

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

The Yodel

Volume 15, Issue 1

June 2008



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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.

Camp Muir: Remembering John R.

by Ivar S.

Just thought I'd share a story of mine with you all, since the latest incident on the Muir snowfield opened up some old wounds and reminded me of a couple of important things, as I'm sure it has for a lot of other veteran OSAT members.

This article is aimed at those of you that are new to mountaineering, and OSAT, or both. Because it is really easy to take a trip to Muir lightly, especially if you've already been there on a couple of sunny day trips. I am certainly no Joe Mountaineer -- that's for sure. But if you're in the mood for a story, then I've got one to share with you. It's a tad long-winded, but time is of the essence and a sense of urgency is upon me.

Way back in the old days, in 1993, before the Internet and MP3 players, I took the OSAT Glacier Climbing Course. They were glorious days of new-found sobriety and adventure. My new wife, albeit a normie, was into everything I was and came to all the meetings with me. I was in la-la land, and nothing could ever go wrong, because it was all so right.

The course itself was fun and uneventful, until my 2nd trip to Muir. It was a cloudy day so I didn't think I needed sunscreen. I spent the next three weeks pulling the skin off my face and discovering that I was someone else underneath. Our founding father and my personal hero, Jimmy Hinkhouse, was not too happy with me when he saw my face back at the car. More than anything, I suspect he was upset with himself for not making sure everyone was doing everything they were supposed to be doing. For those of you that are leaders this year, always remember that there may be mentally challenged people like myself along on every climb. We need to be double-checked, for our own safety and yours.

A few weeks later, at a Thursday night Tiger meeting, I announced myself as "leading a climb to Camp Muir" the next weekend for anyone who wanted to go. I made light of the fact that whom-ever had appointed me leader was certainly irresponsible and of dubious character, due to my limited experience. At the time, I just didn't get it. Jimmy was at that meeting, and more than a little upset this time. He issued a stern rebuke to me, in front of everyone, and gave us all a serious lecture about the dangers of going to Camp Muir. He covered the facts that many more people die between Paradise and Camp Muir than ever perish on the upper slopes, that getting into a white-out on the Muir snowfields is one of the worst things that can happen to you - especially if you are not adept at using a compass (or GPS). His bottom line was that weather on Rainier can change in a few minutes and, if you are not prepared, you will be in serious trouble.



OSATer John R., lost to us on a Muir trip in 1999

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Getting a stern lecture like that in front of everyone was humiliating, and humbling. But I took his words to heart. Deep down I knew that his intention was to make sure that all of us understood the seriousness of any undertaking on Mt. Rainier. This was no place to screw around. Several of us went to Camp Muir that weekend anyway, on a gorgeous, cloudless day, and had no problems whatsoever. And this time, I wore my sunscreen.

Fast forward a few years, to the spring of 1999. There were tons of other people going to Muir that day, about fifty OSATers. By this time, I had considerably more experience, with three Rainier summits under my belt and close to twenty trips to Camp Muir. As a group we had many experienced and highly qualified leaders amongst us — including John R. We had all the right gear, including several people with radios. The weather wasn't looking good but was expected to improve. All in all, not much cause for concern. John R made us all laugh when he showed off his bright yellow rain pants. He said there was no way in hell we could miss him in pants like that. We all agreed. We said the Serenity Prayer and off we went.

The weather never got any better that day. It got much worse in fact. All the way up, Jimmy's words echoed in my head, as they always do when I'm on Mt. Rainier -- especially on the Muir snowfields. I kept thinking this was exactly the type of situation Jimmy had warned us about. I took several compass readings and noted the altitude at various locations. Most of us made it to Muir just fine, with a few people turning back, including John R who wasn't feeling well. The weather was real bad now, but I could see downslope and lots of wands. Everything would be just fine.

On my way back down with a small group that included my now ex-wife Marina and a couple of students, we were following the wands that had been placed by RMI. Somewhere above the Moon Rocks I heard John's last few transmissions over the radio, indicating that he had lost his bearings. My stomach churned and twisted as I heard those words, because I knew how bad that could be. He might actually have to stay the night on the mountain in weather that had by now turned into a complete white-out. I was horrified on his behalf, but I maintained my focus on finding the next wand, using my compass bearing to guide us. Somehow we kept finding the next, and the next. I heard Marina reassuring our two students that they were in great hands with me because I had been to Camp Muir so many times, etc. I kept my mouth shut tight because the truth is, I was filled with apprehension and a growing sense of impending doom. I had not told them about John's

transmissions. And now, in a white-out so thick you couldn't see three feet, I couldn't find the next wand.

