

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

The Yodel

June 2012



Farewell to the Pflugs

In This Issue:

- Farewell to Pflugs p. 1
- Climbing with Jim H.
by Shirley R. p. 2
- Mt Si Sigh
by Rena E. p. 3
- Letter to Jim H
by Mike S p. 4
- While Ascending.....
By Bob S p. 5
- River of No Return
by Kelly P p.5
- Loowit Trail
By Rik A p. 8
- OSAT Quick Ref
p. 11

As many of you know, our dear friends and OSATers, Kevin, Audra and Ava Pflug, will be moving from Washington to Colorado in mid-July. Kevin has been active in OSAT for several years, serving as GCC chairman last year and Climbs Chair this year. Audra is a GCC student this year. While we are sad to see them go, we're excited for the new opportunities they'll have for education, jobs, climbing and being closer to Kevin's family.



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.

Climbing with Jim H.

Chapter 1

by Shirley R.

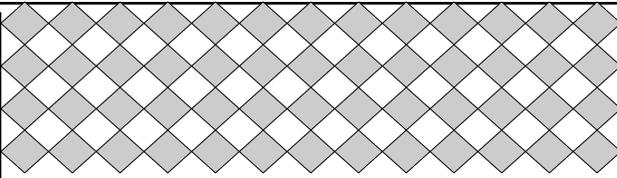
I first met Jim H. in the fall of 1990 near the summit of Del Campo Peak when I was with some scrambling friends and he was with Dick W. I had climbed Mt. Rainier for the first time that year (with RMI) and had scrambled for many years, but wanted to learn rock climbing. Jim was a first year student in the M's Intermediate Climbing Course and offered to teach me to rock climb the following spring.

The next spring we arranged to meet again and we climbed the spire of the "Tooth" near Snoqualmie Pass. I will never forget the sense of joy and empowerment I felt when I stepped to the top (even though Jim had led every pitch) ! I had rock climbed, and that made me joyful. It is part of who I am to be doing outdoor things and technical climbing was one thing I wanted to do more of.

Jim had talked a lot about his dream of starting an outdoor club for members and friends of 12-Step Programs and how recovering alcoholics would be better off in the outdoors and not in smoke filled rooms. As his dream was becoming reality, individuals were connecting to Jim, finding Jim and a loose club was slowly taking form. I remember hearing many stories about how individuals found the club. There was almost a magical quality about the idea, the founder, the members, the ideology and practices that bonded people together.

I do not believe in hero worship and do not like to use the term "hero". I believe that anyone is a hero (or heroine) who lives their own life with courage. Some of us have callings that are more high-profile than others. One of Jim's callings was to start OSAT and to be a strong leader of the club for as long as he lived. He fulfilled that calling with great success. His personality characteristics were unique and, well, you just had to know him, because he is hard to describe. Charismatic, lively, athletic, although he did not hit it off with some people and did not look like an athlete at first. He suffered from his past years of smoking and drinking and relationship turmoil.

After climbing the Tooth with Jim in the spring of 1991, I began climbing with him almost every weekend and participated in the first OSAT climb of Mt. Rainier later that year. My assignment was to be the last person on the last rope team, a very lonely position, and we were moving painfully slow. But we did make the summit



and safely back down. The night at Emmons Flats was very windy and our tent started to slide away which was terrifying. Jim had given away all of his pickets to other people. We escaped and sardined into a neighboring tent with Robert T and his tent mates (I don't remember who you are, but thanks !). I was learning that you had to take care of yourself in the mountains and not leave everything to whomever is in charge, i.e., everyone has to be an active participant and contributor to the climb, mentally and physically. Jim was a natural leader perhaps but he was just learning to be a climb leader and I was just learning to be a climber. It was learning by doing, even despite knowing a lot from climbing books (such as Freedom of the Hills and Accidents in N. American Mountaineering), and from training in the M. basic and intermediate climbing courses.

