

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

# The Yodel

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## Remembering Dave McClenahan

by Louisa P.

Dave McClenahan was a beloved OSATer. He took his own life on December 12, 2008, having reached a decision that his lifelong battle with depression had grown to heavy to continue. He put all his affairs in order, wrote a beautiful and loving note to his family, lay down on his bed and checked out in a split second by means of a handgun. This was what Dave felt he had to do.

What we need *not* to do, those of us who loved him, is judge from the comparative comfort of our own consciousnesses whether he chose wrongly, or blame ourselves in our natural human selfishness for having failed to rescue him. Both paths lead nowhere. Rather, to remember Dave well and try to emulate what we loved most about him — that's what he probably would have wanted for us.

Dave's sister Beth, having traveled from California, remarked at his memorial service how much she had feared to find that Dave lived his final years up here friendless and alone, stuck his little apartment — as would be normal for one so severely afflicted with depression. The hundred-plus people gathered for that service, photographs of an exuberant Dave in spectacular settings, and the loving memories shared by people from all facets of his life showed us all quite a different picture. We saw not only how much light had flowed through Dave, but how valiantly he'd fought his disease — getting out, reaching out, and persisting again the disease's drag of inertia. He lived beautifully, for as long as he could.

In fact, with time I've come to recognize that part of what made Dave so uniquely alive to me was his inner awareness of death as an ever present option, and his deliberate refusal to choose it. In retrospect, I see Dave was always leaping into life, away from despair, seizing at this brilliant and nonsensical cornucopia



Photos by Matt Mc.



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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.*

this world presents us with. There was so much he couldn't afford to care about.

Inflating his ego, for instance. I guess he'd long ago decided the thing wouldn't hold air, so he wasted no energy trying to pump it up to impress you, me, or anyone else. He was what he was. It's easy to glorify the risks and dangers of climbing to craft a self-image steeped in machismo. But what about leading those same risky, demanding climbs with the nickname, 'Don't-Follow-Me Dave'? Could you do it? Genuine humility and humor freed Dave to cheerfully take on that title while continuing to post new adventures on the OSAT calendar and lead them with dauntless enthusiasm. "I'd just get us lost! What do I know?" he would say, puzzling over the map. Matt Mc. remembers Dave, unsure of their way, unfolding the route directions and 'reading': "...baste well, put in 350-degree oven – dammit! I brought the wrong ones again!" And yet he always, eventually, found the way. He kept the group together, watched out for everyone, took suggestions, and made every outing fun. Being so 'done' with fear himself, Dave could inspire others to set it aside as well. "I can't let anyone die on this trip," I recall him saying at a dicey stretch on the Brothers, "or Nancy's gonna be really mad at me."

One bonus of true humility is that, without the need to impress, we're utterly free to be ourselves – as was Dave. I've heard tales of a descent from Tenerife during which Dave kept hurling himself down the snowy slope in summersaults, much to the reported consternation of Russell, who was trying to teach safety skills to the new GCC students. "If I can't have fun," Dave laughed, "then what's the point?" With decades of climbing experience, including a summit of Rainier in 1982, he took the GCC course in 2002, bringing expertise to OSAT without claiming any. In his bright orange ski boots and lime green helmet, beneath a pack like a peddler's dangling with items labeled, "Dave," he was simply doing what he loved.

Thus, he offered kindness for its own sake, not to win over or ingratiate anyone. Robyn S. remembers the encouragement Dave provided on a 2003 OSAT climb of Mount St. Helens – her first "real" summit. When the group stopped afterwards at a diner, he bought her an "I Climbed Mount St. Helens!" T-shirt. "He was almost more excited for me than I was," she jokes. Todd S. recalls Dave's "giving up a summit attempt of Rainier last year in order to accompany me down from Camp Schurman after I fell and cracked my ribs. I got to know him quite well and learned what a gentle man he was." Anna O. "will always remember how he sneaked two entire cakes up to the Lunch Counter on



*Dave in the '80's*

our Mount Adams climb: chocolate layer and carrot. Whenever he was pulling out all his treats for us, Dave would say that his cat had packed his pack, so he had no idea what was in there." A similar offer of blueberry cheesecake at Camp Muir comprised my first personal interaction with Dave, the day before he led my 2006 Rainier ascent. I was a bratty customer, disappointed not to have a climb leader more cool and dashing so that I could feel cool and dashing myself on *my* big Rainier climb. Yet this guy with soot from his Whisperlite smudged all over his face, offering "pie" was more of a puddle, had a simple kindness that suggested an attitude toward climbing as methodical as knitting. And when he called our group out by Cathedral Rocks and drilled us repeatedly on belays and arrests, it became clear he could lead as well, even dashing at times. Gerard M. tells of a descent from Mount Stuart, when two OSATers found a log across a roaring creek too imposing to cross. Dave took up both girls' packs for them and easily crossed the log. "He looked kind of wiry and you didn't expect it, but the dude was strong!"

Yet the darkness overtook him in the end. The last words Dave spoke to me were steeped in pain: "You have no idea," he enunciated acridly, "what my depression is like. It's worse than anything you can imagine." And he was

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right. I recently came across this description from a neuroscientist, Peggy La Cerra, of her own bout with clinical depression: "I was constantly tired but couldn't sleep. ...Foods tasted like cardboard. The sensory world faded, and nothing interested me. I stopped socializing and eventually lost the motivation to get out of bed. ... It was like being slowly embalmed." She theorizes that acute depression evolved as a means of conserving energy resources during periods when "our intelligence system perceives that there is not much to gain by carrying on with the tasks of life – when we are overcome by too much loss or are facing a period of too little gain." But in chronic cases, the impulse to shut down will not relent. It becomes an ongoing condition of feeling "not quite dead but not really alive."

