

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

The Yodel

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GCC 2010: The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly

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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.

By Nancy S.

Although I'm a long-standing member of OSAT, one of the miracles of my recovery is that I am now a graduate of the OSAT 2010 Glacier Climbing Course (GCC). My reflections of this experience fall into the categories of good, bad & ugly.

The Good

There is an abundance of adventure, learning and fun in the GCC. One of my precious experiences is that my middle son, Ryan, agreed to enroll with me and we completed the GCC together.

The people and the fellowship were absolutely outstanding. I was especially moved by the endless service work by passionate GCC volunteers, instructors and Sherpas. They freely gave of their time, energy, and expertise. They practiced sustained love and tolerance with extremely diverse students. Ultimately, the rope leaders then put their own lives on the line as they led groups of two-to-three students up Mt. Baker and Mt. Rainier.

This truth really hit home for me when I learned of the death of a highly experienced climber who was a rope leader for three less experienced climbing friends. On the Emmons Glacier (the route I was on for the GCC Mt Rainer climb, exactly two weeks after our team was there), one of the friends tripped and fell, pulling all the climbers into a crevasse. Lee Adams, the rope leader, died in the fall. The others survived. Wow. How do you thank someone who takes on such risk while sharing his or her experience, strength, and hope?

I will leave it to the other students to expand on all the good of the GCC 2010. There is plenty of it out there. Just ask one of the students or look online at the endless pictures and videos of the smiling happy, joyous and free OSATers in



Nancy during Roped Travel/Snow Camp

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totally gorgeous settings. However, I feel a need to finish my sharing with some of my bad and ugly experiences, just to keep it honest and in hopes that it may somehow help someone.

The Bad

I am an alcoholic. Thus, I have this pride and ego thing going that can cause big obstacles. I'm hard on myself for not knowing what I'm doing; yet I hate to ask for help. I crave to be fully engaged in OSAT; yet I have fears that you won't like me if I'm truthful that I cannot find a similar passion for your love of doing frightening things in freezing places. Early in the course, one of my fellow students asked me about my fears as we carpooled towards a conditioning climb. I admitted that I would hate being a bother to anyone, I would wish to become invisible if I somehow drew attention to myself, and that I was afraid that I might experience some issue (like getting a blister) that would expose me in a vulnerable state rather than a solid person who is there to help everyone else.

In hindsight, it was like handing a list to my Higher Power of the things that we were now going to work on. The first conditioning hike that required Gaiters created one of my various alcoholic bad experiences. My used gaiters didn't come with instructions, so I did my alcoholic best. Surely the smooth side of the Gaiter must cover the bootlaces to keep the snow out. So, I fastened the Velcro over the back of my pant legs and headed up Mt Si. When the snow got to be knee deep and really slick, our GCC leaders had us put traction devices on to finish the climb. Not long after that, I did a sudden face plant in the trail. My feet were completely looked together at the heels, I had embedded in the snow with my weighted pack on and I found myself unable to turn over or get up.

When the confused student behind me asked me what I was doing, I had to admit that I didn't know but that I did need some help. He found that the metal clip of my left gaiter had hooked to my right YakTrak. He was finally able to get it unhooked and set me free.

As we resumed climbing, I decided that the proper climbing technique in this gear must be to hike with your feet safely apart from each other. On the way down Mt Si, JR, an experienced student, was behind me and asked me why I was walking funny. I bad-mouthed the stupid design of the equipment and explained that I solved it by now hiking correctly. With total love and compassion, he then said to me, "Nancy, do you realize that you have your gaiters on backwards?"



Son Ryan (l) and Nancy on Baker (with taped ax)

Next came Camp Muir. I had never been to that altitude or in blizzard conditions before, and I got to work on many more of my fears/character defects. In the whiteout, my fear had me screaming out (I desire to stay calm & quiet) to stay close to Rena, who was staying close to Peter (with a GPS). My modesty defect took a hit when I asked for companionship to brave the arctic winds outside the shelter to go urinate. Karen volunteered to go with me and practiced love and tolerance with a failed attempt while I wailed, "I can't go!"

Coming down from Camp Muir, my eyes began hurting from all the glare and I also started to get a headache and feel nauseous. Oh yes, I also became very irritable and started thinking about quitting the course. I tried to keep my game face on and was hugely relieved when we reached the parking lot. My head was pounding, I still could not pee, I felt completely miserable, but at least I was headed

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home. As Peter, Rena, Derek and I drove towards the Mt Rainier entrance, I started turning green and Derek yelled for Peter to stop the truck. I was hustled out to puke while the other carpools stopped behind us to see if there was a problem. While hurling, I whined that I didn't need an audience. So much for thinking my biggest issue might be along the lines of getting a blister.

I got to practice more humility on the glacier travel field trip. It was our first snow camping event, and

I was really out of my element. Yet instead of asking questions like why would you need water purification tablets, a filter, and also a stove to make water from snow, my novice tent-mate (Carol) and I concluded that we would be very efficient and use my brand new JetBoil stove to just boil the water as needed. When it was time to fill our water bottles

that night, I realized that we were screwed. Looking at the large shovel of icy snow (the cleaner stuff was quite far from our campsite), the tiny JetBoil capacity, and six empty water bottles, I again knew that I would have to ask for help. Thank goodness that Brian and Russell were camped next to us and wanted some of Carol's homemade cookies in a trade. They filled our water bottles with their melt & filter system so that we wouldn't be climbing thirsty the next morning.