Some OSAT people had met Jim way back when he was a high school athlete in Oregon. The ones that come to mind are Rik A. and Dick W. Others had met him at a noon meeting and I think that would be Charlie A. and Robert T. Others may have met him at Boeing. Word of mouth brought more people to OSAT. Other people met OSAT'ers out on climbs, like maybe Chuck T. Other people like Bob C, David B., Steve S, Terri S, I am not sure how they got connected with the club. I know I am only mentioning a few of the many early OSAT members who participated and contributed. My own involvement was with climbing activities and early club meetings during the time Jim and I were sharing an apartment in Factoria and our apartment complex had a nice cabana for meetings. The meetings were quite chaotic as were most early OSAT activities. It is a blessing now that rules and conventions are in place so that OSAT can carry on its activities more safely and smoothly.

After several years of climbing together, Jim and I parted ways in early 1995 due to relationship issues and that was when he was preparing for Denali. I think most OSAT members know that Jim, Scott and Tom went to Denali to climb the W. Ridge in May, 1995, and encountered very bad weather conditions that prevented them from summiting and that later took their lives on the way down. For further information and analysis see Accidents in N. American Mountaineering 1996.

MT SI- SIGH

By Rena E

April 15th 2012

It was a beautiful Sunday morning. I couldn't decide if I was going to go up Tiger for the meeting or climb Mt. Si. I was running a bit late so I thought Mt. Si, here I come. Daisy (Peter's dog) and I set out to go hiking. Peter was doing his 2nd day of MOFA training and couldn't come so I was by myself (bad Rena). The sky was clear blue and the temperature was just right. I made it to the top carrying 31 lbs in 2 hours and 12 min. I felt great – in shape and strong. As Daisy and I were descending I thought I would go over to Tiger and complete a Siger. I had never done that before. We were making good time, Daisy and were about 200 ft above the Boulder Gardens and then

I felt like I was dreaming. I looked around and wondered where I was. I was in an area of vines and bushes. I looked to my left and Daisy was right beside me. I felt a little light headed but mostly kind of dreamy. I leaned over to pet Daisy and I saw red drops dripping down on the vines and on Daisy. I was hiking. I must have fallen and I think I'm bleeding. I saw my pack in front of me. Where were my glasses? I looked and didn't see them. My head felt heavy especially the left side of it. I wondered where the trail was. It must be above me. I went to get up and my left leg hurt like hell. I thought I had better grab my pole to pull myself up. I had the pole in my hand and then I knew I wasn't going to be able to get myself up. God it hurt. My head was throbbing on the left side, right at the temple. I was shivering and crying intermittently.

Eventually I heard someone coming up the trail. "Help" I could barely talk. My voice is usually very audible. It was all I could do to squeak out "help, can you help me?" She said "yes, yes of course, let me come down and help you". We'll get you out of there". "You are going to be alright". I tried to get up and it was very hard, excruciatingly painful. Carley said, "Just hang on to me, I'll pull you out". We finally got to the trail and I just sat for a minute. By this time others had walked by. A man and his son offered to help. He said, "We'd better get another handkerchief around your head. It bleeding in the back too. He sent his son down to the parking lot to call for help. Four or five others stopped to lend a hand. The mountaineers were coming down. Two women stopped to assist. Nancy, a hospice RN sat in back of me with her arms wrapped around me to help me stay warm. I was shaking and feeling very cold. Therese

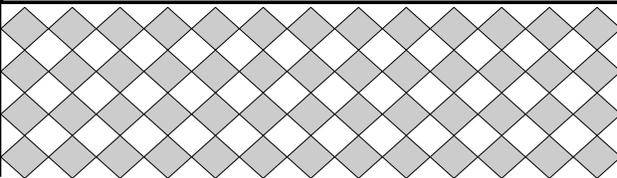
waited with me too. I was so grateful for all of the help and kindness that I received.

The King County Sheriff's dept came up to help. He assessed me and then they said, "We have called King County Search and Rescue and Seattle Mountain Rescue to send a litter up to help you". Nancy, Therese, Dan and I waited a couple of hours for the litter. It takes time to coordinate and get all of the equipment up. Who was dispatching that day? None other than our friend Todd Stone. Many Search and Rescue showed up to help get me down safely. I was so impressed by their expertise and caring. Doug Hutton was on the team too. In the meantime, we called Peter and Cynthia. Peter wasn't answering (he was busy learning MOFA- how ironic) however Cynthia did. Thank goodness. She came and got Daisy and then met me at Swedish ER in the Issaquah Highlands. Eighteen stitches in my head (2 lacerations), concussion, fractured orbital bone and knee damage—tear in my MCL, 2 meniscus tears and an ACL tear. No wonder it was hard to walk. And I thought I'd hobble all the way down. Peter came to the ER. I was so happy to see him.