With Dave's death falling nine days before the darkest day of the year, many of us imagined that if he had only hung on a little longer – until the snowfall came, until the days got longer – he could have made it, and bounced back to be the Sunshine Dave we knew. But Dave understood perfectly well that this solstice would pass. He also knew he had a hereditary disease, and he had actively pursued every course of treatment available for many years. In short, he knew full well what to expect, not only of this winter, but the next, and countless more to come. "I have fought this thing all my life," he wrote in his note, "and I am tired." Gradually, I have come to accept that none of us can gauge Dave's experience. If we can't know how intensely he suffered, neither can we judge his choice.

Dave died sober. Newcomers often qualify sobriety with what-ifs: "If my mom dies, if I get diagnosed with cancer, I can't see how I'll not drink!" In that mindset, the decision to kill oneself would certainly qualify as a damn good excuse. But as we grow in sobriety, we come to revere life and realize we want to be awake to it. The hardest times become those when we seek god most urgently. So it was with Dave. He knew alcohol would not help him. Rather, among the signs he left out for his siblings was his weekly dosage tray of depression medications. He had taken them all consistently – doing

everything "right" – up until the day of his decision, and then he stopped. He made both facts evident. My sense is, Dave wanted to be in his natural state for the journey to meet his maker. He wanted to leave this world as he had entered it: in purity. Suicide was, for Dave, not a destructive blast of despair, but a conscientious choice to return home.

Certainly after someone has died there's a tendency to glorify them; they're not around to annoy us with their human imperfections, so we romanticize them to an ideal. Teens and self-consumed adults can be tempted toward suicide by such sentiments melodrama, half believing they'll be around to savor them. Yet I don't consider idealizing the dead to be a distortion – any more than to be awed by miracle of birth despite the fact that one occurs every quarter of a second, or to be moved by the earnest marriage vows of couples likely to suffer the bitter recriminations of divorce. All perception is relative, and I have not forgotten, for instance, that Dave could whine like a pro when the mood took him.

Yet in moments when I most acutely miss his unique Dave-ness, I do think of him as my hero, the one I aspire to follow: in humility, in kindness, and in sobriety, this friend showed me a way to live and die with honor. I send him ongoing love, and whatever blessings are mine to send.

You live on, Dave, in all our hearts. §



*...Therefore I will trust you always,  
though I may seem to be lost  
in the shadow of death  
I will not fear,  
for you are ever with me  
and you will not leave me  
to make my journey alone.*

—Thomas Merton  
from *The Road Ahead*

## Team Cluster\*\*\*\*, Party of Four

by Ann O.

Who: OSATers Matt McK & Anna O; his friend Scott; her friend Amy

When: A few days in February 2009

Where: Paso de las Nubes, Argentina

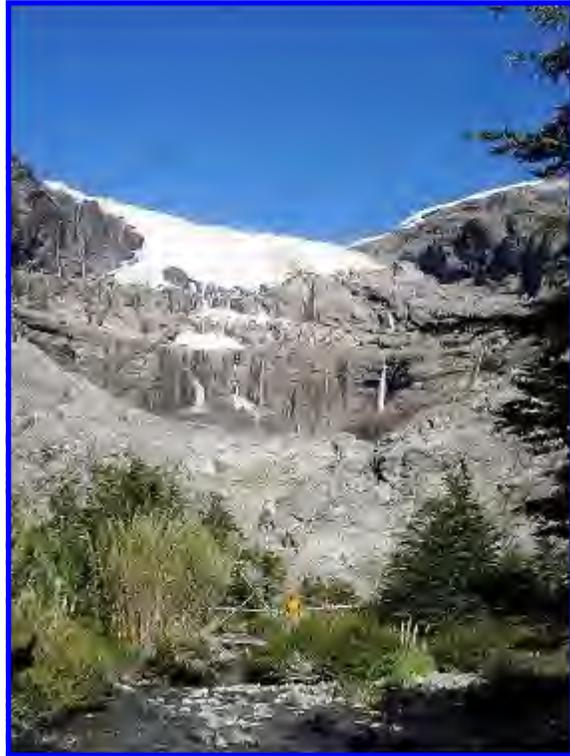
Having spent more than a week following a guide around Patagonia, the four of us were ready to set off on our own adventure.

We were prepared: got relevant maps, packed plenty of food, brought sturdy tents (well, the girls' was sturdy; the guys had some sheet-with-a-stick left over from the Boy Scouts). Our plan was to hike from Pampa Linda to Paso de las Nubes, an eight-hour trek, spend the night at the backcountry campground, then head out around 11:30a the next morning to catch the 4pm ferry from Lago Frias to Llao Llao, then a bus to the Nahuel Huapi ferry, then another bus back home to Bariloche. See how smart we were? We had it all figured out.

It was a happy, sunny day hike in from Pampa Linda: cold river crossings, slurpy swamps, psychedelic lizards, rickety handmade bridges... Late afternoon found us strolling down the trail into the gorgeous glacial valley that nestled our refugio (more of a dining tent than a refuge), where we checked in with amiable concessionaire Hector, ordered dinner (lentil stew with rice) and bought our ferry tickets for the next afternoon. See how smart we were? We had it all figured out.

