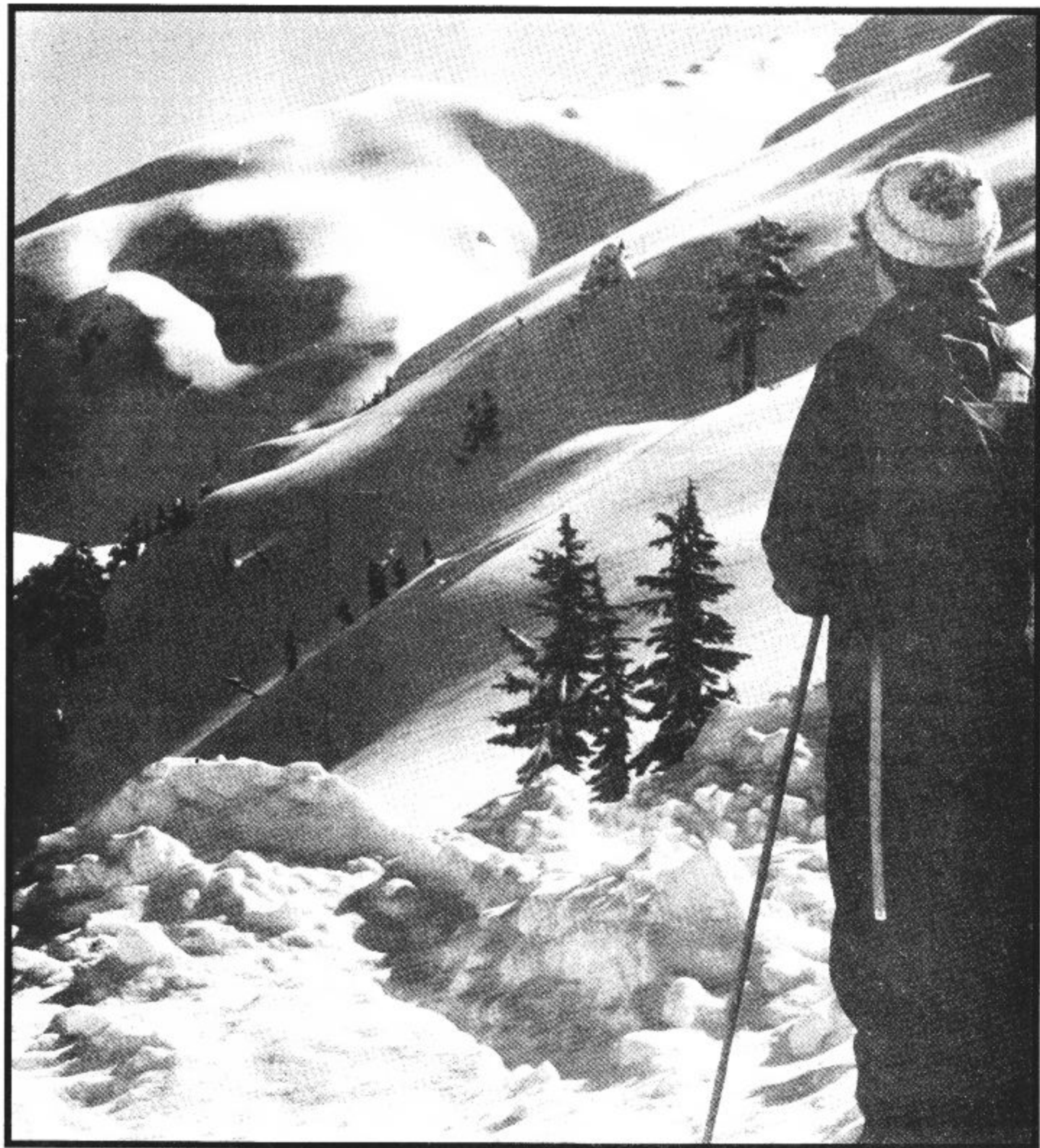


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VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1

RANDOM VIEW—



Karen Sykes

Snowshoers on Mount Margaret.

COVER PHOTO:

In this historic photo from the '60s, Helen Nieberl looks across the north slopes of Mount Pilchuck from about 4300 feet. Mount Pilchuck State Park, Washington. Photo by Tony Nieberl.

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HOW TO BE A PACK & PADDLE CONTRIBUTOR:

Send us your stories, reports, and photographs. *Pack & Paddle* is written by its readers and we welcome your ideas, input, and material. Submissions are considered contributions—if payment is requested it will be a modest amount. We take great care in handling your work, but we cannot guarantee against damage to or loss of materials. Please don't be offended if we can't use your stories or photos.

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• • •

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Staff

Publishers: A. Marshall and L. McKee
Editor: Ann Marshall
Business Manager: Lee McKee
Administrative Assistant: Yellow Cat

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OFF-TRAIL DESTINATIONS

I read Don Abbott's tongue-in-cheek letter (*December, page 4*) roasting you for publishing fishing information in the Yellowstone Lake article (*November, page 24*) when your policy is to not publish fishing information in trip and trail reports. To me, this is defensible for two reasons.

One is that Yellowstone Lake is considerably distant. Publishing a report that included a note about the lake's excellent fishing is not going to create a run on the lake and immediate overuse. This was your primary reason for not publishing fish information for local lakes.

Second is that the excellent quality of Yellowstone's cutthroat fishery is already well known. It is also well protected by adequate Park regulations, both within the lake and in the various streams and rivers within the Park. Ironically, the cutthroat fishery of the lake is threatened by an introduced predator fish, Mackinaw (lake trout), not by excessive human fishing pressure.

Don's point about other amenities (beautiful waterfalls, meadows, lakes and valleys) that make him want to visit described locations brings up another issue. This issue is whether to publish information about off-trail destinations or not.

About fifteen years ago, Charlie Hickenbottom got blasted in Signpost for writing about a beautiful off-trail site, while you were editor. In the dialogue that ensued, Charlie decided not to describe off-trail amenities. I did likewise, deciding not to write about off-trail destinations entirely. This has hampered my contributions to your fine magazine, as over 75% of all the mountain trips I have done in the last two decades have been off-trail. ...

We are faced with increasing overuse of mountain and wilderness destinations close to Puget Sound population centers. Within designated Wilderness, the Forest Service is responding to the problem with increasingly restrictive permit systems.

Outside Wilderness, [many places] will become sacrificial lambs that will get hammered by those displaced from Wilderness destinations. ...

However, other destinations of comparable charm remain to be discovered by individuals who have the ability to explore off-trail and are willing to take the associated risks. But publishing in-

formation about these destinations takes away the element of discovery, while threatening overuse by exposure.

Should off-trail destinations be described and published? That is a question that each of us must answer in regard to destinations that we find. But the larger responsibility rests upon *Pack & Paddle* and editors of other outdoor publications. Until there is understanding of the danger and an agreed policy among the regional press, each magazine editor is faced with their own "publish or perish" dilemma.

I would encourage you to adopt a policy that stops publication of off-trail destinations. And I hope this is a policy that you can push for adoption by all members of the Western Outdoor Writers Association and regional publications.

Until you do, untrailed wilderness destinations will continue to suffer the death of a thousand cuts, word by painful word.

Gerry Ring Erickson
Washington State Representative
Defenders of Wildlife

Ed. Note: You bring up some good points that have caused a lively discussion in the *Pack & Paddle* lunchroom.

MOUNTAIN SCHOLAR

John Roper's article, "Shawatum Mountain and Mount Brice" (*November, page 19*) is magnificent; it chronicles an awesome wilderness outing with scholarly historical and geographical perspective, and in John's enjoyable humorous style.

John and his friend Mitch Blanton are mountain animals; no one I know (especially me) could match their strength and endurance—up to 8000 vertical feet a day in trailless backcountry.

John is my age, which makes his achievements even more remarkable. Keep it up, John, and bring us back more wonderful places in words and photos—places we'll probably never get to see ourselves.

Mick Campbell
Puyallup, Washington

GLOBAL POSITIONING

I found Lee McKee's article on GPS units in the December 1997 issue (*page*

22) to be very informative. When GPS units first came out I thought they were a bit expensive and heavy but at least they could do the one thing that a map and compass can't do for you: give you your location in a dense forest, at night or in a whiteout.

After reading the article, it seems that GPS units can't even perform that function reliably. Not only is there a built in error of 100+ yards, but every so often (and the user never knows exactly when) the unit gives a totally inaccurate reading.

If a trained engineer finds these units difficult to use, I would assume the average hiker would find them daunting. If they are hard to use on a flat beach they must be vastly more difficult to use in the mountains.

There seem to be more features (and thus more complication in using the system) than the average hiker would ever need. An altimeter that tells me I am below sea level is not something I am willing to spend extra bucks for. A function that tells me the straight line distance between 2 points is useless in the real world of switchbacks and cross-country travel.

What I want (are you computer engineers listening out there?) is a simple device I can wear on my wrist and never has to be programmed. The device would have one button and one function. When the button is pushed the unit would display longitude and latitude.

I can live with an error of 100 yards, but I don't want to have to spend two days learning how to use the unit, and I don't want to have to throw out all my old maps and replace them with ones using a new grid system.

Since each new generation of "improved" consumer electronics seems to be more complicated than the one which preceded it, I am not holding my breath waiting for such a unit.

I assume that a small, affordable, user friendly and accurate GPS will be on the market about the same time Saddam Hussein is a guest of honor in the White House.

John Edison
Stanwood, Washington

Ed. Note: See another article on GPS in this issue, page 22.

BACKCOUNTRY NEWS





REPORTS AND CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

See "How to be a Pack & Paddle contributor" on page 3. All readers are encouraged to contribute to *Backcountry News*. Information that is particularly helpful includes: distance & elevation gain, condition of trail or route, hazards such as tidal currents, rockfall, avalanche danger, washouts, bees' nests, etc, and pleasant or fun things you encountered.

Space is limited; we may have to cut your report to fit available space. Typing is not necessary; we can read just about anyone's handwriting. We're interested in ALL trips, easy and hard, ordinary and exotic.

We use the following symbols to help you plan your trips.

-  —Climbing, scrambling, mountaineering, off-trail and cross-country travel.
-  —Hiking, backpacking on trails.
-  —Canoeing, kayaking and water trips.
-  —Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.



PENINSULA



MINK LAKE, LITTLE DIVIDE (USGS Bogachiel Pk, Slide Pk)

Left Aberdeen at 6am and arrived at Mink Lake trailhead in the Sol Duc area about 9. The somewhat rocky trail climbs gently through tall firs and hemlocks. The weather was clear and cool and the trail was frozen in places.

As we approached Mink Lake we scared some ducks from the partially frozen water. The lake sits at about 3000 feet with an old, badly abused shelter sitting in the trees. After taking a few pictures, we headed on up the trail.

Just above Mink Lake is Intermittent Lake. It's more of a marsh than a lake and can't be seen from the trail very well. A little farther up is a nice camp spot near a small tarn. At 4.3 miles the trail intersects the Bogachiel trail at Little Divide.

We went up the Bogachiel trail about

a mile where it opened up to beautiful views of Mount Olympus and the Bailey Range. After lunch, we headed back down the trail a short way where we could almost see Blackwood Lake a thousand feet below us.

Kerry decided a nap in the sun sounded better than climbing back up out of that hole. I went down to find a nice tree lined lake and a perfect camping spot. I would tell you about the fishing in this lake and Mink Lake, but Ann would just edit it out. (Ed. Note: You can't make me feel guilty, Don.)

As I climbed back up to the trail, Kerry was there with water and a book on CPR in case it was needed. Stopping by Mink Lake on our way back we saw two otters breaking up ice as they played in the lake. We counted 16 blow-downs on the trail, most easy to get over or around. Must have been a telephone up there somewhere as we saw two insulators on trees.

