

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

# The Yodel

Volume 14, Issue 4

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Keep climbing mountains and don't slip!



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## **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.*

## Spell of the Enchantments

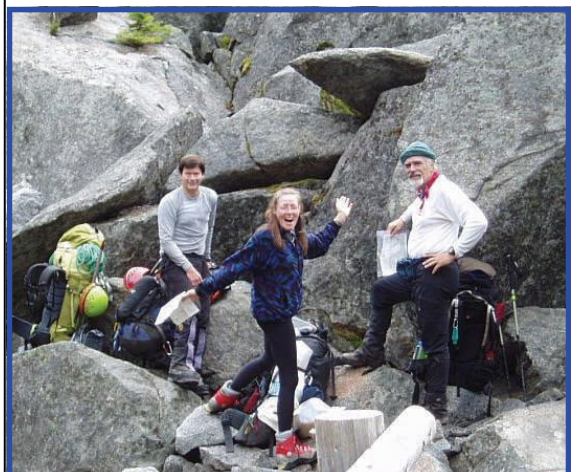
*Story and photos by Dave McC.*

I recently had the opportunity to hike in the Enchantments with Rik A., Nancy T., and Bill L. I had heard of the Enchantments, but didn't really know much about them, or even exactly where they were located, but I'd always heard they were beautiful. So, when Rik mentioned he had an extra permit to go, I jumped at the chance. I imagined us hiking through beautiful green meadows with little lakes and perhaps taking a swim now and again as we sang tunes from "The Sound of Music." No one has ever said I lack in imagination!

Rik and I set out Saturday afternoon and drove to Eight Mile Campground in Icicle Creek outside of Leavenworth. We arrived about 4pm and set up Rik's tent in a nice campground with a fire pit, and then headed into Leavenworth for dinner. We found an "authentic" German restaurant which turned out to be pretty good, where the waiter had these great Bavarian muttonchops for a beard which we decided weren't glued on. Afterwards we went shopping for Smores at Safeway, only to find they were out of marshmallows! We enlisted about four clerks in searching the shelves high and low, which in itself was rather amusing, but to no avail. We finally found our marshmallows at Dan's grocery, and went back to camp where we lit a campfire,

indulged ourselves in some high octane treats, and passed out with smiles on our faces. I had terrible dreams of sharks roasting me over a spit and nibbling on my toes, but that's not really all that unusual for me.

We awoke on Sunday to find that Nancy and Bill had arrived during the night, and were asleep in their car. I had called them the night before to let them know that the ranger in Leavenworth had told us there was "two feet of snow with four foot drifts" in the Enchantments, but what I didn't know was that they had also driven through a rain storm over the pass to meet us. Not to mention that they'd had a flat tire, and had completed the drive on their little spare donut tire. What a way to start a hiking trip!



*Nancy, not the least bit excited, with Bill and Rik*

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In the morning we I headed up to the Colchuck/Stuart trailhead, after Rik and Nancy took one of the cars back to the Snow Creek trailhead so we'd have a car waiting for us at the other end of our hike. The weather was nice as we headed up to Colchuck Lake, though it started to drizzle lightly just as we reached our campsite at the lake's end. Good timing: we just had time to set up our tents and an overhead tarp before getting too wet. We had two of the new MSR Reactor stoves on the trip, so we had hot cocoa in under 3 minutes. When the rain died down, we went and took a look at the trail up Aasgard Pass that we'd be hiking the next morning. It looked steep, especially as we'd be taking full packs up, and we sorely regretted not having any Sherpas along on the trip. Our Sherpa had gone M.I.A. — sad but true! That night it rained pretty hard with the wind making white caps on the lake and we went to bed a bit disheartened about what the morrow might bring. However, when nature called about 3am, I went out to find the wind had died down completely, and the stars were out!



*Bill and Rik awl-most at the top of Aasgard Pass*

We awoke Monday morning to mostly blue skies, which was a miracle. We ate a leisurely breakfast, packed up, and started up Aasgard Pass in the sunshine. It wasn't too bad of a hike, as we followed a fairly obvious trail up the pass, dotted with cairns showing the way. We were in snow for the upper half of the pass, and donned helmets along the way as we skirted a gulley up the left side underneath some imposing cliffs, and then we traversed to the right, up and over the pass and into the Enchantments. The



*Alpine Rappers: Rik, Dave, & Bill*

snow was only a foot or two deep as we made our way past Isolation Lake on our way to our camp further down at Inspiration Lake, but at times we'd sink up to our thighs in the snow, so one had to be a bit cautious with each step.

As we stopped for a quick lunch along the way, behind us on the ridge appeared two mountain goats, horns and all. They looked us over for a moment and then disappeared back over the ridge and into the snow. We were hoping they'd follow us and we'd get some pictures, but we never saw them again on the trip.

Later we made camp at Inspiration Lake, and again set up a tarp over our kitchen area for protection against the rain which had appeared out of nowhere. We had a quick dinner and climbed in our tents for the night. Rik worked on his Sudoku puzzles and I read "Into the Wild" by Jon Krakauer. I'm not sure what Bill and Nancy were doing to pass the time in their tent, but eventually we all got to sleep, and awoke on Tuesday morning to a beautiful skies once again. The weather really seemed to be cooperating with us for a change, so we had breakfast, hung the food from a tree, and headed off to climb Prusik Peak while the sun was out.

*(Continued on page 4)*



## OSAT Quick Reference

### Board Of Trusted Servants (BOTS)

Chris N.	206.706.3242	ebots@osat.org
Kelly P.	425.868.5311	kpurcell0007@aol.com
Deborah L.		deborahl@lazaldi.com
Dave Mc.		yakmandu@hotmail.com
Rod B.		selfarrest@hotmail.com

### Committee Chairs

<b>Activities:</b>	Janice B.	425.277.6770	getaview@comcast.net
<b>Finance:</b>	Rik A.	206.232.8908	hollyrik@msn.com
<b>Info Line:</b>	TBA		einfo@osat.org
<b>Library:</b>	Rod B.		elibrary@osat.org
<b>Membership:</b>	Lucinda T	425.444.5083	emembership@osat.org
<b>OSAT BC:</b>	TBA		
<b>OSAT East Coast:</b>	John H.	617.641.3423	soberhiker@aol.com
<b>Safety:</b>	Doug H.	425.271.5116	doug.sue@comcast.net
<b>Service:</b>	TBA		
<b>Yodel:</b>	Louisa P.	206.427.6772	2louisa@gmail.com
<b>Webmaster:</b>	Scott H.		webmaster@osat.org

### 12 Step Meetings

<b>Thursday Tiger</b>	Summer only	thurstigerleader@osat.org
<b>Sunday Tiger</b>		suntigerleader@osat.org

### OSAT Club Meeting

**Next Meeting:** January 9, 2008  
**Entertainment:** TBA

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 leader, you should be certain that everyone on that activity has signed a Release and Indemnity Agreement. As a participant, you may want to "qualify" your leader.
- 9) Party size for OSAT activities will adhere to the rules of the appropriate jurisdiction.