The following morning, we launched out to investigate the huge glacier that hung at the head of the valley, throwing off two dozen waterfalls. We spread out, each clambering wherever the mood took us. The glacier has been calving off for decades. Hector said it hasn't so much receded from the cliff's edge as its width has been whittled. The gargantuan chunks of snow and ice that have fallen from the cliff top have formed a massive rock-hard ice dome covered in glacial grit. Several of the waterfalls convene somewhere under the ice, and where the braided river emerges from under the dome there's a gaping, dripping 10-foot-high mouth that the brave can peer into from the moraine. Inside, a big gusher of water pours down into the darkness of the dome.

After a couple hours of exploring this crazy place, I realized: We can't leave here today; this place is awesome! Everyone agreed: The weather was beautiful and we had a day to spare. So we went back to camp, paid Hector for another three meals, and got him to change our ferry departure. See how smart we were?



We had it all figured out.

After lunch in the dining tent (where we cooled our Cokes with a ball of solid ice Matt had carried back from the glacier), Matt mentioned he'd been wanting to hike offtrail to the top of one of the waterfalls. Flush with the excitement of our newfound freedom, flexibility and fortitude, we forgot a little of what we'd learned in OSAT. It was like something you might hear in AA, with a wilderness twist: We had no effective mental defense against the first stupidity.

As I mentioned above, we had maps, food, shelter, clothing -- and we left it all in camp when we set out at 4:30pm to deliberately go offtrail in a wild glaciated jungle in the middle of South America where none of us had ever been before. We left together, but as soon as we stepped off the trail, Scott and I went one way (to the right and across), and Amy and Matt went the other (up and over).

Scott and I had it relatively easy. We dragged ourselves up the cliffside using roots, rocks or clods of dirt. It was probably OK for going up, but too steep to descend. Amy and Matt, however, got themselves tangled up in one gigantic bamboo purgatory after another, and when we all somehow met up a couple of hours later atop a rock outcropping, they were both cursing like Richard

Pryor. From there it was a short scramble to our objective, the now deeply anticlimactic puddle that sourced Matt's waterfall.

Having reached our goal (such as it was), it was time to turn around and head back down for dinner, but Matt and Amy refused to have anything more to do with bamboo, and Scott and I knew heading straight down was not an option. So, although our camp lay on the valley floor below us, we decided to go up. Our plan was to get above the bamboo then cross over to the left, in hopes of rejoining the upper portion of trail, which we thought was somewhere above us. Up we went. And up, and up, and up. Then over -- and hit a ravine. Back down -- and hit a cliff.



Across? Over? Down? Up? We tried them all. The sun had dropped below the valley wall. We carried on in this way for at least an hour. Shimmying down through bamboo thickets, hauling ourselves up with sticker bushes, sliding down ravine walls. Let's turn around, try this way. Shouldn't we have hit the trail by now? Is this the same ravine again, or a different one?

We started to think (though no one admitted it) that we might get stuck out overnight. It was clear and 60s, so we wouldn't die of hypothermia, but we were gonna be mighty chilly in our T-shirts (Matt and Anna), shorts (Scott) and glorified sports bra (Amy) in the Patagonian jungle.

And we might get hungry. Our sum total of gear consisted of two Lara bars, seven Skittles and a half-stick of lip spooge. (I was happy to have my ChapStick, since I find dry lips highly annoying.) That means we'd left, oh, about 10 essential systems back in camp, where they could do us no good.

I christened us Team Cluster\*\*\*\* Paso de las Nubes.

We then realized that one thing we did have going for us was that nobody was injured. So we said let's slow down, stop, and try not to make things any worse. It was then Amy whispered to me -- and I believed her -- "My inner b\*tch is about to come loose. I'm not sleeping in this \*\*\*\*ing jungle overnight. We need to head straight down. Fast." Daylight was dwindling quickly, so we took a vote and agreed. Wherever it led us, down it was.

We began the downhill race against time. Madly crashing through bamboo, launching over mini-cliffs, stumbling over crumbling rocks. Amy and Matt were in front; Scott and I trailed behind.

Suddenly I heard Amy shriek: "BUGS! They're on me! Get them off! They're coming for us!" Matt later said that with a look of horror, she launched herself down at him in hopes he'd pluck them off her. They were stinging inside her top and under her hair. She'd run right through a rotten log with a hive of bees or wasps or black flies. Hearing her scream, I jumped about eight feet down a ledge in the opposite direction but still got stung myself, on the scalp and arm. As we kept running, I imagined that big black arrow of insects from Bugs Bunny coming after us.

Some time later, we slowed to a trot to examine our wounds. Then, a small miracle: I spotted an old filthy plastic water bottle. Humanity! "Hey, guys! A water bottle!" And then, just beyond it, the beautiful, perfect, heaven-sent, blessed TRAIL. In all our wanderings, we had somehow circled back around to the *exact* spot where we'd left the trail four hours earlier.

Mass exultation! We were like survivors of a shipwreck. In the gathering darkness, we sauntered down the trail to camp, not 15 minutes away. We rolled into camp with about one minute of daylight to spare. Hector had kept our dinner waiting and was about to go out searching for us. We were so grateful!

