

The mountains will always be there; the trick is to make sure you are, too. —Hervey Voge

The Yodel

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Mutineers Touch the Top!

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L to R: GCC Alums Janet S., Dan L., Bob S., Lucinda T., Jeff H., Matt M., Brian W., Mark L., Bill S., and Rob C.

by Janet M.

Bob S. (ponytail Bob) and I were unable to summit Mt. Rainier with our class in 2008 and, given the size of the 2009 class, knew we would most likely not be able to tag along on one of their climbs. So in March I sent out a feeler e-mail to see just how many prior students and OSAT members would be interested in a climb not linked with the class. Within a week, I had eleven names. Peter J. (Peeta) got involved and we started planning. Bob and I were in training mode, so we began adding a Monday night Tiger to the Thursday night meeting. Dan L. joined one of these Mondays and we started talking about developing an official climb. Somehow I managed to get him to agree to lead the expedition. Peeta offered to obtain the permits and we were set to climb July 24-26th.

The roster changed a few times before the day of the climb, but on July 24th ten of us met at Paradise with Peeta to Sherpa. The weather was beautiful, and we were registered for an overnight at Ingraham Flats, all in good spirits. We left Paradise at 9 am and reached Camp Muir by 2:30, where Peeta (and his trusty GPS) left to make the trek back to Paradise alone and we began to rope up. Due to the sunny weather, several of us were running short on water, so Brian W. sat down to filter water while the rest of us lined up ropes and geared up. We spent this time looking at Cathedral Gap and wondering just how we were going to get over that expanse of loose pebbles. By 3:30 we were geared up and ready for the first team to head out. Dan lead with Bob and Matt, next came my rope with Lucinda, Bill and Rob, finally bringing up the rear was Brian, Mark, and Jeff.

ONE STEP AT A TIME (OSAT) MISSION:

To provide a clean and sober environment for members and friends of 12-step recovery groups, to participate in outdoor and social events in the spirit of conservation, preservation, and ecology.



(Continued from page 1)

On the other side of the gap we got our first close-up of Little Tahoma. Wow what a view, especially when I considered that this was the second tallest mountain in the state, following only the one we were attempting. Within an hour and a half we were at our camp spot on the Ingraham Glacier. Matt and Bob, and Lucinda and I were able to use existing level spots, while the other three tents pitched a little farther up the glacier. We all turned in early without a lot of time spent on setting up our tents. A couple of thunderstorms rumbled through the valley below us and the wind picked up considerably. I had tossed in a couple of ear plugs on a whim and was really glad for them as the sound of the tent flapping was really loud.

Saturday morning we compared stories and learned that Mark, Dan and Bill's tent had collapsed a couple of times and no one had gotten much sleep. We spent the better part of that day shoring up our tents, melting and filtering water, and packing our gear for a midnight start. In the early afternoon, an AAG group arrived, along with a guide that Matt had climbed with only weeks earlier. Matt discussed the weather forecast with him as he was in contact with Ashford. The news wasn't good. More thunderstorms were forecasted for either Saturday night or Sunday. One of the other independent groups decided not to risk it and headed back to Muir. The REI team went by, doing a sunset climb rather than a sunrise climb. The AAG group planned to decide when they woke up at midnight. We did a group conscience and decided that we, too, would revisit the weather at 11 pm. At 5 pm Lucinda and I were snug in our tent doing our best to block out the noise of the rain fly slapping against our tent.

When eleven o'clock arrived, Dan came by our tent and said he hadn't eaten anything Saturday and now he couldn't get warm. He knew he would not make it to the top of the Cleaver and turned the leadership over to Matt and Brian. We restructured our ropes so that Matt was leading and Lucinda was the anchor, and my rope

team became three instead of four. We started out at 12:30 am. We short-rope coming off the Glacier onto Disappointment Cleaver. I found out then that I don't navigate rocky trails very well at 1 am. At one spot I could not see the trail at all but I could hear Matt and Lucinda say to stay to the left. No one on our team nor Brian's could seem to locate where they had gone up so we reversed and went around a different way that looked more like a trail.

By this time we had several independent groups behind us. We were in constant contact with Matt's rope but eventually came to a dead end that way also. We reversed again and headed back the way we came. This time I was able to see the trail to the far left and we caught up to Matt's rope team at last.

The next break came at the top of the DC. We were stuck in a queue waiting to cross either the six foot aluminum ladder or a fixed line. After what seemed like forever, it was now our turn. We were at the ladder and decided to use a boot axe belay across as the pickets holding the ladder in place were extremely loose. All of us crawled across on hands and knees. At this point,



Brian stopped for a cigarette. With a few more crevasses yet to be jumped, we reached a point where we waited for Brian's rope to catch up. All I could think about now was how warm my sleeping bag could be and how upset my stomach felt, so I huddled off the trail and thought of sleep. Brian reached us and helped out my stomach with some Naan bread. All together again, we stepped back on the trail.

We continued on until we were about 500 feet from the top. The time was now 7 am and our turn-around time was 8 am. The weather looked good although clouds still shrouded the summit. We did a review of where each of us stood physically. At the pace we were going, we would not make the summit by 8. Some were willing to turn around if it meant that others would make the summit. The pivotal point came when Rob said, "Janet wanted to reach the top and I think we should get her there". Matt took my pack and Bill

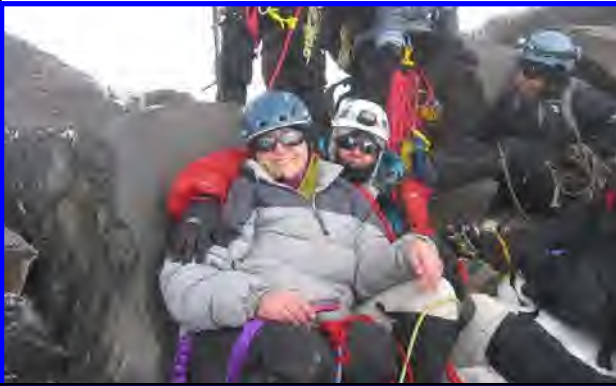
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agreed to pull on the rope if I needed motivation. Brian's rope team headed out first, followed by Rob's and then Matt's. We took one more break about 100 feet from the top. As Bob was putting away his sandwich bag, the wind caught it and it flew off. We laughed about how someone would find it somewhere in Tacoma.

We summited the rim at 8:30 am. The wind was blowing hard across the crater and we were completely enclosed in clouds. After seeing the people attempting to cross the crater get blown back, we decided that the additional time and effort needed to cross the crater would not be a good idea. We didn't wait too long at the top.

While we were resting and eating, we reshuffled our rope teams based on how everyone was feeling. We all knew what lay ahead and were more than ready to get over the crevasses. We were now able to view the ladder and fixed line at the top of the cleaver in the daylight, which made it fairly easy to decide on the



Lucinda and the author at the summit—touching the top

fixed line. We rested at the top of the Cleaver and thought about how relieved we would be to see Camp Muir. We laughed about how now we thought the easy part was from Camp Muir to Paradise, and yet that had seemed a long trip down just last week.

We picked our way carefully down the Cleaver with our tents gradually getting closer. The route markings were few and far between. Brian did an excellent job of keeping us within sight of what was left of the wands. At one point, Brian needed to scout ahead a bit and lost his footing on the loose gravel. I immediately sat down and Matt hit the rocks in an arrest position. We stopped Brian from bouncing right off the Cleaver. Thanks to Brian's sturdy construction and a little tape and from our MOFA, Rob, we were back on the trail in fairly short time. We reached our tents and a recovering Dan around 2:30. It looked like we were the last team off the summit.

We immediately starting breaking camp and replenishing depleted water supplies. Mark appeared extremely tired at camp but he packed up and within the hour we were headed off the glacier. Dan led the first team, Matt the second and Lucinda the third. We were all within sight of each other until we dropped over the ridge at Cathedral Gap. The rock fall was constant between there and Camp Muir so Dan's team headed out while Matt's team started down the gap. We waited at the bottom of the Gap for Lucinda's team to show. They seemed slower than they had on the rest of the trip down. Muir came in sight and we heard the Sherpas (Sharon) calling to us, which picked up our speed considerably.