We didn't see any other people on the trail that day. We were back at the truck by 4:30 and home by 7:30.—Don Abbott and Kerry Gilles, Grays Harbor, 11/15.

FOX ISLAND (NOAA 18448)

—Our group of 11 single sea kayaks set out under gray and drizzly skies for a circumnavigation of Fox Island. We launched from the Fox Island side of the bridge at the boat launch (see *South Puget Sound Afoot & Afloat* for directions). There are no restrooms!

The tide was over 10 feet and still coming in as we started out on the 10+-nautical-mile paddle. We went clockwise to take advantage of the current which was supposed to be ebbing in

Hale Passage and flooding off the southeast end of the island. We paddled fairly close to shore to sight-see so really didn't get much help, if any, from the Hale Passage current. And when we rounded the southeast end of the island off Toy Point, we found the current had already switched from flood to ebb (about an hour sooner than it should have)—so much for current tables.

We also weren't getting any help from the high tide (13.5 feet at noon) which left virtually no shoreline to land on. Our plan had been to land along the shore at the public fishing pier midway between Toy Point and Gibson Point. The tidelands between Toy Point and a ways to the west of Gibson Point are public. A footpath here goes inland on the west side of the fishing pier to a parking area and restrooms—although the restrooms and the gate from the street to the parking area were locked, probably for the winter.

Hoping for some beach to land on, we continued around Gibson Point and found some exposed gravel that gave us enough of a toe hold to land for a quick lunch.

Setting off again, we had a slight current to paddle against for a ways but it magically went away, and we didn't feel any real affects of current again until we rounded the north end of the island at the top of Hale Passage.

Except for the area between the fishing pier and a ways up the west side of the island past Gibson Point, you'll find a lot of the shoreline has some sort of development. There are several chunks of public tideland, but you'll either need the Washington State Public

BACKCOUNTRY NEWS DEADLINE: January 20

Submit your trail reports by this date for the next issue. (Deadline for other departments is earlier, check with us for details.)

BACKCOUNTRY NEWS

REPORTS AND CONDITIONS

Lands quadrangle from DNR or *Gunk-holing in South Puget Sound* to find them. The easiest to identify is the area around the public fishing pier.

At the takeout I wanted to practice an assisted rescue and our trip coordinator, Kathy, agreed to rescue me. I was dressed for immersion so I wasn't uncomfortable in the 46° water after I turned over and wet-exited.

I hadn't done an assisted rescue practice for awhile and was surprised how rusty I was. After two attempts I was back in my kayak with Kathy's help. Since I was already wet, I flipped again and completed my practice by swimming my kayak to shore. Rescue practice is good, but it sure leaves you with a lot of wet gear!—LGM, Port Orchard, 11/22.

FAY BAINBRIDGE STATE PARK (NOAA 18446)—The plan was simple: launch at Fay Bainbridge State Park, paddle south along the shore to Eagle Harbor, and take out at the landing west of the ferry dock. Shoreline distance was to be a little over 9 nautical miles with a lunch stop at the public tidelands at Manitou Beach in Murden Cove.

Things started according to plan on this rainy morning as 8 of us unloaded our kayaks at the park. The forecast was for winds 10 to 20 knots from the south and wind waves 1 to 2 feet. There was very little wind, though, and just a little chop, so after some discussion we decided to proceed.

The first order of business was to set up the cars for a shuttle. By the time this was done and we were in the water, nearly an hour had passed and conditions were changing. The breeze had turned to a steady wind and the chop had turned to definite waves.

We were soon out of what little protection the shoreline at the launch had provided and slowly clawed our way south. Our group was made up of paddlers of different skills and strengths. After paddling about a mile, the group decided we should save this trip for another day when conditions were better. We turned around.

The waves were now coming off our sterns and pushing us right along. I kept an eye over my shoulder watching for the bigger waves of the sets, ready to brace or make corrective strokes since my long kayak doesn't handle a following sea too well (or maybe it's me that doesn't handle it well). Part way along as I leaned into an approaching larger wave, I forgot to lift my paddle clear of the water in preparation for a brace. I immediately found myself

in a very precarious position. Just by luck I was able to maintain my center of gravity and not go over.

We all arrived safely back at the launch point and decided to proceed northwest along the shore and go around Point Monroe since we were now mostly sheltered from the wind and waves.

A lagoon behind the point can be paddled at high tide. Several of the group paddled into it while the rest of us milled around the entrance. Unfortunately one of our paddlers lost his balance while trying to maneuver his kayak and ended up flipping and wet-exiting. Since we were close to shore, he swam to shore instead of doing an assisted rescue.

After emptying his boat and wringing out some wet clothes, we all decided it was time to call it a day and headed back to the landing. We'll be back another day when conditions are more mellow.—LGM, Port Orchard, 11/29.

PORT WASHINGTON NARROWS (NOAA 18449)

Port Washington Narrows connects Dyes Inlet with Sinclair Inlet. It's around 3½+ nautical miles long and ¼-mile wide. The plan for this Saturday paddle was to launch from the ramp at Tracyton (see *Middle Puget Sound & Hood Canal Afoot & Afloat* for directions) at the north end of the narrows, paddle to the other end of the narrows, have lunch at a restaurant called the Boat Shed, then return.

Current can run fairly strong through the narrows—there are current stations at the north and south entrances—and ideally you would schedule a paddle around the predicted current. But today's paddle was scheduled around lunch which meant we would not have a favorable current, but by paddling close to shore we figured we wouldn't have too big a problem.

What was a potential problem, though, was the fog. It was thick, and I would guess visibility was around 200 to 300 feet. As the eight of us prepared to set off we agreed we would stay close and paddle near the shore for safety.

The water was calm and the air cold. Ducks, geese, herons and kingfishers were in abundance as we made our way. For the whole distance we could see only the shoreline closest to us. The two bridges along the way remained invisible until we were nearly under them.

The Boat Shed is built on pilings over the water, with a pier which usually has a gangway down to a float for boats to tie up to. Unfortunately we found the float gone. The tide was high (12+ feet) so there was no beach to land at either.

A gentleman at the restaurant came to our rescue when he pointed out a small area just north where we could land, one at a time, then lift our boats onto an adjacent flat spot.

That worked great and before long we were seated at a table and ordering. By the time lunch was over, the fog was lifting. Paddling back up the narrows we had views of the Olympics in the distance.

At the takeout three of us were reluctant to call it a day—the sun was out, the water was calm, and the Olympics shined in the distance. So while the others landed we continued into Dyes Inlet. All-in-all a neat December day to be out paddling.—LGM, Port Orchard, 12/6.

LIBERTY BAY (NOAA)

This is basically urban paddling but not as urban as some of the areas in the sound.

Two of us launched from the ramp in downtown Poulsbo (see *Middle Puget Sound & Hood Canal Afoot & Afloat* for directions). The parking around the ramp all has a 3 hour limit so rather than feel rushed we parked along a side street a couple of blocks away. There's a restroom north of the launch in Liberty Bay Park by the marina.

We set off southwest from the launch to cross the bay to the little inlets by Scandia. At a tide of 6.6 feet and rising there was enough water to explore the two small inlets. A small stream enters the head of each of them and one was definitely a spawning stream as evidenced by some decaying salmon carcasses.

Leaving the inlets we turned northward to follow the shoreline to the head of Liberty Bay—the plan being to explore the very end of the bay. Lots of birds were out: ducks, geese, gulls, sandpipers, kingfishers, and herons.

By now the tide was around 7.5 feet—enough to paddle the north end of the bay, but not by much. Unfortunately our exploration was cut short by a culvert where the main road crosses the bay. Maybe some more adventure-some spirit would have been able to negotiate it, but it was *long* and *small*. You would need to scrunch down and use your hands to pull yourself along (and there is a little current to go against). I certainly would *not* recommend doing it!

So we turned and headed back along the eastern shoreline. A short way before town is the American Legion Park, and we stopped to get out and stretch our legs. The beach here can be muddy so you need to choose your landing

BACKCOUNTRY NEWS

REPORTS AND CONDITIONS

spot accordingly. And at higher tides you may not be able to land (the tide now was a little over 8 feet and there was plenty of shoreline exposed). There are picnic facilities and a restroom (which was locked on this winter day).

Back on the water we skirted the Poulsbo Marina and continued to the Poulsbo Yacht Club. With mid-afternoon approaching we decided it was time to call it a day.—LGM, Port Orchard, 12/13.

HURRICANE RIDGE—Barring heavy snows or winter storms, the Hurricane Ridge road will be open 9am to dusk, Friday through Sunday, throughout the snow season. Winter conditions, however, may prevent the road from opening or force an early closure.

On Mondays through Wednesdays, the road will be open only if no plowing or sanding is needed and sufficient staff is available. Call 360-452-0329 for recorded information.

Snowshoe walks are offered on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at 1pm and 2pm through March 29. Sign up at the Hurricane Ridge lodge desk. A \$2 donation for maintenance of the snowshoes is asked.

Entrance fees will be collected throughout the winter.—Ranger, 12/12.

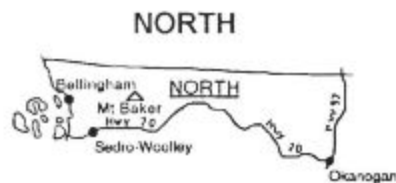
HOH RIVER—Entrance fees will be collected throughout the winter.

BEACH FIRE BAN—A year-round beach fire ban is in effect from Sand Point to Yellow Banks. This is supposedly to protect the revegetation project at Sand Point.

DOSEWALLIPS ROAD—Closed at Park boundary. The hike/ski in to Campground makes a good winter trip.

STAIRCASE—Campground is available for use with no fee, no water. Park

entrance fee will not be collected here until spring.



WELKER PEAK (USGS Lk Shannon)—Scott Bingen and I got the "Welker workout" on this 5587-foot peak east of Baker Dam. Struggling through waist deep powder snow, we managed to climb (swim) the West Face via two parallel gullies.

We parked at around 2000 feet on the Anderson Creek road, about 3.8 miles from the dam. Since 1987, when I first climbed Welker by this approach, a logging road has been built which switchbacks up the west flank. The road is not drivable due to ditches and down trees; however, the best approach is still to climb directly up steep, open timber.

You will cross the logging road three times before reaching the prominent forested ridge at 4000 feet. We left the ridge as it turns east toward the peak and made a descending traverse to the north. The route starts with a 35-degree snow slope which leads to the two gullies. We took the right-hand gully encountering two short sections of ice over rock slabs.

Avoiding the second section, we headed left to the spur ridge separating the two gullies. We followed the left-hand gully climbing three short, difficult steps to reach the top. The time up was about 5 hours. Our descent was by way of the southwest gully.—Dallas Kloke, Anacortes, 12/12.

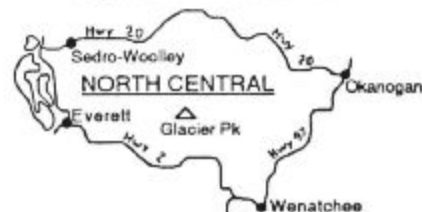
NORTH CASCADES HIGHWAY—At press time, highway was closed temporarily. Permanent closure is expected at any time.—12/17.

METHOW VALLEY—At press time, the upper valley had about a foot of snow. That's not quite enough to groom, so the trails are being packed. Grooming will take place as soon as a little more snow accumulates.

Rendezvous, Schafer Ranch, and Thompson Ridge trails are the best skiing (most snow) right now. Trail fees won't be charged until most of the trails are groomed.

A trail shuttle service is supposed to start in the valley this winter. For current info, call MVSTA, 800-682-5787, or your innkeeper.—12/17.

NORTH CENTRAL



CAMANO ISLAND STATE PARK (USGS Langley, Juniper Bch)—Taking advantage of yet another beautiful November day, Heather and I set out for a short hike at this small state park. We were looking for a leg stretcher after running a 5 mile race in Mount Vernon earlier in the day.