Although there are many more similar stories, I will just share one more bad experience of being an alcoholic in the GCC. This one still un-nerves me. After all the education about avalanches, crevasses, and other hazards of glacier climbing, we practiced our new skills on field trips, and were finally ready to climb. I'm very happy to report that Brian got our team safely to the summit of Mt Baker and

back down again during some very tough conditions. Soon afterwards, I was in an OSAT meeting when one of the experienced GCC students was sharing his frustrations of having to train in the course with his ice ax points taped up. My first thought was about the diversity of the student population and how, on the opposite side of the spectrum, I had found that safety measure of duct taping my ice ax to be of comfort.

Then it stuck me. I had climbed to a summit. I was no longer in training. On Mt Baker, I had

climbed over many crevasses and saw multiple small avalanches. I didn't recall the point that we were told to take the duct tape off our ice axes. After the meeting, I ran to my computer to look at the pictures from the Baker climbs. Sure enough, everyone else had his or her ice ax un-taped

and ready to use, and my ax was taped up. I feel very stupid admitting this, but it happened. I guess it shows that my Higher Power is looking out for me when I'm unable to do it for myself.

And the Ugly

Did you know there's some brutal weather in some extremely high places? I do. The GCC brought that reality fully into my life. After Mt Baker, our climb leader (Brian) and my rope leader (Doug) both expressed that we had climbed in very difficult conditions. They said that our climb was as taxing as any Mt Rainier climb they had done. Those words helped me hang in there and commit to Rainier, even though I had technically graduated the GCC. Surely, after bad weather on our conditioners, Muir trips and Mt Baker, the Mt

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Carol and Nancy in freezing gales on Rainier's DC route

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Rainier climb would be my payback with good weather.

Have you ever heard the slogan, “If you want to make your Higher Power laugh, tell him your plans?” It fits here. On my Rainier climb, our team spent our 30 hours at base camp inside of our tents seeking protection from the freezing wind gusts throwing ice pellets. Inside the tent, I was continually slapped in the head by the tent wall and going outside was only for rapid bathroom breaks when I could not wait any longer.

Hoping that the winds would quit, Andrew, Russell and Doug were great rope leaders and tried to get us to the summit of Mt. Rainier.

However, Mother Nature absolutely wouldn’t allow it. I found myself

crawling on the icy slope more than climbing. I was constantly knocked off my feet in the wind, and when I lifted my ice ax to spear it into the solid mountainside, I felt like a human kite that could easily be blown away. My

insulated water bladder hose froze, and then it broke off and blew away when I tried to thaw it with a chemical hand warmer.

When daybreak finally came, I could not turn off my headlamp with my cold hands covered in two pairs of gloves and a pair of over mitts. I removed an over mitt so I could feel my headlamp switch, only to have my over mitt ripped away and shot across the mountain by the wind. It was all so very discouraging, frightening and exhausting. At 13,200 Ft, our leaders made the decision to turn back.



Nancy, bottom R, at a mellower elevation among “natural recovery” OSATers: (clockwise) Tomania, Rick, Dave, Bill, John, & Tino

Little did I know that I would again get to practice accepting help when I would rather be the one helping others. On the descent, I got nauseous and eventually started puking. Thus, Russell and my son helped me to quickly descend from basecamp. I tried to be gracious to the Sherpas waiting to feed us, but my mouth felt foul with bile, I was exhausted and grumpy, and I simply wanted to disappear again.

This certainly was not the way I had envisioned the GCC for myself. The three other climbing teams had good weather and were able to summit.

However, they do not have the same thrilling war stories that we have.

Looking back, the GCC gave me exactly what I needed instead of what I wanted. I wanted to be a successful, stellar student and be impressive and helpful to my son and fellow

OSATers. What I needed was to learn that I could not control my environment and would need to risk showing my character defects and facing my

fears. I would gain more humility, see that people would still like me if I asked for help, and learn not to take life so seriously. I am now freer to let people closer to me and I feel more comfortable in the middle of OSAT. I also believe that I can be of service as I honestly share the good, the bad, and the ugly of my experiences in the GCC with others. §

Editor’s note: I also wore my gaiters backwards on my first hike and have yet to untape my ax, though I can see now it would sort of make sense...

Longtime OSATER David Brown Remembered

By Rik A.

On the morning of August 15, 2010, David Brown died while hiking up the Cable Line toward the Sunday morning OSAT-AA meeting. He was 68 years old. He is survived by his wife Teresa Flynn, two sisters, three daughters, and three grandchildren.

Dave and Teresa both contributed immeasurably to the development of the club and OSAT-AA. Throughout the nearly 20 years of OSAT's existence, they have demonstrated a unique commitment to serve OSAT in a multiplicity of roles. Dave was on the original Board of Servants (before they were dubbed "Trusted"), was the first Treasurer, served a second term on the BOTS more recently, and participated on the committee to upgrade the website. Dave and Teresa were stalwart members of the OSAT-North AA meeting at Lake 22 and the subsequent Carkeek Park meeting. In spite of the demise of these two meetings closer to their Mukilteo home, Dave and Teresa's dedication has never wavered, as demonstrated by the fact that Dave died on his way up Tiger Mountain!

As a young MIT physics graduate in 1964, Dave worked at MIT's Instrumentation Labs on the development of guidance computers for the Apollo space program that sent men to the moon and back. He eventually ended up at Boeing, where his skills were so unique they brought him back from retirement for projects on the flight guidance system for the new 787.

Dave will be remembered for his quiet and humble manner, and his genuine interest in the welfare of others. Dave and Teresa traveled the world extensively, visiting over 40 countries. He seemed to be on a mission to seek out every amaz-



David B., left, Julie, Kim, Dave N., Ciel & Merry on the Brothers' summit, 1997

ing place and person in the world, but never stopped to notice that he was one of them. His excitement about his boundless interests and experiences turned simple hikes with him into an adventure as he recounted a recent trip, and spoke with anticipation about their next trip. In so doing he seemed to everyone to share in his sense of wonder about how the world around him and how it all fit together, and brought home photographs and stories which he often shared at OSAT club meetings.