I am truly amazed at the support I received from so many people. OSAT's Motto- Keep climbing Mountains and don't Slip. (I think I slipped). I have never been able to remember what happened. Of course I blamed the dog. No matter what be careful and watch each step. You never know what can happen. By the time you read this I'll have my new ACL and on the road to recovery and back to hiking!!



A big shiner and a even bigger smile—that's our Rena



A Letter To Jimmy Hinkhouse After Climbing His Peak

By Mike S.

Dear Jimmy:

We climbed your peak today. There were 12 of us, surely the most folks who ever stood at once atop your namesake in the North Cascades -- the perfect number, considering the ties that bind us together and to you.

Some of us, like Rik A. and David N., were fortunate to climb with you in person. All of us, however, feel like we know you and that you are with us whenever we climb.

We thank you often for your decision more than 20 years ago to found a climbing club for clean and sober folks. That decision, like the First Step, was simple, if not easy, but it has led to such profound joy and hope and spirituality for so many of us.

We can never fully repay you, but Hinkhouse Peak is a magnificent tribute. Rising 7,560 feet, its two summit knobs on the Chelan-Okanogan County line are just visible from Washington Pass on Highway 20, beckoning climbers upward and onward much as OSAT calls to AA members to seek new heights of spirituality and sobriety.



Mat K. celebrates atop Hinkhouse Peak.

For our group of 12, climbing your peak paralleled the paths that many of us take on our journeys of recovery. Up the snowfields we went, one step at a time,

working together to find the route and help each other avoid dangers both hidden and obvious. Climbing -- like recovery -- has its ups and downs so at the first knob we rigged a rope to rappel, losing a little altitude so we could gain the true summit ridge.

Once we were all up top, we peered through the mist at Liberty Bell and the Early Winter Spires, Kangaroo Ridge and Silver Star. We signed the register, many of us putting our thanks to you in simple, heartfelt words. Some added mementoes to the container. And while you were with us all in spirit, you were somewhat more physically with David. He wore your old climbing boots to the top and down. Even though

the well-weathered plastic cracked and crumbled, and the boots appeared ready to fall apart entirely, they made the trip.

"Jimmy never let me down," David said. "And his boots did not let me down today!"



Alexei E. rappels to the saddle between the two knobs.

So thank you, Jimmy, once again. We will try to keep climbing mountains and not slipping as long as we are able, finding both serenity and

strength among the snow-capped crags, on the glaciers and in the alpine meadows.



David N.: "Jimmy never let me down. And his boots did not let me down today!"

You will always be with us.

And someday, when we are called away from the mountains to a place where even the dust of our physical selves is long since gone, the eternal energy of our souls will



Jimmy's old plastic climbing boots, as worn by David N. on the summit of Hinkhouse

meet and embrace and more will be revealed.

Twelve OSATers atop Hinkhouse Peak (left to right): Dan W., Mike S., Rik A., Bryce M., Kate P., Rachel K., John Paul N., Mat K., Humberto W., Adam W., David N., Alexei E.

Sincerely,
Mike S.



BANDERA, TIGER AND SI

By Bob S

WHILE ASCENDING BANDERA MOUNTAIN

June 22, 2012

Misted
Amongst
Again a vivid greenery
Floating mountains
In a disembodied
Terrain

TIGER MOUNTAIN 3

June 29, 2012

Green tiger, fern claws
Catch a hiker by the boot
Plant tentacles encroaching
Into the path thru trees mossed,
A forest tossed upward into
An ambient domain
Our beating hearts
Burning bright

MT. SI CONDITIONER

June 30, 2012

And so, as it is,
Here, now the mountain
And then such humidity!
From the get go we sweat
You bet, no doubt about it
Like some kind of tropical
North Bend climate warp,
Salty water pours off us
As we ascend.
Here we go,
One more time
Up the old trail.