A new loop trail has been constructed at the park that when combined with the beach makes for a nice hike of 5 or more miles. We started at the North Beach, proceeded to the trail to the campground and then took the loop trail back to the beach. This trail is not in Mueller's Washington State Parks book, for it was constructed recently. New maps are posted at park info kiosks.—Craig Romano, Seattle, 11/15.

GOAT LAKE (USGS Sloan Pk, Bedal)—Heather and I, along with fellow adventurer Celia, had the entire lake, trail, and, I imagine, Jackson Wilderness to ourselves today. This trail sees hordes of packers in the summer—but in December, solitude was our gift.

The trail is dry, in wonderful shape and still 100% snow free. New snow draped the towering surrounding peaks—but the lake was ice- and snow-free.

We found a sunny spot to relax but had to move a couple of times as the low sun darted behind ridges on several occasions. Once we were out of the sun, a light cool breeze reminded us that it was late in the season.

With the alder trees bare of foliage, the trail is exceptionally scenic right now—offering alpine glimpses that are usually hidden during summer.—Craig Romano, Seattle, 12/5.

BLANCA LAKE (USGS Blanca Lk)—We had heard a lot about Blanca Lake. It is frequently led by Mountaineers groups. We saw about a dozen people this day. I do not know what the attraction is for this hike. The trail was not good, lots of roots and rocks. The last mile, from Virgin Lake, barely qualifies as a trail.

It was a nice sunny day but very cool. All the muddy places were frozen solid which was good. Crystals of water pushed up as much as 7" in the dirt.

ALWAYS CARRY THE TEN ESSENTIALS

1. extra food
2. extra clothing
3. map
4. compass
5. knife
6. matches
7. fire starter
8. first aid kit
9. sun protection
10. flashlight

BACKCOUNTRY NEWS

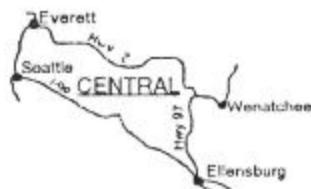
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Virgin Lake, 4550 feet, was frozen solid and we had an enjoyable time "skating" on the lake. We had about 800 pounds total in one spot and it didn't make a crack in the ice.

I can see that there are good views of Columbia, Kyes and Monte Cristo from Blanca but the lake itself isn't that great. Of course, having to negotiate ice-covered rock in a couple of places and a number of downed trees didn't add to the charm.

A couple of tiny snow patches at high point of 4600 feet. 24 hours later there was 2 feet of snow here. Trail scale: 2. —Edythe, Judy, Larry, Mary, Rick, from Aberdeen, Olympia, Mill Creek, 11/16.

CENTRAL



GRAND RIDGE (USGS Fall City)—Tired of Tiger Mountain and its trails? Try Grand Ridge, just north, right across the I-90 freeway, a quick, but decent workout, close to town.

You could park with the hoards at Tiger's blocks-long lot, but even better is a trailhead parking area on the north side of I-90. Walk back toward Issaquah on the old railroad bed about a hundred yards, past the buildings above you on your right (including a church).

Find a scratch trail here and follow it up close to the High Point houses, then strike uphill through the pretty much open Oregon grape and salal understory of big second growth.

After 850 feet of gain, and after passing several fallen TV antennas, you'll find yourself on the top of 1291-foot Grand Ridge, South Peak, easily recognizable from I-90, from Issaquah or Preston.

Does Ken Behring still own and plan to develop this double-hump wilderness? And what about Fall City? Would a climber dare live in a town with this name?—Sue Doenim, Wallingford, 11/23.

Ed. Note: According to an article by Kathy George in the P-I of 11/26, the Grand Ridge owner, Port Blakely Communities, will develop 352 acres with up to 3950 dwellings. They are able to do that because they have just donated 1250 acres of Grand Ridge open space to King County and another 275 acres to the city of Issaquah. The huge tract will become the county's fourth-largest park and provide a key link in the regional trail network.

The county is calling the donated land "Grand Ridge Park," even though the development is now called "Issaquah Highlands."



WEST TIGER MOUNTAIN (USGS Hobart)—Goran and I met at the new High Point trailhead at 9am and decided to take the TMT until we got to the Railroad Grade trail where we hung a left. We followed this trail until we got to the Dick Heintz

trail that leads to West Tiger 1. This trail follows the northwest ridge.

The summit is now fully gated and fenced with a bypass trail around.

From West Tiger 1 the trail follows the Tiger Mountain road down until a gated road on the right takes you up to West Tiger 2. From West Tiger 2 a signed trail takes you to West Tiger 3. The views this day were spectacular; downtown Seattle was as clear as a bell. The Olympic Range had a mantle of cloud and Mount Rainier had a stormy, wintry look.

The trail down from West Tiger 3 is the Tradition Lake trail back to the trailhead. Total gain 3300 feet; highest point 2948 feet at West Tiger 1; distance for this route is about 11 miles.

An excellent hike on good trails all the way to West Tiger 1. The logging around this peak has made the road very muddy.—Fred Redman, Woodinville, 11/18.



MOUNT PHELPS (USGS Mt Phelps)

—Taking advantage of this spectacular weather window, Ihab, Ryan, Jamie and I (plus dogs) were primed for a fine autumn ascent. Clearly visible from Seattle, Mount Phelps is one of the more prominent peaks on the eastern horizon, identified by its bulky, protruding silhouette.

To get there, follow the North Fork Snoqualmie River road until it crosses Lennox Creek and the road splits. Take the left branch (5730) several miles to another left, road 113, which should be passable for most cars.

Park near where a spur road juts sharply to the right, directly below the saddle between Mount Phelps and McLain Peak, elevation 2650 feet. (As noted before, the peaks have been flip-flopped on both the USGS and Green Trails maps).

We hiked the road, which is drivable (4WD) but not worth the effort, until it halted at the abandoned Blackhawk mine. We found a slight trail to the right and skirted the covered mine entrance. After ascending a short section, we broke out into a clearcut and followed the flagged climbers' trail, sparse at times, up the ridge.

Layers of clothes were shed in the warm sunshine, while the dogs yearned for a cool stream—could this be our summer? We exited the clearcut into the forest, where the boot-beaten trail continued, contouring toward the saddle.

We entered a brush-choked basin, followed by an open talus area, which gave tantalizing views of the upper mountain. From here, we split up: I led



Lee McKee

Happy skiers at Rendezvous Hut.

the dogs up a steep streambed to find a few drinking pools (for the dogs, not me), while my companions continued to near the saddle (4200 feet).

They caught up to me on the ridge and we hiked northeast toward the summit. The ridge was a steep, but pleasant, assortment of heather, brush, rocks, and slippery needles. We rounded the summit knob and topped out, 5535 feet.

We were greeted with a stupendous panoramic view, some of the clearest summit weather I've seen all year. The vista included the Olympics and Tolt reservoir to the west, Red Mountain, Mount Index, and Mount Baker to the north, precipitous McLain Peak directly to the southwest, and layers of blue-shaded peaks and ridges to our east. Including a sun-baked summit nap, we stayed on top for an hour and a half.

A cold wind blew in, however, and we reluctantly headed down, knowing that not many of these kind of days remained this year. 2900 feet elevation gain, 3 hours up, 2¼ hours down—Eric Keeler, Seattle, 11/15.

✓ MOUNT SI (USGS Mt Si)—

A good turnout of 9 intrepid Kenworth Engineers and guests for an ascent of Mount Si on an evening when we knew we would need lights before we reached the base of the Haystack.

We had decided to take the old trail, from the Little Si trailhead. Exit I-90 at 436th Avenue and turn left. Turn left on North Bend Way, then right on Mount Si road. As soon as you cross the bridge over the Snoqualmie river turn left, then left again into a small parking lot next to the river. On nice weekend days this lot can be full. Go back over the bridge and park on the shoulder, south of the signs that say "No parking north of here."

As we walked down the street a local resident called, "You're going to have to walk fast to get back before dark."

The trail starts on the right with a good sign that takes you between two properties. The trail climbs a steep section of old logging road. When the road bed levels off look for a trail on the left. Take it until you come to another road (actually the same road you just cut a big loop out of), turn right. Now look for another trail on your left. There are a lot of small tree trunks across the trail but just step over them. Now you are on the trail. In my opinion it's a much nicer hike than the main thoroughfare.

We had to get out the headlamps at about 3000 feet. When we broke out of the trees at the rocks we could nearly

see by the light of the moon, but the wind was cold.

The view from the bench was well worth the effort, a crystal clear night, full moon, and as many electric lights as you would wish to see. It had taken us 2 hours, 7 minutes.

The group had got strung-out and by the time we set off down, four of the group had not arrived at the bench.

Jack was waiting at the last trees. I asked, "Where is Ryan?" to which Jack replied, "He went up a little while ago." He had not arrived at the bench. Rich and I ran back up to the intersection of the Bench-Haystack trail and started calling his name.

We guessed he had missed the turn, and sure enough his light appeared at the saddle, on his way down to us. He said, "I guessed something was wrong when I had to start using my hands to climb the gully."

We made it back to the two cars about 7:45 to find a notice on our windows warning us of legal action the next time they were parked after dark.

The next day I called the DNR telephone number listed on the notice to find out what was going on. The lady I talked to knew about the notices but couldn't answer any questions. She took my number and said someone from the North Bend office would call me.


Later in the morning Jim Matthews called. To make a long conversation short, DNR is trying to appease the local residents who claim we hikers are disruptive after dark, because we get their dogs barking. Anyone who hikes that road to the trailhead is fully aware of the dogs, on the street, no leash, that bark and snap at your heels, in daylight.

Jim said the person who puts the notices on the cars is a local "volunteer." He also said the area is a Conservation Area and the DNR don't want anyone camping overnight. It's a Day-Use Only area.

He sympathized with me and said, "The car park doesn't belong to DNR. It is King County property; they just tolerate it's use as a parking area. Can't you find somewhere else to park?"

"We could park on the street," I told him, "but that adds hazards to everyone using the Mount Si road, and we would still be walking past all the houses."

He was obviously between a rock and a hard spot, and told me DNR had bought some land for a parking lot and new trailhead, but didn't know when it would be ready.—Fred Redman, 11/13.

 **POINT 5520+, RAINBOW LAKE** (USGS Snoqualmie Pass, Bandera)—This peak is about ¾-

mile northwest of Granite Mountain and is very similar in size and elevation.

Three cars were at the Talapus Lake trailhead on this sunny Thursday. I was soon at the junction with Pratt trail 1007. After a few minutes' travel north I left the trail and headed east straight up the hill through trees. This was not a good idea, as I ended up stuck in the middle of an impossible thicket of brush, including stickers and devils club.

I worked my way up and out of this mess, managing to sustain only minor scratches on legs and arms (leather gloves protected my hands). From here I scrambled on steep rocks to the ridge.

On this west-northwest-facing ridge was much easier travel. What a relief! I kept going up to the top where it was cold and windy. The views, of course, are comparable to Granite Mountain, except they include Granite and the lookout.

Returning, I scrambled straight down the ridge to where it levelled (4500 feet), then hung a left down to the trail. This was a pretty good route, with only light brush here and there.

With an hour of light left at 4pm, I decided to visit Rainbow Lake. I inspected the peaceful camps here in the twilight, then headed back by flashlight (I carry four this time of year). The highlight of the return was Talapus Lake beautifully lit by the moon.—Ron Rugg, Seattle, 11/13.

✓ KEECHELUS RIDGE (USGS Stampede Pass)—

Goran and I took our hiking gear and our skis. We left I-90 at exit 54—no snow at the Gold Creek Sno-Park—and drove road 4934. As we gained elevation the depth of snow increased until at 3900 feet we couldn't get any farther. We were about a mile short of the Lake Margaret trailhead. The wheel ruts from the previous day had frozen and my 4-wheel drive doesn't help on ice.