I hadn't cried on this whole climb, until my pack was lifted and I got my first hug from Sharon. This was a goal of mine that had taken three years to accomplish. The final team arrived and were welcomed with their own unique OSAT welcome. Even after feasting on watermelon, sandwiches and juice, I was still feeling the rummy effects of altitude. I needed my knee brace which had been divvied up when we were packing up camp. It was in Mark's pack, and I noticed he really did not look good. He said that he thought he would spend the night at Muir as he was so tired. This didn't seem a good idea, but I didn't really have the brain capacity to formulate why or what I should do about it.

As we had all split apart, the Sherpas had taken over the group equipment, and I knew that I would be slower than the rest, so I decided to head out with Bob. There were some spots we could glissade down but the snow was very soft. When I reached the paved area of the trail I could no longer stand my boots so I eventually took them off and walked in my socks to the parking lot. It was 9 pm.

We circled up and by 10 were ready for the road. We passed an ambulance from Longmire that the Rangers called for Mark around Cougar Rock campground. Mark was admitted overnight with possible AMS. As for me, after crashing at 1 am., I went to work the next day but found that my neck was so sore from that I felt like a bobble head doll. I put a brace around my neck just to look at the computer screen.

For the next week, I tried to put words to the experience but found nothing in the English language that could adequately describe it. It was both exhilarating and exhausting. It had been my goal for three years and with the help of my friends in OSAT and the GCC and those I had only met on this trip, I can now say that I have truly touched the top. Will I do it again? §

What the Heck is Geocaching?

A September adventure along the John Wayne Pioneer / Iron Horse Trail

by Elisha Z.

“Geo what? On a bike? Okay, sure.” That’s pretty much how the conversation went between Pete and me when he presented the idea of signing on to the Geocaching bike ride up Snoqualmie Pass. Rik A. sent an invitation out via the OSAT Echo that got his attention. I didn’t know what Geocaching was, but with OSAT, that doesn’t seem to matter. Good people, great places, and the experience of outdoors always seem to lend themselves to a memorable experience. Our Geocaching trip held true to OSAT form.

So what’s Geocaching? The official site (www.geocaching.com) defines it as: "Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called Geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. Geocaching is enjoyed by people from all age groups, with a strong sense of community and support for the environment." After reading that description I was officially excited. Rik’s shorthand version is, you use a billion dollar satellite system to find Tupperware



filled with toys and other swag in the woods.

Our adventure began on an unseasonably warm fall morning. We arrived at Rattlesnake Lake Park at around 10am to set off on our course. It was

me, Pete L., Bob L., and Rik A. We started off with a list of 17 Geocache descriptions; including latitudes, longitudes, container sizes, and waypoint names like Ragnar’s Revenge, Chariots of the Gods, and Up the Trail without a Pedal (of course you know there’s a good story to go with each of those names!). Rik served as our leader and Geocaching expert. He filled us in on the basics of the game and colorful tales of his own Geocaching experiences.

Even without a high-tech GPS, I was able to pitch in some basic navigation and fact finding skills. It’s a collective effort that has you eager to understand the clues and coordinates and container sizes, looking for something a little too man-made for the deep outdoors.



Pete grabbed the first one out from under a bridge a couple of miles from the trailhead. We signed the logbook and headed on up the trail. Rik spotted a suspiciously out-of-place pile of twigs near a downed log not far off the trail. It hid an ammo box filled with Hot Wheels cars, key chains, plastic jewelry, and the

ever-present log. Bob made his micro cache find down a pole hole after scrambling to the top of a rock formation. Each cache was found within its own set of dynamics. Near the rock-climbing walls along the trail, I found a small one which, like several we found, only had room for a small log to sign in – “Yuppie tagging”.

Some caches were easier to find than others. We knew Pete was hooked when we were looking for one near the McClellan Butte Trail. After about ten minutes of searching without success, Rik and I were ready to move on up the trail for the next cache, but Pete kept plunging down the hillside, one eye on the GPS and the other on the bushes he was whacking. The game truly brings out your adventuresome side as well as relentless desire to find that flipping box in the woods.

Although Pete and I had to turn around before we got to the top of the pass, Rik pressed on to the tunnel, which has been closed for maintenance this year. Up there he found one geocache in a HUGE 3-foot tall ammo box that was placed in 2001 as a publicity stunt for Planet of the Apes, and also one of the first 100 geocaches ever placed in Washington. There are now nearly 17,000 geocaches in Washington, and over 900,000 in the world, so this hobby has definite possibilities as a life pursuit!

We didn’t find every single cache we looked for, but you’ll see by the picture the enjoyment and sense of accomplishment that was achieved as we Geocached our way up Snoqualmie



Pass. The pictures tell a better story than my words could attempt to frame so please enjoy and by all means... Geocache! §

By Land, By Sea, By Air: 3rd Annual Lopez Bike Ride

Story & photos by Diane S.

Ten lucky people (you could be one next year) experienced a natural high in August: three days of camping and cycling on Lopez Island.

Mike and Jane Prime arrived in their airplane. Doug, Sheryl, Bill, and Dave arrived in Doug's sailboat. Janice and Dave, Rik, and yours truly arrived via highway and marine highway: the common denominator? We all had bicycles!

Friday night the gang had a gourmet potluck at the campground. A pathetic and delirious Diane straggled in after dinner, having managed to get lost in the labyrinth of darkening trails. Two other campers got her near enough that her feeble shout of "OSAT" was heard by the others. Sheryl lent Diane her mug, so Diane



The Lopez group (minus Diane) recuperating on Agate Beach (minus agates)

could have a restorative cup of tea before bed.

Rik Anderson arrived Saturday morning in time to peddle with the group into Lopez Village to Holly B's Bakery. Diane stowed away two cinnamon rolls because they have to last until next summer.

But I almost forgot to mention that Mike Prime fixed Diane's flat tire before we headed to town. What a stroke of luck that she got the flat *after* arriving at the campground the night before: no spare tube, no patch kit, no pump and no know how, "no how." I heard her promise the group that she'd take a bike maintenance class before the year is over... And we were all grateful



Idyllic Lopez countryside - here's why we do it

that Dave did not explain what he meant by his tube envy.

While the others wandered around finding lunch ingredients, an inspiring recovery story was unfolding in a dress shop on the other side of the barber shop. Diane had gone in to charge her phone and a customer was trying to find a pink sweat suit for a female friend of his who was due to be released soon, after a year in prison. Diane got drawn into his quest and he was glad to get some help: the sweatsuit turned into a whole ensemble, including ring (donated by the shopkeeper), bracelet, sunglasses, hat, all shades of pink for a clean and sober lady who had organized a choir while incarcerated and was excited and nervous to continue her new way of living on the outside.

The sea lions were as noisy as ever at Shark Reef. Rik found his first Geo Cache of the trip, which was especially exciting for Janice! She's got the Geo Caching cachet to be sure.

Sheryl served lox and bagels at Agate Beach. Another highlight (no, we still haven't found a friggin' agate on that beach!) was watching a ten-year old girl frolicking around in a crown. She was celebrating her 10th birthday and her name was — of all things — Agate Lopez!

Later in the ride, we enjoyed our customary ice cream stop at the country store, where they sell a "red-neck"

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souvenir plaque: “so many bikers, so few recipes.” It’s doubtful that we rode far enough or hard enough to work off all these treats, but the fun quota was definitely reached.

After returning to the campground, the troops headed into Lopez Village for showers and dinner. Diane “borrowed” shampoo and lotion from Jane. Fortunately, the hot weather allowed Diane to dry out without a towel (after dressing). She bought a comb at the store.