Following the celebration of life for Dave in Everett, over thirty members of the OSAT gathered for lunch to reminisce about Dave and share about his contribution to their

lives. Among the group, over half were involved in OSAT in the early- to mid-1990s. We pray that Teresa and family face their loss with courage and strength, and carry with them the knowledge that Dave's contributions to the organization and individuals of One Step at a Time will always be remembered. §



OSATers gather to honor their friend, Dave B.

OSATer Publishes: Two Gold Coins and a Prayer

by David N., OSAT Librarian

Normally adding a new book to the OSAT Library would not warrant an article in the Yodel. This time is different.

I would like to announce that one of our very own, long time members has published a book! Jim H. Keeffe III, along with his father Jim H. Keeffe Jr., has published a gripping saga of the elder Keeffe's exploits during his service in World War II. The book is titled "Two Gold Coins and a Prayer." While some of you might think, "Well, it's a story about W.W. II. I don't think I'm interested in that. Is there mountain climbing involved?"

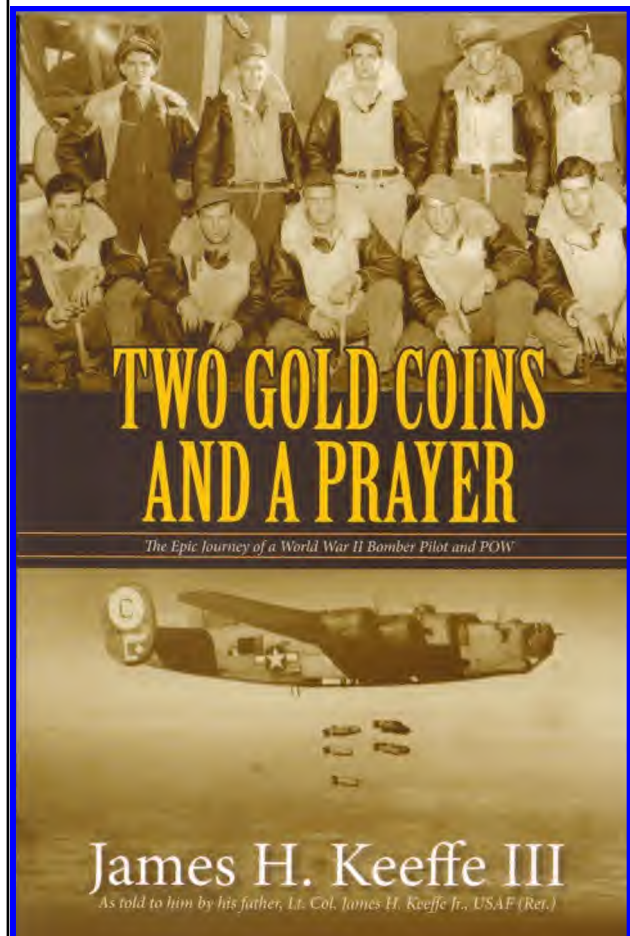
I don't think that there is any mountain climbing involved, but I believe that it is a story that shows how one man, with the help of others, was able to overcome his desperate circumstances with a combination of personal principles, that we as alcoholics strive to bring into our own lives and work at using as best we can in all of our affairs.

Principles such as faith, honesty, selflessness, humility, and a belief that if one frames their situation in the proper perspective, such as keeping a positive attitude when things don't turn out the way we would like them to turn out, that one can not only survive but come through it, a better person on the other side.

The situation may be a little different than our own story of what we were like, what happened and what we are like now, but Mr. Keeffe had to make a decision and rise above self doubt and forge ahead. Perhaps not always making the perfect choices, being betrayed, but moving ahead and trying harder the next time. He didn't stop believing in himself and in others despite good reasons to do so.

The fact that he is here, alive today, and willing and able to share his story with us is good enough reason for me to find what gems of wisdom might be mined from his experience, strength and hope. The book will be available for check out as soon as I am through with it. Librarians have prerogative,

don't you know. Or, you can purchase your own copy from: <http://www.appellpublishing.com>



From the back cover:

...On the 8th of March, 1944, Keeffe's plane is shot down over Holland, catapulting him into a world squeezed colorless by the ever-tightening fist of Nazi occupation. Moving from Safe House to Safe House in the Dutch underground, Lt. Keeffe is able to evade the enemy for five months. Then one day he is betrayed and sent to Stalag Luft III, a German POW camp near Sagan, Germany. There he spends months in captivity...

Notes on Mt. Adams (August 20 - 22, 2010)

by Robert S. (Ponytail Bob)

"..Who makes the various states of being? The whole world is a door of liberation; the whole thing is the experience of the true human being with no position."

-Ying-an

Here is Mt. Adams, a dormant volcano; as if asleep; Inactive. Here are overlapping cones from different eruptive periods. Here we find things that are fundamental, essential, basic: the elements.

