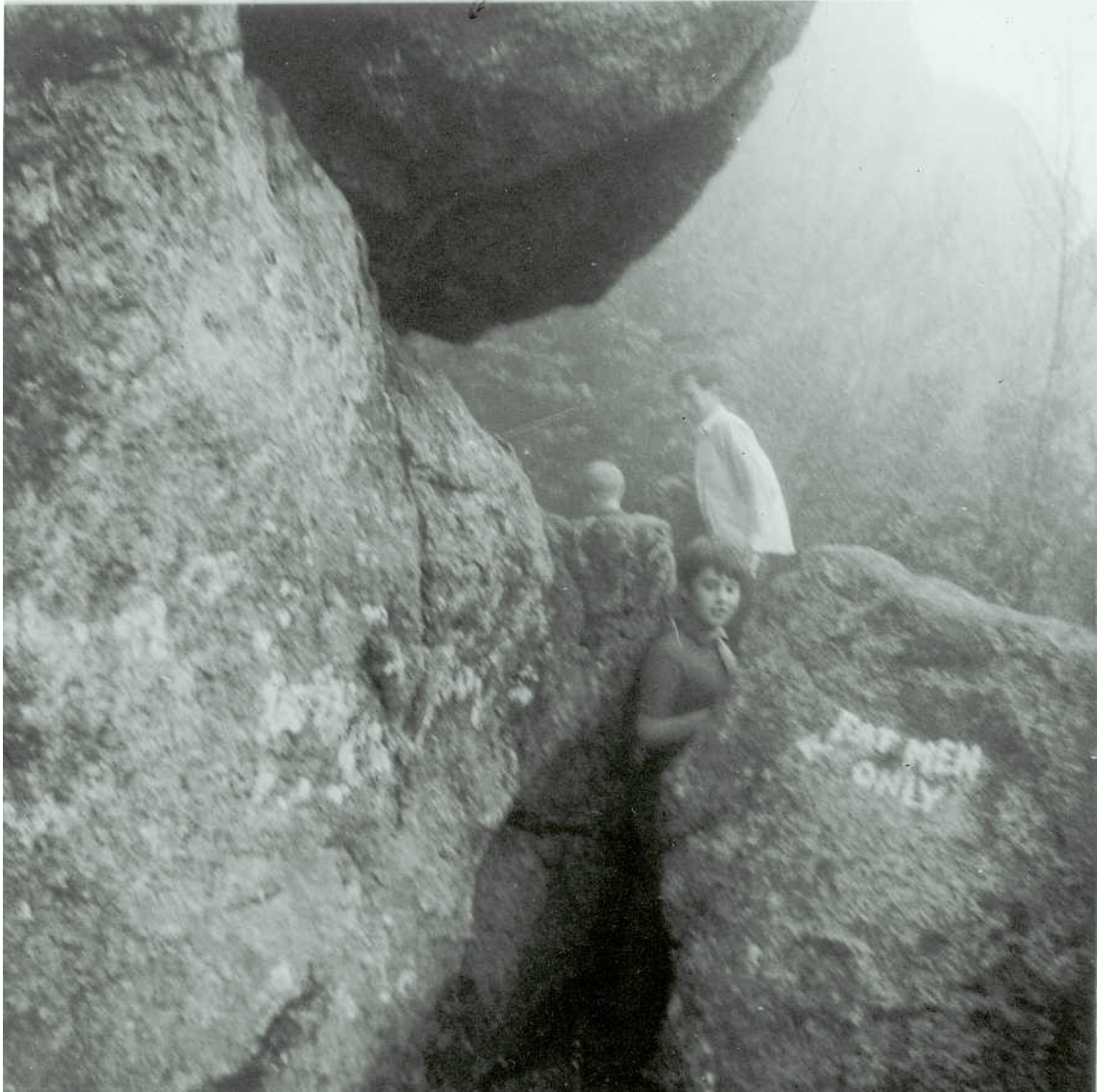
I worked on trail-marking, bridges, foot-tread surfaces and routings for forty years. In connection with A.T. work, I got excellent detailed maps; and when I showed them to the (State's) Manager of South Mountain Recreational Area in MD, (which had state-park status, and which included all forty MD miles of the A.T.), he asked me if I would work for him as a patrolman on Maryland's section of the Trail. A similar move was being made in Connecticut. That was in 1986; I accepted and continued the part-time job for the next eleven years. Then, after that, I worked for the A.T. Land Trust for two years.



Mason-Dixon Line: PA/MD



Old Rag Mountain, Shenandoah Nat'l Park VA



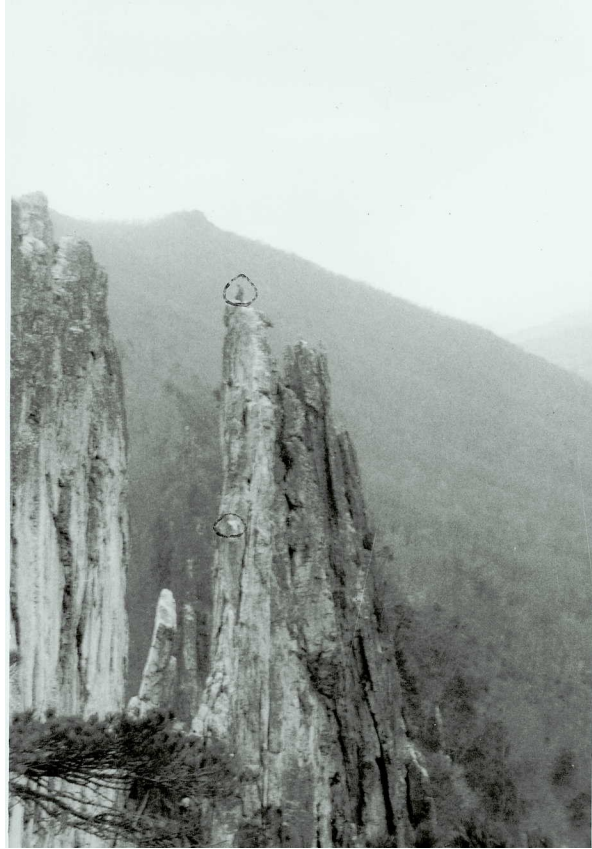
Old Rag Mountain, Shenandoah Nat'l Park VA