The thing about compass bearings is, they're no good if you lose your reference point. If you've wandered off course already, the compass bearing you have is no longer valid. In all the excitement, I lost track of the fact that someplace between 7500 and 8000 feet, above Pebble Creek, the direction changes. Also, the snowfield starts sloping to the right, towards the Nisqually Glacier. When you are in a complete white-out, the natural tendency is to go directly down-slope. In our case, we should have been bearing left a little. In reality, even though we were following footsteps, we were headed directly towards the cliffs above the Nisqually. The

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white-out had gotten so bad that at times you couldn't see where to place your feet, and my equilibrium was starting to play tricks with me. I kept hearing John's voice over and over in my head as he said "I think I've lost my bearings." I realized that we were almost in the same predicament, and that I was responsible for it. I was a group leader that day, and I should have known exactly where we were and where we were going, white-

never been able to completely forgive myself for allowing that to happen.

Well, that day fortune was on our side. One of the students had just purchased a GPS unit, which was a quite new technology to mountaineering at the time. I wanted one badly but couldn't afford it. The student had been making waypoints all the way up. On the way down he had not really been looking at it all that closely,



Collage of photos from John R's life, assembled by his family

out or no white-out. That's a fact.

There's a fine line somewhere between Grave Concern and Total Panic. It's not a fun place to be, but I was there. I turned around, composed myself with great effort, and explained the situation, downplaying the seriousness as much as I could, hiding my anxiety as best as possible. I also informed them about John's predicament and indicated that we needed to be extra careful so that we didn't end up with the same problem. Inside, I felt like a complete failure. I was supposed to be keeping the students, and my wife, safe. And now, here we were at the brink of disaster. To this day I've

opting to follow the leader. We all jumped on this newly discovered information and according to the device, we definitely needed to bear left quite a bit at this point. So we did. A few hundred yards later, we were at Pebble Creek. After fumbling around in the fog a bit at Pan Point, we soon found ourselves on the paved path towards Paradise...and safety. The student saved the day, and even possibly, our lives. For that, I am eternally grateful.

By the time we reached Paradise, the situation with John R. had become quite serious. He was no longer

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transmitting and we realized his batteries had most likely died. The weather was absolutely horrible. The snow was coming down hard, the wind strong and penetrating, the sky black and grim, and we were all cold and miserable. The forecast was for more of the same. Several hours had elapsed since anyone had heard from, or seen, John. Everyone was sick with worry, but even more disturbing was the unspoken knowledge we all had of the frigid, low temperatures that awaited John that night, and the utter helplessness we felt at our inability to assist him. We were all pretty certain that at this point, he was preparing for a night out in the storm and any hope of a rescue that evening was slowly dwindling. Climbing Rangers were now involved, Search and Rescue was contacted, and all of us had chimed in with our opinions on where we thought he might be and what equipment he had with him. We had lost control of John's fate, but our joint optimism convinced us that the crisis, in the grand scheme, was only temporary. As awful as it felt, for most of us there really was nothing else to do but go home.

Driving home with the knowledge that John was still out there in the cold, alone, while we were headed home to a hot shower and a warm bed -- I can't even put it into words. Especially after what I considered my own narrow escape that day.

As the week progressed, hope turned to despair as every day we learned that John had still not been found. I was unable to concentrate on anything at work, knowing that he was still out there, still suffering what the rest of us only had to endure for a few hours. At the end of the week, we all gathered at REI downtown to acknowledge the reality that, in all likelihood, John was not coming home. We slowly returned to our lives, the summer came and went, we all continued with our activities, and for most of us, John was firmly in the back of our minds. Finally, that fall, John's body was found on the Paradise Glacier, six months after we last saw him. He probably died that first night, though we'll never know for sure.

As I read the accounts of this latest fatality on the Muir snowfield, a familiar phrase appeared, one often associated with stories of climbing tragedies: "Experienced Mountaineers." Sadly, the tendency to be less cautious is most common amongst two kinds of hikers: those with no experience, and those with plenty. When you're in good shape, the tendency is to want to climb fast and light, especially in good weather. But I'll repeat Jimmy's warnings about Muir: don't be fooled! The danger is there, though sometimes well hidden.

Ask yourself this: If something happens, how long can I survive on the mountain? To survive a few nights, you'll need a warm sleeping bag (preferably 0-degree), a bivy sack, the ability to melt snow for drinking, and the

ability to stay dry (change of clothes). You might survive a week without food, but a few extra power bars will go a long way. An emergency radio with plenty of extra batteries can bring help. In short, the 10 Essentials are not sufficient unless they are a *really good version* of the 10 Essentials. A candle and a space blanket ain't gonna save your life on Mt. Rainier!