River of No Return

By Kelly P

It was an early summer day typical for Seattle. Foggy in the morning and some sun breaks in the afternoon. The group of nine people had gathered at a friend's home outside of Seattle to start the 10 day trip to the Salmon River of No Return. They were travelling in an early 1980's motorhome that had a rather musty smell but had what Ode, our organizer said was enough power to pull all nine of us along with all of the rafting gear. We were pulling a trailer which had at least two dry bags full of supplies per person along with propane tanks for cooking, the rafts that were folded and deflated, food, tents, and any other gear we would need for the 10 day journey.

We all loaded up and the first thing from Ode was the instructions to stay out of site from any windows in case a policeman came near the motorhome. The rules were only four people could occupy the passenger area and we had nine people. The aisles of the motorhome were occupied by ice chests full of beer and some pop.

Within five minutes of our departure one of the fellows lit up some pot in a pipe and the smoke filled the cabin. The pipe was passed to everyone in the motorhome and all partook except for myself and our driver Ode. Ode preferred beer and was drinking beer as we started our trip.

Being sober for almost seven years, I had not been in such a confined space with so many people smoking pot with no where to go. Luckily I had a box of some tootsie roll pops that I had purchased for the trip and started utilizing my sugar addiction so as not to succumb to the alcohol and pot free flowing through the motorhome.

I spent time that first few hours with the person that had the large bag of pot and found out his brother grew the herb for personal medicinal purposes and there was always plenty left over for his recreational use. He admitted he was a Pothead and this made him virtually unemployable. I didn't really understand this but found out later the primary reason was that he was constantly high. He would start smoking at 7am and not finish until he was asleep at night. He owned a small business out of his home which made trinkets he created out of computer parts. He said it was just enough to allow him to live a comfortable rather meager existence.

The person seated in the right front seat was The Doctor. He was a general practitioner and was the right up there with the Pothead with his amount of pot intake.

The difference was that The Doctor also consumed mass

Continued on Page 6

quantities of beer, wine, whiskey, and pain killers.

Whatever he could get his hands on. He looked rather sober with clear eyes in the morning, but within a few hours of his first pot toke he would transform into a glassy eyed Neanderthal looking person.

The other people on the trip included Larry who was a rafting buddy and childhood friend of Ode's from way back. Chris, also known as Chrispee who was from England and had completed the river run three years previously. Wolfe, who commanded one of the rafts was a previous river guide. He had just completed major hip surgery about six weeks prior and was having some trouble moving around. He was at times heavily sedated with pain medication. He also had a heart condition which resulted from the many years of hard drugs and drinking. Hans was his brother, a rather heavy set man looking a lot like Santa Clause. Hans was the only one on the trip that was a moderate drinker. He had come over from his home in Kauai for the trip. He was on the trip also last year and was the only person to fall into the river at Chittam Falls. This year he sported not one but two life jackets. When he fell into the river the previous year the life jacket was not fastened and he spent "40 seconds under water". He was sufficiently scared and decided to protect himself this time around. Brad was the final person. It was his second time on the river. He was a public defender and rather quiet but nice man.

We spent about 8 hours driving and when we hit the Montana Border stopped at a rest stop for some sleep. Most of us slept out on the ground under some picnic tables to keep from getting soaked from the rain. After a few hours it was back into the motorhome and into Salmon, Idaho for breakfast and to acquire final provisions. The first stop was the liquor store. The crew came out with half gallons of Crown Royal, Baileys for the morning coffee along with many other half gallons of assorted liquor.

We soon arrived at our camping site for the second night and the place where we would put into the river. The ranger check in occurred just prior to arriving at the campsite. There was mention of the extreme height of the river, but no real warnings that there was any danger evident.

After a few hours we had the rafts blown up and were settling in for dinner when Crispee brought out a tuperware container with aluminum foil covered squares. He said these were his "magic brownies". He must have had about 50 of these squares and offered them to everyone in the camp. I have to admit it was very tempting to try these. I noticed about an hour after Crispee ate one of the squares his behavior became bazaar. He would stumble around the campsite slurring his words. He also had a tendency to eat food while it was still cooking with his fingers upsetting others in the party.

It was a rather early evening as we had a big day ahead with starting our first day on the river. Early the next day we started loading the rafts. Ode was particularly animated as it he was in charge of this. It was a nice day and he was starting to drink beer early. By the time we launched I estimate he had already consumer at least a six pack and probably more. Steve the Stoner was constantly lighting up along with the Doctor.