Old Rag Mountain, Shenandoah Nat'l Park VA



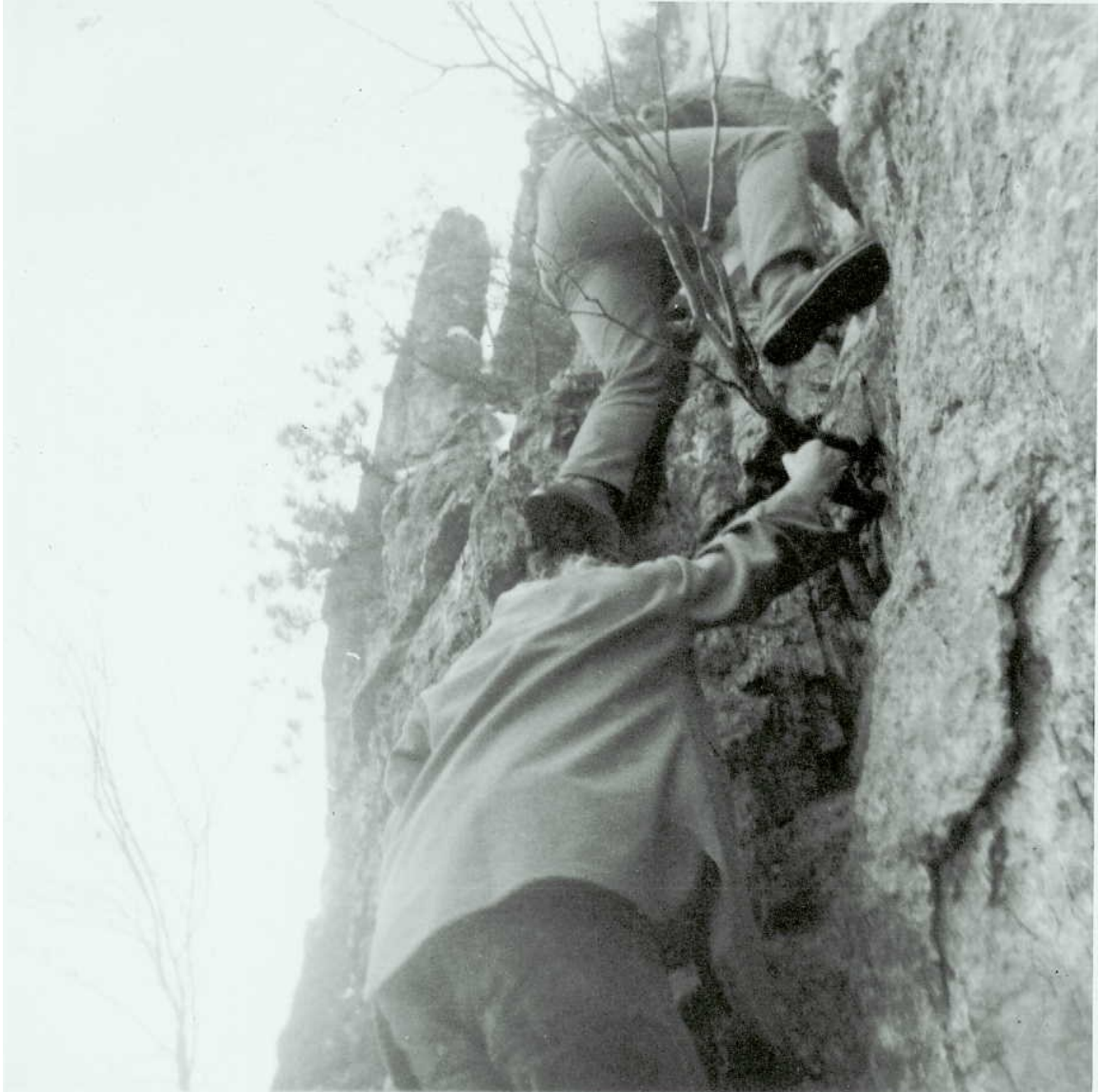
“Why is she stuck, up there? People are waiting!” Mason-Dixon Line



Seneca Rock, VA [note the climber at the center of the photo] This rock-sliver collapsed about 1995.



Starting to climb Seneca Rock -1973



There they go!



Mountain stream in summer

In the first year of ridge-running (patrolling) in Maryland, I learned that the young man who had preceded me had tended to goof off, mainly at the shelters, and had not provided input that showed whether or not he was doing anything useful. The difficulties that prompted the job were trespass and vandalism wherein local people saw no reason why they should not be able to treat “their, public woods” as they wished, even to the point of cutting and removing timber from it. Random campfires also gave rise to occasional forest fires. I think Superintendent Preston, despite his tact and entertaining amiability, felt that an older man such as myself - or himself - might convey greater authority than would a the blandishments of a younger guy.

During my eleven years of ridge-running I walked, in mileage, the equivalent of the length of the combined Americas.



From “The Appalachian Trail Backpacker” courtesy of Victoria & Frank Logue

Here are some facts about the A.T. itself:

- + it was proposed in the early 1920’s in an effort to preserve the Appalachians, in primitivity, as a parkway; but it got whittled down to a mere footpath. No vehicles, no riders or pack animals. Its first actual mileage appeared in NY state in the early 1930’s.
- + it is around 2,200 miles in length, from Maine to Georgia; and it is the skinniest long strip of public land in the country. It has an estimated 8,600 miles of external property boundaries.
- + within those boundaries there are primitive, open-faced shelters at intervals about ten miles apart. It has no tourist facilities except in the White Mountains in New England, where there are five or six huts high up, with no road to them..
- + it traverses Great Smokey and Shenandoah National Parks; also numerous state parks, municipal parks and watersheds. It crosses a river in Maine using a rowboat-

ferry.

- + each year about 200 to 400 hikers walk it from end to end, backpacking. Many come From foreign lands - Australia, Africa, Japan, India, Europe to see, or to use it.
- + there are no fees or tolls. There are no *trailside* commercial eateries. No beds.
- + there are interesting side-trails: amazing vistas, historical sites and monuments.
- + there are fascinating seasonal changes; rare birds, bears, deer, coyotes, raccoons, beavers, amazing wild flowers, steep climbs, bucolic meadows, historic remains.
 - + and finally, interesting, charming, daring, eccentric and beguiling nature-geeks of all ages - fired up for challenge and adventure, Here I come!

For different reasons in each instance, the State and the ATC (the Conservancy federation of trail clubs) wanted a ridge-runner program: the state wants reports of incipient forest fires, of criminal presence or actions, of lost persons, of injuries, of trespass - police and legal matters; whereas the Conservancy cherished contacts with the hikers - to burnish the Trail's image; to share its joys and challenges; to play host, and to convey useful information to those walking the wilderness. Naturally the unprofessional volunteer maintaining groups have equal concern over safety and malfeasance issues, lost hikers, and public safety, as well..

As ridge runners, we had first-aid certification and benefit of a two-day training program in emergency mountain medicine; it even included tips on recognizing people's appearance and traits. We had map study. Study of regulations.

We wore uniforms. We carried radios or cell phones (where usable); we were unarmed; In my case, in Maryland, I was in constant touch with ranger headquarters; and they never failed to show up in prompt response when I reported an irregularity or emergency. They monitored where I was and where I was headed. By listening to the state's radio network, I could keep track of where various rangers would be - how far away, and whom best to call in case of emergency.

In my pack I carried a hunting knife and some rope (often used to lead a wandering dog back to a road), first-aid and some additional medications, candles, flares (in case a helicopter rescue should occur), a piece of canvas, a light blanket, a flashlight, and matches, a can opener, and maps and scrap paper, and a lighter, for starting a fire. Altogether I carried about twenty pounds of that sort of thing apart from weather-wear. In case of rain, I carried an umbrella. I covered between ten and fifteen miles each work day.

Hikers that I met often needed information about where to go, off the trail, to get eyeglasses repaired, boots repaired, specialized medical attention, to make a phone call, or to splurge gastronomically - sometimes just to bathe. "[Through"- (long-distance - hikers, often had become sufficiently aromatic that I could detect their presence before even seeing them.]

I patrolled from early April when wildflowers were creeping out from the soil, to

Thanksgiving when locals had finished making sure that the leaves had finished putting on their color show. I worked only four days a week however, but it always included Saturday, Sundays and holidays when locals seemed to infest the area with picnics and day-hikes. My pattern of operation was, using my car, to hit the shelters, from side-trails that I knew, early in the morning when those who had been partying the night before were most vulnerable to my presence - particularly if alcohol or drug usage was apparent and if they were minors. The rangers would always come, and court citations issued. Usually I would spot the offense, radio the message, and then wait for the rangers to handle the confrontation. In one instance, when the ranger arrived (an hour later because of access distance) he was sweet as pie to the offenders who had an illegal fire and tent site and were squiffed. I knew he was going to give them a citation, but I thought he would never get around to it: he even offered to help them take down their tent! Then, next day, the park office got a call from a citizen who lived close to the car-parking area, that somebody had left a pack there. The rangers found in it not only the identity of its owner, but a loaded '45. [A phone call to the owner suggested that he come and pick up his pack, upon which of course he received a weapons citation!] Tact and etiquette are the most effective tool in a policeman's, or ranger's, arsenal!