Most people would be done in by now, but after peddling back to the campground after dinner, we started a bonfire down on the spit. Doug brought cantaloupe and pistachios. A well-spit shell landed on one of the pieces of firewood, providing the evil eye to an eerie glowing shark, with coal dagger fangs!

The boaters piled into a dinghy, setting off in the dark to the strains of “Row, row, row your boat” sung by Janice and Diane.

The next morning Dave was grateful that Diane had brought extra coffee. Her first inclination, was to announce herself MVP of the weekend for this contribution, but then remembered all the ways everyone else had helped her and provided what she hadn’t brought (oh, “Boy Scout Dave” lent Diane lights for night riding also!)

Farewell to the boaters! The rest of us peddled in for breakfast to the fancy restaurant on the water followed by window shopping in Lopez Village. Then on to Upright Channel Park, where Janice and Diane tried to recreate the seashell angel that we found with Louisa last year. Getting that halo just right is the tricky part—we didn’t have a mirror to look into for guidance!

We had perfect weather and perfect fellowship. The only thing missing was you! Next year, a 4 day trip is in the planning stages: 4 days for the 4th annual: will it increase a day every year? §

OSAT Quick Reference

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12 Step Tiger Mountain Meetings

Thurs Tiger	Summer only	thurstigerleader@osat.org
Sunday Tiger		suntigerleader@osat.org

OSAT Club Meeting

The monthly OSAT club meeting is held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm. Located at 4545 Island Crest Way, take the Island Crest Way exit from I-90, the church is 1.6 miles south of the freeway, on the right. The meeting is held upstairs in classroom #6.

OSAT Traditions

- 1) Every OSAT activity has a designated leader. The leader makes the decision as to who is qualified for the activity. This decision must be based on principles and not personalities.
- 2) Alcohol and illegal drugs are not allowed on any OSAT activity.
- 3) Party members are not to separate from the group without prior permission of the activity leader.
- 4) An OSAT leader should have completed a MOFA course or ensure that at least one participant in the activity has done so.
- 5) When in a wilderness area, each party member will carry the 10 essentials.
- 6) Outdoor activities start with the Serenity Prayer while holding hands in a circle.
- 7) Each OSAT glacier climb will have at least two rope teams that include a person with crevasse rescue training.
- 8) Anyone can volunteer to lead an activity, even a technical climb. As a participant, you may want to “qualify” your leader. As leader, you should be certain that everyone on that activity has signed a Release and Indemnity Agreement.
- 9) Party size for OSAT activities will adhere to the rules of the appropriate jurisdiction.

Discovering OSAT : The Ups & Downs of AT Skiing

by Doug L.

I love to ski!

I've found new friends in OSAT, and together we've done some Alpine Touring skiing. I find I can hold my own on the down hill part, and I'm starting to gain some experience on the ascents. The cool thing about AT skiing is that you can ski back to where you started in about one eighth the time it takes to hike and skin up-hill.

On St. Helens, Bill, Karen, Kevin and I were the only group to summit during a near white out snow storm. There were challenges for sure, yet Bill knew the way and Karen kept a cool, calm, and collected way about things she did. Kevin was an animal, snowshoeing to the top with a snow board on his back acting as an out of control sail in the heavy, snow laden wind. It was eight hours up and one glorious hour down in the most amazingly beautiful and testing powder, ice, back to powder adventure!



GCC 2009 Crevasse Rescue –mystery student in the pit

Fast forward two months. After lectures, seminars, and a lot of sweaty conditioning came the Crevasse Rescue Field trip. Being told to jump into a giant, gaping, seemingly bottomless crack in a glacier was trying enough, along with a 30 foot prussik climb in shower of soaking ice water. But add to that the fact that Jay, Andrew, and Todd all skied in the day before — while this GCC student was restricted from doing so — and it was almost too much to stand.

The next week, Bill and Karen ask me to ski Mt Baker with them! In one week's time the snow had receded so that instead of being able to skin from the parking lot,

we had to hike for hours in ski boots with full packs that include our skis. We got to the site of two OSAT base camps, with climbers preparing for a summit attempt the next morning. We had to cancel a meeting due to thunder lightning and a lot of rain. The climbers started deep in the night to get the firm snow, while we waited for the narrow window of hard snow up and soft snow down.

After trying some roped team travel on skis in icy conditions, we had to change over to crampons on our feet and skis on our backs. Later the tails of my skis on my pack kept me from post holing into a hidden crack in the glacier at the lower crater rim. I greeted all the happy climbers as they descended, having summited on what was now a sunny day. I labored each step, post holing my way the summit. At the top we enjoyed an epic picnic in perfect weather.

Now to ski! Wow, miles of beautiful corn snow, turn after beautiful turn! What a rush! The price for the sweet turns still not paid in full, we had to hike out for hours through bowling ball boulders, leading up to a daunting challenge to cross a river. I took off my boots to cross, and tried to throw them to the other side, only to have them roll into the icy water. Karen had me buckle up and hike. Bill lightened my poorly organized pack and we slogged out just before dark. §



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MOUNT RAINIER: JULY 24-26, 2009

by Robert S. (Pony-Tail-Bob)

The Mountain, cold mistress, sacred place,
Active volcano, 500,000 years old, a mesmerizing
Presence: I must seek your summit. With companions
From OSAT (One Step At A Time), it is here and it is
Now. Oh great mountain, please allow our little group
Upon your ancient flanks. Grace us with your consent.
We intend only a brief stay at your crater, a moment of
Human time. And then gone, descending, returning to
The flat land. Amen.

We plant our boots in Muir Snowfield, as we climb we
Hear rock fall, see dust in the distance. The mind, perhaps
Sporadically mindless, wanders in and out of thought; to
Heat, cold, forward, below, and even the immediate step.
We are working the steps that together, advance us ever
Closer to Camp Muir at 10,000 feet.

Upon arrival at the camp, we enter a slight ravine, lay out
The ropes, put on harnesses, helmets, crampons. We rope
Up and proceed along Cowlitz Glacier to Cathedral Gap.
We are fortunate; the Gap is a precarious place, loose rock
Could fall on us. We shorten the ropes, scramble through
Without incident. I recall the Waiver: glacier climbing can
Result in serious injury or death. Please no, not us. We won't
Stay long. We just want to see the top.

Out of the Gap. We follow a narrow trail onto Ingraham
Glacier where we will set up our base camp. From Friday
Night until Saturday night, we will acclimate, rest, eat. So
I'm lying there, on the glacier with dead man stakes to keep
The tent from blowing away. OK. Calm down, it wouldn't get
Windy enough to blow us downhill into a large crevasse, would
it? I can't sleep. The wind picks up and the tent flaps loudly.
Doubts and fear crop up in my head, and I pray for them to be
Removed, to have faith that things would continue to proceed
As well as they had so far.

I was in a sleep bag with all my clothes on, except for boots.
My feet were cold and wouldn't warm up. I tried massaging them
That didn't work. My tent-mate, Matt, said my core temperature was

Low and to put on a down jacket. I did that and finally my feet
Warmed up. During the night other groups of climbers were passing by.
There were reflections on our tent walls from their headlamps.
They were talking. Occasionally someone would shout a name. They
Were oblivious to us. I climb out of the tent around 6:40 am and go take
A Blue Bag poop downhill at the snow bathroom. Click a few pictures
Of Little Tahoma Peak and Ingraham Glacier. It is so beautiful here!
Matt melts snow, puts it through a filter. I dine on an egg and bacon
Concoction although I'm not hungry.

At the moment, the notion of summiting Mt. Rainier seems like some
Sort of abstraction. I am not alone, yet alone. I know I'll need the help
And support of the others, and I pray that I may be of some use to them.

I want to do this. Can I really do this? I try to eat and rest. I'm drinking
Water mixed with Cytomax. Hydrate now. In the distance we see a clouding,
Darkening sky. We learn of a forecast predicting thunderstorms with
Lightning, including our location.