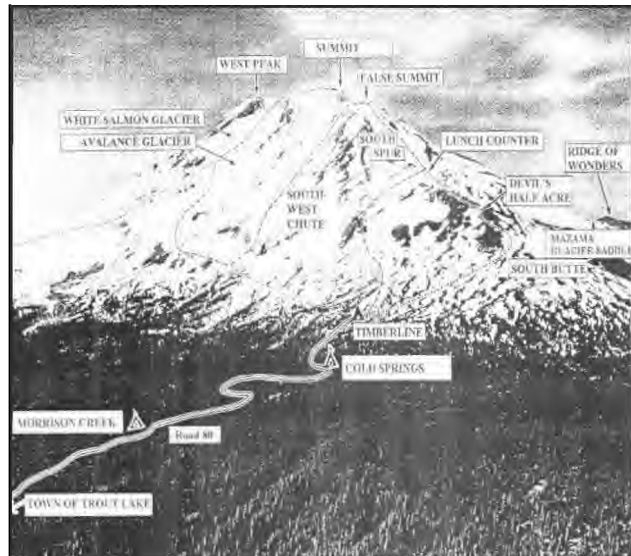
EARTH: These ancient volcanic rocks, blown from cones and quite dry; here is ancient dust upon us. Fine particles resulting from disintegration: "The substance from the grave." And; "From long ago molten lava ash and gases were ejected." A mountain formed. Some grit on our teeth. The mountain is neither dead nor venting now.

AIR: Enveloping us, the atmosphere gives that vital 21% of oxygen. Perhaps we do take greater notice of our breathing, as we climb with the weight of packs on our backs. Breathe in, breathe out. Here now, here now. "Relax, observe, allow, release." The breath of air is an anchor (holding me to the mountain).

FIRE: Heat and light; intensity of feeling, liveliness of imagination. We have sun, volcano history, cooking stoves, core body temperatures. We smell no hydrogen sulphide, no rotten egg brimstone odor. There are no mules hauling sulfur down the mountain.

WATER: Here are altitudes of glaciers and snow, where adequate hydration is essential for life. We camped in the Morrison Creek drainage where we had a supply of moving water to be purified. We are bodies of water carrying reservoirs of water, walking on frozen water. From our bodies flow sweat, saliva and urine.

21 AUGUST 2010: We are out of our tents at 4:00 a.m. There is a vast sky filled with stars that is awesomely breathtaking. Oh! Here we are, tiny human ants, out in the universe riding planet Earth. We leave camp at 5:20 a.m. We will follow The



South Climb (Trail #183), called "non-technical". Up we go, into the wild dark yonder. Oh yeah, fear and doubt. Can I do this? Maybe it is too risky for me.

"When we enter our bodies, we enter the earth; we are composed of this infinity of Earth and stars. We desire faith for we are climbing in search of a higher power, to be closer to it: as a shared experience."

There is an 'us' and there is a 'me' doing this climbing. I am certain that the 'me' cannot do this alone, and yet I'm also enclosed in the solitary aspect of the endeavor. We walk still higher. One step. One step. Breathe. Continue. Go.

Here is the "Lunch Counter" at approximately 9,000 feet. Where is the lunch? Oh, I see. It's a large flat area where people camp prior to going for the top. There is no free lunch here, we have to work to achieve the summit.

We take a break at the 'Counter' and look around. Oh boy. Due north is a steep snowfield. Hmm. Well, we can see people walking up it. Alright, let's do that also. Time to truly zero in on The Step. Nobody is running up the mountain from here.

There is no past nor future; only Now, now. THE ASCENDING. There is hydration, bits of food.

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At the summit, from left: Bob, Aaron, Dave, and James

"The mind doesn't have to be an adversary, it can be the source of awakening."

EXERTION
ELEVATION
EXHILARATION
ELATION
EXHALATION

Pictures taken, time to go. There is still THE DESCENT! (Several glissades facilitated our re-

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Climbing mantra. God, it seems like too much, too slow, slowed down. Proceed an inch and forget about a mile. Maybe it is true that climbing a mountain is 80% mental. Focus on footing. Pay attention. There is something of a path in the snowfield.

We can see Mt. Saint Helens, Mt. Rainier, Mt Hood; the forest all around down below. With X amount of steps we 9 begin to arrive at the false summit: Pikers Peak, at 11,700 feet. Windy. Looking downward at the steep snowfield. O.K. Don't think about descending , yet.

What is left looks on 600 more feet along an intervening divide (a saddle?) to the true summit, at 12,276 feet. All 9 climbers reach Pikers Peak. So, for whatever is going on with everyone, there are 4 of us who end up climbing the last part. For me, summit fever. There is time. It's right in front of us. O.K. Go.

The last bit is like slower motion. The laboring mind clutches the mantra of "one step, one step." We travel through an eternity of 600 feet. And then, we are at the true summit! Visibility is good. Not much wind. We walk up the little bump above the wood remains of a fire lookout built in the 1920s.

turn to lower elevations and base camp.) Visited by a glorious state of Grace and the help of my fellow climbers, I have ascended and descended Mt. Adams. Thanks to all.

LIST OF PARTICIPATING CLIMBERS:


Janet Mau
Aaron Mau
Dave Forest
James McGavock
Dan Lineback
(Mascot) §

Kathy Creighton
Ben Thompson
Rupashri Brown
Bob Schlosser
Kumar The Tiger



OSAT Quick Reference			OSAT Traditions
Board Of Trusted Servants (BOTS)			<div>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.</div> <div>2) Alcohol and illegal drugs are not allowed on any OSAT activity.</div> <div>3) Party members are not to separate from the group without prior permission of the activity leader.</div> <div>4) An OSAT leader should have completed a MOFA course or ensure that at least one participant in the activity has done so.</div> <div>5) When in a wilderness area, each party member will carry the 10 essentials.</div> <div>6) Outdoor activities start with the Serenity Prayer while holding hands in a circle.</div> <div>7) Each OSAT glacier climb will have at least two rope teams that include a person with crevasse rescue training.</div> <div>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.</div> <div>9) Party size for OSAT activities will adhere to the rules of the appropriate jurisdiction.</div>
Dave N.		clim4phun@yahoo.com	
Pete L.		pglitwin@hotmail.com	
Doug L.		douglombard@comcast.	
Chuck A.		upscomic@comcast.net	
Jay M.		jay.mullen@hotmail.com	
Committee Chairs			
Activities:	Nancy T.	nthorpee@juno.com	
Finance:	Rik A.	hollyrik@msn.com	
Info Line:		oinfo@osat.org	
Library:	Dave N.	clim4phun@yahoo.com	
Membership:	Sharon L.	omembership@osat.org	
Safety:	Doug H.	doug.sue@comcast.net	
Service:	Carmen D.	carmenduvall@live.com	
Yodel:	Louisa P.	2louisa@gmail.com	
Webmaster:	Pete L.	pglitwin@hotmail.com	
12 Step Meetings			
Sunday Tiger Mountain		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.			