Another problem we faced one particular summer was the presence of three small groups of homeless people who were seeking to survive on the Trail by mooching food-handouts from hikers. The pattern I used, first suggested to me by Ranger Preston, was to keep them moving, from day to day, either toward the Pennsylvania or Virginia state lines. I would chat with them, see that they were creating no difficulties - such as staying there too long, or monopolizing the shelter, or messing up the site - and mention that I would be seeing them next day or so, presumably farther along the line. In one instance, a lazy man, usually lolling in a hammock strung between trees, with a twelve-year-old boy and a bedraggled woman (who was slaving away boiling clothes, chopping wood, and cooking, just like a slave) was camped near the shelter (to take advantage of its water source), but just out of sight of it.. When I told Ranger Preston about it, he himself went there. He learned that the man had recently been released from prison in New York. The boy and his mother were then turned over to the welfare institutions at Hagerstown and the man was shipped back to New York state.

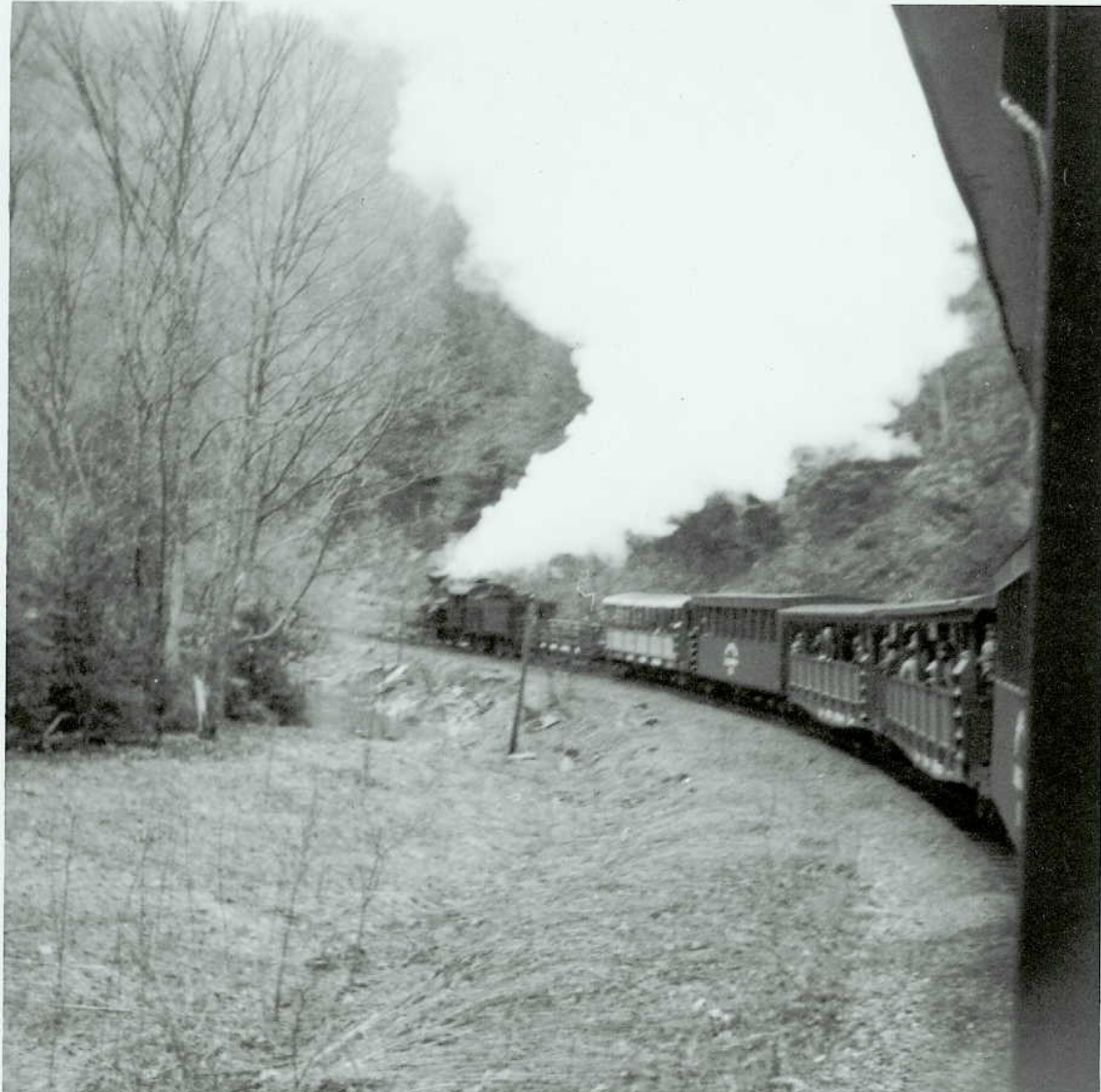
That same year, at an undesignated, improvised tent site I encountered two teenagers who, in defending their inappropriate choice of a campsite, complained that their night had been interrupted by some noisy drunks who appeared to be camped, also illegally, on a nearby knoll. Upon investigation I discovered a scenic overlook about which were strewn all manner of items as if from a deserted house. Among them was a diary written by a young teenage girl. It described how she and her sister and the sister's boyfriend had started out near Chicago, had a car breakdown in Indiana; "borrowed" an Ohio car, only to have it break down here. And the entries concluded with "...and now we are off to do our daily thieving". I radioed to Ranger Preston; presently he radioed back that he had called the Washington County police who would send officers to the scene. They didn't arrive until 4 p.m., looked around, took the diary, and announced that they were supposed to be off duty, and disappeared. The next day's local newspaper had in it a

brief item reporting that a party of three had been arrested the preceding day for shoplifting in Hagerstown.

We also had a perpetual problem with a Hagerstown businessman whose father had built a stone cabin atop South Mountain on 19 acres that he had title to. The son, about 55 at the time, was engaged in a logging operation that had exceeded his boundaries. [He maintained a side road up to it, and the cabin was almost within sight of the Trail itself.] The cabin had no privy and no remaining watersource; a stairway wound around the side of its fireplace to an attic loft. The National Park Service had assessed the entire property at about \$88,000, but the man would not sell. Instead, he moved his property's boundary markers out so as to make it 20 acres instead of 19, hopeful to get half a million dollars, instead - and now he had included the Appalachian Trail itself, inside of his newly declared erroneous boundary! NPS took the case to federal court: the result was an \$88,000 condemnation.. At one point the man had posted himself with a petition to be signed, at the parking head where the Interstate was crossed by US 40. Moreover, he somehow wangled the Baltimore SUN paper to publish his photo putting wood into a cook stove in his goldilocks cabin with the table set, and an article asserting that he was living in the cabin and was subject to eviction without remuneration. [I wrote an (unacknowledged) letter to THE SUN reporting his fraudulence. By way of postscript, I must add the following: the first year I worked there, we got complaints from residents along the road at the bottom of the mountain against nighttime noises, hoots and shrieks and gunshots, atop the mountain where the cabin was. Teenaged wild parties! So one day Jim Preston, out of uniform on a day off, stopped in for a cup of coffee at the man's kitchen and casually mentioned what he had been told. Within a week a cable gate had been installed where the cabin access road began on Loy Wolfe Road, because the man's son and/or nephew had been involved, and there was a mattress in the loft.

Another unusual incident occurred at about that same time. We got word that a vehicle had been seen atop the mountain on the Trail near where an old woods road crossed the mountain, and close to the clearing for a buried telephone cable. One of the rangers and I went out to investigate (this was early morning). We were able to drive up to Brownsville Gap from the east side of South Mountain, where we parked. Looking down the clearing of the telephone line, we could see, at first, nothing special. Then we noticed some fresh tire tracks and followed the ranger's hunch that we look down the east slope of the mountain rather than the west; he suspected the car might have turned around at the top, to retrace its own path.

He was right. First we found abrasions in the soil and a point of impact at which the vehicle (which we could then see below) apparently coasted, unchecked until it has turned onto its side about three hundred yards down. I began to pick up coins that had been spilled. A purse indicated that a female had been involved. There was a driver's license that gave us a name that later matched the driver's identity. There was a bill of sale: the car was new. Its contents had been dumped out as the car turned over - at least once. What next?