And so to bed, around 5:00 pm. The wind picks up quite a bit. The tent flaps
Loudly again. Don't hear any thunder. What if lightning strikes Ingraham
Glacier? I'm extremely psyched to summit; probably won't get any sleep. I
Pray for the courage, strength and focus to keep going. I might have slept.
Not sure. Someone is outside the tent. It is Dan telling us to get up.
It is around 11:00 pm. One person bails out, so there will be nine of us. We
Have assembled pretty quickly with our gear. There is no thunder storm. We

Large rocky ridge. It is about 12:20 am. Quite interesting, climbing on
Loose rock with crampons. We are nine tiny specks of headlamp
Light, roped together.

This wouldn't be a good place to fall; therefore don't fall. I'm very aware of
Our group and others climbing; and yet this is also so much of a personal head
Trip. I'm enclosed with my own thoughts. On we go, and we reach the point
Where we leave the D.C. and move onto Emmons Glacier. Just one last steep
Climb to the crater rim at the summit! And here there are several groups of
Climbers. There seems to be a delay of some sort. There is one party heading
Down. I think I hear the leader say: "I won't take my group across that."
What is that? I wonder.

We finally move forward and there it is, a crevasse too wide to step or jump
Over. Is this the end of our climb? There is an aluminum ladder laid across
The crevasse, with two short, ancient planks on it. It's anchored with two
Pickets at each end, and tilts somewhat to the left. It looks impossible to
cross.

Big fear and doubt for me. It is evident that others have crossed here,
day.

So this is it; we are going. Just do it.

I'm afraid, but the desire to summit wins out. The way is, on our hands and
Knees, crawling. Matt goes, I'm second. I don't look down. The ladder
Moves while I'm on it. I grip both sides, and slide along the old wood planks.
It's a brief trip and I'm across! We all make it. Phew. The pucker factor was
Way up on that one. There is an established path in the snow on Emmons
Glacier. The sky is getting lighter. We are getting closer. Closer. It seems
Like we have been ascending for a long time, like forever. We are into the
Rhythm of it, a steady methodical pace; a persevering determination to get
To the top no matter how long it takes. It's colder, mostly foggy; windy. We
Have always been climbing and always will be. We are in an eternal moment.
We have transcended the lowlands, the city.

OK. Where is it? We step and jump over crevasses, walk past a couple big
Ones. Hey! Here it is! We are at the crater, all of us! In the fog and brisk wind
We take off our packs and rest. I peer into the crater, can't see much. It really
Is quite windy with low visibility. We decide not to hike in the crater, over to
Columbia Crest, the true summit. We eat and drink. Share the space with oth-
ers.

We have reached the summit of Mt. Rainier. What else is there to do? Oh
yeah,

(Continued on page 9)

~ Poetry Pantry ~ Poetry Pantry ~ Poetry Pantry ~ Poetry Pantry ~

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The descent. We have to climb back down now. Step, repeat. Step, repeat. We Are all finding some reserve of energy and resolve to keep going. Visibility Improves, and what a view! We can see Little Tahoma Peak. We simply wear Our weariness and fatigue like a pack. There is now a fixed-rope bypass for The crevasse with the ladder over it. We hook into it with carabiners and get by. At Disappointment Cleaver. Lot warmer. Everything on the Cleaver looks Like a trail now. That slows us, finding our way. At one point, Brian, on One of the ropes other than the one I'm on, suddenly starts sliding down the Loose rock. For a split second we all watch. Janet, behind him on the rope, Immediately sat down and dug in. He stopped sliding. Scraped his arm pretty Good. He cleans and bandages it.

We reach Ingraham Glacier, and our base camp, 14 hours after we had left it. Now all we have to do, is break camp, go through Cathedral Gap to Camp Muir, hike down the snowfield to Paradise and drive back to Seattle. Piece of Cake. As we approach Camp Muir a woman there lets out a holler and whoop. It is OSAT sherpas! Incredible! They will have treats and help carry our gear to Paradise. We are quite happy to see them. We take a break, eat, drink, chat with The sherpas.

I walk down the snowfield with Janet. It is so hot, heat radiating up from the Snow. I feel like I'm being cooked. Time seems slowed way down. One thing That helps is several glissades we take that shortens the amount of walking. It Gets my pants wet and helps cool me off. There seems to be one final store Of energy to keep me going. So much snow has melted on the snowfield; it Looks dirty. There are still rock falls in the distance. A woman who sees Janet

And I asks us if we have been to the summit. When we say yes, she says: "That Is something you can check off your bucket list." I'm spent, moving those Booted feet on automatic. Just above Paradise we encounter mosquitoes. They Enjoy us, as we are sweaty, sticky and salty. We arrive at the Paradise Parking lot. Some of the climbers and sherpas got there ahead of us, some are Still behind. Finally everyone is down. It is dark. I learn that one of our group Of climbers had difficulty breathing up at Camp Muir. He wanted to stay there And rest overnight, but was talked out of that and came down while someone Else carried his pack for him. Turns out he had pulmonary edema and low blood Pressure. He ended up being taken to the nearest hospital for the night.

At 10:30 pm, Sunday night, July 26th, Matt and I start the drive home, to Seattle. This is the final phase of our journey to the summit of Mt. Rainier, and Back. Twice between Ashford and Puyallup, I hallucinate. I see what looks Like dark red high school gym bleachers spread across both lanes of the road. Are they really there? I shake my head, pinch my leg. Both times they went away. I remained awake although spacey. Come on, come on. Do not sleep now.

We do reach Seattle. I pull up in front of my house at 1:30 am. Matt gets his Gear and puts it in his car. We say our good-byes. I haul my gear inside, take A shower and go to bed around 2:30 am. I get up at 6:00 am Monday and go Make coffee for my Home Group. I'm in a state of elated euphoria which will Last for several days before it slowly begins to subside. §

what the mountain whispered

by dawn k

from far away, you seemed eternal, unchanging, solid,
an omniscient clay-footed statue scaling earth and sky

but as i climb you, you intimate your secrets to me
you become personal

on bad days, i hear sharp pieces of you:

snow pebbles pattering my skin, my eyes,

wind-howls shrieking over your crackling, furtive face.

i am lost in loud, noiseless white, stumbling in fearful faith

on good days, i hear completeness of you:

the piercing-healing hum of uncertain peaks

peeking through clouds,

all-embracing in endless song of blue awakening

i brim with everything and nothing. it is enough.

you are at times shy, moody, harsh, sincere, loving, ambivalent, gentle, sacred

i saw you hold a little bird, as you now hold me,

small and worshipful, treading softly on tender mystery. §

Forty-nine and Finished

By Rik A.

The following is an abridged version of an article published on SummitPost.org. Google "49 and Finished" to read the entire story and see some of the photos documenting this odyssey. Rik

Origins

The quest began 1985. The inspiration occurred while scanning a road atlas. My eye fell on the notation "Highest point in Illinois". Soon I was studying a list of the highest points in each of the states. At the same time, I was looking for an activity to replace my adventures in YMCA Indian Princesses with our oldest daughter, Vanessa. Thus was born an ambition: to visit the highest point in every state in the country. I choose the verb "visit" advisedly, as the word "climb" applies to, at best, 20 or 25 of the US state highpoints.

I had no idea whether anyone else had done it. The highpoints of four of the states didn't even have names. My log later revealed that there weren't even summit registers at 22 of the first 32 state highpoints we visited. In short, as far as we could tell nobody cared.

The Initial Blitz: 1985-1987 – 29 state highpoints in 27 months

Shortly thereafter our family vacationed in Vermont. My plan to hike to the top of [Mount Mansfield](#) was thwarted by bad weather. The next day we drove toll road to the summit ridge, and Vanessa and I hiked 1-½



First of 49: Rik on Mount Mansfield, 1985

miles to the true summit, our first state highpoint (SHP). The quest was on!