And remorseful. Matt and I couldn't believe it had happened to us, exactly the way it has happened to so many others. We'll hump 35 pounds of supplies up Tiger Mountain for a one-hour meeting, but we had deliberately set out gear-free that afternoon in Argentina and never gave it a second thought. §

## Mother's Day Meeting on Tiger Mountain



*Nancy's Crew: Jason, Cortney, Ryan, Brandon, Nancy, Nick, Christy, Tel, & Tisha*

*by Nancy S.*

The Mother's Day OSAT meeting this year was phenomenal. The spring weather was perfect, and Mike P. chaired the meeting after leading a biking group up the back side of the mountain. Dave F. and friends cooked a delicious breakfast, and Tino captured the event in pictures. It was also the birthday meeting for May, and "Coin Chick" Michael gave out coins and great hugs to OSATers celebrating months to double-digit sobriety. Many members hiked with their children, and it turned out to be OSAT's largest meeting yet!

As my own recovery journey has so many years of motherhood struggles, the day brought me new levels of gratitude that are nearly indescribable. Yet, my sponsor seems to think that I need to give it a try by putting pen to paper and sharing it.

Since early childhood, I dreamed of becoming the perfect wife and mother, and I was as happy as I could be when I married and was blessed with three treasured sons. Yet it was not meant to be, and within ten years I was divorced, broken-hearted, battling low self-esteem, and turning to alcohol for comfort. To this day, that time in my life is an excruciating blur, and I do not know if the divorce that I did not want led to more drinking or if more drinking led to the divorce. Either way, it was a dreadful spiral downhill, and my desire to be a good mom to the sons I cherished could not keep me from drinking even when I didn't want to. Eventually, I experienced those appalling events of alcoholic

parenting that compromised the safety, health, and happiness of my precious sons.

When my sons were between 9-12 years old, alcohol had defeated me. Although I lived in fear that my ex-husband would use the admission against me, I could fight no more and surrendered to alcoholism by asking for help. I am endlessly grateful that this program works, and I have not had a drink since Dec 11, 1989. I am also grateful that the AA fellowship and sponsorship were there to trudge with me through what was to come next.

In early sobriety, I looked to my children for purpose and strength to recover. My sons were the most important part of my life, and I craved the opportunity to be a sober mother to them. However, when I admitted that I was an alcoholic and sought help, my ex-husband immediately filed for custody. I soon learned to live with the terror of yearly custody challenges from my ex-husband. He filed for full custody every year for the first ten years of my recovery, and my disease was fully exposed in the court proceedings.

I already felt that pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization for the past wrongs to my sons, and these annual trials would nearly paralyze me. I would like to report that the hearings all went well, but that is not what happened. During the beginning of that ten-year period while my sons became teenagers, I experienced increasingly less custody and less contact with them. The time periods when one or more of them did not

live with me were agonizing, and I did not believe that they were getting the letters and phone messages when I called. It seemed as though the situation continuously grew worse, and I experienced intense negative feelings. I often felt angry at this program that tells me to be honest, do the right thing, and trust that all will be well. I sometimes cursed God and AA for my losses, and I found new levels of insanity like the savage rage of a mother bear watching her cubs being pulled away.

I wouldn't have made it without the loving fellowship and good sponsorship. Although I didn't share much of this mess at meetings (there wouldn't be enough time nor enough room for tissues in my backpack), I listened to the stories of recovering families when you all shared your experience, strength, and hope. It helped me more than I can say. Behind the meeting scene, the work with my sponsors was key to my survival and healing. My responses to their guidance included:

—You'll be okay/Are you saying that so I won't kill myself?

—Acceptance is the answer/How do you accept the unacceptable?

We had exchanges such as:

—My ex-husband is just trying to hurt me/Pray for him

—I don't have any hope/Use some of mine

—This isn't fair/If you got what was fair, you would likely be dead

—I can't do this anymore/You can because I will help you

—My sons don't answer my letters & calls/Send one-way love with postcards & voicemails

—This is letting the bad guy win/The best revenge is to get as healthy as you can

—This hurts too much/Your deepest pain will become your greatest strength when working with others

Even when my sons were old enough for the custody battles to finally end, the damage to our broken family remained. As young adults, my sons all lived with or near me, and they visited their out-of-state dad regularly. I had worked the steps of the program and made an amends to my ex-husband for my part of the harm done. Yet, the strain continued. Holidays and special events involved separate celebrations or contained tension if we all attended. My sons always took care to treat their dad and me equally – not wanting to show favoritism and continually hoping for a happy, joyous, and free existence.

## OSAT Quick Reference

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### 12 Step Tiger Mountain Meetings

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

### OSAT Club Meeting

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

### OSAT Traditions

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

(Continued from page 7)

So, what is it like today, and why was the Mother's Day OSAT meeting so important to me? My sons and I have become closer than I could have ever imagined. They have attended meetings with me at Fort Lewis and hiked with me up Tiger Mt for meetings. For the past nine years, my mother's day gift has been their unconditional love and support at the Sunday Meeting.

This year's Mother's Day Meeting topped them all, as just three days prior, my oldest son became a father. That little girl is my first grandchild, and I get to be a sober grandmother! My daughter-in-law and middle son's girlfriend join our hikes when they can and fully support my program work. On top of all that, two of my sponsees (Tisha and Christy) and their sons hiked with our family to this year's meeting - with all of us sharing and learning from each other. Knowing of the program work that my sponsees are also doing behind the scenes, and seeing the miracles happen in all our families is so very powerful - and I shared at the meeting "that it just doesn't get any better than this!" But even though it was perfect just like it was, my Higher Power had yet another miracle in store for me that day.