If you'll indulge me just a bit more, I'll make a controversial statement. When you're an experienced mountaineer, the one thing left to do, really, is to make a big mistake. It's sitting out there, waiting for you to make it, despite all you know. Considering all we've learned and all the tools we've been given, dying on the Muir snowfield seems so senseless -- almost like tripping on a garden hose and hitting your head **on** the driveway! And yet it happens every year on Rainier, for the same reasons. I can't understand why a greater effort

is not made by the folks at Paradise to instill a stronger sense of the few simple steps that can help you to avoid a senseless tragedy. Sure, they tell you. But what they really ought to do is grab you by the packstraps and shake you.



Jim Hinkhouse, left, with student Ivar S.

Jimmy's pointing his finger and reading me the riot act taught me a permanent life lesson. It took him less than five minutes, but I became enlightened in a new way. I've no guarantee of safety, but at least I have the tools I need to make the right decisions. Jimmy made such a huge impact on my life in the short time I knew him, just as he did with everyone that crossed his path. And today, somehow, I feel that I am not writing this story at all -- it's a metaphysical transmission from Jimmy H from that great Bergshrund in the sky.

I'm sure I'll see a lot of you out on the trail to Muir this year. I'll be the out-of-shape guy with the full-size backpack. And somewhere along the way, if we listen closely, we might hear John R. laughing at us. §

* * *

*From the editor: Remember also the importance of staying together as a group. If you're fast, don't jet out ahead, and if you're slow, make **every** effort to move quickly! A lagging hiker endangers not only him/herself, but the sweep as well. Don't attempt Muir if you doubt your ability: choose an easier hike!*

OSAT Quick Reference

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Webmaster:	Scott H.		webmaster@osat.org

12 Step Meetings

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

OSAT Club Meeting

Next Meeting: July 8, 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

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.

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.

Unsubscribing:

Send a blank email to 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

On a lighter note... **Meet Mr. Mailbox** ...the tale of a silly conditioner

by Louisa P.



Benjamin T and the author at the Mailbox trailhead

The refrain of this article is, “Guess ya had to be there!” But I’m going to assume that, if you’re reading a *Yodel*, then in a sense, you were. Because there’s a unique flavor to all OSAT conditioners and, in fact, all our outings. I wonder if Jim Hinkhouse could have predicted the rare combination of humility, service, ego, and doofiness that characterizes our undertakings. To my mind — and I don’t speak for everyone — The Mountaineers is for grown-ups. They’re serious and sensible. I am none of the above. Maybe it’s the delayed development from 14 years of daily guzzling, or maybe it’s just a personality trait common among us, but I take great pride in failing to act my age and, apparently, so do some of my OSAT cohorts.

My first year in the course, all I cared about, obsessively, was summitting Rainier and proving I was tough. Let me at it, let me tackle the big stuff!! I dismissed conditioners as officious hoops I had to jump through to qualify for the Rainier climb — because wasn’t I already Ms. Fitness? Of course, I found out I was *not*.

Just prior to my first ever Mailbox Peak conditioner, I’d been vanity-dieting hardcore for a few days, and had eaten nothing for breakfast. By about half a mile in, I was so fuel-deprived and winded that I actually *saw a little gnome* peek out from behind one of the trees. The gnome, wearing a conical Seven Dwarves cap and sporting a pointy beard, waved cheerily to me and popped back behind the tree with a sort of metro-gnome-type movement. I truly saw it! I felt embarrassed of how thoroughly thrashed I appeared — super-fit me, flushed, sweaty, and gasping like a fat used car salesman forced uphill by pitchfork. My defensiveness made me reserved, and I resented everyone on the hike. Pete L. was leading at a brisk pace, and I wanted to kill him — the showoff! Throughout the day, I connected with no one despite many kindnesses offered me: Roy loaned me yak-tracks, I think it was Lloyd who loaned me a trekking pole, and Gerard hung back from the group to walk me up the last slope of the summit — I was still quite woozy. But, to be honest, I couldn’t even tell the three of them apart! They were just “OSAT dudes.”

Happily, the longer I’m with OSAT, the more I am enjoying conditioners for their own sake, and as a chance to get to know people. Recent excursions have shown me that, in deep enough snow, even Mailbox can pose challenges that demand a lot of strength and strategy, and the low-key fellowshiping of smaller groups can actually make them a heck of a lot more fun than the “big” volcano climbs.

This past April I signed up for a mid-week Mailbox climb with Benjamint, Rachel L., and Matt C., over the course of which we became decidedly silly. Alarming so, in fact. For instance, while we were engaged in standard OSAT pre-hike farting around at the trailhead, I discovered a black eye patch in the snow and suggested the WTA, who had taken off just ahead of us, was actually a closeted group of pirates. Ben picked it up and carried it with him as the 12th essential (the 11th being TP), while we all started up the trail impersonating WTA pirate exclamations such as “shiver me timbers” and “swab the trail!” Okay — guess you had to be there!