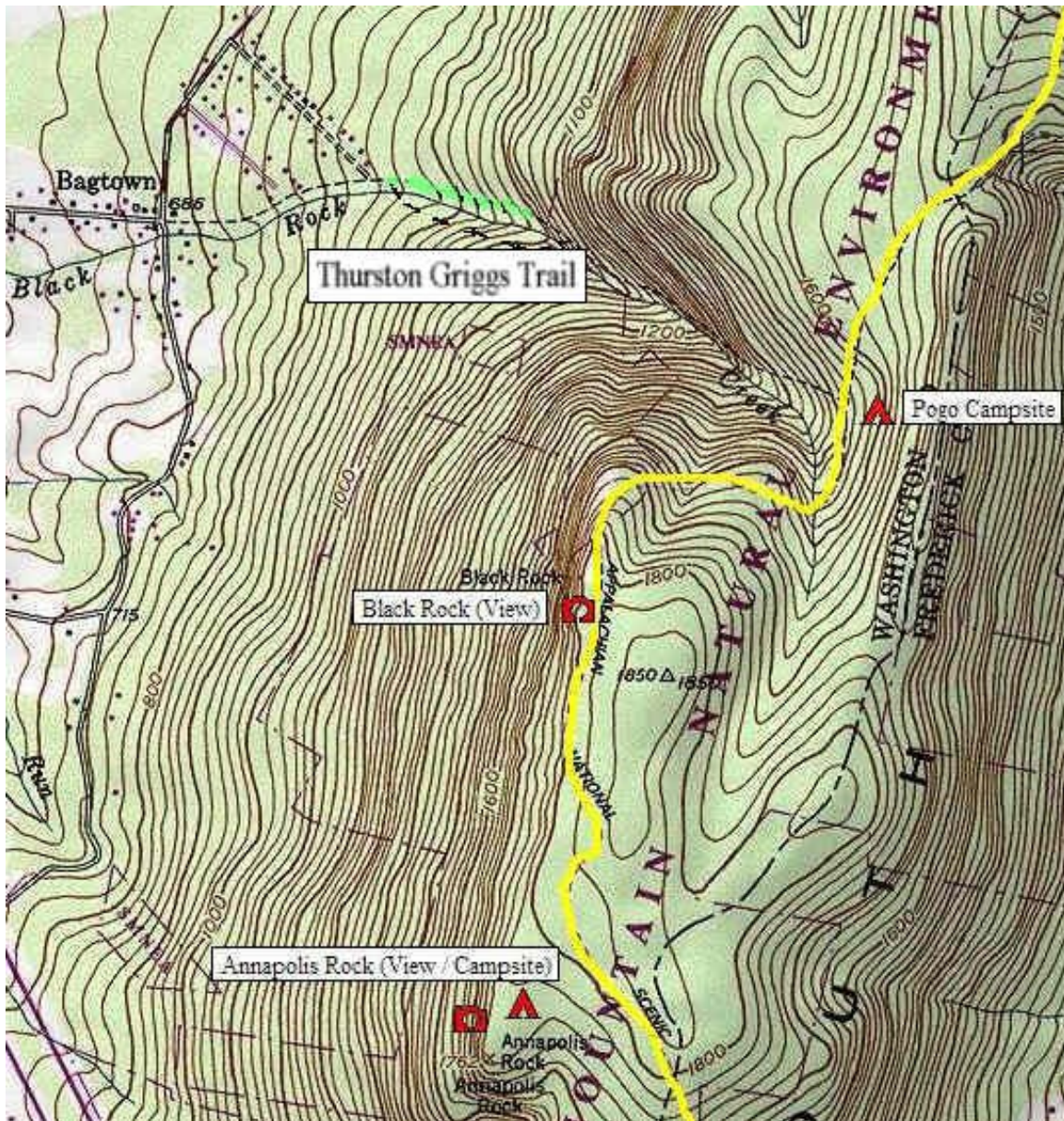
Our headquarters had received a call from a local hospital that two young women had checked in at about 3 a.m. one of them with some abrasions and a possible concussion. They had spent the evening at a white house on the east-side road at a lively party. One of the guys suggested that they take a ride with him “up to the Appalachian Trail” in his uncle’s new car. Then, without making clear his intent, he drove them up the telephone-line clearing, straight up the mountainside, presumably to show off its fantastic power (or to emulate TV commercials). They had made it to the top and had turned around there just as the ranger surmised, then on the way down, they struck a protruding rock and couldn’t stop thereafter. The young man simply took off, on foot. The two girls, shaken but not immobilized, made their way down in the dark but missed the white house. They hitch-hiked on the road for quite some time before somebody stopped and took them to the hospital. It turned out there were at least a dozen white houses on that road..

One morning we got an “emergency “ call to try to find the brother of one of two Australian hikers southbound from Pennsylvania where that brother, not feeling well, had lagged behind, then become hospitalized with Lyme Disease. He was now mortally ill (but did recover eventually) and the other brother, now somewhere in Maryland, needed to be stopped. That day I hiked twenty miles in search of him, only to learn later that he had been faster than we knew, but was intercepted at Harpers Ferry, WV.

In looking for a missing person, often a child or children who run ahead, we always assume (often correctly) that they have taken the wrong turn at some fork or pre-existing side trail while not paying attention to the white tree blazes that mark the A.T. route itself. Knowledge of that situation called for many unwanted detours.

Another of a ridge runner’s duties is to be alert for fires. Since most of the A.T. follows the tops of ridges (to make use of occasional vistas), often one can see out over vast expanses of forest land. The chances of spotting a fire getting out of control are “high”. So I want to tell you about four such instances that occurred in Maryland, on state park land.

The first was a 20-or-more-acre fire that resulted in five days of suppression, back around 1980. It involved use of bulldozers and dozens of firefighters; and helicopters transferred mega-gallons of water from Greenbrier Lake about three miles distant, dumping their loads from above - onto the top of the ridge, adjacent to the A.T. Specifically, it started at much-visited rope-climbing cliffs - Annapolis Rock , probably from a campfire that got out of control. Annapolis Rock at that time was an island of privately owned (but untended) land that had a great view and an ever-flowing spring, surrounded by state park land. [From its cliffs one can see the Lake three miles below.] At the bottom of its cliffs in a jumble, are boulders that have broken off and fallen, through time. So, fanned by dry leaves that had accumulated between the rocks below the cliff, the fire not only spread rapidly but scattered into multiple, almost inaccessible hot spots. It has now taken twenty-five years for the traces of that fire to disappear.



Annapolis Rock stands about 500 yards at the end of a side-trail from the A.T. It long has been a camping and picnicking Mecca for local outdoors-persons and rock-climbers. In 2002, through cooperation of the National Park Service, Maryland state, and the A.T. Conservancy, it was made the site of a patrolled backpack-camper facility - but with prohibition of open fires. Prior to that time conditions there verged so close to being out-of-control on weekends or holidays, that, as ridge runner, I would go there in uniform pretending that it was part of its surrounding park preserve. (There was no privy, and blotches of toilet paper littered the area; vegetation was sparse; and, in search of firewood for bonfires, people were even trying to burn wet, 'green' wood.). On one occasion (here we pick up the second fire!) some small trees were on fire only 15 feet from a tent - and although about ten people and other tents were within sight, nobody was paying any attention to the fire - as if it were simply a part of somebody's campfire - they were all so busy pursuing their recreational objectives! I radioed for help, and tried to

confine the burn in that area for an hour until local volunteer fire department volunteers rived. [At that time it was possible to take a vehicle to that site if not too large and if suitably geared.]

The third fire gets referred to as a “ground fire”. That means it doesn’t kill the trees. It is not hot enough to climb up to leaf level (because deer eat the lower leaves). So it spreads quickly over dry tinder on the ground, including early autumn dead leaves. This particular one - the area of which was not visible after three further seasons - was started when a long-distance hiker forgot to screw back the cap to her gas stove’s fuel chamber after filling it. Her match led it to take off like a rocket. The next day I learned from a southbound hiker who had met her, that another backpacker at her night-time location happened to have an extra stove with him and that he was happy to give it to her.