After the hike, my sons and I went to see the baby again, and my ex-husband was there, too. We posed for photos as a genuinely happy family, and my ex gave me a card which read, "Just for you on Mother's Day - You're special in more ways than you know and today is a perfect time to thank you for all of them... and to wish you the loveliest things in life. Happy Mother's Day." He then added, "Nancy - Thanks for being such a fine mother to our sons. You've done such a great job on so many levels and that has had such an impact on our sons, and the men they have become. It was imperative I let you know how I felt. With all respect due & Warmest Regards"

I shared this "after the meeting" story with my sponsor and sponsees by email. In it I said, "I'm finding myself crying a lot lately (good cries now), and I'm totally overwhelmed by the miracles of this program. You have all been there for me in my times of agonizing pain, and I want to share my times of profound humility, gratitude, and joy too. I realize that I'm living proof that this program works for people and families, and I want to pass it on the best that I can. Thank you for helping me make it so that I can experience the miracles and carry the message of recovery, hope, and unconditional love. §



## Poems

by Robert (Pony Tail) S.

### RETURN TO MT. SI / 13 APRIL 2008

We are going up again  
Reading with our feet the  
Lines of trail, of rock and dirt  
And mud and root, elevation  
Ascension, exertion of heart  
Lungs, legs, back and mind  
We want to be closer to  
The sky, further from  
The city, freer from  
The weight of our lives,  
Left only with the weight  
Of our packs, and perhaps  
Forgetting Self  
We can find  
God is

### MOUNT SIGH / 19 APRIL 2008

Black rich mud, white new snow  
A cedar rope rises to sun from summit  
Snoqualm tries to bring down fire  
To melt Winter which refuses to leave  
Sky darkens and lightens and darkens  
Hail and more snow arrive  
As our hikers ascend  
And Springtime falls backwards  
Hopefully momentarily  
And we are amused and amazed  
At this climatologically unique  
Day

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# Meditation on Mountains

by Reid W.

As each step presses boot firmly to earth, met with the raw power of my own body to propel me onwards, I feel strong and alive. Sunlight filters through the trees leaving shadows woven by my own. The gentle air strikes my skin and smells like the dirt and trees, water and distant fires; a fragrance not equaled. The rocks and roots and mud pass below me easily. Life is before me and within me, powerful. The breeze in the trees above brings awareness of the smallness of me amidst this grandeur. The beginning is always so rich, so joyful. It is like this with many things in life.

Yet this is not why I am truly compelled to ascend; or at least it is not the most valuable part of this experience. What gets me out of my warm bed before sunrise on those valuable weekend mornings; what pulls me from the busyness and chores and 'shoulds' of life is the lessons I learn. And those lessons I find do not so much happen in the glorious minutes that pass as the car and highway and people diminish and I enter this other reality.

Shirt steamed and drenched with the smell of sweat and exertion, chilled from the breezes of higher elevation, one boot in front of the other, stumbling over root and rock - this is when the lesson begins. The strength of my muscles has been replaced with uncertainty and pain as with each step it is an act of will to press on, one in front of the other, ever higher. My mind races to find the reprieve; calculating the distance traveled and the distance to go. Only 1200 feet left to climb. But will I make it? My feet hurt, the weight on my back presses into my shoulders and hips uncomfortably. It is too far for sure, I need to stop. I begin considering the options. It is all thought now, endless projections of the goal, and the immediate disheartening realization that the goal is so far away.

It is in these moments that I truly learn what it is to be in the moment. There is no way to climb a mountain but to take each step along the way; no way to the top but to be in the discomfort as long as required. But the discomfort I have found is so magnified by my mind's focus on the

goal; the obsession with escaping the discomfort only makes the discomfort more profound. So, finding that kernel of awareness deep inside of me, I pay attention to each breath as it moves through me, filling my lungs and exhaling powerfully. I focus on the step I am taking; around this root, over this rock. I watch as my mind begins its calculations and projections, and gently I bring the focus back to this step. I pay attention to the discomfort; I recognize it and accept it as a part of the journey, and it so doing it diminishes to the point that it no longer needs attention. Another step, another six inches higher - but those six inches are all that matter.

Eventually, I stand on top; bundled against the cold of the high air and the cool wetness of my clothes. It does



not matter how I got here and it does not matter how I will return. The rugged mountains rise in endless lines in one direction; in the other the rivers and forests and farms yield gradually to the housing developments and suburbs and the dark towers of the city. Beyond this, the waters of the Sound; from here all the world is reached. As in all things in life, though, the top is itself only a moment, and soon I begin, one step at a time, to descend and re-

turn to the cars and cell phones and email, knowing that I will be here again, and it will be different because it always is.

I have spent much of my life avoiding discomfort, running from pain, from others, from myself. Thinking about the endpoint, the goal. Obsessed over reaching the point where everything will be great, and trying to find that thing that will get me there - that person, that job, that love, that chemical, that award, that praise, that escape. My time spent going up mountains teaches me invaluable lessons. The discomfort is greatest when I seek to get out of it. Eventually I will be 'there', but only after being 'here' ... and even then 'there' is itself only a moment and not an endpoint. Where I am right now is all that matters, and most importantly, where I am right now is beautiful. §

## OSAT: Giving Back is the Key

by Jay M.