## OSAT Information Line

This hotline is available to the public to contact OSAT, leave messages, and hear about 12-Step meetings and other club events.

**206.686.2927**

## OSAT Online - [www.osat.org](http://www.osat.org)

New Members receive instructions via email on how to activate their account to access the Members Section of the OSAT Website. If you are a current member and would like to set up an online account email [emembership@osat.org](mailto:emembership@osat.org).

## The OSAT Echo

### Subscribing:

Members are added upon joining. You can also manage your Echo subscription in your online account settings.

**Posting:** Email to [echo@osat.talklist.com](mailto:echo@osat.talklist.com).

### Unsubscribing:

Send a blank email to [echo-off@osat.talklist.com](mailto:echo-off@osat.talklist.com). You can also manage your Echo subscription in your online account settings.

*"The relationship of height to spirituality is not merely metaphorical, it is 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 spirit."*

— The 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet

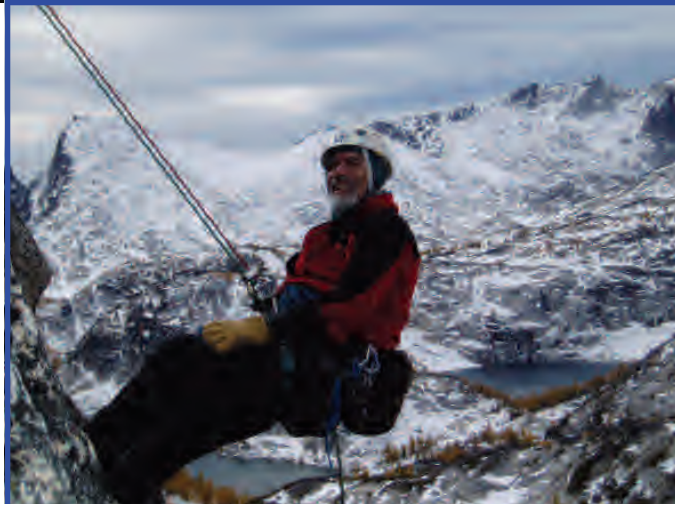
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Bill led the first pitch up Prusik with me following, and Rik followed us up by prusiking up the rope, which seemed rather appropriate being on Prusik Peak and all. It was pretty cold and windy, and my feet were freezing after only one pitch, so we took a consensus and decided to head back down and save the summit for another, warmer, day. Nancy was great and was waiting for us at the bottom with hot tea!

We headed back to camp and Rik and Bill went for a hike while Nancy and I stayed in camp. When the guys returned, we made dinner followed by a most unusual tasting chocolate mousse made by Bill. I had discovered to my delight that I was hiking with some serious chocolate lovers, which made the addict in me extremely happy!

Wednesday morning dawned with low lying clouds covering the Enchantments, but occasionally some blue sky would break through, so we all decided to go for a hike. Rik and Nancy went one way, while Bill and I took off to climb Little Annapurna which was covered in mist. When we reached the top, however, the mist parted a bit and we had some good views of some of the nastiest looking peaks I'd ever seen: they reminded me of the mountains of Mordor in Lord of the Rings! The snow on Little Annapurna was pretty deep in places, and we tried to keep to the rock as much as possible to avoid post holing, which got a bit tiresome. It was a nice little climb though, and we made our way down and back to camp pretty quickly.

We decided to move down to Snow Lake that afternoon, so we packed up and headed off, slowly



*Is Rik blue-screened in, or is he really there?*

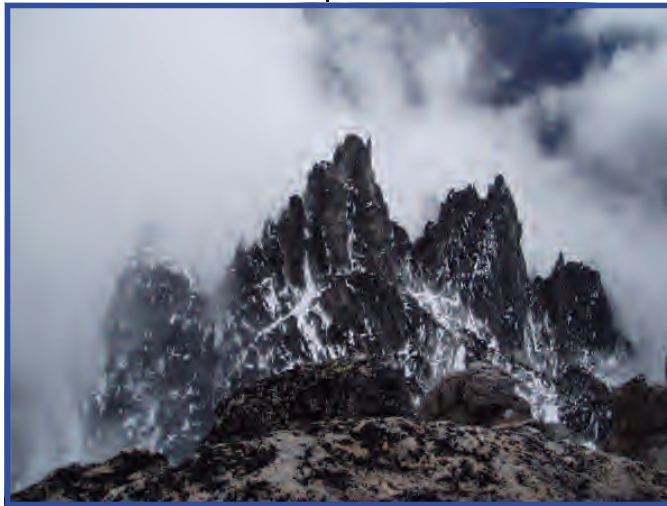
making our way through the Enchantments. We skirted around Perfection Lake and Leprechaun Lake while marveling at the beauty of the area. The windswept Larch trees surrounding the lakes had turned golden and were dropping their magical needles on the ground. Nancy had scooped up a handful to

take home, and I couldn't resist taking some myself as a reminder of this wonderful area.

At the end of Lake Vivian we stopped to say goodbye to the Enchantments, and then headed down the trail towards Snow Lake. I felt a little sad to be leaving. I have no idea where I came up with the notion that we'd be hiking through green verdant meadows in the Enchantments; maybe it's

like that in the summer, but the snow made the trip even more beautiful than I could ever have imagined, with incredible granite peaks everywhere, and tarns and lakes surrounded by Larches turning color. We camped out that night at Snow Lake, and hiked out on Thursday in time to get Bill's car to a tire shop and have his tire fixed for the ride home. It

had been a wonderful trip. The weather had cooperated nicely, and we'd only seen six other hikers the entire time, which was really nice. We'd practically had the whole place to ourselves. I'd like to go again in the summer and see what the area looks like when it is snow free, and, of course, to give Prusik Peak another shot on a warm day. §



*Nightmare Needles, seen from Little Annapurna*



## Car Camp-out a Raging Success — one OSATer's experience



Janice B. belays Deborah L.'s first climb photo by Scott H.

By Deborah L.

This year my family — husband Don, son Nathan and girlfriend Becky — attended the camp out. We were the ones with the 25 foot RV in the parking lot. It is difficult to get a 15 year old son and his girlfriend to go anywhere with us, so that's how we induced them to come. Anyway, a night in a bed at our age is always a good thing when we can grab one!