I’d told them about my waving gnome, so we kept looking for him and practicing our gnome wave responses, akin to parade float waves. We lost the trail in the snow — of course — and bushwhacked tirelessly through deep powder and low tree branches for some time before Ben broke through to the trail. He stepped over a large, exposed log and, voila! we were back on course.

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Ben, front, and Matt C: major post-holing

Emerging from the trees, we met with a thick accumulation of fine powder blanketing a fragile crust that everyone kept post-holing through – except for me, cause I had snow shoes (that fit --Matt's

wouldn't go on his plastic boots). I kicked steps up to toward the false summit with great dedication and perseverance, thinking of my group **members'** reliance on me, panting like a mo-fo and sweating buckets.

I'd just gone over a small ridge at the top when I looked back and saw that my steps were *kinda* working. Ben and Rachel were standing in the bright sun; I could see them from about the shoulders up. One would suddenly vanish, post-holing, then the other. They alternated like Whack-a-Moles, a comparison I yelled to them. The result was all of us cracking up each time it happened again. "Are you guys sure you want to keep on?" I yelled. They'd pop up: "YES!" (gone! ... back again) "WE DO!" all the while giggling like kids. This was damn slow and difficult climbing, mind you. We were pushing ourselves, but we were having a blast at the same time.

At long last we sat a ways from the cornice edge at the summit, eating lunch in the brilliant sunshine with the magnificent splendor of the clear-cut I-90 Corridor unfurling with serpentine grace before us. Ant trails of traffic trickled along. We took some pics. It was good.

Coming down we experienced one of the most magical moments of my all my post-teen hiking years. There's a grove of firs just south of the summit, sort of quasi-alpine, large but gnarled. Passing through them, we entered in the deepest, finest powder I've ever encountered. This snow was like talcum powder fluffed full of air, with mops of

it slung over every branch and swag above us, muffling the present moment to total silence, a flawless vacuum of sound. We'd waded through a bit, me leading again with the snow shoes, all of us sensing the wonderland atmosphere. Then we all stopped and listened to the silence. I took a moment to look at each of us, looking. Chins up and full of wonder, everyone resembles the child they once were – Benjamins, Matt, and Rachel, all beautiful children of god, the first two miraculously sober. I spoke one of those little silent prayers to always remember this scene of my life.

Further down I felt free to bore everyone shitless with my politically correct lambasting of some white dude (Captain Vancouver) who'd named Mount Rainier, which had only been called Tahoma for a few centuries by the locals. I kept imitating his words in a booming, robust Englishman's voice, rolled R's and all: "To the south I sahwa a rrround, snoweh peak, which I named foh my goood frriend, Rrrear Admiral Rainieh!" I said it a bunch of times, having a jolly time with it – you know when you vaguely sense you might be annoying as hell, but you don't really care? Meanwhile, we were all looking for the log which had marked Ben's moment of triumph, re-finding the trail. Finally, we spotted it. I boomed out: "I sahwa to south a grreat log, which I named foh good frriend, Benjamins!!" Ben obliged us, posing for a photo op with one foot up on the famous Log Benjamins. It was hot, I'm telling ya.

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Rachel L, Louisa, Ben T, Matt C, and somebody's pack atop Mailbox Peak

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What I wish to underscore at this point, in my own defense, is that EVERYONE involved in this conditioner was being equally dorky -- it's just that I write from a distance of almost two months and thus can recall only my own symptoms.

But our adventures weren't over yet! On our descent through the icy, rooty woods, we were able to easily follow the spray paint blazes that were all on the *uphill* side of the trees -- though the downhill sides were unmarked. When we came to the spot where we had headed right, losing the blazed trail, I broke off a little tree snag and lay it across the wrong path as a barrier. We'd not gone ten feet from doing this when we met another climber of perhaps 55 or 60, short and fit with a trim beard and dressed, in my memory at least, almost exclusively in khakis. We told him of our service, putting up the barrier. "No, you didn't lose the trail," he informed us. "The trail splits here; you simply took the eastern fork, which traverses blah blah miles northeast to before rejoining the western fork at approximately blah-de-blah thousand feet. Both trails have existed in rough form for ten years, and neither is superior to the other."



"Wey-ell," we said. "Um, all's we know is, we took THAT-a one, and ended up bushwhackin'!"

"You must have erred further on," he said in a rapid-fire, near monotone, "and lost the east fork." He then told us of another tangential route and its history before we parted ways.