At about 10am we headed down the river. It was a beautiful day and the river was especially calm the first day so we enjoyed the scenery along with the occasional small to medium size rapid. Our first night was spent at Goose island, named for all of the goose crap that is all over the island. It was an uneventful landing and soon we had pitched our tents and were cooking dinner.

Crispee had already broken out his pot brownies and I started my watch. Again, about an hour later he was acting bazaar with eating food directly out of the cooking pot and slurring his words. Wolfe actually yelled at him to stop his antics but it didn't seem to faze Crispee a bit.

The next morning shortly after hitting the river we passed the ranger station were we were required to check in. The Doctors raft almost didn't make the landing and luckily Ode through him a line and hauled him over to the shore. As soon as we landed a ranger came running toward us saying that there was a death the prior day on the river close to the ranger station and two rafts had come down the river empty, one floating upside down. She strongly recommended we not go any further and that the river was especially dangerous. There was a marking along the river which showed the river height. The water was above the highest mark. We also noticed a large number of rafts and people camping around the ranger station. These were guided trips where people who were supposed to run the river decided not do due to the extreme water conditions. We went into to register and again the ranger strongly suggested we do not go any further down river. The general consensus of the group was the more dangerous the better. It would mean less people on the river and a more exciting story to tell when we reached Riggins, our final destination. I was wondering what I had gotten myself into. I certainly didn't intend to risk my life on this river. I realized the next stop would be only a few miles down and this would be a layover day with two nights in the same spot. I decided I could go for the layover day and if I decided not to go further I could hike out in two days as they continued down river.

Where we camped the second night I noticed there were some backpackers across the river. I walked over the bridge and asked the backpackers when they were hiking out. They indicated they were going out the next morning. I asked for a ride and they said they had a

very small car and it would be very tight. I said I didn't want to impose and figured if I did decide to hike out I would need to hitch a ride at the ranger station about three miles up river.

A few hours later when we took a hike the backpackers came up to me and said they could give me a ride to Salmon and I could probably catch a bus from there to Missoula where I could catch a flight. I told them I would consider this option. That evening at dinner I told Ode I was probably going to hike out the next day. He didn't try to talk me out of it but did say he felt confident he could run the river safely.

Hans and I had some blunt discussions about the safety of the trip and the fact that they the Doctor and Wolfe were half stoned during most of the rapids. Hans had told Wolfe he needs to be sober for all of the remaining days as they were going to be more dangerous with the rapids reaching category 4 and 5.

Day four on the river the sun was out and the river had gone down a small amount. We placed a stick straight up where the river edge was and the stick this morning was about three feet or so out of the river. I decided that morning I would continue on the river. I thought it would also be dangerous to hike out. I would have at least a three mile hike and then I would have to hitch a ride and I was unsure I would be able to get a ride from the ranger station. Also, Ode made a better place for me to kneel down into the boat which made me feel more secure.

Within three minutes of leaving we hit by far the highest rapids of the trip. I was thrown hard to the left side and Crispee thought I had been thrown out of the boat. I was thinking to myself at this point I had made the wrong decision and should have hiked out. At this point there was really no turning back as the ranger station was getting further and further away.

Whiplash, which is the one of the largest rapids was awaiting us shortly. The ranger during her warning speech told us Whiplash at extreme water was very dangerous, certainly a category 5+ and strongly recommended we not attempt this rapid. As we approached the rapid we noticed two fully stocked rafts tied up alongside the river. We thought they had decided to land the rafts so they could scout the rapid. However, we had not noticed anyone passing us on the river and the ranger had indicated we were the only ones on the river below the ranger station. Upon further review we wondered if perhaps they had decided to abandon their run after scouting Whiplash. There was no one in site and the rafts were fully stocked as if they were to spend many more days on the river. Later we learned that the people in this group beached the rafts, scouted Whiplash and decided it was too dangerous to run so decided to hike use a satellite phone to call in a helicopter to fly them out, leaving their estimated \$20,000 in gear and

rafts alongside the river. This made me extremely nervous as I thought not only had no one run Whiplash, but the only people who had made it to this rapid decided it was too dangerous to run and would risk leaving their boats and expensive equipment and incur the expense of a helicopter evacuation.