We donned our skis and set off up the road avoiding the ruts. We turned

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left on road 4948. This road goes all the way over to Kachess Lake, and we kept going until we could see down into the Kachess Valley.

It snowed steadily as we climbed but stopped by the time we took our break and turned around. The tire tracks from the previous day went all the way to the summit. What a mess they had made—a trail of empty beer cans, beer bottles and cigarette packs marked their route.

Our descent would have been great but for the tire tracks. I like to have lots of room for my snowplow! The snow was melting rapidly as we descended and the gravel road showed through in the bottom of the tire tracks. My skis were drawn to these like a moth to light; consequently I did a couple of face plants.

The round trip was about 10 miles and 1800 feet elevation gain.—Fred Redman, Goran Granberg, Woodinville, 11/24.

4 ROCKS 3 STONES HILL (USGS Davis Pk)—It's raining, it's pouring and the old man was ready to hike. Started east. The farther we went the dryer it became. Turned left at Cle Elm and headed up into the Salmon la Sac country. The temperature plummeted to 32 degrees, snow covered the road at the Guard Station and a snow hike was imminent.

After passing the Salmon la Sac guard station, the snow got too deep for our vehicle, so we dodged into a logging spur one mile past the Ranger Station after an almost-head-on with a frisky snowmobiler.

At the spur we parked and hiked up the road in 12" of nice snow. At the road's end, we continued up a gully. Soon we were confronted with a ridge line of jagged rocks and a thick stand of timber. We stayed to the right and tramped through deeper snow until the ridge. Postholing slowed us down, but it was fun.

When we reached the ridge, we could look into and over a watershed. It had been clearcut and roads below us invited us to explore. Daylight did not permit further exploring, so we climbed to the highest point on that ridge to a peak. At the top was a three foot ground-level rock with four large rocks set like a campfire ring on top. In the six-inch

center were three stones. Therefore the name of the peak. The total hike was only 3 miles round trip with a 510-foot gain, but for a late afternoon hike, it was fun.

When we arrived back on the west side of the mountains, it was weather as normal, rain.—Wanderbuns and Shortstop, 11/29.

SCOTTISH LAKES—High Camp has 40 inches of snow, 18 of them new since Saturday.

All trails are open and backcountry routes are marked. A new route has been developed down the mountain, using the Roadrunner and Coulter Creek trails as well as parts of the road. It lets you ski all the way down mountain (snow level permitting) without having to travel the last few miles on the road. Of course, skiing the road is still an option for those who prefer it, and transportation is available for those who don't want to ski down.

New this year are an additional guest cabin and a wood-fired sauna. The sauna is proving to be very popular and it is reserved by sign-up to avoid crowding.

For information on facilities (a great place for families and kids), prices and reservations, call 888-9HI-CAMP.—Don Hanson, 12/17.

ENCHANTMENTS—For 1998 permits, call the Ranger Station to be put on a mailing list for the new mail-in application and information sheet: 509-548-6977. Permits are required from 6/15 through 10/15.—Ranger, 12/2.

NORTHEAST



MISSION PEAK (USGS Mission Peak)—Less than a mile from the top of chair 2 at Mission Ridge ski area, Mission Peak offers views down to the Columbia River, over 6000 feet below. When the Liberty/Beehive Road is drivable, the summit can be reached in about one hour from a junction in section 22.

Janet Stanek and I made the trip to the summit on a cold, but sunny day, with views including Rainier, Stuart, and the Enchantments. We enjoyed hiking a portion of the Hog Loppet, a winter ski trek between Mission Ridge ski area and Swauk Pass made annually by hundreds during a Saturday in February. The volcanic basalt beds in the area provide a sharp contrast with the surrounding forested areas.

When the Liberty/Beehive Road isn't available, the trip could also be started from a lower footing at the Mission Ridge ski area parking lot.—Charlie Hickenbottom, Wenatchee, 11/15.



Grant Myers

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A Mountaineers Club group on Snoqualmie Mountain.

SOUTH CENTRAL



TWIN FALLS, MOUNT WASHINGTON TRAIL

(USGS Chester Morse Lk)—An easy hike to Twin Falls, then up to the RR Grade and up the Mount Washington trail to the overlook. Sounded great for the Kenworth Engineers hikers.

A good turnout of twelve, three announcing they would go only to the RR Grade. We set off in a steady rain. The trail to the falls was in excellent condition, and the falls were spectacular.

By the time we got to the RR Grade it was dusk. The trail stays on old logging roads and was relatively easy to follow, even when it got dark, and no one wanted to be the first to break out a light. Must be a guy thing.

Eventually we had to get out lights and we continued up until the main trail makes a right turn at a headwall; a small track goes to the left that climbs around the left side of the cliff. We stopped once we could see the lights of North Bend from a vantage point part way up the cliff.

Turned around and headed back to the cars. Even in the dark the trail was easy to follow.—Fred Redman, Woodinville, 11/20.

CEDAR BUTTE (USGS Bander)

This diminutive summit, 1880+ feet, visible to the south from I-90 just east of North Bend, makes a pleasant winter destination. With a user-friendly round-trip gain of only about 1000 feet and distance of 3.6 miles, Cedar provides nice views to the north and east from its partially forested top. Mounts Si, Teneriffe and Washington, Mailbox Peak and Russian Buttes stand out among many others. Through the trees are glimpses of Chester Morse Lake, the seldom seen Seattle water supply.

Cedar Butte is a blob on the west ridge of Mount Washington. It has about 400 feet of prominence on the east, but 800 feet or more on its other sides. From northwest to northeast its slopes are very steep; the other aspects are moderate to gentle.

John Roper, noted climber of most peaks in Washington including several difficult first ascents, humbly selected Cedar Butte as his 1000th named sum-

mit in the state so that family, friends and kids could celebrate with him (*Signpost*, June '91, page 23).

From Exit 32 on I-90, take Cedar Falls road south for 2.7 miles. Just before Rattlesnake Lake, turn left on a woods road which is now gated. Walk the road southeast .2-mile to the trail which bears east. The path follows the cement post and barbed-wire fence erected by the Cedar River Watershed, passing by a lake and under a power line. At .6-mile from the car intercept the old railroad grade, now called the Ironhorse Trail. Follow this straight northeast, where you see Cedar Butte directly ahead. At .9-mile, stop on the trestle over Boxley Creek; the sound of rushing water may bring to mind the churning of the great locomotives that once passed here on their climb to Snoqualmie Pass. At 1 mile, leave the railroad grade on an obvious trail to the right. Climb through partially logged woods, then denser forest, reaching the top at 1.8 miles.—Mick Campbell, Puyallup, 12/12.

MIRROR, COTTONWOOD LAKES (USGS Lost Lk)

Heather and I set out for a nice afternoon hike on an absolutely beautiful, albeit cold November day. We hiked to Cottonwood Lake, beginning on the road about 1/2-mile below the trailhead and just beyond Lost Lake. This trail is short—about 1 mile—but very scenic: old growth forest, a cascading creek, and little Cottonwood Lake.

We continued past Cottonwood to the PCT and hiked to much larger and even more scenic Mirror Lake. A cool breeze met us at the lake, but we found a wonderful spot to absorb the late afternoon sun. Absolutely no snow anywhere, nor people as well. We continued south on the PCT through the adjacent clearcuts that mar much of this part of the Cascades, and hiked down a logging road back to our car to complete a 4 mile loop.

I'm interested in returning to this area and hiking the abandoned trail to Meadow Mountain. Anyone out there have any info that might aid me?—Craig Romano, Seattle, 11/14.

HUCKLEBERRY CREEK (USGS Clearwest Pk, Sunrise)

—The report in the December issue said that the distance from the Huckle-

berry Creek bridge to the Park boundary was 12 miles. This should be 2 miles.—Madeleine Beaty, Federal Way.

MAZAMA RIDGE (USGS

Mt Rainier East)—Party of 9 to Mazama Ridge, about a 3- to 4-mile round trip with about 500 feet of elevation gain. First snowshoer sinks in about 6 inches but there is a firm layer at that depth.

Forecast afternoon sun did not appear. Sleet when we arrived at Paradise changed to snow showers for rest of day, limited visibility, fog enshrouded mountain, not unusual.

For the second time in a week met Ake and Bronka Sundstrom. If you are the first skier out in the morning keep your tracks the right width or be chastised (nicely) by this diminutive duo. Avid skiers, snowshoers and hikers the couple went to Camp Muir 38 times last summer. Amazing!—Paul Schaufler, Olympia, 11/30.

REFLECTION LAKES

(USGS Mt Rainier East)—Arrive Paradise 9:45am; parking area swarming with student snowshoers. This party of seven heads down the Paradise Valley road on the same snow we traveled on last week, about 40 inches of it, slightly more compacted.

Bulk of traffic is headed up Mazama so we are alone as we continue to the decision point; drop down to lower road, cross steep slope above Inspiration Point or take avalanche avoidance trail over the toe of Mazama Ridge.

Opt for latter since no other members of the party had ever been over that route and wanted to check it out. It is steep, narrow, and this day, icy. Not skiable for a recreational cross-country skier like me. Good cleats on snowshoes prove helpful.

Lunch at Reflection Lake out of the wind, delightful setting. Lake looks tempting but doubt it would support snowshoes or skis. Head up toward The Castle in unsuccessful search for glissades. Time runs out so back to the road and to Narada Falls via the Stevens Canyon road and Wonderland Trail. Had left car there on way up to carry drivers back up the hill so we could have an essentially downhill trip, pretty lazy.

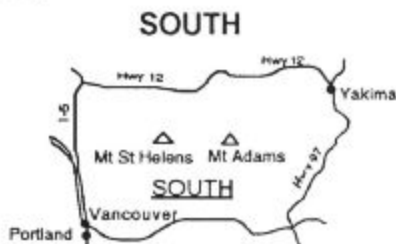
By the time the day was over (3:30pm) about 3 inches of new snow had accumulated on the Stevens Canyon road. Do these folks put up with me because I have a lifetime pass or do they need someone who is chronologically challenged to provide diversity?—Paul Schaufler, Olympia, 12/7.

Back issues are available.
Write or call
for ordering information.

BACKCOUNTRY NEWS

REPORTS AND CONDITIONS

✓ **MOUNT TAHOMA TRAILS**—The winter season starts December 20th, and the office will be staffed weekends from that date until the end of March. For recorded information, call 360-569-2451, or stop in at the office at Whittaker's Bunkhouse in Ashford.—12/17.



✓ **COLUMBIA HILLS** (*USGS Stacker Butte, The Dalles North*)—Acting on information provided by *Pack & Paddle* (July '97, page 29), Heather and I set out to explore this new state park.

Dalles Mountain Ranch is a 3400-acre state park that borders the 338-acre Horsethief Lake State Park to the south and DNR's 3100-acre Columbia Hills Scenic Special Area to the north. As of yet, no trails have been developed in the park, but a gated primitive road leads through the heart of the park and preserve ending at an FAA transmitter on the 3000+-foot summit of a Columbia Hills Peak.

We hiked the 3-mile road to the summit, passing stands of Oregon oak and then to the upper open grassy slopes of the Columbia Hills. Great views of Mounts Hood and Adams as well as the Columbia River Gorge and the smaller



Chair Peak in winter.

gorge of the Klickitat River.

The weather was raw, windy, and cold and we just escaped the incoming rain.—Craig Romano, Seattle, 11/22.

✓ **HORSETHIEF BUTTE** (*USGS Stacker Butte*)—Horsethief Butte is a 500-foot basaltic monolith that rises above the Columbia River in the arid eastern half of the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. A short ½-mile trail leads to the butte from where you can strike off in many directions scrambling the butte's many walls, fissures, and pinnacles. This is a great place to practice climbing/scrambling techniques and this time of year sees no rattlesnakes!