This fellow was only a bit gruff, and clearly knew ten times what we did about this mountain, but in our book, he was ripe for rankin' on. There was something odd about his excessive knowledge, we decided. We theorized that at home he had countless maps and scale models of Mailbox Peak, was in fact compulsively obsessed with the same, and then we came up with his name: Mr. Mailbox. We imagined asking him questions. "Excuse me, Mr. Mailbox! What is the geological make-up of the peak, layer by layer?" The shock of trail revisions created by the WTA pirates, we theorized, must have thrown him into therapy. "It's all so great but... I'm just not ready!" We got at least fifteen minutes out of this poor guy. Just when you'd think we were finally done, somebody'd kick one more out there. At one point, I honestly *had* to stop walking, I was laughing so hard.

What this is really all about is trust -- lowering inhibitions without the haze of alcohol. I later asked Matt C. if he could remember any funny stuff for this article. "I don't remember anything anyone said," he responded.

"All I know is, I had a frickin' blast!" §

Mt Washington in October

by Alexei E.

What an underrated hike! Maybe it was the newness of the area to me, but I really enjoyed the complexity of this trip. It was an all-in-one introduction to Olympic hiking and scrambling. I was glad to have Eastking and Quetzalcortissimo along for the ride.

Ed Miller's traveling memorial register was in my pack, and I was nervous about my chances of getting the register to the summit. It's about 2.5 hours to the TH from Seattle. Instead of turning left at the last sign for Ellinor (7 miles from pavement) go straight for 200' to the parking turnout for Mt Washington

The trail starts steep, and really stays that way almost entirely. The boot path is well defined, and the condition of the trail good as they come. The path through the avalanche field was likewise obvious. Eventually we reached a scree field. We persevered upwards, soon entering a patch of some kind of low tree. The branches were helpful on the steepest parts, but also challenging. Just below a huge rock, two pieces of tape indicated a left turn to reach a slot. This went well, with only a trickle of water. The alternative would have been to leave the slot and scramble left up a short wall.

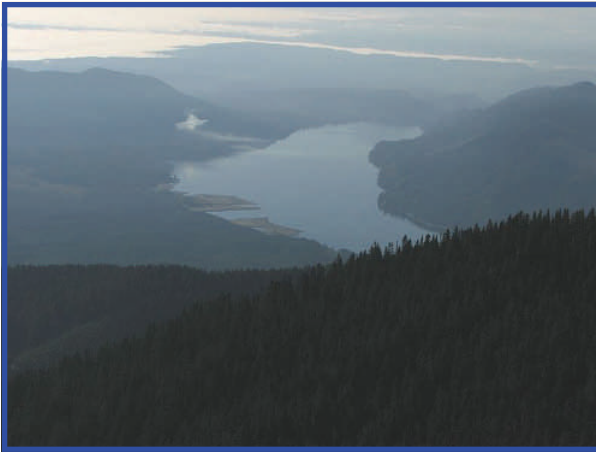
We entered a beautiful basin. Colors were bright, with a tarn for one. We kept following the path until we got to the bottom of the huge main scree field. Here, the route did not exactly present itself. We headed up and right. The normal route goes all the way to the top of the scree and then heads left on a ledge, which disappears behind some trees. We took a more direct route. A little ways up the main scree field, we went left into a rooty gully. This was followed by scree, rock, and then tree bashing to reconnect with the main



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path. Another one of Magellan's interesting short-cuts! At some point Greg decided he'd had enough uncertainty, and turned around.



Lake Cushman

As we went up, an interesting, gravel-covered ledge appeared. Above this there was more scree, and finally the ridge top. The views were spectacular, and the summit was close. Some ridge walking, a small notch, and then another spectacular ledge. It was wide and solid, and the only weakness I saw in the summit block. More sand, a short scramble, and the summit.

We had incredible clear views of the Olympic Mountains. There was fog burning off Puget Sound, so only the five volcanoes stood out from the Cascades. I let some of Ed's ashes go, read his brother's quote, and signed the register. The main register of the summit is in sorry shape — a notebook in a metal box in a holey bread bag! I wish I'd had more time to go through it.

Leaving is always sad on such a sunny day. It was positively warm at this point. Down was not exactly quick, with care warranted in many spots. The only really interesting part was the gravelly ledge. It's not out sloping, but there are no handholds for a while. I stayed upright, but Curt sat down and used his 'fifth wheel.' We took the hidden ledge down to the main scree field. After finding Greg we took a break. From here it is down, down, down. Don't worry if you slip and fall, because you'll tumble all the way to the car. §



Don't expect to see Alexei around much anytime soon: he's a new dad to little Lucy, at left.

Congratulations, Alexei!

Talent show a raging hit~!

Staff reporter

Many thanks to Jim K. and I guess me for reviving the OSAT talent show this past March! About fifty OSATer fans turned out to watch Jim K. and special guest Lulu LaTush, direct from Las Vegas, host an eclectic showcase of talent and sober nerve.

Featured acts included guitar solos by Jim K. and Dick W. as well as a duet featuring their combined talents. Bob L. played guitar and sang a few songs he had written. Lulu attempted a few Karaoke songs, as did Janice B, Lori U, Karen M, Sharon L. and several others, the names of whom presently elude this reporter.