The fourth fire to report to you was where I came upon an “illegally” located campsite, trailside. (Along the A.T. in Maryland, camping is permitted only at shelter sites and developed campsites; that is to preserve the woods and to group campers for their mutual protection and assistance.) In this instance, I had passed the two men who had ‘helped themselves’ overnight before I found the remains of their campfire. It was smoldering as the roots of old dead wood had been ignited, and, if fanned, could readily spread. I knew it had to be utterly extinguished. Or, should I call for a ranger to come in with a water-can backpack? No, that would take too long; and I would look more like “silly” than a hero, if the ranger came unnecessarily. Ah! my lunch water! Yes. So I poured that out, to pretty good effect. But there was one partly-buried root that had to be extinguished, and I should be able to do it; but how? As I stood there pondering, Mother Nature spoke to me as to how to solve two or three problems at once - with use of a zipper.

There were occasional suicides, and of course those have been difficult to locate because there will be no responses when you call out - whereas lost people can shout a response almost effortlessly.

One year there was a rather unusual lost hiker situation unlikely to be repeated; and I must tell you about it because, by strange coincidence, it transected at one point with the string of casualties I’m now telling you about. It involved a blind man with a seeing-eye dog who wished to make a religious testimonial by backpacking the A.T. alone - just he and his dog. It was about his salvation as a former alcoholic. He did have some degree of sight - enough to recognize and distinguish me at subsequent meetings. and he could make out forms according to different shadings of light. He had contacts through his religious denomination, and from that source he was assisted and his supplies arranged - as he would be met by his support group from shelter to shelter. We got word that his dog was not in good shape; and the ranger asked that I follow him - at a respectful and perhaps imperceptible distance through Maryland. Truly, this seeing-eye dog’s coat was not in good shape and the dog had a limp. Arrangements then were made for an SPCA representative to intercept the dog and its owner at a certain road crossing as if coincidentally. But when the blind man reached that encounter, he was highly annoyed

and upset: the dog must not be taken from him, nor given any medication! Nevertheless, some flea powder was accepted, as was an offer some dog-biscuit. [The owner, lamentably, was undoing one of the basic principles of seeing-eye dog training: since he himself could see forms and fallen logs, he made the dog ignore stopping for them each time as if they were hazards that he should warned against.]

That evening as dusk fell, neither the man - nor the dog - was able to read the sign marking the side-trail to the shelter at which he was to be met by his support team. The hiker consequently spent the night lost, sleeping on a big rock. The support team found both of them in the morning, a mile ahead, unharmed and on the right route, the man having passed up his turn-off, but now waiting to be found.

There were four murders on or near the Appalachian Trail during my service there, but I was only marginally involved. The first was in Pennsylvania, at the (then) Thelma Marks Shelter about five miles south of Duncannon (where the Trail crossed the Susquehanna River). An engaged young couple, both teachers, were attacked, stabbed and shot there by a man from South Carolina who was wanted for a murder he had committed (of an elderly woman) in Florida, [That shelter has since been replaced by a new one built by means of old-time beam-framing techniques, by my hiking club.] It was my disagreeable task to clean up the aftermath of the murders within the shelter, wherein I saw the bullet hole in the log and all the blood from the preliminary stabbing. Prior to engaging in that task, I had met the murderer on the Trail in Maryland, not knowing him to be a fugitive at the time. Here is how it happened.

That day I was following the blind backpacker and his dog, as the blind man was preceding me by about seventy yards, I saw a person approaching at a distance on the far side of a trail loop, loaded not by a backpack, but by two laundry bags slung from across each opposite shoulder. He had faced us as the dog came into view, and momentarily moved as if to back up. Clearly he had seen the man with a harnessed dog and perhaps my uniform, as well, approaching him. He stepped aside, clear of the dog. Then, when I came to him, I greeted him and asked where he had stayed overnight. "On the Trail" I asked him about his destination. "Going south. I've been going back and forth between Harpers Ferry and Delaware Water Gap". I was asking him only the usual questions. Next, where was his home. "South Carolina". Where was he going to spend the night?. "Oh, along the Trail." I told him the location of his next shelter and how far away it was. Then I left him. Later I saw a sketch that was being posted of the suspect in the Thelma Marks murders, and from it, recognized him - even though the sketch had given him a head of hair. That very night we received word that he had been arrested when he crossed the bridge into the town of Harpers Ferry. Later he was tried and incarcerated in Pennsylvania. Preference would have been Florida under a probable death sentence; but evidence there made that unlikely, they said.

The second mortal event occurred in central Shenandoah National Park, not on the A.T. itself, but on a side trail. There a Lesbian couple with a collie dog were murdered - by a Maryland man who was not identified and caught until some ten or more years later.

The dog (that was supposed to be on a leash at all times) was found roaming in the vicinity of their tent, and absence of its restraint had called attention to the situation. It was at first addressed in the press that they were A.T. hikers, which was not the case; they were week-enders. Nevertheless it was believed that their assailant could have been an A.T. hiker, or might now be trying to use it as an escape route.

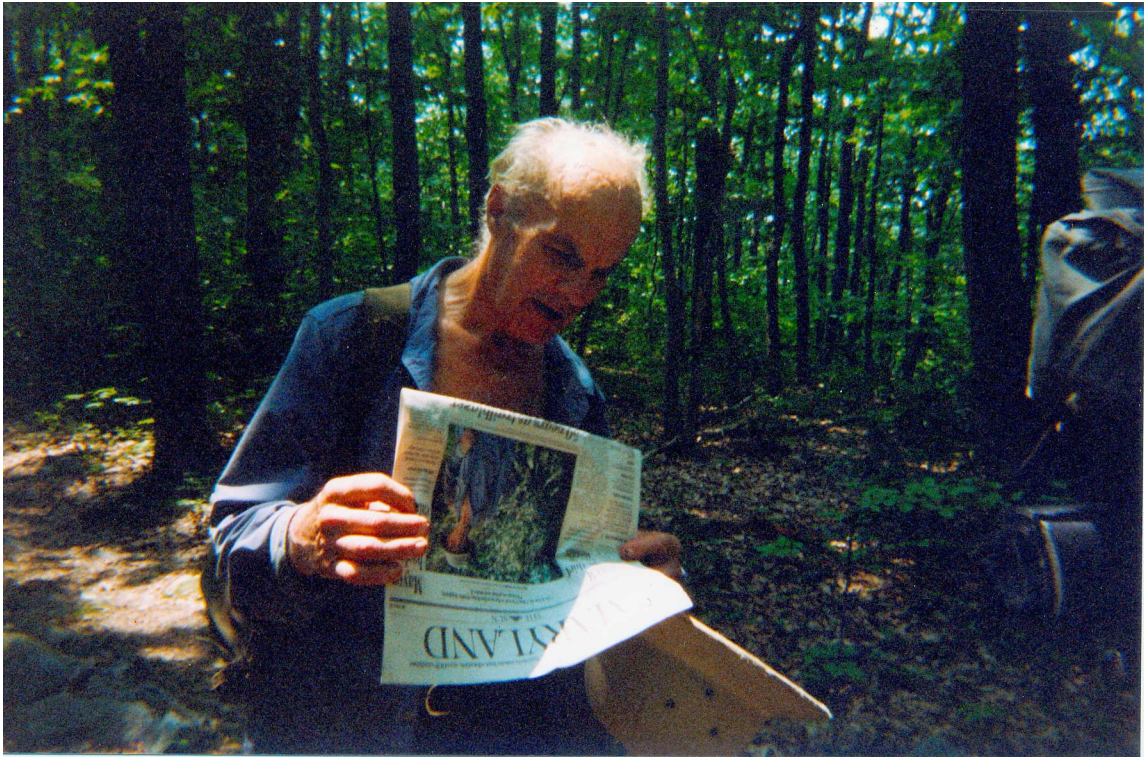
So, very quickly a watch-network was set up along the Trail, and for a week, at shelters between mid-Pennsylvania and Great Smokey National Park, two-man sets of rangers and A.T. ridge-runners stopped hikers and talked to them, looking for possible witnesses or relevant information. At my post in that operation, we talked to a couple of hikers who indeed had been in that vicinity at about that time; but there was no relevant information available from them. However, one day after our formal interviewing, I happened to be chatting with three hikers discussing the tragedy, when a fourth hiker, who had remained silent, volunteered that he had been at that place at that time but had nothing to say, and "I don't want to talk about it." Then he immediately pulled out.. For a time, there had been a suspect's name given to us, and that name had appeared in the Shelter log at Pine Knob Shelter; but it proved to be somebody then in Massachusetts who could be exonerated through calendar dates. It was a common name that he had.