What makes OSAT what it is? How is it possible to teach large groups to mountaineer and get them to the summit of some of the loftiest peaks in the Northwest? The answer is the people. OSAT is what it is because of the members that volunteer their time to give back what has been given to them. That is the key to the years of success that this outdoor club has enjoyed.

I showed up on OSAT's doorstep with three days of recovery under my belt on the summit of Tiger Mountain. It was there that I found the answer for what to do now that I was sober. I had missed the OSAT climbing course by a few months and the students were climbing Mt. Rainier that weekend. I was hooked; I wanted to climb, so I waited for the class to start the next year.

OSAT gave me a gift that I can't fully explain, and that's because it changes continually. Sure, at first it gave me a goal to reach the summit of Mt. Rainier, and I achieved that on the weekend of my first year birthday in recovery. My adventures have been wild and wonderful — and that is the gift of OSAT.

When you stand on the summit of Mt. Rainier for the first time with your OSAT buddies, it is for you. You set a goal; you worked hard, and committed yourself to the course. Don't be surprised by the tears and emotions that overcome you standing on the summit for the first time. The magnitude of your accomplishment will grow as time goes on. You will never look at the mountain with child's eyes again. You will look at Mt. Rainier and know that you have joined an elite group of people who did what it takes to climb where others can only dream.

The first year in OSAT is for you. You are receiving the gift of the OSAT spirit and it will change your life forever. If you have reservations ask anyone who is a member and they will tell you their story. It's simple; this group will

change you when you're not looking. Climbing, hiking, skiing, sailing, just having fun in the outdoors with other OSATers, and one day you look in the mirror and you will see it. You will have grown in ways you never expected and you had a great time doing it. OSAT magic!

Now, if the first year is for you, who are the rest of the years for? Glad you asked! The only way I have found to keep the OSAT magic is to give it away to others who are coming into our club. Service is my key to personal growth and inner peace. The first year is fun, but the real fun begins when you start helping others achieve a dream. As an OSAT volunteer you will change lives in ways that you will never fully realize. The changes are small for the people who come in and climb and leave. The changes are immense for those who stay, play, and serve. OSAT has changed me immensely and I'm quite sure the volunteers that made my first year possible had no idea of the change they made in my life. That's how it works around here.

Find a job that you love and you will never work a day in your life. I believe that this holds true in service as well. I am very grateful for Jimmy Hinkhouse's idea to help other people in recovery with mountaineering. His idea has helped so many even after his untimely passing. OSAT is changing people's lives, one step at a time. §



Jay's ice-axe training field trip: world record for group glissade?

## My Wonderful Wonderland Experience

by Vivian J.

For several years my husband two sons and I had been car camping mostly at Mt Rainier. During that time we did a few short day hikes. We found out there was backcountry camping at Rainier and gave it a try. The four of us took off for an overnight at Shadow Lake from Sunrise and later to Glacier Basin out of White River campground. Our boys and I loved it. Hubby, on the other-hand just didn't get it. He went along for the boy's sakes, but it just wasn't his cup of tea.

After these short adventures the boys and I decided to go on a bigger one. In 1993 Albert (15), Dan (13) and I chose an extended Labor Day weekend trip from Sunrise to Ipsut following the Wonderland Trail. It was the experience of a lifetime. We laughed, we cried, we fought, we made up, but we worked together as a team. Each morning and night we had our specific duties, which worked out well. After supper the boys, being boys, went out looking for lions tigers and bears oh no! Of course, Mom's duty was KP; besides I didn't want to come face to face with a bear. Being inexperienced at this, we carried far more than we needed. One of the laughs we had was near the top of Skyscraper Mountain. I wanted to get a picture and made the mistake of squatting down to take it. With a full pack on, I couldn't stand back up and the boys just stood there laughing at me all the while I was screaming for them to help me up.

A couple of more highlights for me occurred near Garda Falls and the moraine of Winthrop Glacier. Looking up at the mountain, it was such a majestic sight, I'll never forget it. Also, as we were coming down from Mystic Lake along the Carbon Glacier, we could hear avalanches crashing and thundering down the mountain — how exciting that was! Speaking of thunder, on our last night out we were at Dicks Creek camp. Sometime in the night a thunder and lightning storm came roaring up the Carbon Glacier, which I might add was right next to the camp. That was a frightening experience for me. We could feel the electricity in the air. Al slept through it all as I watched his shadow being cast across the tent. I wouldn't even raise my head to get a good look. Dan was awake, lying there laughing at me. A group of boy scouts had come in for the night and they were hollering and sniveling that everything was getting all wet. Ahh! The joys of camping.

The next morning there was a fine drizzle — our first rain. We made our way toward Ipsut campground. Vince, my hubby, met us about a mile from Ipsut. He asked if he could help me with my pack. Me being the egotistical and stubborn woman I am, I said, "NO! I've



carried it this far and I'm going to carry it on to the car!" When we did get to the car, I threw that pack on the ground and let out a whoop and a holler that could probably be heard half way across the county and was jumping up and down hugging him saying, I did it I did it. My poor boys pretended they didn't know me. After this adventure I was hooked on the Wonderland and vowed to complete it some day. It has taken me many years, as you can see, and I have had to do it in short sections but on August 3, 2008 I completed the Wonderland Trail.