Doug C. in mid-song. And, yes, it got even better (worse?)

The highlight of the show was definitely a rousing rendition of "I'm a Mountaineer and I'm Okay," performed by Doug C and OSAT Supremes Dave Mc, Bill L, Rik A. and Russell S. A strong supporting cast of Margie K. as a dissatisfied REI customer and Nancy T. as the mountaineer's adoring sweetheart set a taut dramatic context to foreground the song itself.

This act was followed by perhaps the only spot worthy of its heels — an impromptu guitar jam by "real" music superstar Gary H. The staff will be getting on Janice B and husband Mike's case to cough up videos allegedly taken of the entire evening's festivities for posting on YouTube. §

My Journey to Become a Student of OSAT

by Janet M.

It all began in September 2005, when I realized that I was powerless over alcohol and that my life had become unmanageable. One of the joys in my life that I let go in my quest to run away from life was my inherent love of nature. As a teenager, I swore that I would never have a job where you sit at a desk all day. Also in September 2005, I took a job working downtown Seattle in an office on the 28th floor as an accounting professional. Most of the employees at the company are active in sports and support several charitable causes, so in March of 2006 they signed up as a team to participate in the Big Climb for Leukemia. Several of the women began a regimen of stair climbing at lunch. I joined the training but not the team. I started at 12 flights and honestly thought I would die. I added four flights every other day and within six months was doing all 57 flights in the building. I was so bored at one point that I counted all 1099 stairs.

Over the summer of 2006, some friends from church invited me to go hiking with them. Although our schedules didn't work out, I mentioned that I would like to take my stair climbing to a local hike. (I was raised in the Kent area, but had no real experience with any of the hikes around the Cascades.) When my friend heard about the stair climbing, he said I should be climbing Mt. Rainier as that is how he trained for it several years earlier. I thought it quite the joke at the time as I was now 41 and in the worst shape of my life. However, the idea stuck in my head and every time I climbed those stairs I thought about it some more.

I started researching Rainier climbs and found an organization that really interested me, called Summit for Someone climbs. The group raises money to benefit Big City Mountaineers who reward urban youth with trips into local wilderness areas. These climbs were sponsored by Backpacker Magazine. I really had no knowledge of any of these organizations but thought that if I could raise funds for youth while climbing, it would be a worthwhile endeavor.

At my first birthday in AA, I made the commitment to

attempt Mt. Rainier for this organization. The climb would take place August 2007 and I knew nothing about what would be needed to prepare for this adventure. I made up some training plans for myself that spring and summer. I was surprised to learn that this organization was national and the climbs were supported heavily by some of the biggest names in the climbing industry. One day at work, I received two very large boxes full of gear from the company sponsors. I later learned that I had probably received over \$3,000 in gear that day.

The team was to be lead by RMI, but I still knew nothing of the sport of mountain climbing. I prepared my own training schedule for hikes every weekend and climbing stairs with weight. I found few friends who were willing to join me and fewer when they read about some of the hikes. I went primarily with my son and my dog. We fell in love with some of the climbs off of I-90 and my son started working on getting his "Hike 90" patches with me. Over the summer we found Mt. Si (the

new trail), Granite Mountain and McClellan's Butte. I even did two trips from Paradise to Camp Muir (without the son and dog but with a 29 year old girlfriend). My girlfriend left me in the dust on both trips so I focused the time on battling the mind over matter of putting one foot in front of the other for six hours. I knew nothing of stopping every hour to eat and hydrate so arrived at Camp Muir dizzy and no appetite.

The weekend of the climb came and the Friday for my only training session was gorgeous. We had to hike two hours from Paradise to find enough snow for training. I found that after we stopped for our first break, I couldn't keep up with the rest of the team. (I

later found out in OSAT that I have exercise-induced asthma.) This really worried me but I kept on and managed to survive that day's training.

The next morning we woke to a total change in the weather. The fog was so thick we couldn't see beyond the road in front of the bus and the wind had picked up. My stomach was really upset. I think deep inside that I was scared to death that people on my rope team would

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Janet & Joan at Roped Travel (photo by Anna O)

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be counting on me to know what I was doing and I felt very unprepared. My doctor had prescribed an altitude sickness medicine that, it turned out, I could be allergic to. I couldn't eat at all at our first rest stop. I knew not long after that that I would not be keeping up with the group. I could potentially harm the rest of the team if they had to have someone stay with me the entire way up and if I couldn't make Camp Muir within the allotted time frame. I made the difficult decision to turn around.