This event was very special for our family. Our son became "one of us" a year ago. We sent him to treatment and, oh boy, did he ever hate us! We pulled him right out of the first week of high school. It was very traumatic for the two of us. I thought I would be ready if he had the gene, but it was every parent's nightmare. Yet, in talking about the problem on Tiger mountain, a lot of other parents gave us the strength to take on the problem as life or death. Our son is now sober.

So one year later, our son celebrated a year of Sobriety in late September. He read *How It Works* at the meeting during the campout. He was too shy to stay, but it meant a lot to us. We are very blessed to have been able to share that moment with all of the

other families and young people there.

The next day I went rock climbing for the FIRST time ever. It was amazing. The guys and gals on the rope were great and I was again lucky to have OSAT in my life. Then I had another treat. I got to give something to a little girl, Aspen Harder, Scott's 4-year-old. She got up the first 15 feet and then had "a moment." As a mom I just scrambled right up to her and we talked about breathing and whether she wanted to go to Dada Scott. She just took a deep breath and before we knew it she was in Scott's arms. It was beautiful! I must say I have never seen Russell's hands shake as they did when he was tying her off. Those Dads of daughters, they do look after us! That was sweet, too. And I am sure Scott will tie Ardea's rope just as carefully if she chooses at age 4 to rock climb following in Daddy Russell's footsteps.

The family campout was the first time my husband was able to meet my OSAT family. He has two fake knees, so his climbing days are officially over. The campout is important for this reason. A lot of us climb, and OSAT is important for that, but the campout allows us to share a side of us with family members who do not join us in our climbing activities. So climb on and camp out. Thanks, OSAT! §



"Dada Scott" and Aspen climbing near Leavenworth

## Sahale Arm — Bittersweet

Story and photos by Alexei E.

Ow. I can't turn my head. I can't lift it, either. Maybe if I pull my hair and kind of spasm forward I can sit up. Aaaaaarrrrrrgh!!! This is what I got for sleeping in the back of a truck. I was off kilter, high centered, feet dangling, and I lost my pillow. Not good for people over 32. Somehow I got going, but I really felt like junk all day.

Lots of action on the Cascade River Road after 11pm. People coming and going, climbers gearing up for Eldorado, and a lot of bandit camping in general. Sleeping at the trailhead was the only way I was getting a 7am start.

Curt and I found the trail mellow and cool the first few miles. Mushrooms were abundant, if my Amanita pictures did not turn out. I didn't see the sun until we hit the pass. Only a couple of folks in front of us, and a handful heading down from their overnights. At the steep stretch to gain Sahale Arm, my physical malaise became very evident. I can't believe how slow I was. Curt blasted ahead of me and then waited. He has the patience of a saint. As we crested the arm, Sahale came into view. It still looked a long ways off. I decided I would go as far as I could.

The arm was beautiful, with views becoming better with every step. The colors were just beginning to turn. The greenery continued until we arrived at the foot of what I believe is the old terminal moraine from the glacier. The trail became a choss fest from here on



*Sahale Arm*

out. Perhaps snow cover would make future trips more fun. At 7200' are camps, and a composting toilet with incredible views. Wow, what a place to lighten your load!

We cramponed up the start of the glacier. Note to self: adjust crampon size at home before trip! Some ice was showing, but I did not



*Triplets & Johannesburg*

see any crevasses. I did notice two dimples where I believed cracks would appear soon. I quit mentally once at the bottom of the glacier, and then announced I would go no further near the top. Curt kept going, and we were very close, so I just continued to follow.

Eventually we hit the rock pile, ditched our packs and crampons, and started scrambling. It was loose at first, but became more solid as it steepened. We were on the south side somewhere. The class three was fine, but Curt was not a fan of the exposure. At a fourth class step, he announced he was done. Since he was nice enough to wait for me all day, I did not abandon him on the face. Don't think I was all gung ho for that section! Because I was sick, we had spent way too long heading upwards. It took over five hours when it should have taken four. It was really tough to turn back after overcoming all that junk. Fifty feet from the summit, and we turned around! The views were amazing, and I wish I could have looked to the north.

On the way down we met a lot of people. The route is long, so they were well spaced. The group bickering at the top of the moraine was interesting. The couple from Texas who called their big white granite seat a 'throne' was great. You should be on a throne to view God's Country! Virginia, Florida by way of Russia, a Whidbey couple on their way to camp with their ten-month-old, and even a newlywed couple from a church five blocks from my house. I basically blathered away to anyone who would listen. It took almost as long to get down as it did to get up, nine hours car to car. §



# OSAT Memoir

Story and photos by Nodair R.

## Mount Whitney

After ten steps I feel like taking a break, but I know it's harder to stop and go than it is to keep a steady, sustainable pace. It's just so tempting to take a break. It's freezing out and I'm sweating. The sun is beating down, I take off a layer, the wind blows and the chill soaks into my bones. I'm never comfortable. Iceberg Lake is only a few hundred feet above us, but the route description wanders further up the valley. We try and take a shortcut but end up getting on steep snow and ice bands with intermittent rock. Why is there a rappel sling here?

Ahh, we finally reach the lake at 12,500'. Right upon stopping I get a splitting headache, perhaps from the altitude, the strange hot/cold combination in the air, or maybe from running out of water. I put my head down and start digging a tent platform. All I want to do is lie down...

Five hours later, after staring at my unappetizing dinner and melting five liters of snow, I lie down with the same headache. The winds pick up and rocks our tent. The sun sets and the cold is just bone chilling.

"Caleb, how're you doing?"

"I'm f\*cking cold and feel like shit"

"Yeah, so do I."

"Let's go down in the morning."

"Okay."



*Nod climbing Whitney*

We are both shaking and are unable to get warm. There's no way I'm going to try a summit attempt if I feel like this tomorrow morning. A couple hours later, the tent warms up a bit and I fall asleep.

There's nothing like alpenglow in the range of light. Mt. Whitney looms a couple thousand feet above us at 5am. The sheer East Face looms. Voila! My headache is gone! Now, breakfast: all five liters of water are frozen solid — why didn't I think about this? We both feel good and start heading up, with one liter of water a piece...

Three hours later, on March 29th we are on the summit of Mt. Whitney, highest point in the contiguous United States at 14,505 feet. Usually, there would be a hoard of people up here, but we have it to ourselves. We stand on the top for about five minutes, then it's time to head on down.

As with everyone else, the call of the summit is what brought us into climbing. In the end, the summit is the least memorable part of the trip. In fact, the summit is usually when you feel the most miserable! All I wanted was to be warm and have some decent food in front of me! What I do remember is the process and steps it took to get us there, the friends that I made along the way, and the void looming under my feet waiting for that wrong step. Climbing has completely sucked me in, and now every hardship I encounter in life has a similar climbing analogy AND solution. Just take it One Step at a Time.