It was my custom to manifest hospitality by chatting with any hiker who wanted to talk, often giving them some local history or telling them about paw-paw trees, or geology of the terrain where we were, or about recent animal sightings. It always proved useful, and satisfying. Tragic incidents were scarce, actually; And in many respects I felt safer, on the Trail, than I did in my car when driving back and forth from Baltimore. The Maryland State Park rangers and technical people were wonderfully competent and helpful. One tourist from England volunteered that Maryland's section of the A.T. was the best-managed section she had seen.

I think one reason why we made out so well working together, the rangers and I, was because I painted on the sides and rear of my car, in Chinese characters, were two words meaning "Old Geezer", which I now am - even more precisely.... Whimsy in the work force!

Definitely not whimsy was the "baptism" of the Appalachian Trail as an end-to-end hike - by a Pennsylvanian, Earl V. Shaffer, in 1948. Earl had just been released from military service in WW II when he read about the A.T. and decided to explore it non-stop on foot - just as if that were what it was put there, for! He wrote it up. Then 50 years later, 1998, he hiked it again using the same backpack, the same limited equipment, "sleeping out" under a tarp by preference (didn't like shelters!), and taking careful note of how much some parts of the route had changed in places where it had been removed from private land and placed in more remote areas when the National Park Service bought up its protective corridor. Earl told me he liked it more, initially, when he was living off the land, and hobnobbing occasionally with mountain people. Earl played the guitar and wrote poetry - but not often on public display.

I first met Earl thirteen or fourteen years after his first hike (out of three altogether); he was on the Trail, doing trailwork on his own. By that time he had figured significantly in the construction of three A.T. shelters in Pennsylvania. I ran into him four or five times when each of us was doing trailwork there. Earl didn't like crowds; he did not attend the ceremony presenting the award from the A.T. when he was made an honorary member. He was a person-to-person kind of guy. It was he who scouted a re-routing of about ten miles of the A.T. where it crossed the Susquehanna River just north of Harrisburg [done in order to avoid a military fort's firing range]. Then Earl disappeared from circulation to live in his own hermitage where among other agricultural pursuits, he kept bees. It was said that he was becoming blind; presently that he was near death. [These were rumors nurtured by Earl himself in order to insure privacy, particularly during the 80's - during which time on two instances I met him on the Trail in the woods.] Nevertheless, Earl hiked the Trail once again, and in addition did some exploration, on his own, trying to find a possible alternate A.T. route a bit father west in the Appalachian Mountains.



Earl Shaffer – 1998 – Reading *The Baltimore Sun's* account of his repeating (and the first by anyone) his through-hike of the A.T. In 1946



Thurston and Earl

In 1998, subject to considerable publicity the while - when Earl sought to repeat his first end-to-end hike - intercepted by newspaper reporters much of the way - at that time - as a ridgerunner in Maryland - I decided to become one of those interceptors. A news feature about him in the *Baltimore Sun*, (from an interview at Harpers Ferry, WV on the day before that,) was displayed prominently. I put it on the Trail's pathway ahead of him, hoping to get a photo of him reading it as he found it lying there. Then we had a good chat, just as trail-users always do.

CHAPTER 7 ADDENDA - and so forth . . .

Here are some more incidents - scattered without regard for where they took place - to round out the story - to finish things off, so to speak.

Quite a bit of the Appalachian Trail in Maryland lies on old woods roads that are now too narrow and impassable to allow for vehicular use. But in one early-morning instance while ridge running, and as I passed a boy scout troop at Pogo Campground, the scoutmaster told me that he had heard a car driving by on the Trail at about 3 a.m., headed south toward Black Rock, [which is the best vista along the Trail in Maryland] . So I went to see for myself. Sure enough, as I approached the 20-yard side trail to that viewpoint, there **was** a car on the Trail - a definite no-no. I went out to the view, and there, about 12 feet down, on a ledge, were two people celebrating human nature. Being considerably inclined, I shut off my radio (for silence) and silently withdrew, intending to “nail” the driver when he returned to his car - for his trespass with a vehicle. I took down his tag number, name and address and waited.

Presently I heard the boy scouts approaching, possibly eager to see this uniformed old man chew out the trespasser. The fat was in the fire, as some of the boys started for the view. (At that point the young man had reached the car.) “All right then, you can come out now, you naked ladies!” shouted one show-off boy scout. But nobody else appeared in response. The trespasser nervously apologized and defensively claimed he didn’t know he was on the A.T. In delicacy, no formalities took place - even though I knew he was lying. A year later, when I related this incident to somebody I knew, he said the young woman had to have been his cousin. There were some similar incidents (that did not involve a whole boy scout troop); and a year later, when a reporter for a local newspaper was interviewing me for a “human interest” story, after she said the interview was finished, she wanted to hike with me for a mile or two “to get the feel of it”. Thinking we were then “off the record“, I mentioned encounters with human nature, only to find that my reference to it appeared in print in two local newspapers subsequently. After that, no further such incidents were observe-able.....

About that time, also came another Black Rock story. A man in a small town near the trail was taken to the hospital with a gunshot wound. The situation was that of two men interested in one woman, and he was the one who lost out. “ Depressed“, he said, he went to the Appalachian Trail to commit suicide. He told them he went to the Pogo site but he called it “High Rock hotel” [because it is where the “hotel” burned down three generations ago.] Looking for his gun, or a bullet, so as to rule out a chance that the erstwhile rival might have followed the “suicide” and shot him, [rifle bore = bullet?] and, the state Police, not being aware that the “hotel” site had been a mile distant from Black Rock vista, made use of a standby crew of a dozen ground-scroungers to stage a hunt -advancing solely en masse in line, with each participant a few yards from the others - among the rocks of the cliffs below the view. They also had a search-dog, but couldn’t use him because the boulders were too big to provide footing for it.. After half a day, they gave up. Up-shot: nobody was charged - no evidence. The young man reported that

after he shot himself, he fell down, bleeding; and in the morning was surprised to open his eyes! His walk from that location back to his transportation would have been about two miles.

On one occasion I came upon an elderly woman with a backpack, sitting at a shelter, nursing some cuts on her face and arms but with active bleeding stopped. She seemed confused; had fallen during the rockiest part of the A.T. in Maryland. [The previous year a long-distance backpacker, in that same stretch, had broken both arms on rocks and had bushwhacked his way down to a road.] This woman was hiking the whole trail in order thereby to raise money for Lupus, her daughter being one of its victims. She was trying to get to where the Trail passes through a county park, so that her son could meet her there that evening. She declined any first-aid assistance and was eager to resume her hike despite her accident. I said I would call for a vehicle (the shelter was close to a road crossing) if she would wait. I would need to be gone in order to gain elevation so that radio contact would be possible (because short-wave radio travels only in straight lines and not over ridges or mountains).

I was gone for about ten minutes; then, after having arranged for a ranger to meet us, I returned only to find that the lady was gone! I was anxious about that, particularly because she had head injuries and hadn't been fully coherent. Hoping for the best, I tried continuing her trek in the direction she would be going (I had gone uphill to make the call and she was headed the other way.) Shortly I came across a piece of bloody tissue; it was clear she had continued her hike as planned. So, another radio call; but by then, the ranger was at the road where the shelter was, and he said "Well, I've been up to the shelter, and where is she?" Before I could answer, he continued, "Oh, here she is, just coming back out of the woods!" Three hours later I saw her at the county park waiting for her son to appear.