The OSAT Echo is our email list. There have been some problems maintaining the list lately. We will try to assure the list is current with respect to wishes expressed on your web site membership profile, but this is not automated at this time, so please bear with us. To post a message: send email to echo@osat.talklist.com. Please keep in mind that this goes to a large list. Try to keep messages short and appropriate to OSAT members. Please do



NOT "Reply All" to messages from the Echo, reply instead to the person posting the message.

To unsubscribe from the list: send a blank email to echo-off@osat.talklist.com.

If you are new and have not been getting OSAT emails, please send an email to any of the following omembership@osat.org, owebsherpa@osat.org, or otreasurer@osat.org to be added.

Thanks! KCM&DS!

OSAT HISTORY: Dave N, Jim Hinkhouse, Shirley R, Rod B, and Rik A atop Little Tahoma, July 10, 1994

Triple Slam Becomes Single Spank: Courtney Peak

by Louisa P.

Whenever crappy weather moves in to dash our plans, as it did our hopes of climbing Glacier Peak this past Memorial Day weekend, Gerard and I revert to plan B: Head East! In this instance, Gerard proposed a trip called "Triple Slam" in *Washington's 100 Highest*, which involved tagging three summits in the East Cascades – Star (34th), Courtney (80th), and Oval (29th). Looked easy enough on the map! Risk of avalanches was high that weekend, and the ascent of Star looked potentially dicey in that regard, but we decided to just head over and see what we found.

We headed Southwest from Winthrop to find the trailhead utterly deserted. On a Memorial Day weekend, that struck me as, well, just weird. Maybe even a bit spooky. By this time in my hiking experience, I start bumming about the hoards of trailhead cars before I even *see* any, just by reflex. So – nothing? It was almost like having a sneeze disappear when you're all ready. We took pictures of each other changing pants by the truck because we're immature like that, then set off for a private adventure.

Not many people had tramped this trail lately. The first signs were little pine cones and debris scattered all over it; the second what I would call a raging, flooded creek to cross without the benefit of a bridge – and then another, and another for a total of six. Now, Gerard has near-perfect balance. He cavorts across a narrow, wet log indifferent to the roaring white water beneath like a kid whistling on a sidewalk curb – no big! I, on the other hand, have abysmal balance. I remember when I was a teen teasing my dad mercilessly for his freak-outs and gigantic flinches on the trail at stretches of high exposure; it was as if he were inventing break-dancing. Why not just walk? I'd ask. Eventually I grew up to look just like him, and now it turns out I inherited his deteriorating balance along with alco-

holism. Oh, well!

Well, you work with what you have, right? So I edged across these with great drama and trepidation, seizing at any twig that would help orient me, tapping with my poles like a blind woman. For the largest, I made him come back across and get my pack, watched him skip across merrily as I gathered my resolve, then crawled across the largest log. Gerard stood patiently on the far shore, amused as if I were filming a treacherous Batman building ascent on a flat studio floor. Nice job! he congratulated me.

The next signs of little use on this trail were the uncleared blow-downs. We counted fifty-some, as I recall. Some posed minor obstacles with opportune gaps in the branches one might step between. Others were honkers one could detour around. But a few involved such a length of domino trees that climbing over the mess was just plain simpler.

At least for Gerard. He hops over combination blow-downs as though someone had placed numbered Glo-steps on the

branches and logs – up, two, three, and he's over. I, on the other hand, labor and wallow as though the trees come alive halfway through, like the resentful apple trees in *The Wizard of Oz*, and decide to wrestle with me, pull me down, and try their best to steal my pack. I struggle. I flail absurdly. I end up straddling god knows what. And I emerge with enough scrapes, bruises, and general dishevelment to suggest I've been mugged by some monstrous chipmunk. In the interim, Gerard has strolled five hundred yards ahead so I can barely see him.

Another sign was that once the snow got deep enough that we'd snowshoed up, there were no tracks, tags, or other indications to mark the trail. Gerard was walking along and suddenly paused with his head cocked. "Something's not right," he muttered, and we backtracked. He spied an old cut



Gerard at camp cozy: not lost, just sans trail

log in another direction and we recovered the trail. But once the snow deepened, all signs of the trail were swallowed up. We reached a high valley with sparse trees interspersed at all about the same distances from one another, where no one course was more clear than another.

For a while I deluded myself that we were still on the trail, but eventually it seemed I should speak up: "I think we lost the trail," I said.

"Oh, a long time ago," agreed Gerard.

"Shouldn't we go back and try to find it?" I asked edgily. "I mean, we've never been here before."

"We'll never find it six or more feet down," said Gerard. "Why would we need a trail? We have the map." And he wasn't even joking, I could see.

So we kept on. And on, and on. We were supposed to gain a pass and descend to Ice Lakes beneath Star Peak. Where that pass was, you know right now about as well as we did then, because we could see nothing over the trees surrounding us. Nothing but snowy fir tops. And the light was fading.