## On Climbing

I was timid at first to join OSAT since I wasn't in AA and didn't know anyone. Thankfully, one of my 'normie' friends decided to join it with me. Thank God I did.

In the beginning, I was meticulous about my gear (going as lightweight as possible). I was goal focused. I wanted the summit so bad. I trained and trained with my buddy, Caleb. We went out EVERY weekend for over a year, bar none. I tried so hard to go lightweight, but on the Stevens Pass overnight field trip, I was packing in 50lbs (including a *glass* jar of spaghetti, not as bad as Cody's flint and steel)!!!

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One year later, my pack was 28lbs...

In my first year I climbed every volcano in the state and went on a through-hike of the Enchantments, with Little Annapurna, Enchantment Peak and Prusik along the way! My success rate was 100%. Needless to say, I had a completely warped sense of climbing.

So, I entered the climbing year of 2007 with an inflated ego. My first climb of the year wasn't the wisest choice. Climbing Mt. Shuksan with a washed out road in April. I failed miserably. But, when I look back, I notice that I use the word 'fail' in the wrong sense. Thomas Edison said during his quest to invent the light bulb, "I have not *failed*. I've just found 10000 ways that won't work."



*Old Guard on the Ptarmigan Traverse behind Gerard & Nodair*

Over the course of 2007, I went on to 'fail,' Shuksan, Morningstar, Stillaguamish, Forgotten, Baker, Shuksan again, Bonanza and many peaks on the Ptarmigan Traverse. I 'failed' for various reasons. On Shuksan, I picked the wrong time of year. On Forgotten, we got in avalanche terrain and didn't bring a map. On Baker and Bonanza, we got caught in white outs with knowledge of deteriorating weather. I learned from all these trips, so I don't consider them a failure in any way. Like Edison, I, along with my climbing partners (namely, Cody and Gerard) learned the ways that didn't work.

When I remember that I climbed Rainier in 2006 in a single push from the car in under 24 hours, though it was physically demanding, I don't consider it as much

a success as my failure on Dome Peak of the Ptarmigan Traverse. As Gerard likes to say, anyone that has a heartbeat, a weather window, and proper physical training can follow a trench to the summit of Rainier; but not everyone read the signs to back off a mountain when angry weather comes in, or assess conditions to be not stable enough to make a push. In my 'failures,' I have learned the most.

### **On Climbing**

As a kid, I would have never guessed that I would be saying to my parents, "Yeah, I'm off this weekend to climb with a bunch of alcoholics. Be back in a few days!" Yet, I have said that almost every weekend. There are some truly great people in OSAT and I would trust many of them with my life, not to mention the crazy 'alkie' stories I hear along the way! This group has such a great drive to live life, and I'm so glad that I'm climbing with OSAT. They say AA is like, "Spirituality for Dummies," but I tell you what: being on *any* path of spirituality is better than nothing. The love for life OSATers have is just hypnotizing. People are starting to climb in their late 40's and beyond! My hat is off to you.

Thanks for allowing me to climb with you even though I'm not in the program. Thanks for volunteering your time to teach people how to climb safely. I wish the best of luck to you all in the mountains and please, be safe. As Cody says, "It's only a success when you get back to the car," and as Gerard says, "F\*ckin' A — this climbing thing rocks!" §



*Cody H. & Andrew M. on Eldorado's "knife edge," by Nodair*



# How My Big Fat Ego Chucked My Camcorder Off a Cliff...

by Louisa P.

Years ago I had a kick-ass sponsor who forced me to sponsor felons at a women's work release facility.

The sheer size of my sponsee terrified me. She stood over six feet tall and carried enough bulk to have crushed me beyond recognition just by sitting on me — a fact of which I was always strangely conscious as we read. In conversation, this woman's face remained immobile as a carved mask, vaguely bovine in its default state of slack indifference. But one

day, before we obtained clearance to enter the little room where we worked together, the TV in the lobby flashed to a news correspondent reporting some atrocity. My sponsee jumped up, pointing excitedly at the screen. "That's the woman reported my crime!" Her face beamed with the same delighted energy that rang in her voice as she practically danced before the screen, shaking the floor. "My crime, when I was on TV! My friend taped it!"

What woke up that woman was pride in her brief moment of fame — the power of her ego. I felt pity and disgust: couldn't she see how pathetic she was, having traded years of freedom for whatever cliché image she'd concocted of herself — the bad-assed renegade, the defiant outlaw feared by society's tamer sheep — and the seconds of celebrity she imagined it earned her?

Yet the amazing thing about alcoholism is that, different as our lives appear, parallels connect us that characterize the disease. "Alcoholism only made one mistake," I've heard said at a meeting: "It's the same for all of us." I can recognize from my using days an egotistical bravado remarkably similar to that sponsee's. When I hosed down a fancy party I wasn't invited to with a fire extinguisher, threw drinks in

faces, or acted out in any number of selfish, antisocial ways, my ego always concocted a delicious

self-image to justify it. I was Catwoman, Calamity Jane, and a female Cool Hand Luke all rolled into one. Vaguely imagined audiences admired my pluck and impulsiveness in scenes I replayed to savor my coolness. They provided a counterpoint to the me I hated: the bookish girl paralyzed by self-analysis that I was without alcohol.



*Super cool rock climbin' dude*

*copyright: Allposters.com*

We all know ego plays a huge role in alcoholism. Ego and fear are the like chicken and egg: I fear I won't get what I want in order to make me feel bigger and better than I fear I am (or will be if I don't get what I want...). Our egos inflate to ludicrous proportions, and when they are finally pummeled into submission by incomprehensible demoralization, we fall hard. Face in the mud of our own folly, we get our first taste of humility, but as we climb to our feet and commence to trudge the Road of Happy Destiny, we learn that our recovery actually depends on its cultivation. Ego constantly strives to supplant it, the hardy weed whose taproot we never completely eradicate. It sprouts back to alarming proportions before we're even aware of its resurgence.

Ego is likewise a vine easily entwined through the exploits of mountain climbing. This is ironic, because nature's grandeur traditionally offers inspiration for spiritual contemplation and getting right-sized. But nature can likewise pose challenges on a scale vast enough to tempt pride. There's always the competitive edge — who tackles the challenge best, making them the ultimate mountain dude? You can see it in young climbers, strutting gear that dangles from their harnesses like cowboys

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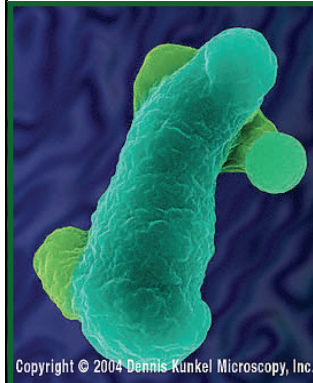
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with six-shooters. Take one look at the climbing magazines that showcase astounding feats of larger-than-life heroes, or watch a snippet of rock climbing video that documents impressive ascents set to bad ass music with killer, jostling camera angles, and you'll sense a tough, gritty, f\*ck-the-risks ballsiness not too far from my convicted sponsee's bravado: I dare what humans cowed by fear dare not. Sure, the setting differs, as does the social class involved, and nature of the risks. And yet, ego is ego. Bad ass is bad ass.