Ode did not let this phase him and we beached our rafts just past the abandoned ones and started a hike around the corner to scout Whiplash. It was truly a remarkable rapid with water falling sharply into a large boulder in the middle of the river. If the boat miscalculated and ran too close to the boulder the boat would flip and the water did not ebb for miles down the river. The prior evening Ode had told us how he had flipped on a previous run through Whiplash. He had to ride on the bottom of the boat for several miles until he was able to get the boat out of the strong current.

We returned to the boats and the Doctor gave out a war cry as he took a hit off of his pipe to give him added courage. I held on for dear life as Ode approached the rapid. He steered to the wide left and was able to have the bow of the boat just kiss off the rapid water surrounding the boulder and spin us clear. The other three boats followed exactly as Ode and cleared the rapid fully intact. After we completed additional rapids and his relatively calm water it was time for a celebration. Larry had abandoned his small raft which looked like two bananas tied together and was with us now and he and Ode celebrated by each drinking at least a six pack of beer within the next hour or so.

The next stop would be Buckskin Bills a supply post only accessible by jet boats and raft. It had started raining and we were all very cold and wet when it came time to beach the rafts at Buckskin Bills. As Wolfe rounded the corner he was too far out in the river and appeared to be going to miss beaching his raft. Steve the Stoner jumped into the rowers seat next to Wolfe and took one of the oars and it ended up being the extra strength they needed to make the landing. Hans jumped out of the boat and tripped on a rock and was shaken up in addition to being hypothermic and was telling Wolfe he was contemplating stopping at Buckskin Bills and having a jet boat come up to evacuate him. The caretaker at Buckskin Bills served us some hot chocolate which warmed our spirits and we all decided to stay on the river. Hans did comment shortly after this that he would definitely not be returning again however.

We spent another few hours which were in rather uneventful and found our camping spot for the night. The next day was one more major rapid before we ended the trip in Riggins. The rapid was Chittem and it was where the prior year Hans had been thrown out of the raft and

Continued on Page 8

spent 18 seconds (he claims) underwater before surfacing. He was cold and very shaken up but not injured. He had talked about Chittem ever since we started the trip and was very concerned about running the rapid again. Ode decided just to make it more interesting he would not scout Chittem, rather run in blindly and hope he would be able to navigate successfully. A little after noon we approached Chittem and Ode told everyone to watch him and follow his exact location in the river. We noticed at high water there was a slipway along the right side of the river which avoided the dangerous drop which was a category 5 rapid. Ode decided to take this route and the others followed suit. So Chittem ended up being more a class 3 or 4 rapid rather than a class 5 which it would have been at lower water.

After we passed through Chittem we found an area of calm water alongside the river and a celebration started. We had completed the large rapids and the rest of the trip was an easy float the take out point in a few hours. The beer flowed and the pot was smoked as I ate a candy bar in celebration.

A few hours later we reached the take out point outside Riggins. We unloaded the supplies, deflated the boats and started our drive along the river to the town of Riggins about 30 miles from the take out point. As soon as Ode started driving a half gallon of Crown Royal was passed around the motorhome and Ode was drinking this along with beers as he drove. The drive was quite harrowing as there we were in the large motorhome with a trailer in tow along a narrow dirt road along a cliff leading to the river below. There was considerable construction along the road making it barely passable for vehicles in both directions. This did not phase anyone except me. The party was on as we had just conquered the River of No Return at extreme water, and, we were the only ones that dared take on the challenge.

As the partying continued and the speech started slurring I contemplated getting out of the motorhome at one of the construction stops but didn't. I wasn't sure how I would make it to town and decided to just tough it out and hope if didn't get any worse.

About one hour after we left the take out point we pulled into a hotel on the banks of the river. It had been 10 days since I had taken a shower and slept in a bed, so both were welcome comforts.

Hans and I decided to go into town and order a steak. We knew the others would be at the bar drinking heavily boasting of conquering the river at extreme water conditions. We had a short dinner, and returned to the hotel. I don't know what time the other arrived but by their appearance the next day it was a heavy night for all but myself and Hans.

The next day it was like déjà vu, with the Doctor in the passenger seat constantly smoking his pot pipe. Steve the Stoner in the back rolling up joints for himself and Wolfe, Ode drinking beers as he drove, and the lawyer and Larry with an occasional smoke and beer.