Before the month was out, we flew to Newark, and vis-

ited [High Point](#) in New Jersey and the trailer park in Delaware identified as its SHP. My pre-teen daughter's "summit" picture in Delaware tells it all in her cocked-head expression: "This is really dumb, Dad." Next we drove to Wisconsin to climb up the tower on [Timms Hill](#), then on to SHPs in Ohio, and Indiana. In February 1986 we drove to [Charles Mound](#), in our home state of Illinois. Among our first seven SHPs were 5 of the lowest 10 -- we were starting out easy!

By the end of the first year, Vanessa and I completed fourteen states, including three actual climbs, [Mount Elbert](#) in Colorado, [Harney Peak](#) in South Dakota, and [Mauna Kea](#) in Hawaii. We eschewed the road to the summit on the latter and hiked the final 4000 vertical feet. We also visited SHPs in Arkansas, Missouri, Massachusetts, and North Dakota. The experiences were getting more interesting, and our quest was having a character-building effect on her, and building our respect for each other.

In September 1986 we drove to Michigan. In the little town of L'Anse we learned that our information was out-of-date, and our attempt to follow the directions to the newly discovered SHP left us lost in a maze of logging roads. We returned home with our first failure, but by the end of 1986 we added Rhode Island and Alabama the states we had summited.

In 1987 we maintained the pace of a new SHP about every month, but we began with another disappointment. Our family vacation to Arizona included an attempt to climb [Humphreys Peak](#), thwarted by threatening weather. Later we summited Mississippi, and our entire family went for the Allegheny trifecta of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia. Vanessa and I then hiked to the only SHP that is on the ridge of a peak whose summit is in another state, the highpoint of Connecticut. In July the family traveled to the Adirondacks. Unfortunately Vanessa was suffering from asthma, and [Mount Marcy](#) became the first SHP I did solo.

A family road trip through Appalachia offered an opportunity to knock off a bunch of SHPs. We summited Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, North Carolina (highest point east of the Mississippi River), and Kentucky in one 4-day stretch. We had to forego the hike to [Mount Rogers](#) in Virginia as time grew short. On the second anniversary of our quest, Vanessa and I flew to Boston and drove the toll road up [Mount Washington](#) in New Hampshire. By the end of the year I quit my job with United Airlines in Chicago, and on our trip to Seattle we drove to the SHP of Kansas, and then had a misadventure on the Oklahoma panhandle as I drove off the

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Rik, Vanessa, and Hillary: SHP # 20 in W. Virginia

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road near the base of [Black Mesa](#), disabling the van and forcing retreat. Nevertheless, 27 months into our quest I had been to 29 SHPs, Vanessa had been to 28.

1988-1994 – 12 state highpoints, including more real climbs

Our new home in Washington State afforded an opportunity to begin climbing in earnest. We learned the skills needed in a [Boeing Alpine Club \(BOEALPS\)](#) alpine climbing class. In July we climbed [Mt. Hood](#), and the following Labor Day we completed the [Borah Peak](#) hike/scramble in Idaho. Our family finished the year with a trip to Disney World, and the two of us drove to the country's lowest SHP, [Britton Hill](#) in Florida. I also discovered a copy of [Frank Ashley's Highpoints of the States](#) in the BOEALPS library, the first guidebook written on the subject. We were then over half way to completing the goal, and finally discovered that anyone else harbored the same ambition we had.

In the Boeing Marketing Department I met [Jim Hinkhouse](#). Our mutual interest in climbing blossomed into mountaineering companionship. He joined Vanessa and me on his first climb of [Mt. Hood](#) in the summer of 1989. That year we only climbed two new SHPs, both worthy adventures. After a six month hiatus, our trip to [Mount Katahdin](#) proved well worth the wait. We did the complete traverse, across the so-called [knife edge](#) to the summit of Maine. The other SHP that year was [Mount Whitney](#), the summit of the Lower-48. We hiked the [Whitney Trail](#) to the Consultation Lake camp on the 4th of July, and summited the following day.

Later that year BOEALPS published a 25th anniversary book recounting its history, which included a note that former member [Jack Longacre](#) had summited all 50 SHPs. I tracked him down, and we joined the [Highpointers Club](#) Jack formed in 1987. In the first half of

1990, we took a family vacation to New Orleans, during which Vanessa and I summited Louisiana's SHP. That spring Jim asked me to join him and his long-time friend Dick Wright to teach alpine glacier climbing to members of their basketball team, an effort that ended in a bid to climb [Mt. Rainier](#) that was foiled by an early season whiteout. Vanessa and I spent a horrid night at Camp Muir and retreated with the RMI guides the following morning.

In August we climbed [Gannett Peak](#) on a 5-day trip from the north side with five other Highpointers and my father. Gannett ranks among the toughest of the SHPs, being the most remote save Denali. On summit day we sat out a snow squall in a bergschrund on the way up, and waited out a thunderstorm on the descent. It ranks as my favorite SHP trip, both for the pleasure and pride of being part of a three-generation climb, and the satisfaction of co-leading a successful glacier climb deep in the wilderness. In November Vanessa and I attended the Highpointers annual meeting at El Paso. We met Jack Longacre and other leaders in the early years of the organization, and summited [Guadalupe Peak](#) with the club. It was my 37th SHP and Vanessa's 36th.

The following year Jim Hinkhouse founded [One Step At A Time \(OSAT\)](#). I summited [Mount Rainier](#) with him twice that summer, up the [Ingraham](#) route, and subsequently as a rope leader on the first OSAT club climb via the [Emmons Glacier](#). Rainier was my only SHP that year and I did not climb in 1992 due to a flare-up of a back injury sustained in college.

A family trip to Santa Fe afforded the opportunity to grab two SHPs in April 1993. We returned to [Black Mesa](#) Oklahoma to avenge the disastrous off-road excursion in the mini-van five years earlier. Two days later we climbed [Wheeler Peak](#) in New Mexico from the Taos ski area, which we summited in spite of a whiteout for most of our hike out the ridge. This was Vanessa's 39th SHP, and is the last we did together as she left for college the following September.

In 1994 I invited Jim and his girlfriend Shirley to join me on a trip to [Granite Peak](#). The highest mountain in Montana is among the five most difficult SHPs, although it is only tenth highest. We had a delightful three-day trip, culminating in what Jim coined in a different context as "a Sound of Music descent" down wildflower-filled alpine meadows.

Timeout ...and Reassessment

Granite Peak proved to be my last SHP for over twelve years. Although I drove around with "50HIPTS" on my license plate, with Vanessa gone to college my climbing focused on the Washington Cascades with a growing

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circle of OSAT companions. I climbed at least 100,000 vertical feet per year every year from 1993 to 2002, and exceeding 150,000 in 1994 and 1998. During this SHP hiatus, I summited Rainier eight more times and Hood three more times. Our other daughter, Hillary, joined me on my second time up the [Kautz Glacier](#) route of Rainier.

I also led two OSAT trips to South America. The first was an [attempt on Aconcagua in 1997](#), the highest peak outside of Asia. Our team organized our own logistics and climbed without a guide. The climb culminated in the five of us spending forty hours in a three-man tent at 20,320 feet, buffeted by the White Wind, unable to see where to go either up nor down, periodically applying repairs to our tent. Our descent revealed that the camps above 15,000 feet on the mountain had been abandoned. Our traverse from the [Polish Glacier](#) to the [Normal Route](#) was a great mountaineering adventure: two-weeks from trailhead to trailhead, but no summit!

After the Aconcagua climb, I resolved that if I were to ever again invest the in another two- or three-week mountaineering adventure, it would be to Nepal rather than to Alaska. I led an OSAT [trip to Ecuador in 2002](#), where we summited three peaks above 15,000 feet including the beautiful [Cotopaxi](#) and the challenging [Illiniza Sur](#). Time and other priorities have not yet permitted another major climb outside North America, but



Rik on Humphries, 2005

I am still resolved to rank the cultural experience of an international destination above the prospect of three-weeks on a glacier in Alaska.