Which makes OSAT — a group of recovering alcoholics and addicts who climb mountains — an interesting crossbreed of participants. Keeping a sharp eye on our egos is critical for two reasons. First, because ego shuts us off from the sunlight of the spirit, allowing the insidious insanity of our disease to return, and secondly, because ego-based choices in the mountains can be fatal to us as well as others in our party. In both cases, it's serious business.

This past summer, I got an exercise in humility, or rather, a series of lessons that exposed to me the hazards of my own overblown ego, when I went on a climb I had no business attempting. Here's my problem: I like to think of myself as surprisingly strong, especially for my size. In fifth grade, bussed into Seattle's intimidating Central District, I proved I wasn't a timid little white girl by pinning every boy in my class, each slightly tougher than the last, in a recess tournament of wrestling matches — until no one was left but a chronic flunkie named Anthony who was almost ready start shaving, and I retired undefeated. Today, I have that same thinly masked drive to prove that, though I appear a 5'4" 120-pound, pencil-necked female, I'm no wuss. Toss into the mix the fact that I'm getting frickin' old (47?! *there's gotta be a mistake!*) and the outcome is a thinly veiled desperation to convince you this lil' old beeyatch can (still) kick ass.

All of which may have something to do with why I decided to climb Mount Rainier this summer despite an incomplete convalescence from a prolonged bout with intestinal parasites. I picked them up on a February hike up Mount Pilchuck. I was out of water; here flowed a picturesque stream. By the time I tooted my way into the Bastyr Clinic four months later, tests showed advanced cases of a hostile stomach bacteria



Loitering in Pilchuck stream,  
a parasitic intestinal amoeba

as well as intestinal amoebas that consume and irritate the intestinal lining. Blood work showed I was almost anemic. "We prefer naturopathic treatments," my ND explained, "but in this case we want them suckers *dead*." He prescribed a quadruple strength 24 hours of amoxicillin for the bacteria and for the amoebas, a two week course of Flagyl... which, you may know, is the *only* antibiotic prescribed in Hell.

Over those two weeks, not only did I lose all the probiotics in my inflamed guts that couldn't digest worth a crap anyway, but the amoebas all died off and decomposed in my intestines, releasing toxins. For days I was graying out, too exhausted to care for my 6-year-old son. I recall telling him I could not sit up to read him a story. For a few days I could hardly get myself off the couch. I'd lie there and think about Rainier, two weeks away. I recalled the ideal, picturesque climb I'd experienced in 2006, the spiritual insight I'd felt at the summit. I wanted that again. I also recalled the conversation with my ND that went something like this:

DOCTOR: I strongly advise you to *not* attempt that Rainier climb of yours.

(pause)

LOUISA'S BIG FAT EGO *silently*: [Obviously, doctor, you know not who I *am*...]

LOUISA, *faking folksy humility*: To be honest I... I'm gonna do it anyway. If we could just get me well...quick.

I really tried. I took a lot of flora, ate nutritional stuff I could sorta digest, and worked out a lot. The weekend before, I ran up Si (to the haystack base) in just under two hours with a 30-lb pack, and midweek summited Dickerman in about three — all with a *Rocky* theme song in the background. I thought I was ready.

But ready for what? As Bill L. has phrased it to me since, there's a big difference between surge

(Continued on page 11)



strength good for a few hours and the long term, deeper endurance that calls on your body's reserves and draws from weeks and months of conditioning. Of the latter, I had zip, and I sort of knew it.



*All for one & one for all leaving Paradise, 7/14 team plus sherpas*

And here's the ego piece: all I thought about what *I wanted*: my experience, my ambition, my accomplishment. I didn't even consider the key question: would I want *me* on my rope team? I wasn't going on this trip as a GCC student, but supposedly as an alumnae and support. I did not think much about my implicit pledge to be able to react swiftly and accurately in emergencies, to know some key things about glacier travel safety and be able to apply them. Rather, I dwelt upon the crucial fact that my older brother was likewise climbing Rainier a second time with RMI the week before, and how our mom (who frowns on my climbing as daredevil) was tickled pink about it. He and I had a childhood history of competitiveness I liked to think was past, but wouldn't he just *love* to have climbed Rainier more times than I? And wouldn't my mom just *love* to observe it was a feat better left to men? Therein lay my true motivation, my stubbornness.

On the morning of July 14<sup>th</sup>, I felt good. With my spankin' new digital camcorder I dorked around from Paradise up to about the Moon Rocks making a documentary video of our climb, being a moron of narration and joking around with anyone I could get to talk to the camera. I did notice I was slowing a

little on the home stretch to Muir, but attributed it to the distraction of filming.

That weekend, we found Muir to be, even more than usual, a frickin' REI Tupperware party gone mad: hoards of vaguely resentful climbers everywhere you looked, camped in dirty, grainy snow. So Jay somehow got us cleared to move on to Ingraham Flats at 11K feet. As we crossed



*Approaching Muir*

Cathedral Rocks, the wind picked and often made walking a battle. Coming into the Flats, I'd reached the end of my surge strength: I felt cold and tired in the relentless wind. The cheerfulness of others struck me as incredible, as though they were damn good actors.

With a sharp, cold wind blasting and daylight waning, my slow and inefficient efforts to set up camp caused Gerard to lose patience with me a few times and snap a little. Both times I went to a "pity pot place," cried a little, and hid it.

Ordinarily when I'm climbing, I do my utmost to steer clear of the ppp, even just within my own mind,



*Edge of camp at Ingraham Flats*

*(Continued on page 12)*

(Continued from page 11)

but I was too tired for self-control. I felt haunted by a vague sense of doom, as if something ominous were approaching, at which I refused to look directly.

When we left Ingraham after a few hours of lying in out tents (I couldn't sleep), I felt cruddy from the get-go — dizzy and weak. Dave, a GCC student tied in on the last rope between Gerard and me, kept having rope management difficulties each time we reeled in and out, that ended up delaying us far behind the rest of the party. Many spur trails ascend the Cleaver, and at one point in the darkness Gerard got chose the wrong one. We climbed at a crazily steep pace, about 50 feet in three minutes, before he sighted the rest of the party below and led us back down. That little jaunt *wiped me out*. My legs were shot.