Later that night I was eternally grateful for that decision as I spent the entire night huddled in the bathroom of my room at Ashford, sicker than I had been in a very long time. The rest of the team had turned back around 12,000 due to extremely high winds. I really thought my quest to climb Rainier was over, and I had developed a healthy respect for the mountain.

Over this last year, I had been sharing with my home group my progress. The insights I had into how powerful it can be to live today and that there is something to be content with just for today. I had developed a strong relationship with my son and did not regret any of the time we spent together. Joan was one of the members of my home group that was very supportive. We didn't see a lot of each other but did talk about hiking in general. She volunteered to hike with me, but it hadn't seemed to work out.

In January 2008, Joan brought me a Glacier Climbing Course pamphlet from OSAT and said she really wanted to do this but wanted someone else to go with her. I had heard a little about the Thursday night and Sunday morning meetings and had wandered through the website but had never really found the information on the climbing course. After reading the pamphlet, I signed up the next day. I never thought that there would be others out there with the same desire to climb mountains and to stay sober doing it. I knew that if I ever wanted to attempt another mountain, I would need training. It took Joan another two weeks of me bugging her to get her to sign on.

My sense of awe at the first training of OSAT held at the downtown REI store, which I had never been in before, was huge. This was not a small little group, but an entire room filled with people who loved to climb and were also learning to live life without the aid of chemicals. I also had a course syllabus and textbook. I made a commitment to myself and OSAT that day. I would try to learn to the best of my abilities. I would attend all the required course training seminars. And perhaps someday, I might be able to pass something of value on to another person in recovery.

Thank you all for being there for me. KCM & DS §

From the Talent Show...

The following is a sing-along written and led by Rik A., to the tune of "Home on the Range."

Home In The Rain

*Oh give me a home
Where no buffalo roam
But the climbers and hikers all play;
Where often is heard
An encouraging word
But skies are all cloudy all day.*

CHORUS

*Home, home in the rain
Where the OSATers never complain;
Where friends give a hand,
While on mountains they stand,
And they're proud to call climbing their
game.*

*Oh give me a tent,
Where the climbers all went,
When the skies opened up and rained
down;
Where Goretex protects,
From our feet to our necks,
But we never face life with a frown.
{chorus}*

*Oh give me a trail,
Far from phones and email,
Regardless the wind and the rain;
Where soaked to the bone,
I descend toward my home,
And get ready to do it again.
{chorus}*



Nalgene Drama

by Rik A.

Is your Nalgene water bottle safe?

A laboratory accident in the late 1990s revealed that polycarbonate plastics can leach endocrine disruptors such as Bisphenol A (BPA). Since then, there have been numerous public and private studies on the safety of polycarbonate plastics and BPA exposure and health risk. The FDA and its European, Japanese, and German counterparts have all weighed in over the past five years with conclusions that current exposure levels of BPA from plastic water bottles and other food containers do not pose a health risk.

However, last Fall Mountain Equipment Coop in Canada ceased selling polycarbonate water bottles, and on April 18, 2008 Health Canada labeled BPA a health risk and announced its intention to ban the sale of polycarbonate baby bottles. It also said that existing polycarbonate bottles can continue to be used, but advised that boiling water should not be put in the bottles because it increases the rate of BPA migration out of the bottle material. On the same day as the Health Canada release, Nalgene announced that "in response to consumer demand" it is phasing out production of polycarbonate containers.

Nalgene's clear or colored hard plastic water bottles have become widely used in the outdoor and athletic community. My Sunday morning routine has long included mixing up Gatorade in my Nalgene bottle and popping it in the microwave to bring it just short of a boil, so I could have a nice warm drink atop Tiger at the meeting. And many of us have used Nalgene as hot water bottles in our sleeping bags. Well, it is unlikely that anyone of an official nature will come out and say these practices will kill you or cause a miscarriage, but it seems prudent to stop using Nalgene bottles for hot liquids as a minimum response to this remote health concern.

REI **had** been preparing for the latest news for some time, and on the weekend of April 26-27 they removed all polycarbonate bottles from their shelves. And true to their "Return Everything Incorporated" reputation, REI will take back Nalgene (and other) polycarbonate products purchased there and exchange them for other options now available, which include SIGG aluminum bottles and bottles from both Camelback and Nalgene made from a copolyester plastic known as Tritan. Alas, last month Holly threw out the beat-up old Nalgene bottle I had purchased from REI years ago as she began her campaign to save me from Alzheimer's. The others I own prominently display logos that identify them as having been purchased elsewhere. Arrrrrrgh! §

Mailbox Revamped

Stolen - er - reprinted from the WTA Journal

One of the Puget Sound area's most challenging day hikes, Mailbox Peak near North Bend, is in for a long-overdue facelift.