Renewing the Quest: 2006-2007 – 3 more mountains

In 2006 I renewed progress toward the adjusted goal

arose on a [five-day OSAT trip in the Grand Canyon](#). As we began planning the trip, Dan L. agreed to join me in the hike up [Humphreys](#). We had the mountain to ourselves, with a light dusting of snow, calm and clear weather. #42 SHP was completed, and the odyssey resumed. The following year Dan and I climbed two desert SHPs, [Kings Peak](#) and [Boundary Peak](#) in early July. Boundary Peak was my last of the twelve SHPs over 10,000 feet I was going to climb.

The Completion Expedition: 2009 – 5 final state highpoints

In 2008 I retired from Boeing, but soon experienced the cliché that retirement is busier than working life. I climbed less than when I was working five days a week. However, as I planned to attend my 40th college reunion in Boston in June 2009, the idea to drive there and back intrigued me. The itinerary for my Great American Road Trip quickly evolved into a plan to visit the last five SHPs on my list.

The trip eventually covered 8000 miles. We passed buffalo on our way to [Panorama Point](#) Nebraska, and in Virginia I hiked up the rugged Appalachian Trail to [Mount Rogers](#) on a beautiful day, passed groups of wild ponies and perhaps a dozen other hikers. After my reunion and a visit with daughters and granddaughters in Boston, I began my return to Seattle. On my 62nd birthday I found [Mount Arvon](#) in Michigan without a hitch. The following day I made the 8-mile round trip hike to [Eagle Mountain](#) Minnesota, my SHP#48.

Finally, this year on the 16th of June, 23 years and 288 days after I'd begun, I exited I-90 at Worthington Minnesota, and turned south toward the Sterler farm in Iowa. [Hawkeye Point](#) didn't look anything like the guidebook pictures; the cattle feed structure was gone, replaced by a mosaic marker, a granite marker, a signboard with a 50-state license plate collection, and a group of signposts pointing to the other 49 SHPs. A fitting spot to end my quest: an homage to SHPs! I wasn't a bit self-conscious wrote an entire page in the Hawkeye Point log book and drove back to I-90, satisfied that my quest had come to an end.

I started this activity before "highpointing" was recognized as a verb or as a pastime. Jack Longacre, founder of the Highpointers Club, completed summiting all fifty SHPs just a week before Vanessa and I began our quest. When we began about eleven people had completed all fifty, and fewer than twenty had completed forty-eight. Today, the Highpointers Club lists over 300 people who have completed 48 states, over 180 of whom have done all 50. I'm now on the first list, and have no intention of joining the second. §

Del Campo Adventure - *A day or two in the mind of Anna*

Story & photos by Anna O.

Ben and I wanted to take the weekend to try this after my sponsee canceled her Fifth Step and opened my weekend. We rallied the troops by email, but James was the only who stuck! Ben finally heard from Adam that we could do this in one day – it was four hours to Foggy Lake.

I picked up Ben at 6:30, got James at the Park & Ride, and were there before 9am. Some sprinkles on the way but no rain on the trail – just totally soaked in with fog. We loved the hike in. It begins along the Sauk – "now with arsenic!" – then

goes up through temperate rain forest, some of it damn steep. We took two breaks but otherwise moved continuously, except to eat huckleberries (that Ben noted had a hint of bilge water flavor) and to inspect mushrooms. There were some ripe thimbleberries in the first section. Yum! They have a tangy, unique flavor (now they're my favorite). After a couple hours, the forest

gave way to a more gradual dirt & rock path akin to the Shuksan ridge, with half-pint trees.

We could see the ridge of the basin we were aiming to get over. Inside the basin are tons of rock outcroppings and lakes and tarns. Gothic Basin is much bigger than I expected. The path meanders around inside it before you get to Foggy Lake. We passed five or ten other people camping to a little spot between a tarn and Foggy. I filtered some water from the tarn and we had lunch. I'd brought hummus & pita, apple & cheese sticks. Lately I'm really trying to bring only what I'll eat, plus a couple Lara bars for extra.

After lunch James strung his hammock and we put up the Spire. I didn't bring a sleeping bag, hoping to stay warm in puff clothes and Ben's great small tent. Put a few essentials in the summit bag and headed around the lake to try Gothic Peak. We headed out at 3pm with a 5pm turnaround time. Big scramble, temperatures in the 50s, some clanky rock piles, some scree, a little snow.

We ended up between a rock wall and a huge snow shelf. After the relatively safe scramble, we hooked up with the trail near the base of the pyramid. It was a great, fun scramble with helmets!

The top was totally soaked in, fog coming over from cliff on back side. Yet it was nice – quiet & still. We relaxed a long time, had tea. It had taken less than an hour to summit, and the descent was even faster. Trails are easier to see from above. Not many critters up here, just a bird or two and maybe a little rodent.

We hung out at camp with more tea and dinner (pasta Pro-Pak). I thought about suggesting a meeting, but we all turned in at 8:30pm and set the alarm for 6:30a with an 8a departure for Del Campo Peak.

I was somewhat chilly in my micro-puff plus puff – slept fitfully and kind of wished I'd brought my sleeping bag. The wind picked up a few times and I wondered if James would get cold in the hammock. Ends up he just got blown around



Anna & Ben atop Gothic Peak, with Foggy Lake below

some. He had his tarp over his hammock and all his stuff out beneath him. Ben woke up before the alarm and we looked out at a beautiful, hazy fog shot through with bright sunlight. It looked like it would burn off, and it did. We pattered around camp with breakfast (English muffins with cream cheese), etc. and finally headed up the other way around the lake to Del Campo.

My light summit pack felt great. Perfect weather: sunny and in the 60s, no wind. Brought my rock-climbing shoes. The path led up and over a scrubby knoll/ridge and down to the talus slope. Scrambling up, Ben decided to try a little different route, and we soon discovered the error in that impulse. Had to traverse this scary section where one slip would mean a big problem. James was in front of me, and I could hear his nerves in his breathing. He asked me if he was going too slow, and I said, No way. I prayed to God to please keep us safe.

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After a little of that we were back on course and realized the value of staying that way. It was steep, but most of the amazing rocks were big and stable. Then we got to a point kind of like the Shuksan pyramid, where it was all solid. I put on my rock shoes — what a great idea! They are so much more precise, and I could just cruise up. Ben got a little stuck, so I tried a route around him and found it worked great. I ended up on top first. A small summit, comparable to Shuksan, with awesome views: Rainier, Baker & Glacier; Pugh, Sloan, Whitehorse, Shuksan. We got out Ben's maps and were able to ID a lot of them. That was so much fun. Had some tea and a snack and let the exposure adrenaline drain away.

Ben later said the thought of going down scared him. I was mostly scared for James, who'd never done anything like this. But he did great. He almost fell once or twice — enough for me to gasp dramatically — but caught himself. Once his recovery move looked like a slo-mo breakdancer. When we got to the resting point where my boots were, another team was coming up, and Ben talked with them about the route.

From there, we had a very pleasant descent back to camp. Ben hadn't really brought anything for lunch, so we shared hummus & pita & apple (I'd brought too much, again). We took our time packing up and headed out.



Yep, it goes UP! James & Ben make a plan...



Ben & James at camp

By now, people were all over the basin — day hikers in various stages of fitness. All seemed to me to be starting out late. One pair of guys in particular stood out. First one very fit, older, shirtless & happy; second guy scowling, sweaty and irked. Looked at us as if to say: “Do you believe what this a—hole is putting me through?” It made me wonder if one guy was a guide/trainer — and I had the idea: “Hey, I should take people out hiking and train them, get them into shape.” James was like, “That's what GCC does,” and I was like, “Yeah, but I want to get paid!” Got me dreaming of a new career direction.

The way down was like a different hike, because we weren't socked in and could see the peak behind us from a couple of spots. Really a nice hike, with different climatic areas. In the forest, James spotted some huge chicken-of-the-woods mushroom on a tree, and Ben goes, “Uh — I HAVE to go over there.” He took a baggie for a “sample” but brought back a good amount. He guessed there were 40 pounds of mushrooms on that tree. Later he cooked it up and pronounced it delicious.