The views of Mount Hood, the Columbia River and the Columbia Hills are splendid.—Craig Romano, Seattle, 11/22.

✓ **GIFFORD PINCHOT NF**—Warm temps and hard rain have melted most of the thin snow pack. No grooming has started at Sno-Parks. Skiers and snowshoers can reach deeper snow on Mount St Helens by hiking upslope.—Ranger, 12/17.

OREGON

✓ **WAHCLELLA FALLS, ELOWAH FALLS**—Heather and I started by hiking to Wahclella Falls up the Tanner Creek Canyon (exit 40, I-84). This is a beautiful 1-mile trail along Tanner Creek to the base of a spectacular waterfall in a region known for spectacular falls. The loop is not possible right now because the bridge over Tanner Creek has been destroyed by flooding.

We retraced our route and then hiked 3 miles west on trail 400, the Columbia Gorge Trail to John Yeon State Park, home of yet another spectacular waterfall, Elowah Falls. The Gorge trail is an easy relaxing hike if you don't mind a little freeway noise and at this time of the year, a little mud. The crossing of Moffett Creek is also a little tricky this time of year too, but not impossible.

We ended our trek west at the base of Elowah, for the bridge across McCord Creek was also destroyed by recent flooding. The total out and back hike to the two falls is about 8.25 miles. This is a great winter hiking option.—Craig Romano, Seattle, 11/29.

ARIZONA

✓ **BLUFF SPRING LOOP** (*Superstition Wilderness*)—Sun and perfect weather makes a nice hik-

ing vacation in late November. Claudia and I drove from Phoenix to the Peralta Trailhead in an hour and 15 minutes. This is desert mountain country.

We took a counterclockwise loop, starting with the Dutchman's trail through a basin toward Cathedral Rock, turning north up Miner's canyon. Surrounded by all kinds of cactus, including the familiarly shaped saguaro cactus, we reached Miner's Summit and then descended into Bluff Spring Canyon. We turned left going west with 4553-foot Weavers Needle in the background.

The last leg was down Barks Canyon. We passed between large rock formations as we headed back to the trailhead. 9.5 miles in 5 hours. This is a fine hike. Take lots of water.—Chuck & Claudia Pettis, Medina. 11/28.

CALIFORNIA

✓ **FERN CANYON, GOLD BLUFFS BEACH**—Heather and I took a mini-trip to the California redwoods to run in the Humboldt Redwoods Half-marathon, and to hike, of course!

Beautiful weather, quiet campgrounds, and virtually no one on the trails—this area is a must-see in the off-season. We camped at the Elk Prairie Campground (yes, the elk were out, and lots of California quail too!)—a great base for explorations in the park. We completed a 10-mile loop that took us down the Miners Ridge trail, to the Gold Bluffs Beach and back through Fern Canyon and the James Irvine trail back to the campground.

The trails are in exceptionally good shape—however stream restoration is going on near the end of the Miners Ridge trail causing some big muddy areas. The foot bridges in Fern Canyon have been removed for the season, but during low water there are no great difficulties hopping rocks and crossing logs. Oh yeah, and lots and lots of giant old-growth, beautiful redwoods, Dou-

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Write:

Pack & Paddle
PO Box 1063

Port Orchard WA 98366

e-mail:

pack&paddle@visnetinc.com


Phone:

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BACKCOUNTRY NEWS


REPORTS AND CONDITIONS

glas-firs and Sitka spruces. —Craig Romano, Seattle, 10/17.

 **BIG TREE AREA, ALBEE CREEK LOOP**—This was an easy day for us hiking about 5.5 miles on some pretty loops. We were saving ourselves for tomorrow's 13.1 mile road race on the Avenue of the Giants.

The Big Tree Area is located on the Mattole Road. The log across Bull Creek was still in place, and the Giant Tree is still supreme (I believe it is the second tallest tree in the world!).

We hiked along Bull Creek to the Grasshopper Mountain road. This section of trail is lovely—I felt as though I were hiking through a Tolkien novel. We continued up to the open fields of the Albee Creek campground and then back to the Big Tree on the opposite side of Bull Creek. This is a lovely loop with options to extend it in many directions. —Craig Romano, Seattle, 10/18.

 **PRAIRIE CREEK, WEST RIDGE TRAIL LOOP**—Today's 10 mile loop was for working off the lactic acid that we had accrued from yesterday's successful run.

The Prairie Creek trail begins at the visitor center near the campground and follows its namesake for 4½ lovely miles. The creek is crossed several times on permanent bridges. This trail


is probably one of the finest in the park and it is flat!

For our return we climbed the short but steep Zig Zag trail number 2 to connect with the West Ridge trail. This trail follows its namesake for 4 miles before dropping back down to creek level. The forest along the ridge contrasts nicely with the one in the valley. Both forests contain hundreds of giant ancient redwoods—but the ridge forest is drier, more open and shared with giant Douglas-firs as well. This is a great loop for nature study and photography. —Craig Romano, Seattle, 10/20.

YOSEMITE—Construction on Highway 140 between El Portal and Yosemite Valley will impact travel this winter and spring. It's possible the road will be open only a few hours each day through April 15.

From April 15 through late May, delays of up to one hour are possible. Take an alternate route, or check for current road information before you go. Call Yosemite at 209-372-0200; road information at 800-427-7623.

CHINA

 **THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA**—An incredible trail in all respects, starting with the "no rules" form of Chinese cab driving to

Badaling, the most popular tourist spot accessing the Great Wall.

The 100-yard walk to the "trailhead" passes Chinese food shops and all kinds of trinkets and souvenirs. The Great Wall is a 25-foot-high, 18-foot-wide paved "trail" over 3900 miles long. Add to this that the wall stays right on the crest, no traverses in sight. Imagine the PCT with a paved walkway on the Cascade backbone.

A true crest trail, in places, the wall is very steep with footworn stairs. Only hiked up about a mile, but it looks like one could hike it forever. Anyone ever done so?—Chuck Pettis, Medina, 11/8.

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FOR SALE—Transceiver, F2 Ortovox, dual frequency (457 and 2275kHz). Bought 1994 for \$240. Minimal use works fine. \$100 firm. Call Jim Abbie, 360-675-0278 (Oak Harbor).

FOR SALE—Camp Trails Vagabond pack in new condition (used on four urban hikes). The pack converts to a suitcase with a zippered flap which can be used to enclose the hip and shoulder straps. Will not fit a person over 6 feet. Perfect for carry-on air travel and light mountain hiking. Original price was \$150. Will take \$50. 206-644-4007 (Seattle).

FOR SALE—Koflach plastic mountaineering double boots. Excellent condition, used on two climbs. Men's size

eleven. Vibram soles. \$175 new. *Pack & Paddle* reader can have for \$15 to cover my postage and packaging. Larry Smith, 360-895-4710 (Port Orchard).

FOR SALE—Two trained pack llamas with great pack system. 360-425-6495 (Kelso).

FOR SALE—Book: last 40 copies of *North Cascades Highway Guide*, 2nd edition. 63 pages; 30 trail descriptions. \$4.50 (includes postage and handling).

Fred Darvill, 1819 Hickox Rd, Mount Vernon WA 98274.

INFORMATION PLEASE—Seek info on continuous north-south route through the Rocky Mountains from Canada to Mexico. FarWalker, PO Box 553, Hadlock WA 98339.

FOUND—Camera at the toilet at Snow Lake trailhead in October. Identify to claim. Call Art at 425-888-6518.

FOUND—Tent fly on Mildred Lakes

waytrail, 9/21. Identify to claim. Call Joe at 360-871-0291 (Port Orchard).

FOUND—Jacket near Ingalls Lake. Identify to claim. Call 360-754-7203.

WINTER CLIMBS—The 2nd edition of Winter Climbs: One Day Ascents is now available. This paperback guide covers mountains for the climber, snowshoer and skier from the Canadian border to Snoqualmie Pass area.

The revised guide has over 160 peaks with info on location, access, route(s), time, and avalanche hazard. The cost including mailing is \$12.00.

Write to: **Dallas Kloke, 4012 M Ave, Anacortes WA 98221-3350.**

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INTERESTED IN HIGH LAKE FISHING? Washington State Hi-Lakers club meets third Wednesday of each month at Mercerview Community Center, 7:30pm. For information, call George Bucher, 425-821-5752 (Kirkland).

DENNIS & PAT ✓

Misadventures in Muncaster Basin

—IN THE OLYMPICS WITH A CALIFORNIA MIND-SET—

It has been said that as you get older, you get wiser. After 30 years of backpacking, I'm beginning to wonder.

Pat and I spent the summer on the John Muir Trail in California where the sun almost always shines, the altitude is high and you lighten your packs as much as possible. We came home at the end of August 1997 to do a six-day cross-country trip into Muncaster Basin in the Olympics with Jon Pollack.

The five-day forecast predicted sunshine and eighty degree days, so we didn't alter our California packs. We left out the usual plastic liners in our sleeping bag and Thermarest stuff sacks. We didn't change the worn out and holey garbage sacks that lined our packs.

We didn't bring a tarp to cook under when the rain is pelting down. We didn't bring a double set of extra clothes to replace the rapidly mildewing ones we wore. These are all standards for Washington backpacking, but we had a California forecast and a California mind set.

We hiked up the Enchanted Valley trail to Fire Creek and headed up the ridge a bit to the right of the creek following elk trails at first up the steep slopes. This was followed by a section of brush-bashing and slogging over downed trees.

When we crossed the small side creek coming in from the right, I did a bit of scouting and found a good elk trail angling over toward Fire Creek again. At 3600 feet we started to break into small meadows.

We also noticed that our sun was gone and the building clouds were beginning to toss out a few drops of rain. Our goal was the meadow at the head of the creek at 4000 feet, but wisdom and weariness prevailed.

We stopped at the first acceptable site, set up camp, cooked dinner, and crawled in just as the skies opened up. It rained hard for about four hours. We were somewhat dismayed to discover our California tent was leaking a bit at a couple of seams. We cursed ourselves for believing the weather forecasters.



Looking back at "Fire Creek Pass" from Muncaster Basin.

The storm blew through by morning. We climbed through considerably wetter brush to the headwaters of Fire Creek in the meadows at 4000 feet. This would be a great place to camp.

There seemed to be two possible routes up the headwall, with a small rock buttress between them. After embarrassing ourselves with several inept attempts to take compass bearings (it's definitely a good idea to brush up on this skill before going cross-country!), I decided to scout the steep hillside to the left which appeared to be the correct route.

I found an excellent elk/boot track on the far left edge of that face, and one blazed tree. I popped out above the headwall into a flat area and looked up the draw all the way to the pass that led into Muncaster Basin.

Fortunately for us the gully was full of snow and another hour of fairly easy climbing got us to the pass. When the snow is gone there is a track on the left edge of the gully, very doable, but harder than just going up the snow.

The north side of the pass was still full of snow, but it was an easy down. Muncaster Basin itself is a beautiful place, with meadows and streams, great views, super campsites. We spent the afternoon soaking up the sun and drying out some slightly damp gear.

Our third day was again sunny and beautiful. We leisurely walked the ridge above Noname Creek, soaking in the solitude and views, watching bears feed on the hillsides, identifying familiar Olympic peaks and valleys, reminiscing about favorite Olympic trips.

We popped over a pass left of Peak 5333 and contoured to Lake 5003. Here we ran into some cliffs, but found a way to drop below the lake and back up after a short bit of backtracking. Then we traversed through meadows to the tarn at 5000 feet above Lake Danton, hoping to camp there. It wasn't too attractive so we dropped down to Danton.