As with the empty parking lot, I had a strange experience *the reverse* of my normal hiking frame of mind. I began to *crave* signs of human impact – of chopping and clearing and trampling and signage and, yes, even litter! Just somebody's Cliff Bar wrapper, or shoelace, or heck, even some negligently buried toilet paper would have delighted me – *any* evidence that we were not wandering randomly in the Okanogan National Forest.

Gerard, however, seemed exhilarated, as though on a treasure hunt. He loved having to find out where we were! At the head of the valley, the way began to ascend and he hoped to be able to see some land features. We climbed for another half hour, still with no way to see through the trees, past huge wallumps of snow bulging out from the hillside like white haystacks or giant mushrooms. Climbing warmed me, but the temperature was dropping along with the light. Gerard called a pow-wow.

"I think we should go back down to that last place we saw running water in the snow, maybe camp there and reconnoiter for the morning,"

Fabulous! I thought. Even though we had no idea *where* we'd be camping, we'd be cozy enough.

And as it turned out, from our campsite, we could see *a* peak. Not a very big peak, and it shouldered off into an equally non-descript ridge, but at least it was something to guess at. That night and the next morning, we kept moving mountains around, picking up the whole landscape like a huge lumpy blanket and resettling relative to our position.

"What if we're here, and it's Courtney?"

"It can't be Courtney. No. This is south, right?"

"Yeah, but I'm saying what if we're *here* and that's south, which makes *that* the way to Star, and *this* would be Courtney. No wait. No, it can't be Courtney."

"Sure it can! Like you said, if we're here..."

We went on like this for literally hours, changing places, reconsidering. What amazed me was that actually Gerard considered my input at all. I was just kind of bluffing that I had any idea where anything was or might be.

But he's a collaborative hiker by nature, I've realized. What he hates most is being put in charge. So as we started off after breakfast, retracing our steps from the night before and then striking out in our new "right" direction, we'd keep calling back and forth about what we could see. We were heading straight for Courtney, I was positive of it now. There was a drainage turning to our right up ahead, and a ridge to the left, same as on the map. Turn into that drainage and *thar* she'd blow.

Gerard stopped us after about an hour, though – oops, I mean half hour – and finally overrode my navigational insistence. We were traversing a steep slope. The map's contour lines, he said, didn't match up with my reality. In fact, they put us a mile northwest of the drainage we wanted, so we'd have to backtrack almost all the way to camp. I was struck again by how indifferent he was to whether we were "lost." It was as if the whole of Okanogan were his living room, and we'd accidentally walked behind the couch.

"Don't tell this part in the *Yodel*," he said.

"What, that we went the wrong way a while? We had, like, zero landmarks, and you figured it out."

"Yeah, but an hour's a long time not to figure it out."

"I'll say half hour, okay?"

Even though I'd completely blown my map and compass efforts, Gerard still welcomed any input from me. I'd point out things I'm sure he he'd noticed ages ago – the land dropping away to the right, a ridge that would likely cliff it out, possibly a "real" Courtney appearing past the pretend one – that confirmed we were now on the right track. His response was always eager, as if to say, "You know, I was thinking the *same* thing!" That collaborative thing, again. He was just happy I was actively participating.

But he still had to break almost all the steps as we got higher. We followed some fox or coyote tracks (finally!) that led to the saddle, and for a while I broke steps, but the way was steep and I found myself thoroughly sweaty and winded after twenty minutes, so he resumed. From the pass between Star and Courtney, we could look down at the route by which we'd hoped to climb Star and see it scored by multiple avalanches. So we'd just have to settle for Courtney, which was only a short ridge walk away – less than a mile.

It was easy-peasy going until we got near the summit, where a pile of large boulders and slabs blocked the way. Gerard ducked to the left of them, above the steep, southwest flank of the mountain. I followed around a large outcropping, but he was essentially carving a path with his snowshoes above a two thousand foot drop. The snow packed pretty well, but it was still *snow*, if you know what I mean. Further up, I saw a boulder scramble. I started to freak.

Now, if I knew a *trail* went this way, if I'd known thousands of people had passed this this way with this same exposure and lived to tell of it, that would be one thing. But I remembered a time I followed Don't-Follow-Me-Dave off-route along a very scary, incredibly dangerous passage on the south peak of the Brothers. All of us risked our lives that day to make the false summit, where I

had sworn if I somehow made it back alive I would *never* do that kind of thing again.

"I can't keep going," I said, taking a stand. "I'm too scared." The summit was just not worth it.

No problem. Gerard packed me down a flat patch about two feet square and told me to hang out there. He'd just tag the summit and be right back.

If you have vertigo, you know a little about the nature of mounting panic. You know the feeling I got looking down at fir trees two thousand feet be-

low whose crests looked like circles – not wedges. You know the surges of imbalance that warped through me when I first tried to take off my pack and hit the rock behind me.

First your heart speeds up and your face gets tingly, then the full fight or flight kicks in. Through your veins chugs a locomotive that only gains and gains speed. You start trembling in every muscle like a Magic Fingers mattress. You can't catch your breath and every thought strikes like a momentous brainstorm. I didn't want to be where I was; yet the scramble looked impassable, and the way back involved

passing an outcropping I was too dizzy to try.

I decided I didn't want to stand, but I was afraid to sit with my legs over the ledge. I decided I'd squeeze under the boulder behind me to sit, and put my feet on the snow shelf. Turning around, I stepped all over my own snow shoes and did several outstanding imitations of my dad. The huge space filling half my vision seemed to want to suck me out into air, grab me into falling. Finally I got turned around and sat. Now all I have to do, I thought, is wait. But Gerard didn't come.