Got back to the car at 4:30pm. There was a new meeting I really wanted to hit up, so after a quick, mediocre dinner at Granite Falls' Los Flamingsos, I sped a little on the drive home, dropped James, dropped Ben, then picked up my two friends, and we went to that meeting. Because without meetings, I wouldn't be doing any of this awesome stuff. §

The relationship of height to spirituality is not merely metaphorical, it is a physical reality. The most spiritual people of this planet live in the highest places. So do the most spiritual flowers . . . I call the high and light aspects of my being spirit and the dark and heavy aspect soul. Soul is at home in the deep shadowed valleys. Spirit is a land of high, white peaks and glittering jewel-like lakes and flowers . . . People need to climb the mountain not simply because it is there, but because the soulful divinity needs to be mated with the spirit.

-- 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet

Ross Lake Kayak Trip: The Great and the Small of Nature

by Louisa P.

This is a story of things great and small.

THINGS GREAT:

What's the big deal with Ross Lake? When I used to see it listed on the OSAT calendar, I'd have no interest. The name "Ross" for some reason reminded me of saw-horses (my mind works in weird ways), so I'd picture kind of a dull pond with piles of saw-dust and old saw-horses abandoned on its peripheries, where some OSATers and I would be paddling about aimlessly, laughing too much and pretending to have fun – and then I'd click on something further down the calendar.

In reality, Ross Lake is surrounded by mountains – imposing, majestic peaks that gaze

down from their snow covered shoulders and contribute via countless cascading waterfalls to this 23 mile long lightning bolt of turquoise, dammed at its south end and extending into Canada at its north. Ross Lake cannot be reached by car. Imagine! A sanctuary at 1,600 feet,



Gerard did this a lot

unbreachable by the Winnebago blob-beings and their jet-skis! This was the second year Keno and I had hiked in the mile-long, yahoo-repelling trail from Hwy 20 to the pick-up point where we and our packs (mine about 90 lbs!) were ferried to Ross Lake Resort, near the

dam. Others cross Diablo Lake by kayak and load their boats on a big rumbly truck that totes them up from the base of the dam to the same point, where they can launch again. This year Lori U. had come early, and was joined Saturday morning by Pete S., Joe L., Gerard and Nodair, while Bill and Nancy arrived as usual in their sailboat.

Keno and I had rented a two-person kayak from the resort, the propulsion of which, in theory, we would

share. Though at age eight, he did contribute in spurts, I ended up paddling for both of us most of the time. Nodair was in a kayak for the first time in his life – one of two beautiful wooden Pygmy kayaks Gerard assembled himself. He'd kindly loaned Nodair the flat-hulled model that's more difficult to handle, so Nod was learning as he went along – just like in Ethiopia!

We all set off paddling toward our campground -- McMillan this year -- which we were dismayed to find overrun for the first night by a group of notably butch womyn and a troupe of half a dozen Boy Scouts. While we resented the heck out of both groups at first, we came to appreciate them more with interaction, especially after the Scout leader marched all the boys down to the dock to answer Nancy's question, "Why are you in the Boy Scouts?" Even at ages 13-15, their answers were adorable. As for the butch womyn, I discovered we'd shared a scheme – never acted out on either part – to scare the scouts off by running around naked and screaming. A great lesson in neighborly love and tolerance was had, but even so, we were stoked on Sunday when they all took off and left the place OSAT only!

The days were hot, and we all jumped off our dock innumerable times. As the result of someone's releasing bait fish into the lake decades ago, the shallows team with tiny minnows who cluster around and nip at one's skin. Keno caught & released jar after jar of them, but

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for me, the sensation was too freaky to stay in long.

On Sunday, everyone except Keno and

me took off paddling up-lake to Devil's Creek Gorge, which I've heard is breathtaking but have yet to see, as Keno can't make the trip. Bill and Nancy borrowed our double kayak, and I've heard that Gerard climbed up to the bridge and took photos of everyone from above, very much like this one. Maybe next year!

Upon their return to camp, Pete S. decided, amid the late afternoon heat, to practice overturning his kayak and using his oar float to get back in (I'm sure more technical terms exist). Pete spawned a fad, a craze, a new cool thing to do! Gerard and Nod were the first onboard, or rather overboard – rolling their kayaks, sliding out, righting the boat, etc. Lori, Nancy, Joe, Bill and I found our relaxed observation thereof interrupted by calls and urgings of peer pressure to try it ourselves, which we waved off with "maybe later." I, for one, did not want water up my nose.

Then, to my surprise, Keno piped up: "Can I try it?" I assented, and we started him off swimming over to a drifting, upright boat. Once the little guy — amid much cheering — had clambered up the oar and into the cockpit, a new wave of capsizing recovery mania broke out amongst the "maybe later" crowd. We all wanted to try it!

Pre-Keno, we'd just sat there too afraid of looking stupid, but suddenly we were all caught up in a "my turn!" competition, inspired by an 8-yr-old. A number of us did get water up our noses, but after thirty years of having no clue what that folded pad thingie on the bow is for, I finally do!



Youngest kayaker

Then all the "boys" except Joe and Keno jumbled eagerly into the sailboat and took off for a sailing lesson with Bill. No room for Louisa! Ditched *again!* The boat appeared absurdly overloaded with the four of them, and how they came about without thwacking someone, I know not, but their collective "I'm going, too!" boy-eagerness struck me as endearing. I wondered, listening to the quiet, arrhythmic smack and slurp of wavelets under the dock, observing as their outlines and bits of voice receded into the sun streaked panorama of shadowed mountains and pastel waters, if this affection came from so many years lived as a Lesbian with male energy banned from my life, or because I'm a mom who's watched that same bright determination evolve in her son's little bosom, or because I was just secretly pissed that those selfish a-holes had elbowed me out of my rightful place on the boat and was trying to cover it up by acting all spiritual. Such are the elements that will frame that moment forever for me — friends, beauty, and life — which is what I so much adore about being part of OSAT.



THINGS SMALL:

While Keno and I were alone at the campsite, we found a tiny, cheeping baby bird on the path from camp to the dock. He (or she) had a crushed leg. Two of the men in our party, I learned later, had already seen him but relegated him to a fate of snack food for some scavenger. Keno and I, by contrast, put him in a Tupperware bowl with a mossy floor, named him Spencer, and began trying to feed him bugs and minnow guts. Later that day,

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in almost the same spot, we found a second, slightly bigger chick, added him (or her) to the bowl, and named him Eliot.

Craning their open beaks up like bright spring crocuses trembling with eagerness, both babies would cheep urgently any time they sensed something overhead. Nancy, Lori, and I (the three women) were all love-struck with them. The guys would peer in over the bowl's edge as though someone's shoe lining had come alive, which they found interesting, but certainly no trigger for a surge of oxytocin-fueled "awwww!" Lori donated her tweezers, but every time we brought a string of fish guts or squished fly near those tiny beaks, they would clamp shut in a kind of grossed out disdain. No! they seemed to say. Wrong thing.



By twilight, I'd honed in on the third and tiniest chick amid the underbrush via a cheeping version of Marco-Polo, and Keno had named him Joey.

All three were getting feathers, but had not quite fledged. Hearing their cheeping, the perplexed parents flew down to visit, one and then the other, perching on the bowl's rim in helpless confusion. It was heart-breaking to watch. None of the trees around us had branches low enough for us to reach. Some disastrous 9/11 had befallen their nest, but we could do nothing to reinstate them.

I did glimpse the parents well enough to recognize them as finches. Finches, I knew, are often domesticated, and more importantly, eat fruits and nuts. When we offered the chicks tiny bits of blueberry on the tweezers, we were in business. "At last!" they seemed to say. One blueberry provided 4-6 portions — enough to satisfy them. They also liked banana, and some almonds I crushed to a paste for them. We stowed them in the bear-box for the night, and in the morning all three mini-crocuses opened bright orange for feeding.