The day ended with a few mare's tails floating across the blue sky. Mare's tails usually signal a weather change within 24 hours, but the morning of day four dawned cloudless. We briefly talked about going out a day early because of that impending weather change, but this was our planned lay-over day and the basin seduced us.

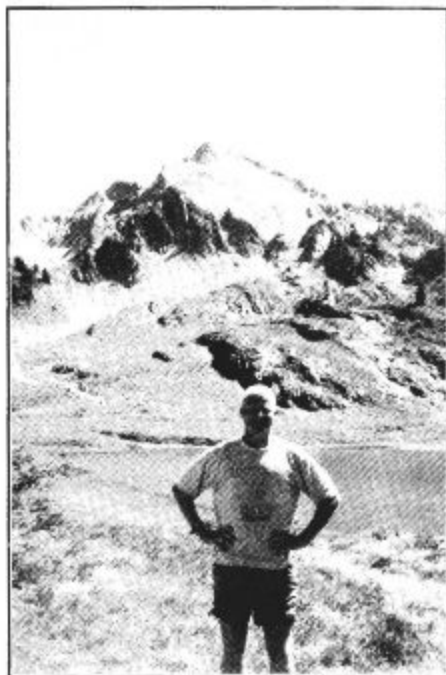
On day five, we woke early to darkening skies. We hastily broke camp and headed for Pyrites Pass. It was such a short distance on the map!

Three hours later, exhausted after battling through ugly, ugly gullies and listening to the thunder crash around us, we got there. It started to rain and didn't stop until long after dark.

From Pyrites Pass the route traverses a long mile or so (on elk trails if you're lucky) across the upper basin heading southeast. It passes just under a rock buttress and crosses the two side streams coming off Peak 6049 at about 4400 feet. This is about the only decent place to cross these creeks. They're in steep gullies everywhere else.

From here you head west toward Py-

Jon Pollack



Dennis and Pat

Jon, 10th of June Peak, and Lake Danton.

rites Creek and down. Sounds easy. Traversing through steep, dry meadows and brush is slightly miserable. Doing it in a downpour is seriously miserable.

The footing was terrible. Everything was slippery and wet. Our minds immediately started to dream up scenarios of broken ankles and worse. Every step required serious concentration. We were rapidly assuming the state of dishrags. We crossed the side creeks about 1pm and took a short lunch break in the rain.

I had done this route eight years ago and at that time large chunks of the old trail were still intact, so even though it was now afternoon, we had hopes of getting down by dark.

Just strike the old trail in the tall timber and follow it out. That of course assumes you find the correct route. I blew

it. We went way too far east away from the creek and got into very steep and scary slopes.

It was 5pm before I would admit that I was off-route. With no hope now of getting down by dark, we needed to find a place to camp before hypothermia set in. We were wet to the skin and getting cold whenever we stopped. There was plenty of water coming out of the sky, it just wasn't convenient for cooking.

At 4000 feet, we turned around and traversed back toward Pyrites Creek. We found a small opening in the trees with a flat spot for our tents and a small, murky dark pond—our own private elk wallow. (You can drink anything when you have to.) Home for the night.

Setting up a tent in the pouring rain and trying to keep it dry while you put on the fly is an exercise in futility, but we tried. Imagine our joy when we unrolled our Thermarests and watched streams of water pour out. Pat's sleeping bag was in a similar state.

We cooked in the rain and ate in the rain. Then we peeled off our wet clothes and jumped in the tent for the night. Pat reminded me how nice it was going to be to put those clothes back on in the morning.

We guarded our one dry set of clothes against leaks and wet spots with paranoia. Those leaky tent seams from day one still leaked, just faster now. I studied the maps and my memory of eight years ago. Jon did similar map work in his tent. And we waited through a long, long night for morning. As penance I traded my dry sleeping bag for Pat's.

Day six. Up at 7am to more rain. We were due out today. It's only 2500 feet down and a couple of miles on the map.



Jon Pollock

A soggy Pat and Dennis below Pyrites Pass—we thought our work was done at this point, but we were wrong!

Our water filter clogged hopelessly after half a quart. We used iodine tablets and didn't look at what we were drinking. The rain finally stopped as we got started.

At 3800 feet we found new flagging, but it was intermittent and we kept losing and refinding it on the way down. The slope was brushy, steep and slippery.

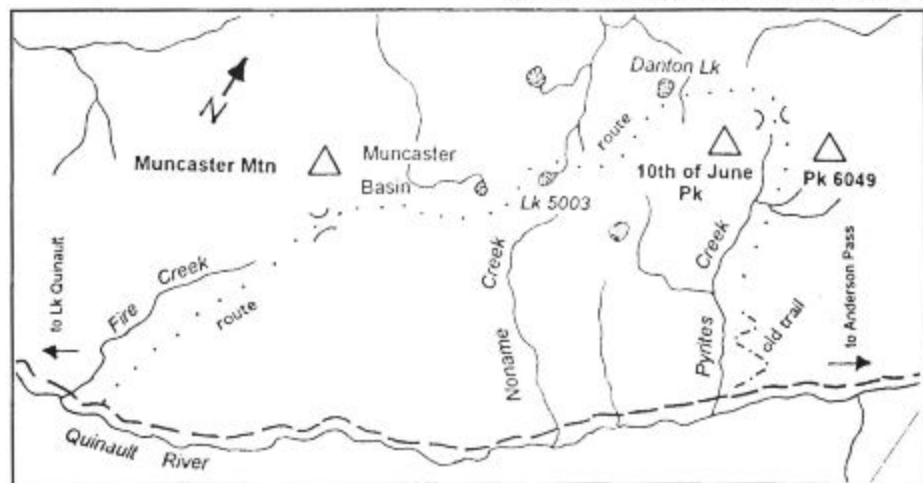
At 2500 feet, just above the confluence of a small creek (not shown on the map) and Pyrites Creek, still 1000 feet from the bottom, we finally struck the remnants of the old trail and followed it out, crawling over and under dozens of wet, slippery logs. At 12:30pm we hit the Enchanted Valley trail. Now it was just a long walk to the cars.

Two suggestions: First, if you want to visit Muncaster Basin, go in and out Fire Creek. If you like crawling over and under downfall, crossing dangerous gullies, traversing steep and slippery slopes, and bashing through brush, by all means give Pyrites a try.

But in our opinion, there is nothing but misery from Lake Danton to Pyrites Pass and down. Fire Creek is a much better option.

Second, always remember in the back of your mind why the rain forest is called the rain forest. The Olympics are not California, so pack accordingly. All the five-day forecast is good for here is a chuckle or two.

Dennis and Pat, of Olympia, consider Olympic National Park their back yard. In their spare time they travel to the Arctic, collect High Points of the US, and hike the PCT.



JIM AND MADELEINE BEATY

A Fall Loop

—THE PASAYTEN SOMETIMES OFFERS OTHER DELIGHTS THAN VIEWS—

In early September 1997, we left the car with high expectations of a splendid trip like Lee McKee described in *Pack & Paddle*, April 1997. The first 3 miles up to Billy Goat Pass got our circulation going in a hurry. The trail deteriorated as soon as we entered the Pasayten Wilderness on top of the pass. We found the trail quite gouged and muddy in places.

A few lupines were still blooming on the way down to the small clearing on the north side of the pass. We looked for mountain goats but didn't see any, unfortunately. While taking a leisurely lunch break at Two Bit Creek, we met two girls hiking out. They told us about the downpour that kept them in their tent for six hours two days earlier. They were just moscying along that day.

We shouldered our packs again and headed toward Dollar Watch Mountain. We had no difficulties locating the

shortcut trail down to Larch Creek, thanks to Lee's article, and rock-hopped across the creek. There was a pretty nice little camp on the bank above the creek and we contemplated whether we should stay there for the night or go on to Tony Creek basin. We opted to go on.

By the time we got to the camp at Tony Creek we were bushed. It was a hard 10.5-mile day. Although it was only 5pm, it was very cold already, too cold to cook dinner.

We quickly set up the tent, munched on a banana and gorp and called it a day. Getting into the warm sleeping bag was all we cared about. About an hour later two fellows passed by and set up camp upstream from us.

The next day we proceeded up to Dollar Watch Pass. It was still cold but not windy. We were glad to finally get into some open country with scattered

larches and some views.

We were surprised how high the trees grew up the slopes and ridges around us. We expected the landscape to be much more open.

We went down to the little meadow on the other side of the pass and tried to decide if we should stay there or go on. We had the time for a layover day to climb to the top of Dollar Watch Mountain but Jim's back and hip were acting up fierce and he was worried about needing more time to get out. So we went on.

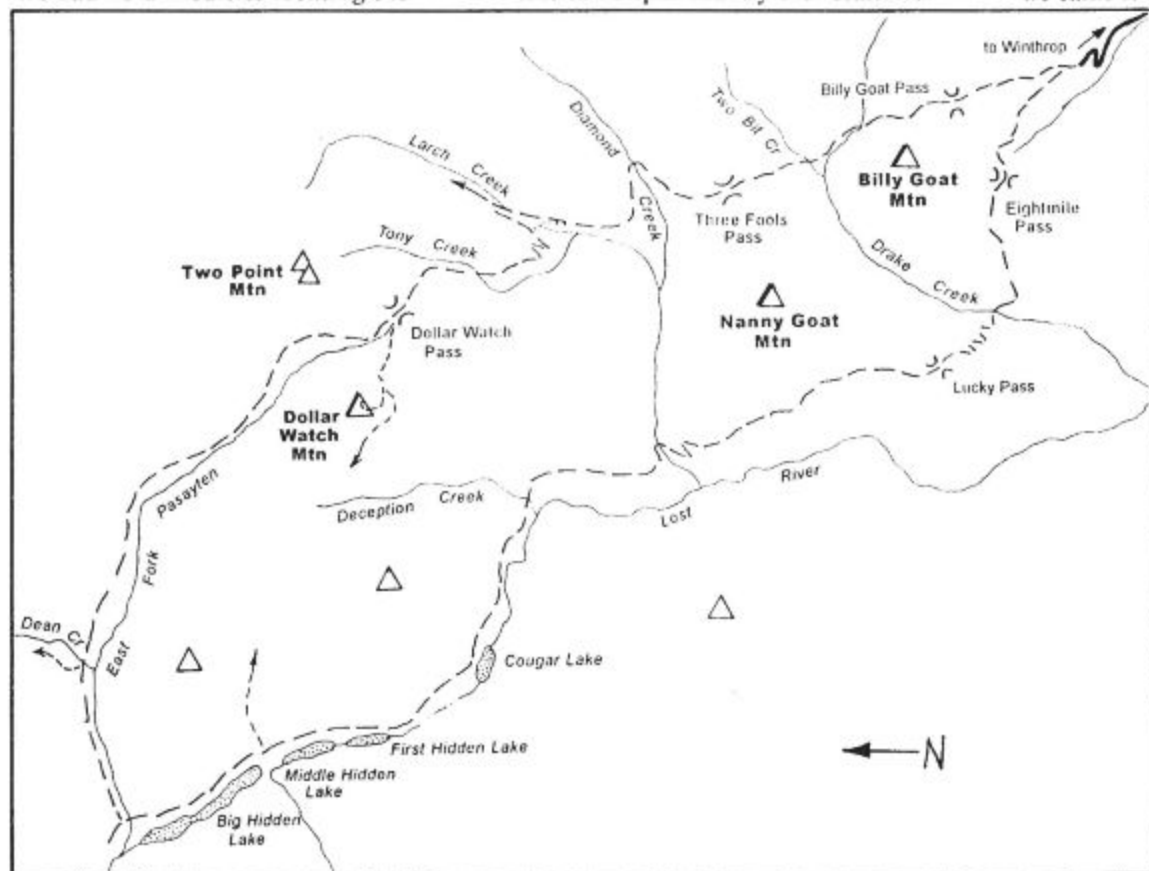
Rather than going over Deception Pass and fighting the blowdowns, we chose to drop down the north side of the pass and go the longer route to Hidden Lakes, adding about 5 more miles. This trail has not been maintained for a long time.