At the top of the Cleaver, where we took a break, Patti and Sarah decided to turn back, Patti saying she felt sick enough to "pose a danger to myself and others." Sarah felt too cruddy to say much of anything. Nodair kindly agreed to lead them back to Ingraham Flats. However, being the end person on the last rope team, I missed that entire conversation and didn't realize anyone was turning back. By the time I did realize it, they were just about to take off, and the revelation seemed sudden and abrupt to me. Out loud I called, "Maybe I should go back, too?" but in a half-hearted tone. Jay, our leader, responded with an incredulous exclamation, the edited translation of which would be, "Surely you jest!" (He has since called me and offered heart-felt apologies.) Gerard added quietly, "You can do it."

Here comes the second ego piece. Imagine one of those little red devil figures appeared on my shoulder, except mine is a vision of my vanity, an eternally-34-year-old super-sexy muscle woman. And she said: "Louisa, come *on*! Clearly we've duped both the climb leader and the boyfriend into believing we're a powerhouse. You wanna blow all that and trade in your rep? Little old lady hobbled back to base camp and crocheted potholders while the rest of her party pressed on to the summit? Or you wanna just suck it up and let's GO?!" So I said I'd go.

It was the wrong decision. A danger to myself and others — that's precisely what I became. As soon as the brief rest wore off, I was staggeringly fatigued. As I write it still freaks me out to recall those huge, shad-

owed crevasses we traversed above the Cleaver. Sure, my headlamp spotlighted a clear if narrow boot path side-hilling the mountain, but I wove like a drunk and slid a boot off the edge more than once. I should have been home on the couch. Eventually I reached a point where I felt, "Oh well! If I fall, I fall. I'll worry about it when it happens." Was I watching out for my team? Was I ready to react to anyone *else's* fall? Maybe vaguely.

The rest of the ascent was hellish — at least for me. Wind gusts of 60 mph. Ice needles pelting our



Here we're descending what we climbed in dark photo Mike C.

faces. Major traffic jam of rope teams. An inaccessible balaclava and screaming cold face. But mostly my exhaustion, my pounding, swollen heart punching rhythmic throbs of mute ache into my head, and the sheer hopelessness of looking up — these were what tortured me. At one point in the last 2,000 feet, during an extended halt of traffic, I signaled Dave, 75 feet ahead in the howling wind and grey dawn light, *I can't keep going*. Thumbs down, pointing to me. *You're out* sign pointing to the summit. The dude had no frickin' clue what I what I meant. Shaking my head in exaggerated pantomime. Finger drawn across throat. Karate



chopping arm. I was desperate. Dave kept lifting his palms, like, "What?" By the time the rope moved on, I'd given up. It would have been like a box car wanting out of mile long freight train, anyway, the way we were lined up team after team. It's funny now; it wasn't then.

When at last I saw Gerard vanish over the lip of the crater, I held myself back from even hoping. *Don't believe it's the summit. Don't go there and be wrong, or we'll not be able to stand the disappointment.* But the summit it was. Soon Nasa, Faye, Mike, John. David, and Jay all headed for the true summit, while Gerard and Andrew hung with me in a small dugout in the crater's snow, huddled against the 40 mph winds.

I was far too cold and exhausted even to rest. What I mean is that the maintenance of consciousness — metabolizing, persisting as a living creature in the here and now — had become an insurmountable demand in itself. Gerard saw me try to stand up to walk around and warm myself. My legs just kind of noodled out from under and I went down. Trying it again, I did walk, but my legs felt like ill-fit prosthetics and my core could raise no warmth, so I got back in the dugout. Gerard pulled the emergency sleeping bag out of Dave's pack and put it over me, but I was generating no heat, so it had virtually no effect.

Next thing I knew, I was peering inside my high school locker, the door of which was decked out with a number of rad lookin' decals and stickers, and inside I found a pair of pink suede ice skates. Wow, my old skates! How awesome! All was warm and cozy and sweet, 'til Gerard elbowed me and — dammit!! — I



Gerard ,with gloves off, helping me at the summit, photo by Nasa K

was back on the summit of that frickin' mountain! But only for a few seconds. Because really it was very nice, the way rays of sunlight slanted down onto warm the quilt covering my parents' double bed, and how divine it felt to be lying there, about four years old, amid the quiet of late afternoon, knowing they loved me, watching the dust motes swirling aimlessly... God DAMN it!! Gerard had nudged me *again*! We were gonna have to have a *talk*! Because I truly did not care for it, for consciousness in this nightmare of miserable cold, cold, cold. I had a choice between sweet dreams and this unendurable reality, and with childlike insistence I just wanted the *dream* — okay? Wouldn't you? Just let me sleep, *please*!

In short, I can attest to the fact that late stage hypothermia is indeed a deliciously cozy and bright experience.

Thank god for angels. Mine appeared as a European dude toting brands of gear Gerard had never seen, who had carried with him to the summit a small thermos of hot tea. He offered me a steaming cup. Gerard handed it carefully to me; I was so afraid of spilling! That first sip ignited a blissful column of warmth from my mouth to my stomach, heat which radiated out like the glow of a blown ember, calories that lifted me back to consciousness. It burned better than Jack Daniels in the old days — know what I'm saying? I offered Gerard a sip but secretly rejoiced when he declined, and I polished it off. Only then did I understand the dreams had been seductive hallucinations, that they were dangerous, and that I needed to stay present to get myself out of here *physically*, as in descending the damn mountain.

True, I sobbed like a baby for about the first 2,000 feet, drizzling snot and tears that crystallized on my face, shuddering full on, not even trying to hold back. But I was able to walk on my own. Further down I began to feel better and eventually even resumed my video filming — I got some great shots of the clouds below us, of the crevasses and serac formations. As we neared the base of the Cleaver, just above Ingraham Flats, I felt cocky. We were almost to camp! That's right, I pulled this shit off! Then, when I unclipped my pack belt for a last clothing adjustment, I watched my \$500 camcorder



Descending

photo by Nasa K

fall to the trail, bounce once, twice, and roll off the edge into the invisible depths of crevasses below us.

That sobered me. I didn't react much. I think I said, "Well, *that's* gone." Inside, though, I experienced an odd feeling of relief, as if I sensed I'd had something coming, and was grateful it turned out to be only the loss of a fancy toy. It could have been me, or someone in my party lost that same way. I felt the mountain had claimed something just to underscore my stupidity, my absurd hubris. *Do you understand the principle?* it seemed to say: *Here now, and then gone forever -- in the blink of an eye. That's how it works.*

But we did make it down okay. And I did have a lot to think about. For instance, those skates that appeared in my hallucinated locker. They were the ones I'd worn when, at age 13, I beat my big brother in a much-touted race, finishing almost a half lap ahead of him. I'd gotten to gloat then, having shown him, once and for all that, small as I might be, I was tough. See, everyone???