The wind had picked up and it started to snow. When I looked toward Star Peak to my left, its aspect had changed entirely. What had seemed a pretty, Matterhornesque spire earlier now frowned its sublimely huge vertical strata of rock toward the horizon with complete indifference to my or any



Louisa and Star Peak, pre-panic mode

other human life. The avalanche striated basin grew more obscure in the snowfall. And where the hell was Gerard? When I couldn't stand it any more I yelled his name as loud as I could. The wind swiped my pipsqueak voice into miles of openness, dissolving it. No reply.

My panic spiked. It flared all out. I thought, I'll pray: "Please, god, please, please help me – I don't want to fall, I'm so scared!" *CAN'T HELP YA, HONEY*, came the answer. *LAWS OF PHYSICS AREN'T MY THING. YOU GOT YOURSELF UP; YOU CAN GET*

YOURSELF DOWN. I decided I'd wait five more minutes, then try to make it through another five if I had to. But I didn't have a watch, dammit! And to hell with that plan, anyway: "GERARD!!!!" I screamed over and over as loud as I could.

"What? What's wrong?" At last he came loping down the scramble I was too scared to climb. "You scared me!" he remonstrated. "I thought something had happened!"

"Something *did* happen! I'm f*cking terrified!" I employed a host of expletives to underscore this.

"Why? Of what?" He looked around utterly mystified, as though we were at Greenlake and I were cowering on a park bench. Because to him, there *was* no danger. The drop wasn't vertical; there were features, some boulders. It was as though he were on a completely different mountain than I.

"I can't go past where the rock sticks out," I said.

"Sure ya can; piece o' cake!" he assured me. His tone was ho-hum, which made me angry – and angry panic is actually a huge improvement over pure panic. So I managed to follow his lead and get back to the ridge.

I tried to be a good sport, but to be honest, nothing was much fun anymore. When we got to the fifty million blow-downs and creeks so difficult for me to cross, I realized all my self-confidence had been



trashed. I reached for deeper humility and came up instead with a handful of f*ck this sh*t – I was damn tired. At last we got back to the trailhead, which was still empty of other cars. With good reason!

When I reflect on this trip, I realize my confidence had been eroding throughout the entire approach. I was out of my element, while Gerard was in his. Virtually all my hiking has followed a trail, where the bridgeless creek and blockage of blowdowns are the exception, not the rule, and I take great security from knowing I am where I'm "supposed" to be. And, yes, I've read maps and taken bearings, but always when I can *see* the mountains.

I realized everything I couldn't do right that weekend had taken a toll, until somehow the humility I'd been cultivating flipped over to a sense of incompetence. By the time I reached that impasse on the ridge, I had no faith in my abilities.

I don't know what I learned from this. I'm not sure what I'd do different. I'll never be as skilled or agile as Gerard (maybe I can wait til he gets *really old* and turn the tables) and yet I love to go with him into places I'm not really qualified to travel. I guess the possibility of freak outs and panic is part of what I need to expect on every hike I take.

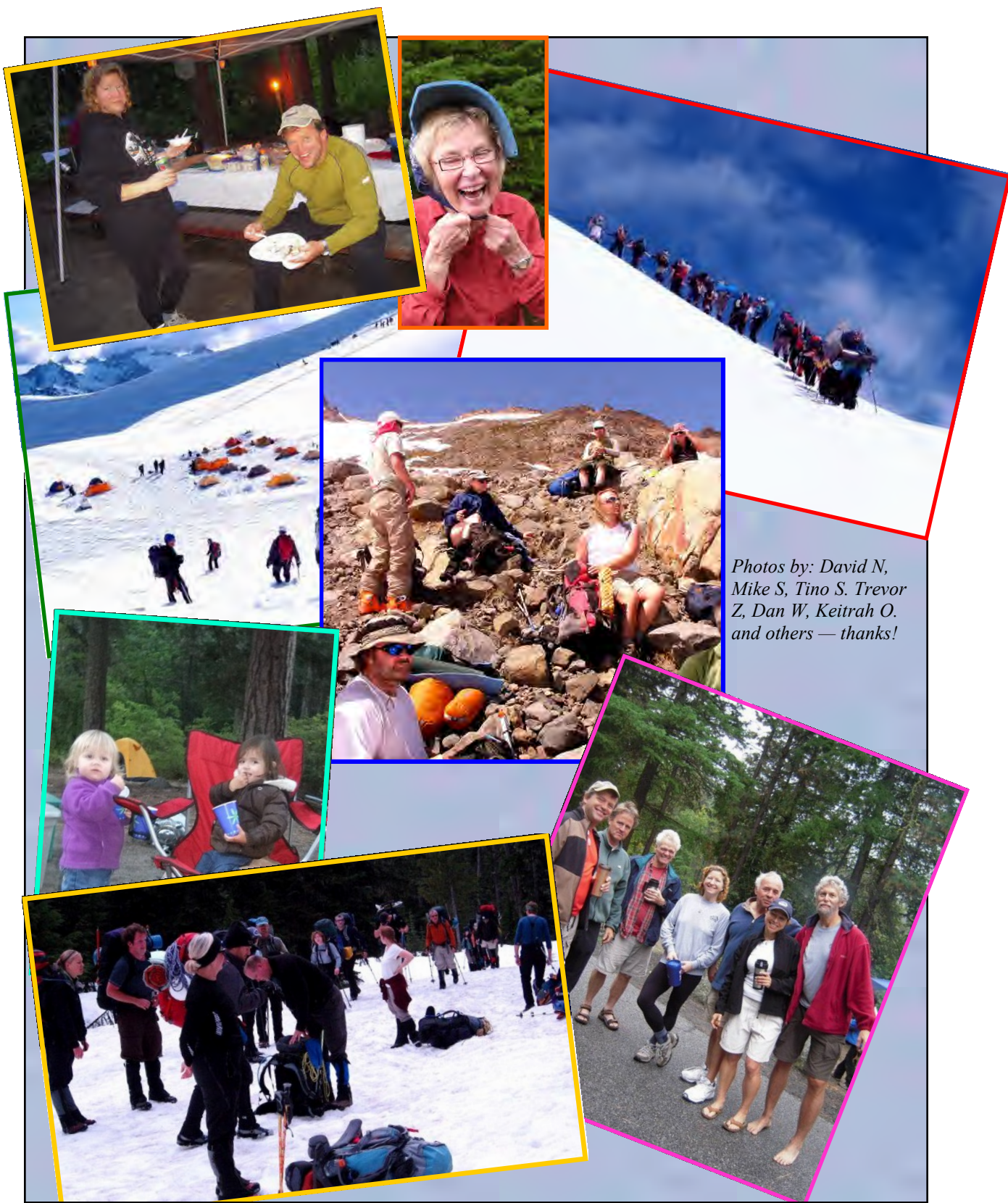
On the other hand, the specter of pants-sh*tting terror like that is a small but real part of what draws me to the mountains, because it shatters my accustomed mindset against a vastly powerful reality. That stern face of Star Peak, my utter insignificance in the whirling snow, the proximity of ultimate disaster – when I brought these memories home with me and set them beside my fears about not finding a job or being able to pay bills – let's just say the mundane boogie-men of my daily life had shrunk pretty small.