After going down about a mile or so we came to a very nice camp at the edge of a rock-strewn alpine meadow below the west slope of Two Point Mountain. Water was nearby.

We followed the East Fork of the Pasayten River all the way in trees. There were some blowdowns here and there, but nothing too bad. We came upon a small camp near Dean Creek shortly before the Bunker Hill junction.

From there on the trail was very wide and smooth. We soon came to the Hidden Lakes trail junction, 9.5 miles from Tony Creek. We found a nice, large camp with a wooden bench on the left just before the junction.

That night we heard an owl hoot in the distance, barely audible. All of a sudden an owl near us responded and they



called back and forth with the distant hoot coming closer and sounding louder.

Then we had the greatest serenade. One owl would start hooting, the other would start one beat later and they would have a duet. They repeated this for quite a while until they faded into the distance. What a performance!

Day Three took us on a mostly good, slightly up and down trail past the lakes to Diamond Creek 9.5 miles away. There was a very large, much used and abused horse camp with an open shelter just before the river crossing on the main trail. We noticed that all the camps were very clean with not a trace of garbage around.

Crossing the East Fork of the Pasayten was quite tricky. The water was fast and fairly deep. Two skinny little logs offer a crossing just a bit upstream. The problem was that one of the logs had so much give that it was difficult to stay balanced, but we both made it across okay.

Big Hidden Lake is indeed very big, probably 2 miles long. It was full of water. The next three lakes were very low. Where did all the water go?

When we got near Cougar Lake we immediately noticed the "Revegetation" sign Lee mentioned. It did seem out of place and almost laughable to see. Walking along the bank of Cougar Lake was delightful, much more open and the lake was a beautiful color.



Lovely Cougar Lake.

We were near the south end of the lake when we had another great surprise. There was an otter barely off shore putting on a show for us! At one point we saw the otter spy a fish and chase it at great speed—but the fish got away.

We walked to the south end of the lake and had lunch at the nice little camp where Ann and Lee had stayed. We were there for quite some time and all the while the otter sunned itself on a grassy little island just past the log jam. What a treat!

As we headed down the trail again we found no water until Diamond Creek. Deception Creek had had flood damage and was bone dry. We found a dandy camp at Diamond Creek to spend the last night out. We didn't see a single soul today.

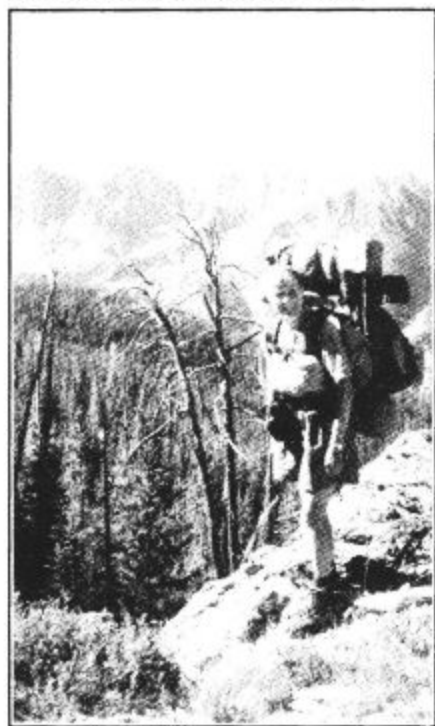
Our last day out was great! Even the uphill trail to Lucky Pass was easy to tolerate. Cloudless blue sky, superb views from the trail along Nanny Goat Mountain—and Jim's improving back and hip—all were contributing factors.

We saw a string of mules and horses pass by while we were having lunch at Drake Creek. We were glad we didn't meet them on the trail. It was surprising to find water near the top of Eight-mile Pass as we hiked the final stretch of our 40-mile journey.

This may not have been an exceptionally scenic hike but the owls hooting and the otter's performance made it all worthwhile. Wilderness is not always about grandeur and solitude but

also about the unexpected little surprises nature has to offer. △

Jim and Madeleine Beaty, of Federal Way, are both retired and are avid skiers and hikers. They have hiked a minimum of 500 miles a year for the past dozen years.



Jim Beaty

Madeleine at Lucky Pass.



Madeleine Beaty

Jim in the basin north of Billy Goat Mountain.

LEE MCKEE

Maps on Computer

After a bunch of hemming and hawing, I added another tool to my collection of backcountry and paddling equipment. This one is in the form of a computer program called Topo! The program is on CD-ROM and consists of all the 7.5-minute USGS maps for a particular area along with the capability to do such things as trace routes, build elevation profiles, add text and symbols, and select specific areas to print. I bought the set that includes Seattle, Mount Rainier, and the Central Cascades.

After using it for awhile, I have found that it has both good points and not-so-good points.

The good points first. You can view the area at five different scales. The least magnified is level 1 at a scale of 1:380,160; the most magnified is level 5 at 1:12,000. Level 4 is 1:24,000 which is the scale of the 7.5-minute USGS maps. All the maps are joined by some computer magic to give you a seamless connection. In effect, what you see on your monitor is one continuous map displayed at one of the five magnification levels that you choose. That's a real plus if you've ever tried to trace a route when it includes portions of two or more quadrangles.

Not only can you view the maps joined seamlessly, you can also print them out that way. You select the portion of the map you want printed, the magnification level, and the scale. Black and white or color, the quality of the print is a function of the magnification level and scale as well as the kind of printer you have. None of the prints I made or have seen come close to matching the quality of a commercial map, but they are acceptable.

Trails and other details on the maps are the same as those shown on the current USGS map for each of the quadrangles.

Which brings up one of the not-so-good points—since those trails and other details are only as accurate as the latest revision or field check by the USGS you may not be seeing current information. Maps such as Green Trails, though, are updated more frequently and reflect more up-to-date trail routing as well as providing trail

distances.

Another feature of Topo! is that as the cursor is moved over the map, the latitude, longitude, and elevation of the cursor is continually displayed in the corner of the screen. This is a good tool if you use a GPS and want to enter coordinates for waypoints before a trip. Right now you need to do it manually, but the company is in the process of developing a GPS plug-in that will enable you to directly upload and download waypoint information.

While coordinate information appears to be quite accurate, I found elevation determination not to be so good. The booklet that came with Topo! actually says "approximate elevation." In fact, if you want to be certain of the elevation of a particular point, you're better off looking directly at the contour line on the map.

Which brings up a significant not-so-good point. One of the features is being able to "visualize elevation gain with instant elevation profiling." You do this by drawing the route you are interested in with the "ruler tool" and then selecting the "build profile" command. The program generates a graphic representation of the vertical gain and loss along the route as well as giving such statistics as total gain/loss and net gain/loss.

Tracing out a trail that switchbacked from 3880 feet to 4400 feet (actual gain of 520 feet), the computer-generated profile showed a total gain of 534 feet with a total loss of 101 feet, resulting in a net gain of 433 feet. The traced route only climbed so I'm not certain where the elevation loss came, and from experience I know that particular portion of the trail has no elevation losses. So if I was using Topo! to figure out what to expect, I would have gotten an incorrect impression.

Tracing out another route that climbed with no switchbacks from 3160 feet to 3880 feet (gain of 720 feet), the profile generated showed a total gain of 1218 feet, a total loss of 401 feet with a net gain of 817 feet. Again, from experience, I know the trail climbs the entire distance. This time I would have had an even more significant incorrect impression.

Another feature of Topo! is to calcu-

late distance for routes you have drawn. This feature gives you both the horizontal distance and what is called "terrain distance" which accounts for the ups and downs along the route. When I checked the accuracy of horizontal distance for a straight line route between two points, the distance calculated was accurate. I didn't have a good way of checking curvy line route distance but I suspect it, too, would be as accurate as the route I drew. I would think, though, that "terrain distance" would not be too reliable based on inaccuracies with elevation determination.

Among other tools included with Topo! are:

- A "compass tool" for determining direction between two points. This worked well.
- A "text tool" for adding text labels to maps—unfortunately you're limited to one line width per label.
- A "symbol tool" for adding a variety of symbols to maps.

From a computer hardware/software standpoint, minimum system requirements for both Windows and Macintosh are given on the box. I was using a system with Windows 95 and lots of RAM, and the program ran quite well. I would suspect, as with most computer programs, if you have a system that matches the minimum specifications, it may not work as well. The software loaded without problem, and I found the instructions for using Topo! straightforward and easy.

Overall I was favorably impressed by Topo! It won't replace the USGS and Green Trails maps I currently use, but it will be another tool for trip planning. And since areas of Puget Sound are also included I can use it in planning paddling trips, too.

Retail price for Topo! is around \$59.00 for each region. You can find it at local outdoor shops or you can contact the manufacturer directly at:

Wildflower Productions
375 Alabama Street Suite 230
San Francisco CA 94110
415-558-8700
www.topo.com

△

Lee McKee is Pack & Paddle's business manager.

MARILYN and VERNE WADE ✓

Geyser Valley Loop

—A HIKE FOR GEEZERS—

One of the easiest day hikes in the Olympic National Park is also one of the most interesting and, at least on weekdays, the least crowded. We left the Whiskey Bend trailhead midmorning of a sunny Monday late in July and saw only two couples and a solitary birdwatcher all day.

The area is called Geyser Valley, according to some accounts, because the Seattle Press party thought they heard the sounds of bubbling geysers there in 1890. Another story has Doc Ludden, a homesteader and guide in the valley in the early decades of the century, declaring that the name refers to the twisting mist formations that result from winds sweeping up the Elwha.

Our own theory is that it is a misspelling of Geezer, because the hike is so perfectly suited to old geezers like ourselves, out to enjoy the day.

Less than a mile from the parking lot, a trailside sign identifies the path to Rica Canyon. The loop starts at that point. Taking the path down to Rica Canyon (actually to Goblin Gates at the entrance to the Canyon, which is inaccessible) was the best choice for us because it is the only steep part of the hike, and downhill. Better steep downhill early in the day than steep uphill at the end.

The sketch map and descriptive

sheet available at the Elwha Ranger Station on the way in from Highway 101 made the hike more interesting by giving us something to anticipate every half mile or so. A particular delight was Humes Ranch.

The cabin, built by the Humes brothers and a cousin early in the century and used by Herb and Lois Crisler in the 1940s when they filmed *Olympic Elk* for Walt Disney, sits quietly at the end of its upper meadow and above the trail that leads down the bank to the lower meadow.

We sat on the porch awhile, peeling away the years, trying to see this place as it had been twenty years ago, fifty years, a century . . . Inside the cabin, we wondered if the view window (at least it was larger than necessary for a strictly utilitarian cabin) had been there from the beginning or if some later occupant had chosen to sacrifice a bit of winter snugness for a wider glimpse of the beauty outside his walls.

Had the scene always been an intimate one into the trees on the slope, as now, or had the Humes brothers or the Crislers seen all the way to the river?

There were other places of interest on the hike: Krause Bottom, Michael's cabin, the site of Doc Ludden's Geyser House, each with its own story, but Humes Ranch was the only one where we felt the presence of a magical spell other than the simple magic that midsummer stillness cast over the whole valley.