It happens that a few days before climbing Rainier I heard my brother had turned back about 2,000 feet from the summit because he did not feel confident. He has a wife and son, and he made what seemed to him the best decision. Who's the better mountaineer, here?

I, by contrast, had lacked enough confidence in myself to fail. By this I mean, if I really believed in myself, if I really knew I was strong, then I could face the fact that on this trip I was not, and I could turn back. That's why, I think, Patti was able to. As I see

it, my ego is powerful enough to kill me, and irascible enough to parade before my fading consciousness symbols of the things I long for most — self respect (skates) and love (the quilt). *Look what I scored you!* it claims. But the true and lasting forms of these can dwell only in a heart that is spiritually awake. They are available to me every day, to be had through channels of prayer and usefulness to others — channels that only humility can open.

God alone can remove our character defects, just as god alone can relieve our compulsion to drink. But the former only happens if I try my utmost to learn and change based on each experience god places in my path. From this trip I learned that I need to practice taking a wider view in all my choices, and, when I'm concerned about how I appear, to check in with my internal sense of what god would have me be. I need to remember that *every* talent and ability I possess — from breathing to writing to climbing — is purely a gift from god, to be used with gratitude and humility. If I can't separate a cell myself, I certainly can't climb a mountain. That means I share my gifts with others, and I don't take foolhardy risks. And, last of all, I learned that even at 47 frikin' years old and post-amoeba, I can still kick me some seeerious ass on a goddam volcano — *whoops!* Shit. Strike that...

I guess I've come to accept that this tug-o-war with ego is a part of being human. The muscle-babe-demon on my shoulder may fade temporarily, but she'll always be back to tempt me, and often enough, I'll fall for it. Even with this article — ever notice how I'm always complaining about *something* or coming up with *some* dramatic reason a given effort was not my best? I notice; I just can't stop it. But when that little game quits working, god will take it, too.

Thus I am and will for all my sober days remain a work in progress. §

*Egolessness is a state of mind that has complete confidence in the sacredness of the world. It is unconditional well being, unconditional joy that includes all the different qualities of our experience.*

— Pema Chodron



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## OSAT Events Calendar

### December

**25th** Mt. Si Appetite Builder ~ 8am

### January

**1st** Mt. Si Appetite Builder ~ 8am

**12th** Activities night ~ 6pm  
Come help plan the '08 calendar! 425-681-1715

**28th** GCC Begins 6:00, REI Come help out!

### March

**22** OSAT Talent Show !  
All talents valued— features Karaoke machine!



## OSAT 12 Step Meetings

### Tiger Mountain

When:	Sundays	@ 10am
Where:	The Tiger Mountain Trailhead is on the south (right) side of the High Point Way Exit (1st exit east of Issaquah) off I-90. Make a reverse U-turn onto the road parallel with the Interstate. Follow the road to its end.	
Contact:	<a href="mailto:suntigerleader@osat.org">suntigerleader@osat.org</a>	

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Photo by Ed Miller, RIP

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BOREAL

## Kings and Boundary Peaks ~ Two Desert State High Points

*Story & photos by Rik A.*

Why on Earth would anyone climb the highest points in Utah and Nevada during the first week in July? Temps in Salt Lake City were consistently above 95 the week before we left Seattle, and broke the century mark the first three days of our trip! Well, recall that the lapse rate is 3 degrees per 1000 feet, so when it is 95-100 in places like Salt Lake City, Tonopah Nevada, and points in between (as it was for our entire trip), it is pleasantly in the 70s-80s at 9000-11000 foot camps during the day and in the 60s at night – not bad weather for summer hikes! Just dress appropriately, and drink lots of water!

Dan L and Rik were joined in Salt Lake City on July 5 by Rik's friend Richard, and the three of them headed for Wyoming and the northern approach to Utah's Uinta Wilderness. The Unitas Mountains are described as the largest east-west oriented mountain range in the 48 states, and the location of all 21 of Utah's 13,000+ foot peaks, all of which can be climbed/hiked without technical gear or experience.

As we drove into the Henrys Fork campground at over 9400 feet elevation and spotted a moose along the road, our anticipation quotient moved up a notch. After a comfortable night's sleep at the trailhead, we headed up the Henrys Fork trail. Up? Well, not exactly. It's a bit difficult for a Cascades climber to get used to topo maps with 20 foot contour intervals. As high as the Unitas are, the approach to Kings Peak is exceedingly moderate. It took nearly seven miles of hiking to get to our 10850 foot base camp near Dollar Lake, barely 200 feet of gain per mile. So it is more like a hike ALONG Henrys Fork rather than UP it, although the creek flows swiftly, beautifully, and convincingly in the opposite direction.



*Kings Peak from Henrys Fork Valley*

The lake is situated in the impressive two-mile-wide upper valley of Henrys Fork. Surrounded by 12,000-13,000 foot peaks and ridges, the valley is dotted with lakes, spring-fed creeks, abundant fields of wildflowers, and broad vistas of all from the trail which traces up a rise on the east side of the valley. There was a lot

more green than I expected for Utah in July – the traditional Rocky Mountain afternoon thunder showers keep the landscaping healthy. Campsites are plentiful along the trail around and above Dollar Lake, with a good creek for water a short stroll away.

We set up camp in a small grove of pines, and watching the thunder storms building up in the west across the valley. By around 2 it started raining, and we spent nearly three hours in our tent listening to the thunder and waiting out the rain. After dinner we toured the lake, and wandered up the trail several hundred yards, but were unable to espy Henrys Fork Lake through the trees in the base of the valley, and elected to go to bed early rather than explore further, as the recent rains followed a long dry spell and the mosquitoes were pretty excited to see us.

After a good night's sleep we got an early start to beat the afternoon heat and possible thunderstorms on our return. We continued up the well-worn pack trail to Gunsight Pass, 11,188. At this point the climbers' path departs the pack trail, rounding West Gunsight Peak to 12,700 ft. Anderson Pass, on the north ridge of Kings, and a bit south of the crest of the Unitas. After a short scramble through a cliff band, this route becomes cross-country travel with lots of boulder hopping and not much elevation gain. I dropped back in spite of my light pack as Dan and Richard pulled ahead to Anderson Pass. I was psy-



chologically handicapped as I kept thinking of how easy it was to break my leg on similar terrain seven years ago. When I caught up with them, they were looking down the possible shortcut gully below the pass for our return to camp after the climb. Then we turned around to check out the last 800 vertical feet up the crest of the north ridge of Kings.