Loowit Trail

By Rik A

Many OSATers have climbed Mt. St. Helens from the south, either via the winter/spring route from the Marblemont trailhead up Swift Creek and the Worm Flows or on the summer route from Climbers Bivouac up the Ptarmigan Trail and Monitor Ridge. In August 2011 eight OSATers took a different approach to getting familiar with the volcano: circling St. Helens to gain a more complete picture of how the eruption 30 years ago changed the landscape and seeing how the mountain is teaching naturalists about recovery on a geologic scale. The 35-mile Loowit Trail encircles St. Helens at elevations between 4000 and 4900 feet, with excursions down to 3000-3200 feet for overnight camps. It is named for the woman in the Klickitat Indian love-triangle legend. Loowit (St. Helens) is the keeper of fire, over whom Pah-to (Adams) and Wyeast (Hood) fought across the Bridge of the Gods across the Columbia. We began our clockwise circumambulation of the volcano at the Windy Ridge trailhead above Spirit Lake, northeast of the mountain.

The hike begins through the eastern portion of the devastation zone and quickly ascends to the highest elevation of the entire trip, Windy Pass. The summit stayed stubbornly shy in the overcast, but from the pass we looked south across the Plains of Abraham which dominate the east side of the mountain, and over our shoulders to the north and Spirit Lake. The hiking from here was deceptively easy, as this is the only extensive flat section on the entire circuit.

We were greeted throughout the first day by gardens of flowers. Several acres were in bloom at the base of Pumice Butte near the top of a waterfall dropping into Ape Canyon. Here the profusion of color and variety were particularly impressive. Happily the skies cleared just as we reached this spot, so we stopped for lunch and got our first real views of the mountain's east side, dominated by the deep gorge carved by the Shoestring Glacier. The afternoon took us across the Muddy River and Pine Creek Lahars, giving us our first taste of gully crossings that would be typical on the west and north sides of the mountain. The last of these brought us to the lava fields of the Worm Flows, and several more miles of up and down hiking with occasional stands of small trees and meadows of wild flowers among the lava. Eventually the trail works down into the old growth forest at the southeast corner of the circuit, and we turned off the Loowit for the quick, steep descent down to June Lake.

Our first camp was set up between the lava flows and the lake, which is fed by two 70-foot waterfalls. After dinner and a meeting, dark clouds appeared in the west, and we prepared for showers that fell most of the night. The next morning we awoke to a low overcast. The gently ascending side trail on the map from June Lake to Swift Creek proved to be a winter ski route across the Swift Creek lava field, with no apparent trail, so we hiked back up the steep quarter-mile to the Loowit, and continued our circuit. The trail quickly re-entered the lower Worm Flows, at times disappearing entirely among the jumble of rough aa lava, and we were forced to boulder hop as we headed from one wooden post, plastic pipe pole, or stone cairn to the next. Happily the skies cleared and soon we were looking up the familiar south side of St. Helens. A little more than a mile from June Lake we came to the scattered woods along Swift Creek, and passed Chocolate Falls. After following the creek for a short section, we left the spring climbing route and headed toward the ridge. All but Kelly, that is! He kept his head down, and stuck to the spring climbing route! Eventually he came to a clearing where he could see far enough ahead that he knew he'd missed a turn. In the meantime the rest of us stopped and waited for him, and shortly we all began the 1-1/2-mile, 1000-foot climb up Monitor Ridge through forests and small meadows.

Most of the rest of this day was spent at 4500-5000 feet elevation in clear weather with great views of the mountain and surrounding country. After crossing the summer climbing route (Ptarmigan Trail), we entered the longest and most difficult of the lava flows on the entire trip. Posts, poles, and cairns pointed the way some of the time, but elsewhere conflicting cairns would take part of our group one way and others another. A slip or tumbling loose boulder here with a three-day pack could spell disaster, so we picked our way carefully across the flow. After a mile of this, we saw we were through the worst of it, and stopped high on the last lava ridge for lunch, looking out to the south where Mt. Hood peeked out among the clouds.