The last section extended from Lake Mowich to Ipsut Campground (I was camped at Mowich). When I got back up to the top of Ipsut pass, the shout I made must have been heard for a country mile. In fact about five minutes down the trail I met a couple who were grinning at me, and I told them of my accomplishment. They told me joy exuded from every part of me. My heart still goes pitter-patter when I think of it.

I enjoy car camping but backcountry camping is a whole new ball game I love. Yes, it's hard work lugging that 40-50 pound pack over hill and dale. I feel alive sweating like a horse huffing and puffing, thinking I'm going to die and almost wishing I would hurry up and do so.....then the top..... the view of hills mountains and valleys not to mention the beautiful wild flowers. I have to pinch myself to make sure I am alive and not in heaven. When I'm out in the wilderness I feel so much closer to Mother Nature and Father God.

I once saw a wall plaque: "When you're in the mountains, you're closer to heaven." That kind of sums it up for me. §

# Renewal

by Rik A.

Easter Sunday morning. I awake to the soft jingle of my phone alarm. The sound of water trickling into the downspout confirms my expectation. Another April shower. Maybe I'm too stiff from ice ax arrest training yesterday? No, it wasn't that much of a workout. The slope was near the parking lot, the instructor manpower plentiful, the students both eager to learn and quick to acquire the skills. No, I haven't an excuse to take a pass on my Sunday morning ritual.

I peek out the blinds. The shroud of Western Washington drizzle hangs from a low ceiling like Lt. Colombo's well-worn overcoat: familiar, even comforting, competent at its task of bringing life to the earth, but penetrating thoroughly with an early-Spring chill. Some folks suffer seasonal-affectedness disorder in the fall and early winter; I think it hits me on the grey Spring mornings, in spite of the ever-nearing promise of renewal. With barely a conscious thought, I've dressed, packed a snack, thrown my gear into the Prius, and before becoming fully aware that the day has begun, I've maneuvered through the potholes in the road to the Tiger trailhead parking lot.

I near several strangers standing at the trailhead, when I'm awakened from my hypnotic trance by someone in a group of three young people inquiring "Are any of you going to the meeting up there?" I volunteer that I am. The rest of the strangers leave, and I look at the three young people, standing in the drizzle wearing nothing but cotton sweat clothes and tennis shoes. No packs, no water bottles, nothing. I'm incredulous. "You're going up dressed like that? You don't have any warm clothes or food?"

They return my incredulous look with "Why not?" expressions on their faces, and ask directions to the meeting site. "How far is it?" When I say "About 3 miles, and a couple thousand vertical feet", they laugh off the concern I imply by my questions, and start walking up the trail. Seeing their commitment, I tell them there will probably be enough well-equipped folks up there to help them out. Within a few minutes, walking a bit faster than my normal pace to keep up with them, I've described all they need to know to find the top. Between their youth and the weight of my pack, the distance between us soon grows.

The drizzle continues, and so do I. The ferns have not

yet sprouted their fiddleheads, and even the Trillium are reluctant to show their faces, but spring is on the hillside. Buds are appearing on the deciduous trees, birds are calling to each other as they seek refuge from the weather, and a distant woodpecker rat-a-tats out his breakfast. I recognize the swales and turns of the trail, and even some individual rocks, roots, trees, and snags along side it: old friends who have accompanied me up Tiger; how many times? The meeting starts at 10. Even now, an hour before I get there, I know I'm going to be 2 or 3 minutes late. Bless the comforting confidence of familiar routines.

I arrive at the meeting site as expected; the steps are being read. After paying my respects to the memorials, I sit down next to the young people. I hardly recognize them. Dave has rigged a tarp over them, and they are all wearing borrowed jackets. At introductions it is revealed that fully a quarter of the 20 or 25 around the circle are there for the first time. Throughout the meeting I notice one or another of the three young people next to me shivering. I pull out extra gloves and pass them to her. Then a hat to the one next to her. Later some rain pants. They still shiver. I implore them to squeeze together closer and drink some Gatorade. Joan offers a space blanket to wrap their legs. They partake in OSAT's weekly Sunday morning smorgasbord. Then they share.

It is no surprise, as I've heard it over and over again: they are glad to be there. The fact that they are wearing gear borrowed from a dozen strangers shames them into staying, I suppose. But for all the physical discomfort of a wet hike, a bit farther and longer and steeper and colder than expected, followed by an hour sitting on a wet log listening through the wind to the varied stories, I believe they are sincere in their appreciation.

"Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends – this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives."

OSAT begins another renewal, for itself and for others. §



*Climbing the Brothers—Dave McClenahan Memorial Ascent, photo of the issue, by Adam W.*