*Rik, Richard, & Dan on King's Peak — highest point of Utah*

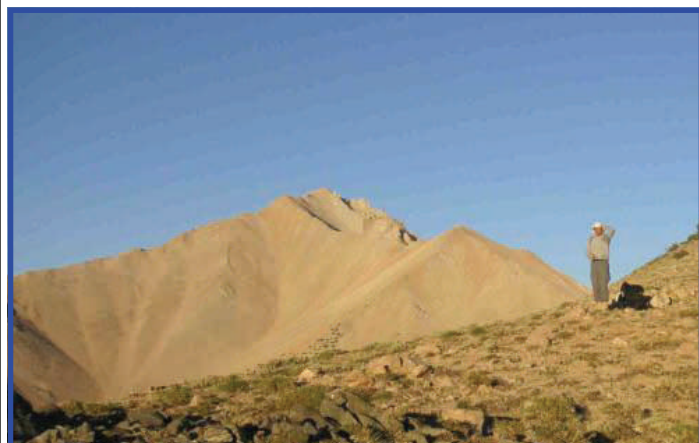
The scramble from the pass to the summit was a reasonable workout at 13,000 ft. There is no real trail nor consistent climbers path, so it is pretty much make up whatever scramble line attracts you. There were about 20 other hikers going for the summit of Kings the Saturday we were climbing. A number of them passed me by as I fell back and I worked my way up to the top, hanging mostly to the east side of the ridge, but with a few views down the steeper west. Finally I saw Dan and Richard again, sharing the summit with another pair of climbers. No one could find a summit register, so after a snack and summit photos we started working our way down the ridge back to the pass.

After all the scrambling, we decided against sliding down the 800 feet of scree on the short cut gully, and opted instead to follow the trail as far as possible down the east side of the mountain before heading north across the shoulder to search for the track though the cliff band to Gunsight Pass, and were back in camp before the heat of the day. Although we hustled to break down the tent and pack up, the thunderstorms were not building as they had the previous several days, and we were able to get back to the cars without getting wet. All hikes out seem

long, but when you're only losing a couple hundred feet per mile, it is extra boring. As scenic as the High Uinta Wilderness is, it was nice to find my altimeter was reading a couple hundred feet high, and the trailhead appeared about a mile before I was expecting it! We were soon packed up and on our way west.

Richard flew back to Seattle from Utah for his daughter's birthday, but Dan and I headed across the south end of the Great Salt Lake, the Bonneville Salt Flats, and the endless ranges and dry valleys of Nevada to its western border with California, and Boundary Peak. We rolled into Tonopah with less than a gallon of gas in the tank, after forgetting to top off in Ely. The temperature was well into the 90s, so we took our time in the convenience store, stocking up for our next adventure.

Dan had read the guide books regarding Boundary, all of which describe the Trail Creek approach from the east. I had studied the peak for quite some time, and thought the Queen Mine approach from the north looked more attractive. Both trailheads are at about 9000 feet, but coming from the north offers a long ridge traverse to the Trail Creek Saddle, whereas the standard route comes up a valley to the same point. Several guides and trip reports speak of the bush-whacking or confusing trails in the valley. Even the co-author of one of the guides admitted getting so lost she went missing overnight! So with the forecast of more high temperatures, running the ridge where there might be a breeze sounded like the better choice. The Queen approach also cuts the dirt road travel down from 14 miles to a bit more than 6, so



*Dan checking out Boundary Peak*

*(Continued on page 18)*

(Continued from page 17)

we opted to come in from the north. After shooting a picture from the highway, we initially missed obvious turn, and got to the California border a few miles past before returning to find the road up Queen Canyon.

We reached the mines with the sun still high in the sky, and opted to just sit in the shade of Dan's Explorer waiting for the cooler late evening before fixing dinner. The other strategy to beat the heat was an alpine start the next morning. We awoke at 4, and by 4:45 we were on the trail (actually the upper mile of the road above the mines) with our headlamps on, headed toward the top of the ridge and the first saddle at 9900.

The trail begins at a blank sign just above the saddle, and winds for a half mile up the east end of the ridge and reaches its crest around 10,700 feet, almost exactly the same elevation as the saddle another mile-and-a-half to the west. The trail is punctuated by huge piles of mustang droppings; at least the wild horses are evidently smart enough to poop in one place rather than despoil the entire trail! Unfortunately we never saw the horses, but the summit was in sight all along this traverse, and the trail does a good job of staying relatively level.

An hour after leaving the first saddle, we were at the main (Trail Creek) saddle, where we each stashed a quart of water for the last three miles of the return trip to the car. The path up the scree pile seemed obvious, although around the corner a short ways it petered out into multiple potential minor scramble paths. We followed these for a while, eventually climbing high enough to re-connect with the well-worn descent path somewhere below a minor saddle near the knob at 12210. The sun was up, but the trail skirts this point to the west, and we continued up in the shade of the ridge until the path reached the north ridge proper. For the most part the entire climb is on a good path, but there are a few spots where going around rocky

points involved minor scrambling. We reached the 13,143 summit five hours after leaving the Queen Mine, about average time I imagine, although Dan could have easily made it in substantially less if he weren't dragging me up this desert rock pile.

Boundary Peak is actually a sub-summit of 13,431 ft Montgomery Peak in California, but the latter is probably climbed a tiny fraction as often as Boundary. In fact, but some definitions (e.g. the 300 foot "rule"), Boundary isn't even a peak, as the saddle between the two (the low point being very close to the actual state line) is only 266 feet below Boundary's summit. As with the majority, we didn't give serious thought to doing the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile scramble over to California. This was my 45<sup>th</sup> state high point, and I can't say it is in my top 10 hit parade of SHPs, but having the mountain entirely to ourselves in such a remote location did provide a worthy memory. The register indicated about 50 people had climbed the peak so far this year.



*Rik at the summit of Boundary Peak*

We lingered for a little over half an hour, but mindful that the day was going to get hot we were soon on the trail down. The boot track below 12000 was easy to follow, and the water stashed at the saddle a welcome treat before the trek on the mustang trail and mine road back to Queen Mine. Two hours after summiting (and well before noon) we packed up and headed for California.

The shortcut across to the south end of Mono Lake (remember Clint in "High Plains Drifter"? ) passes some of the more interesting topography south of Lake Tahoe, with a mix of volcanic landscape, a small group of hills featuring rock that look as though they're made of bread

dough, and the moonscape of Mono Lake. Dan and I had lunch at Lee

Vining, and headed north to return to the coolness of the Pacific Northwest, successful in our quest but thankful that we don't have to experience global climate change in the two high desert states we summited. §





*Triumphant OSATers at the summit of Mount Adams, after a fabulous trip nobody would frickin' write about...*



*Cody (l) and Jonathon on the Baker trip nobody wrote about*



*Nobody wrote on this conditioner, either (editor is not bitter!)*

# The Yodel

P.O.Box 852

Mercer Island, WA 98040



*I heart the North Cascades — photo by Alexei E.*