Continuing up the southwest side of St. Helens, the trail crosses thin stands of short timber, occasional meadows with wild flowers, a few lahars and gullies, and one final lava flow. At one point we stopped after descending a couple of hundred feet, thinking perhaps we'd missed the trail crossing the deep Blue Lake Wash. Happily a group circling the mountain in the opposite direction showed up, and we realized we were on a major detour not shown on the trail map. The trail continues down the south side of the wash, eventually crossing to the other side where the elevation must be regained to meet up with the original trail. After another mile the path re-enters the eruption impact zone and begins a 2-mile, 1400 foot descent of Crescent Ridge, initially with

views to the north across the South Fork of the Toutle River to Johnston Ridge, but also crossing back into old growth forest. The river crossing provided the most excitement of the day, with one of our number slipping into the swift current. Climbing steeply out of the gorge, we made camp in the meadows and settled down for a night under the stars.

Our third day was under clear skies, perfect for experiencing the blast zone and surrounding terrain. We began with a hike out of the deep South Toutle River gorge, crossing a wide open ash slope and re-gaining the 1400 feet lost the previous afternoon. Atop the gorge, broad meadows stretch across to Studebaker Ridge. Plentiful good, clear water was found in the first fork of Studebaker Creek, then as we rounded a corner near the north fork, we came upon a herd of 120-150 elk. They moved quickly to the top of the ridge, and then across our trail to the east side of the ridge. Seeing this many animals travelling together was a highlight we will long remember.

The open country now provided a broad vista of the devastation zone to the north of St. Helens. Although shrubs and young trees dot the landscape, the lack of vegetation north of the mountain remains as a testament to the power that was unleashed in May 1980. The landslide debris flows climb the ridges north of the Toutle, and the logs afloat in Spirit Lake for the past 30 years, having washed down from the slopes of Coldwater Peak and Mount Margaret, leave one imagining the 3-mile long lake sloshing hundreds of feet up the opposite hillside when the largest landslide in recorded history rushed into it from the south.

Crossing the still near-lifeless debris flow at The Breach, we came to our second stream crossing of note. The stream that tumbles over Loowit Falls was flowing swift and strong through its ravine. While most of us searched upstream and down for a crossing point, Erika and Autumn simply changed from boots to sandals and walked across. We ate lunch at a trail intersection below The Breach, before ascending a mile of trail to the Loowit Falls side-trail. The falls hide behind cliffs and ridges as the trail gains elevation, with only the top of the falls visible. We dropped our packs at the upper intersection and hiked the short trail to the overlook where the falls' 200-foot plunge feet into a deep gorge can be fully appreciated. Thinking this was the last highlight of the trip, we headed further east on the trail, only to be surprised by lush willows and vivid pink Lewis monkey flowers at a spring emerging from the pumice hillside. We took our time filling water bottles for the last time in this little paradise among the barren slopes.

Soon we returned to the intersection where we began our circuit, and headed back on the final three miles of .

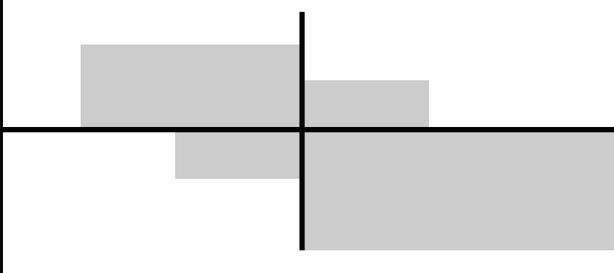
Continued on Page 10

trail and road to the Windy Ridge Viewpoint and trail-head. We reveled in the experience of having hiked completely around this most famous volcano. The hike encompassed more vertical elevation than a climb to the summit, and gave us an appreciation for the entire mountain in a way a climb to the summit cannot.

More pictures are available at <http://www.summitpost.org/loowit-trail/742347> .



Along the North Slope of Pumice Butte



Participants: Rik A, Nancy and Jeff S, Autumn C, Erik and Erika N, Kelly P, and Jacob S.

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

See this blank spot right here??

This could be your spot to tell all OSATer's your awesome story

Send a story to the Yodel Lady
k_creighton@msn.com

OSAT Quick Reference		OSAT Traditions
Board Of Trusted Servants (BOTS)		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 Wilderness First-Aid 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.
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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, oweb-sherpa@osat.org, or otreasurer@osat.org to be added.

OSAT HISTORY: Picture courtesy of Kathy O.

Thanks! KCM&DS!

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The Yodel



OSAT GCC Class of 2012—Mount Rainier Summit