Occasions where I could perform first aid were almost non-existent except for offering suggestions. People who had those needs were either stoics or boy scout leaders who had a burning need to take responsibilities upon themselves. Moreover, in Maryland well-trained help by both volunteer groups and professionals is fairly close at hand.

People often asked me whence the name "Pogo" in these woods. Was that an elf? Well, in a way; he **was** elfish; for, when a child, he looked something like the cartoon character. Pogo was one of five brothers in a family that was very active in our hiking club. On one occasion when he was 15, he was hiking near the highest point on the Appalachian Trail (in N. Carolina), where there is a short side-trail to an observation platform. [It gets a lot of use because it can be reached from a road, too.] At that point another of his adolescent co-hikers gave Pogo a dare: \$5 that wouldn't dare to "streak" (sans cover) 150 yards up to the platform and back. Pogo took the dare! - and won!

A year later Pogo and a pal started out on (then 3-speed-only) bicycles to ride from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Second day out from the Jersey coast, they were both side-swiped by a truck; Pogo's friend's back was broken (but he survived well)

whereas Pogo was simply bruised. The parents responded with, “huh-uh! drop it!” A neighbor friend then, in sympathy, offered to take him canoeing on the Potomac River. Pogo, unfamiliar with canoes, stepped in, off-center, with his life-jacket not yet tied, and drowned, suspended by it.

The hiking club wanted to memorialize Pogo by making a purchase of land needed for the A.T.'s corridor; but at that time Maryland was doing the land-acquisition needed for the corridor, using funds from taxes on real-estate transactions; and it wanted no competition (interference?) from private sources. So the (then Washington-based) Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) suggested that the Maryland Club take over the former site of a 19th century mountain inn close to BlackRock and make it into Pogo Memorial campsite - partly because there was a fine, cold mountain spring there, close to the top of the ridge.

Pogo also hiked about half of the Appalachian Trail before he died. I recall one caving trip where we went to a cave that connected with another cave at one common point, known as “The Connection”. It was a rock-lined narrow opening where you had to lie down prone, arms extended over your head and literally wriggle your way through, pockets emptied, and no cumbrances. Pogo had no problem with it, nor did I; but one somewhat portly guy got stuck. We couldn't figure out which end of him to push on, which to pull, because communication was quite muffled between the two halves. [Finally the foot-pullers won, and he never made it into the second cave;.] Later we found another cave through which a mountain stream also ran when it disappeared into a wall of rock. Wet up to our hips, we would emerge in another valley, then had to climb back over the mountain, with daylight instead of flashlights, back to our cars.

On the way back from one caving trip, dirty and in old clothes, my car was stopped by a local police car on a back road. They approached with their hands on their weapons. Who were we? What were we doing here, off the beaten track? We explained, apparently convincingly enough despite our appearance. So they let us go after one of them first remarked: “We stopped you because of your worn tires”. Presently we heard the car's radio tell us that a couple of convicts had escaped from a nearby prison.



Site of '56 Chrysler loss – vehicle is dark object on the left



Site of '56 Chrysler loss – There it lay!

Mention of a car calls up another time when three of us including my youngest, were scouting in the mountains, slabbing up a wooded, muddy side hill. It was slimy.

Ours was a Chrysler, and it slid off the road and turned over, rolling sideways into a couple of trees. Nobody was hurt in the least because we had been driving at only 5 miles per hour at the time. After about 20 minutes, by miraculous coincidence, a local mountain rancher drove up in a pickup - to take us to a fortunately prearranged meeting point with others of our group. En route he asked many details about the Chrysler's age, its oil consumption, oil changes, and parts-replacements - its history - almost sentimentally, sympathetically. But when we called a tow truck a few days later, it couldn't find the Chrysler. The reason was that its engine was, by that time, running the water pump at the rancher's well.



There is one side- (access) trail to the A.T. that has a story to it. It leads up toward the best view in Maryland in its stretch of the A.T. - one from which you can see almost all of the way from the Potomac River to the Pennsylvania Line, on a clear day. Only a mile to the north of it, also close to the top of the mountain, on an old woods road, is a cold, continuous spring; and on that site was a tavern that in early times was called a "hotel" - but by today's standards would be called a flophouse. Nevertheless, in the hot summertime, people from the valley would ride their buggies up into the woods where some logging was taking place, to escape the heat and enjoy the view. The Civil War then cut off that habit, and the "hotel" burned down. Subsequently, a newer "Black Rock Hotel" was created at the spring, and it did well until about 1900, when a railroad crossing the mountain fifteen miles farther north, at Pen-mar, developed as a resort area. Then, just after WW I, local boy scouts accidentally (?) set fire to its remains.

So the “Bagtown Road” remained an access route from Hagerstown in the broad valley below, to the old woods road atop South Mountain that had become the A.T. It became a blue-blazed trail, and for the past twenty years much of it has been impassable to vehicles. Another problem arose, however. The man who had owned the stone cabin located on the A.T. half a mile to the north, claimed to own a parcel of land traversed by the Bagtown Road. For two generations there had been a member of his family working in the land office in Hagerstown (for Washington County), and his deed showed that he had been “given” this piece of land by the “Society for the Advancement of Old Age in Washington County”, for free! This man also owned eight other sizeable timbered parcels on the west side of the mountain, some of them all or partly timbered. As he had done atop the mountain, the man usually did not interfere with hikers, but at times he would bring in vehicles and sometimes close off the routes with chain-gates. He and his father and grandfather had acquired most of their holding by the legal process known as “adverse possession”. It means that, if a person thinks there is no real owner; and if he/she makes use of the property in some material manner, then after seventeen years, he/she can file a claim to title of the land, provided that he/she has not been challenged during that period. In the case of this man, there was an instance where his grandfather had failed to file his claim through the courts.

That situation made it possible for this man to act like a landowner who felt it was o.k. for him to regulate matters in “his” domain; but it was antithetical to our aim of making the terrain accessible to the public at large. It was what happened on Bagtown Road in an area where the other parcels of land all were owned either by the state or by the A.T. Conservancy.

Bagtown Road’s route of ascent (from the end of White Oak Lane lay northeast of Black Rock Run, a stream that originated at the former hotel site, now Pogo Campsite. So I investigated a possibility that we might try to relocate the lower reaches of the route, putting them onto the southwest side of the stream. Such a route not only looked feasible but was much more scenic than Old Bagtown Road. But that took us into a couple of land-ownership problems.

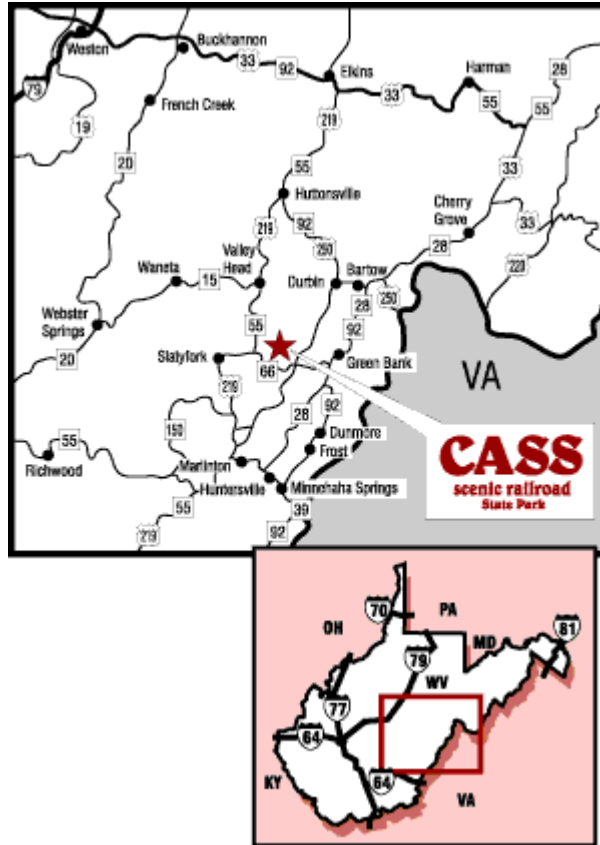
There were two landowners’ properties that bordered parcels listed as belonging to our nemesis, ”this man“. If we could get easements from them, we might have it made! But there were also two intervening strips claimed by the nemesis. First we talked to the two - whose properties were located at the two respective ends of the route of relocation. Both were willing to *give us* easements - in fact, **eager** to do so, because in each case this man had moved boundary markers and was asserting ownership of another parcel of land that he, the nemesis, had timbered five years before. They wanted our ties with the State and the NPS to be available so as to block trespass by this man.