I mean, whatever: I'll live! §

Photorama ~ Photorama ~ Photorama ~ Photorama



"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



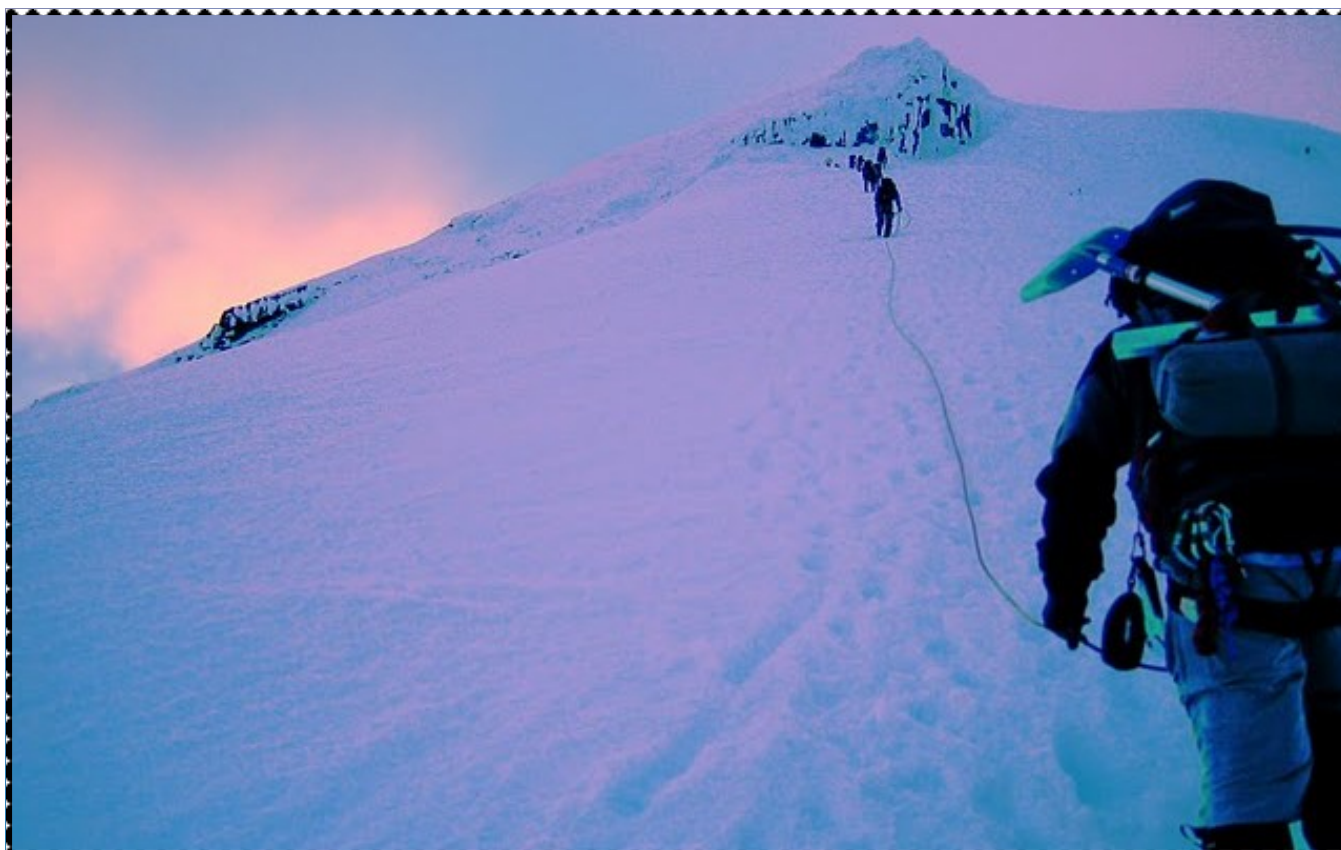
*Photos by: David N,
Mike S, Tino S. Trevor
Z, Dan W, Keitrah O.
and others — thanks!*

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

The Yodel

P.O.Box 852

Mercer Island, WA 98040



Ascending Mount Baker — Photo by Trevor Z.