Nodair cautioned me that removing creatures from the wild was questionable, both ethically and practically. He was right, of course. Yet both ethically and practically, these little guys were toast, so our interference was not so much with them as whatever *would have* been lucky enough to eat them. I decided to try hand

feeding them, and if successful, I would release the two with healthy legs.

"That's fine, I guess," Nod shrugged. "A sort of science experiment." Even then his words struck me as ironically ill-suited; he didn't understand that, already, I loved them.

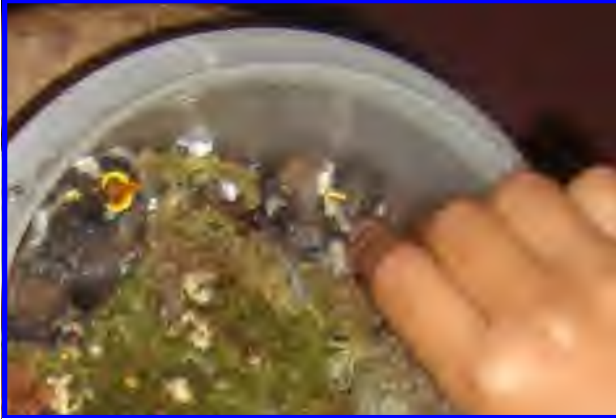
I stowed their bowl in the back of our kayak for the return trip and discovered, when one of the hands at the rental resort almost violently scoffed my fruit diet and shouldered me out of the way with a huge horsefly in our tweezers (the beaks clamped shut), that some people have surprisingly strong views about baby birds.

Because they are so tiny, baby finches are harder to raise than starlings, sparrows, or robins; they need to be fed every half hour, with the exception of overnight. The first morning back in Seattle, I fed them all as much as I could before leaving for a total of five hours to teach a class. When I came home, I heard no peeping. In the bowl, Eliot and Joey feebly raised their heads. Spencer did nothing. I grabbed all three and stuffed them down my shirt as I began frantically hunting down the heating pad. Once the pad heated up enough, I carefully set the three of them on it and kind of wrapped them up like a burrito. Eliot and Joey peeked out at me as if to say, what the heck?! But Spencer was ebbing like a little spent battery, his beak hinging in slow motion. I saw his spark go out.

So thereafter, the survivors two came to work with me every day. I carried the heating pad in a large bowl, with their smaller Tupperware bowl nestled inside it, with a cover of crinoline netting. I would park illegally on the UW campus, dash into my office with them, zoom off to a legitimate parking space, and bicycle back again: then I'd reverse the whole process every night. I'd concocted a formula for them of rice cereal, apple sauce, and cashewbutter, inspired by a few websites. They loved it, but I missed so often with the dropper that both got pathetically encrusted. A long-planned weekend gathering at my family's summer cabin came up; I brought the birdies with. There, my friend April insisted I was doing everything wrong: they should be eating moist cat food and have nothing but clean plastic under them. I could see Eliot was not doing so well. His pooper was stopped up, and he wanted to eat but kept turning his beak away at the last second. I tried using a Q-tip to clean his pooper, but the struggle exhausted him, and I didn't succeed. Keep in mind, he

(Continued on page 18)





Dwarfed by Keno's small hand; tweezer tips filled their beaks.

was the size of the end of your thumb. By morning, a week after I'd "rescued" him, Eliot had died as well. April nodded knowingly.

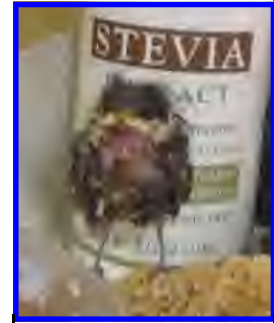
So it was down to Joey, the runt of the clutch. He'd begun to make a second, cozy sound when he was happy, and to experiment with preening. His eye would acquire an odd, urge-filled look, and then his little foot would be whirring by his head, too quick to be seen. Or he'd grab at the gobs of food on his breast and whittle free a few strands of down. Despite his bedraggled feathers, he was thriving, except that having lost both siblings, he found this gargantuan ape his only companion. I will never forget him perching on my finger – he weighed barely a few grams, less than a marshmallow – and cocking his head to check me out as we traded chirps. This tiny creature engaged me not only without fear, but with a confidence bordering on impertinence. This world was *his* oyster, and he was gonna... gonna -- he'd fluff and flutter and fluff! -- he didn't know *what*, but *something*!! He wanted to live, to see, to do! To be a finch! He was almost bursting with it -- revving toward the moment his zeal would break out in flight.

I was amazed by him, in awe of his Maker. How could something no bigger than the face of a watch actually see an image of me, hear the sounds I made, perceive the world and be so stoked to explore it? Without a bit of caution, he'd run up the towel I draped over the Tupperware's edge, hop down the other side, skitter to the table's edge to dive off, and be zipping around the office floor like an animate dust mouse. We also became more intimate. When his pooper clogged up, I dunked his butt like a tea bag in a tea cup of warm water for a few minutes while he protested, then used the tweezers to fearlessly uncork him. It worked. He pooped three times in the next minute as if to say, "Ahh!" The only thing that scared him was the laminate table surface, where his feet slid out from under him. He'd persist in a frenzied tapdance of panic until he could catch hold of my finger, like a life ring.

I'd talk aloud to him while we drove around town. He seemed unimpressed but alert to my glances and sounds, there being not much else to do in the bowl. I'd tell him to wait while I went in shopping, and when I'd get back I'd wish I could grab him up and kiss him. More often as the days passed, he'd get those fluff and flutter shudders, itching to fly. I transferred him to an aquarium with perches. In hopes he might be getting close to feeding himself, I bought him some branches of millet, and set out one of Keno's baby dishes with a quarter inch of water. He'd sort of wrestle with the millet, but he never thought of eating it.

On his thirteenth day with me I went running, and upon coming home hurried upstairs to exercise and stretch for about 20 minutes. When I came down, I noticed the aquarium was still. "Joey?" I went over to find him lying in the dish of water, sopping wet, eyes closed.

"Oh, my baby!" I whispered. Bits of feather and droplets splattered on the glass told me he had done his little tapdance of panic in the plastic dish for some time before collapsing in the water. He lay warm in my fingers, loose and lax, but definitely drowned. I touched him with my huge ape whorls, half hoping, sobbing how sorry I was. Then I ran to the neighbors where Keno was, lurching in over the childgate,



Joey's last day

and sobbing unabashedly: "Keno, Joey *died*! He drowned in his water dish!" The thing in my hand looked like a wad of cat fur pulled from a drain, but Keno appeared more stricken by my face: he had never seen his mother cry like that. He didn't know I could.

I still cry for Joey sometimes. Running past some autumn crocuses the other day, I recalled what moved me in those craning, trembling little beaks stretched up as high and wide as they could reach in a desperate, no-holds-barred competition: pick me! They were Life, in all its fragility and persistence. The miracles of design, of evolution, of spark passed down from parent to offspring against the odds -- we forget how incredible all of this is. Even ourselves we imagine to be the pilots of our lives, when in truth we're carried, not just spiritually but physiologically, by an incomprehensible force with an intelligence all its own. Joey and his siblings reminded me of that force. Really, he and the others died with their broken nest; they belonged high among those swaying firs and nowhere else. Yet their stay with me blessed me with a sense of that realm — glimpses too evanescent to be weighed down with words.

Such were the findings of our science experiment. §



Clockwise from Top: Aasgard Pass w Ron, Margie, Gretchen; Car campers Elisha & Anna; Prussik Peak; old growth OSAT (Doug, Roy, & Cliff?); Asorted car campers. Top and bottom photos taken by Ron's son, Javin

The Yodel

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Photo by Ron's son, Javin Ellif.

Mountain goat near Leprechaun Lake