Remaining was the matter of the timbered parcel. We contacted the listed California owner. Of course he was furious over the timber-trespass. He had tried, without success, to employ legal help in Washington County. Then, after two years, when the Californian had died, we learned that the county land records were incorrect. The

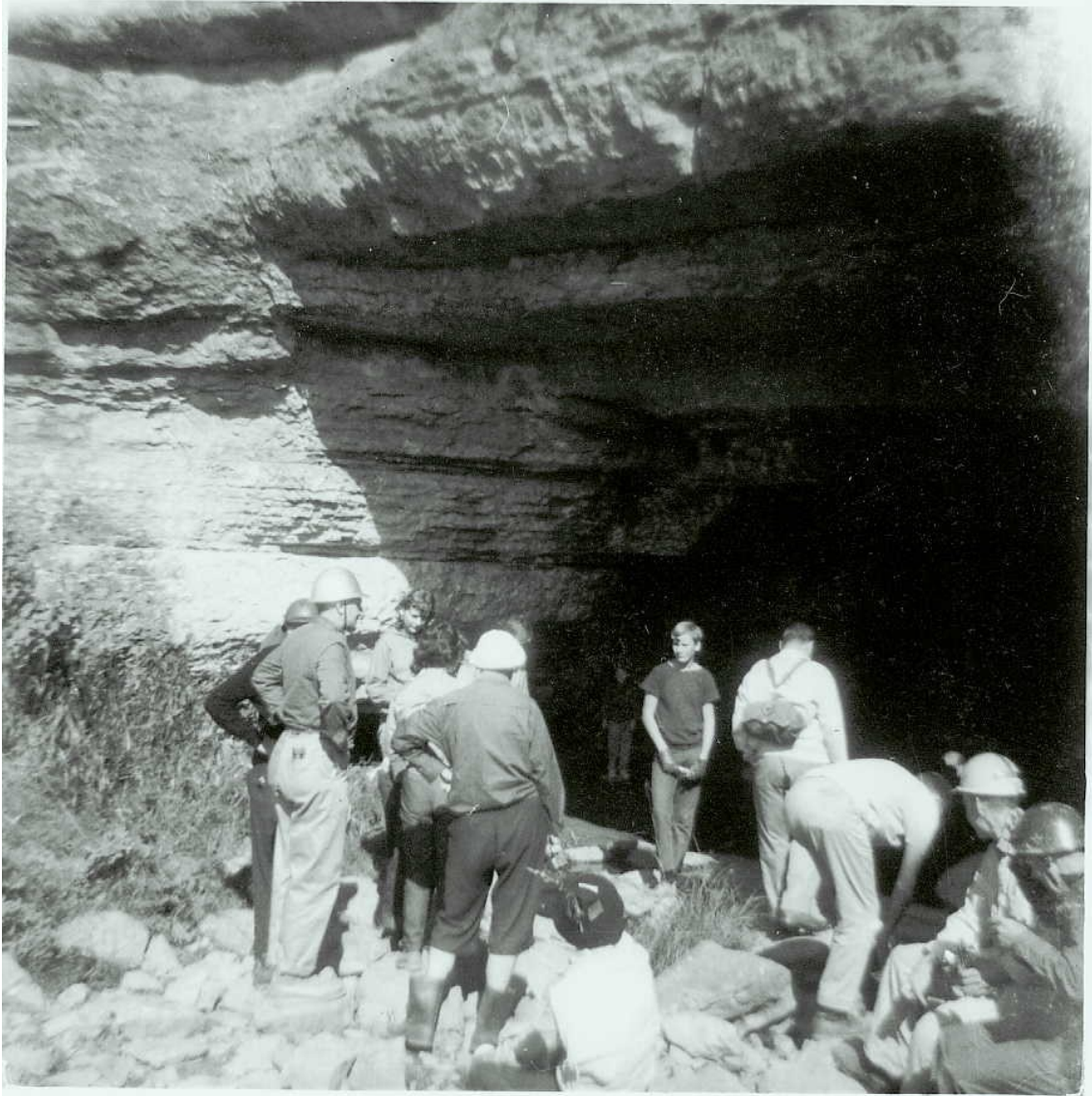
timbered five acres did not belong to the Californian, after all! - nor did they belong to Mr. Nemesis! So it evolved that the relocation route on the southwest of the stream would lie on protected property, and the timbered five acres, in actuality, was land-locked and had reverted to the state - presumably.

The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) has named the route, in its new location, the Thurston Griggs Trail. The two donors each requested that it be restricted to non-stop use: no fires, no camping; and of course no vehicles. It is about one mile in length. On Saturday January 28, 2006 a PATC trail crew of a dozen workers was astounded when Mr. Nemesis and some of his employees fired about 200 shots in an effort to dislodge the workers and terminate work on their new trail route, acting in the mistaken belief held by Mr. Nemesis that his land was being trespassed upon. That was contrary to fact. Apparently he was not aware that in so doing, Mr. Nemesis was engaging officialdom - the National Park Service, the State of Maryland, and possibly the courts. .

One time, the hiking club had a weekend outing that included climbing a mountain on which a logging railroad had previously run. In scouting out that outing in advance, I had followed the tracks whose rails had not been removed. Surprisingly, at the top was a hand car on the tracks. It had on it a wooden framework against weather. Still more remarkable, there was a man inside of it. He told me a plan was underway to make use of the tracks to open up a tourist attraction - using old-time geared railroad locomotives, on a route which had four switchbacks where the train would be reversing direction as brakemen dismounted to change the switches. This man then let me ride with him down the proposed course (thereby satisfying a long-held childhood dream of riding on a railroad handcar).



Three years later the railroad was operating for tourists, with old coaches and engines that puffed and belched and whose funnels spewed cinders.





Mine entrance



Cave entrance



Coal mine



This one was operating!



Cass Scenic Railroad WV



Cass Scenic Railroad WV



Cass Scenic Railroad WV



Cass Scenic Railroad WV



Cass Scenic Railroad WV



Cass Scenic Railroad WV

On the occasion of a subsequent hiking-club trip, we had prearranged to **hike** the route also after riding it, with a dinner at Bertha's Boarding House (in the WV village of Cass). Bertha had catered to, and housed, loggers; so there was no problem in serving about sixteen hungry hikers. She had two wood cooking-stoves fired up and two local girls from the village as helpers. On the long tables, successively, appeared rolls, soup (two kinds), condiments, ham, roast beef; chicken, pinto beans ("Have some more!"), baked potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, beets, squash, biscuits, salad (two kinds), celery, jam, home-baked bread, applesauce, cottage cheese, fritters, and toothpicks. The girls circled the table urging us not to miss anything and be sure to take "seconds". Then, for dessert, came pies (three kinds) cakes (two kinds) and ice cream. There was little time (nor was there incentive) to occupy the mouths with mere words.

The cost - seventy-five cents per person! - apologetically!

Don't try to find Bertha's Boarding House in operation that way now; for she retired five years later. And quite a few other good things have changed since then, as well!