*Ben & Todd , photo by Anna O.*



*Anna, having a miserable time, again!*



*Approaching Baker's crater at dawn, photo by Doug C*



*Baker's out there somewhere, photo by Anna O.*

*GCC Tent City, Crevasse rescue, photo by Alexei*





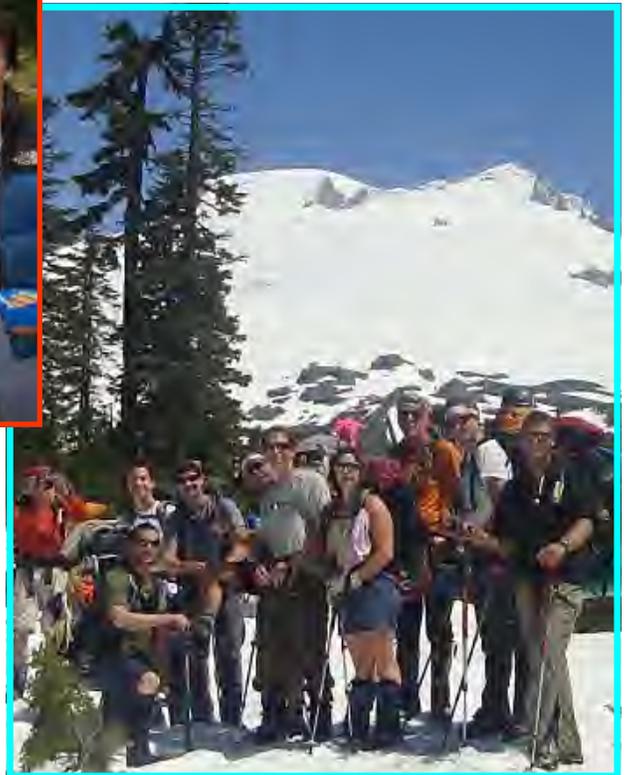
*Enchantments, photo by Anna O.*



*Crevasse Rescue, photo by Alexei*



*The Brothers: Brent, Pete, Adam, Alexei, Lisa, Nancy, Dave, & Bill  
(photo by Pete, except he's in it)*



*Mount Baker team, photo by Louisa P.*

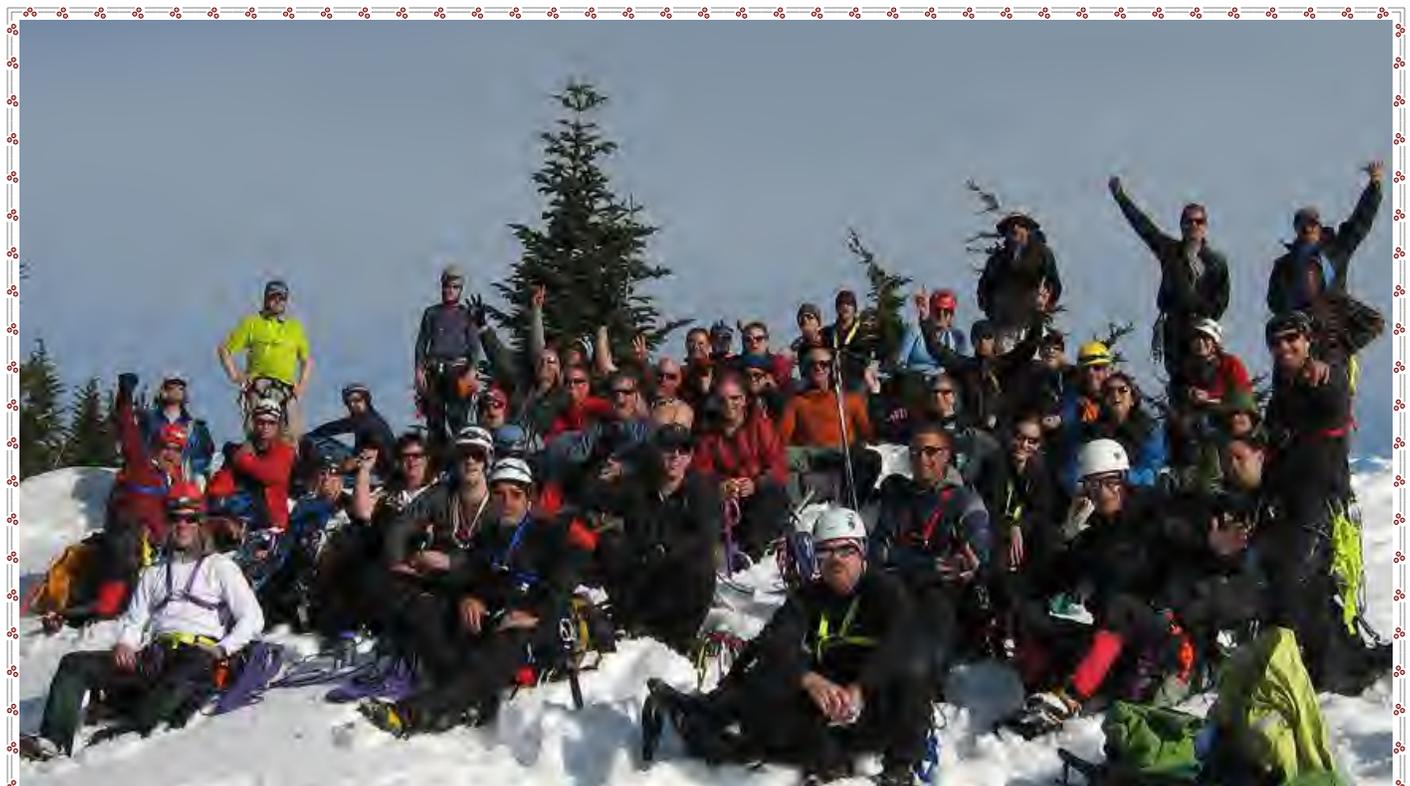
*The relationship of height to spirituality is not merely metaphorical, it is a physical reality. The most spiritual people of this planet live in the highest places. So do the most spiritual flowers . . . I call the high and light aspects of my being spirit and the dark and heavy aspect soul. Soul is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

-- 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet

# The Yodel

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*Just a couple of OSATers enjoying the solitude of Cowboy Mountain, Roped Travel '09 Photo by Jay M.*