Mailbox Peak is not typically the sort of hike that is chosen for the casual hiker's easy outing. The summit, which has an actual mailbox at the top, is reached by a rugged trail that climbs three miles and gains over 4000 feet, sometimes at a grade as steep as 40%. The steep, rugged character of the trail makes it one of the most difficult hikes in the I-90 corridor. Mountain climbers, local hikers and even fire fighters have lugged heavy packs up and down for conditioning for decades.

But as the trail's popularity has increased, so have the erosion and resource damage along the trail. Trail braiding, exposed tree roots and steep sections have resulted in broken ankles and lost hikers, leading to more search and rescue missions on Mailbox.

Starting this weekend??, the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be working with volunteer trail crews from Washington Trails Association (WTA) to improve safety and resource damage along the trail corridor, starting with the first mile.

"There's an allure to Mailbox Peak that has brought far more hikers to its summit than ever before, and the trail is in dire need of some emergency fixes," said Jenni Blake, Trail programs Director for Washington Trails Association. "Volunteers are pitching in to provide a more safe, enjoyable experience for Mailbox Peak's visitors while also helping to prevent further erosion and natural resource damage."

Exposed tree roots are tripping hikers and breaking ankles. Braided trails are confusing hikers and cut switchbacks have created gullies and destroyed vegetation. One section of trail is so steep and degraded that a toboggan could more easily go down than a person. In some places, hikers lose the trail and get lost, resulting in calls to King County Search and Rescue.

Located on land managed by Washington's DNR, the Mailbox Peak trail's origin dates all the way back to the 1950s. The name "Mailbox Peak" was coined in 1991 by hiker Sally Pfeiffer in a trip report published in WTA's monthly publication, *Signpost* magazine, because the summit register was located in a heavy green mailbox.

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In recent years, DNR has recognized the need to make emergency repairs to the trail that will create a balance; retain the rugged, steep character of the trail while making it safer for hikers and minimizing the resource damage that has occurred. This need has reached a critical point as hiker interest in this trail has increased.

The long-term vision for Mailbox is to add a new trail to the top of Mailbox Peak that will be easier to hike and serve more casual hikers into the future. DNR is applying for a grant from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) to build a new Mailbox Peak trail. The original steep and difficult trail will remain, while a new trail will take some of the pressure off it.

“On a recent visit to Mailbox Peak, I was amazed to see the amount of damage and erosion that has occurred on the trail just in the past year,” said Heather Cole, Recreation Manager with Washington Department of Natural Resources. “With the amount of use Mailbox is now getting, it is all about triaging the places that create a safety problem for hikers and that are causing the greatest amount of resource damage.”

DNR is presently focusing its efforts on the user built Mailbox Peak trail, focusing on trail safety for hikers as well as preventing further resource damage along the trail corridor. One of the first things they’ll do to increase safety along the trail is to put a kiosk at the bottom of the trail and a sign warning hikers of the difficult nature of the trail. They also plan to further define the trail with white diamond markers as hikers go up and down to prevent people from getting off trail. Later this summer, Washington Conservation Crews will make emergency repairs to the upper half of the trail.

To join a volunteer work crew on the Mailbox Peak trail, contact Washington Trails Association at 206-625-1367 or www.wta.org.

OSAT Events Calendar	
July	
4th	Fireworks on Mt. Si Call Dave F: 425-378-7911
9th	General Club Meeting 7:30pm Congregational Church, 4545 Island Crest Way
12th & 19th	GCC Rainier Climbs! C'mon out & Sherpa if you're fit! (see Muir article, page 1...)
25th	Lopez Island Bike Campout Sign up online
August	
2-4	Ross Lake Kayak

Plus much, much more on the [Calendar](#) page!



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:	suntigerleader@osat.org	
When:	Thursdays	@ 7pm
Contact:	thurstigerleader@osat.org	

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EVERYBODY CARPOOL!!

Here's the math (*note: this article is 2 months old*):

Round trip for me from home to Paradise and back is 204 miles according to mapquest.com. My Prius gets 45 mpg, so with regular gas currently at **\$3.47** at Costco, that puts the gas cost of trip to Mt. Rainier at \$15.73 for me.

What, you're planning to drive your 19 mpg Explorer? Well, that's cool I guess, but plan on shelling out around \$40 just for the gas to get you to Rainier and back. In the past when I rode with folks, I took to treating them to dinner on the way home. Jeez, now I'd be getting off cheap if that's all I did!

—Rik A.



Top: Sunday Tiger Meeting; left, Thurs Tiger start up in the RAIN; right: Tory at Roped Travel field trip

Photos by Anna O.



*Lori U & Doug H, left, and
Matt M at Roped Travel;
Monty-Python skit, center;
Roped Travel switchback
practice, below*

Photo by Karen Marie



Photo by Anna O

The Yodel

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Photo of the 6-months!

Shuksan from the summit of Baker. Photo by Doug C., June 08