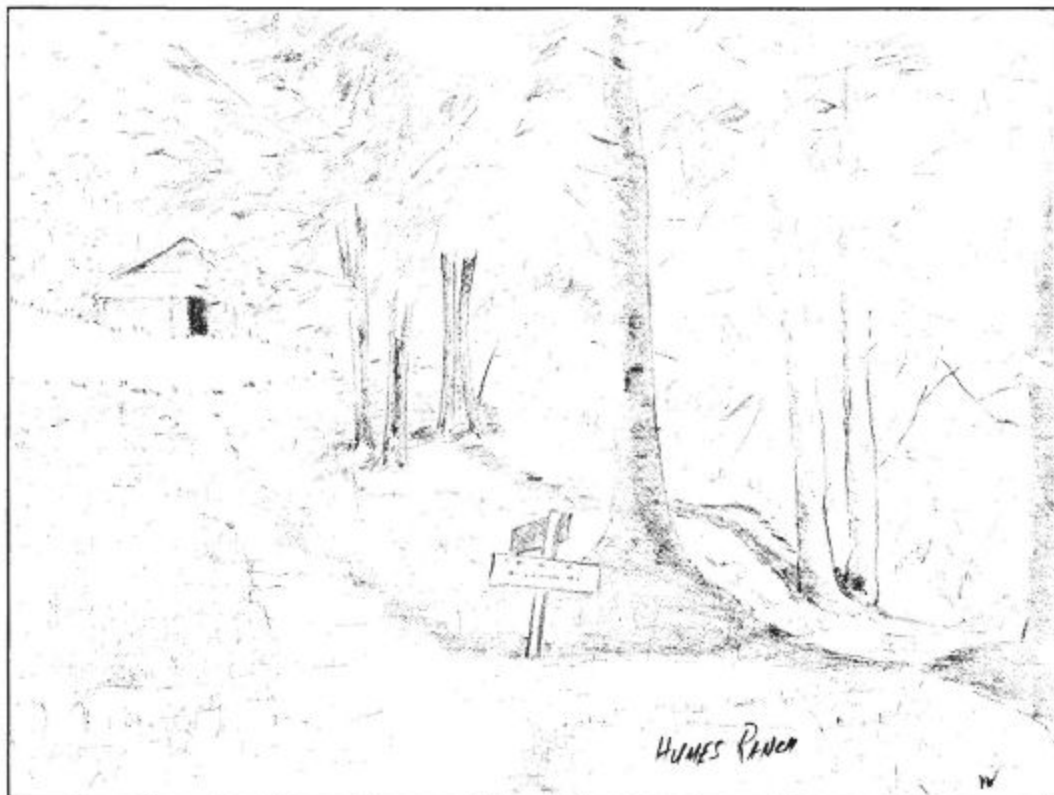
Although we struck the main trail a few hundred yards before the Dodger Point trail footbridge across the Elwha and could have turned back there, we continued to the bridge and enjoyed another brief rest in the shade on the far side.

We noticed the bent steel rails of the bridge and wondered what had caused that damage. Surely the Elwha, even in midwinter, is never such a torrent that it can hurl logs that high. Actu-

ally this would be a great wintertime hike, and our curiosity about the bridge would be reason enough to come back to check it out.

△

Marilyn and Verne Wade are long-time residents of Bainbridge Island. Both retired, they no longer backpack, but still enjoy day-hiking, especially in the Olympics.



JIM MILLER

Canadian Alps in Winter

—CAST YOUR EYES NORTH FOR ALPINE SPLENDOR—

The Canadian Rockies hold some of the most magnificent scenery on earth. Their aspect is different than that of our volcanic Cascades; for these are huge chunks of old sediment that have been shouldered two miles up into the air by the collision of oceanic plates, and weathered into their present form by millennia of glaciers and storms.

These same mountains hold a multitude of possibilities for hiking and skiing or just plain auto-touring. Moreover they are a reasonable driving distance for Northwesterners. Is your favorite North Cascades site "all booked up"? Cast your eyes to the north for wilderness tramping, flower meadows and alpine splendor.

I have visited the Canadian Rockies many times in summer; but last February for the first time went on a Mazamas club cross-country ski trip to Banff and Lake Louise, generally regarded as the heart of these gorgeous mountains. It was a wonderful trip (which was enhanced for me by the fact that I had no leadership responsibilities) and I can hardly wait to tell you all about what I found there.

We flew to Vancouver and on to Calgary. Then we rode a bus back to Banff, which has no airport. At Banff we were unloaded at our new home-for-a-week, the Caribou Lodge. It has a spacious lobby, a fine restaurant, and is right on the main drag (Banff Avenue) but is still a half-mile walk to downtown. No prob for a hiker.

Our trip leader rented a couple of vans to get around to trailheads. The streets are kept snow-free. The temp was around -4 to -14 C but sometimes thawed at midday and refroze at night. Thus mornings were frequently icy; and lug soles don't do much to prevent a sudden alighting on the posterior landing gear.

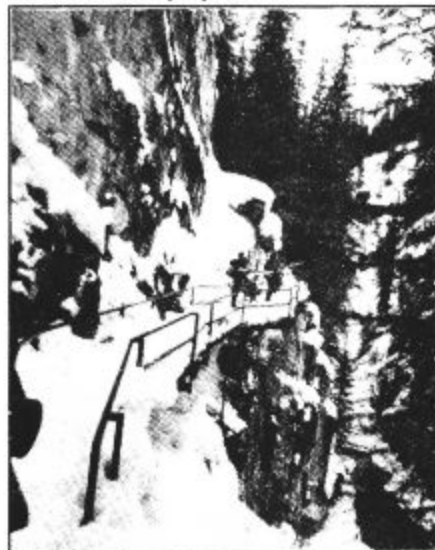
We were happy to hear that our first full day of skiing would be the Canmore Nordic Center. This large touring area was the site of the 1988 Winter Olympics—and I can still recall watching those leggy Nordic skiers on nationwide TV.

We arrived at the Nordic Center and found it to be a cross-country skier's paradise. Long smooth double-tracked runs, with about 8 feet of center for the skaters, undulated over gentle hills and meadows. Other more demanding ski runs ran off through the trees.

The good grooming, the long swooping runs and the powdery snow made almost all of us feel like Olympic contenders. We did a long loop out and back to the Center; grabbed a quick lunch and went right back out for more. At the end of the day we returned to our hotel hungry, happy, and ready to hop into the hot tub.

So much for wimpy track skiing—next day we would tackle Goat Creek and ski the backcountry 18km from Canmore to Banff.

Canmore was originally a grimy coal town, but nowadays it is sort of a bedroom community and tourist overflow for Banff. A huge mountain ridge—Mount Rundle: a mile wide and twelve miles long—stands squarely longwise between Banff and Canmore. Goat Creek runs down the backside of Mount Rundle through forested country. We were dropped at the trailhead by a van which promptly departed. Getting back to Caribou Lodge by ski trail was strictly up to us.



Crazy, lost cross-country skiers on the trail in Johnston Canyon.



Waterfall ice climbers; Johnston Canyon.

The trail had a few downhill steep spots but was generally a skier's delight. At a midway point we found a picnic table and paused for lunch. From this point a secondary road ran directly to the parking lot at the Banff Springs Hotel in Banff. From here it was an easy urban walk to downtown Banff and the Caribou Lodge ... and the hot tub.

Our next ski day was less idyllic. Johnston Creek and the Inkpots were chosen as the objective. We made a mistake in the trailhead location and found ourselves on a hiking trail, impossible to ski. This amazing trail ran on a series of catwalks up the sheer walls of Johnston Canyon with many views of frozen waterfalls. We stopped and gaped in awe at two parties of climbers scaling shiny parapets of blue ice.

Eventually we did connect with the trail we sought (Johnston Creek), but it was still a bit nasty for a ski-trail. Most of us continued to carry skis, boot-hiking along the trail of packed snow.

We reached a summit where the trail dropped crooked and precipitous into the next valley. I put my skis on, crashed, and rather than risk life and limb, took them off again. The hiking trail was narrow and if you accidentally stepped off it, you floundered in at least 10 feet of soft snow! Not fun.

At last we arrived at the Ink Pots, several unfrozen thermal pools in a

Jim Miller

Jim Miller

beautiful valley, skis in hand instead of on foot. One optimist said, "Let's report this trip as a terrific hike—instead of a horrible ski!"

As we hiked back up and over the summit, it began to snow so hard we could barely see more than 10 feet ahead. A wonderful experience—but just a little bit scary. We of course arrived back at the highway where our van was *not* parked—and had a 2km road walk to top off our "terrific hike."

Next day the group hired a couple of guides to take us into some of the untracked Kananaskis backcountry. I am unable to report on this trip because—as a result of several falls on Johnston Creek and my bruised pride—I recognized my duty to hang out in Banff and study the majestic mountains that loom over the city: Mount Rundle! Cascade Peak! Mount Aylmer! Goat Mountain!

On this evening most of the group opted for an expensive dinner at the German restaurant at Banff Springs Hotel (\$30). Some of us more plebeian types dined on fish-n-chips and a pint of ale at the Rose and Crown pub (\$12).

An easy day was promised on Thurs-

day: we would ski the Fairview Loop, an easy 12km trip starting and ending in the Lake Louise parking lot. This trip was as billed, a just-right moderately easy ski trail, quite a contrast to Johnston Creek!

We completed the loop in 2 or 3 hours. With time left, some of our group chose to ski directly across Lake Louise on the thick and safe ice. Low clouds over the glacier prevented us from getting the full effect of the most photographed view in Canada.

All too soon the day came when it was



Ice skaters on Lake Louise.



"Don't take that picture!" cried the skier. Lake Louise ski trail.

time to pack up our ski bags and suitcases and climb aboard the Calgary bus. It had been a wonderful trip and I highly recommend it to others with similar interests. We had barely scratched the surface of the many possibilities in this "Rocky Mountain high."

Jim Miller, of Portland, likes nothing better than a good mountain adventure.

More on Water Filters

Readers: See Dan Vorhis's two-part article on backcountry water treatment—August, page 26 and September, page 30.

Dear Dan,

I have been using an older MSR water filter—the kind with a carbon filter element above, and a paper filter element at the bottom. I am concerned that the harmful protozoans that have been multiplying inside my filter will infect me when I touch the filter element during cleaning. Is my concern justified?

If so, what is the safest way to clean a filter?

Michael Felber
Port Townsend, Washington

Dear Michael,

Microorganisms and other particulate contaminants that are removed from surface water will build up on the surface of your ceramic filter. Your fear is that, in the ceramic cleaning process, pathogens from this surface may be

transferred into mouth, nose, or eyes and cause illness. I think that is a reasonable fear.

Bacteria will grow in a damp filter media. According to the test reports I have read, most of these bacteria won't make you sick, although some might.

Protozoa and viruses that can make you sick do not multiply in a damp media. So, most of the pathogens of concern will be close to the surface of the media, not breeding in the media.

The MSR WaterWorks-series filters have a bacteria-proof (meets HIMA standard for 7 log reduction of *Br. diminuta*) membrane downstream from the ceramic, so any bacteria that grow in the ceramic or carbon don't get into your drinking water.

The MSR MiniWorks does not have this membrane cartridge, but the Marathon ceramic+carbon cartridge can be boiled to kill colonizing bacteria.

How to prevent spread of pathogens after handling the ceramic cartridge? First, a little perspective. If you have ever made sand castles on a beach, you

have probably been exposed to pathogens in concentrations similar to those on the surface of your filter.

You don't wear latex gloves on the beach (do you?). On the other hand, you probably wash your hands before eating your picnic lunch. Use the same precautions when using your filter.

Wash the plastic components of the your MSR filter in warm, soapy water regularly. Re-lube the piston O-ring and filter housing O-ring after washing. Store components dry.

Boil the Marathon cartridge at least once a week on long treks (see instructions). When cleaning the ceramic cartridge, remove it from housing, abrade it, and rinse, covering clean-side hole with your thumb while rinsing. After re-assembly, pump four or five strokes of water to waste to rinse the outlet side of the cartridge. Wash your hands before you eat.

Dan Vorhis
Water filter designer for MSR

DALE KLOTZ

Toy or Tool?

—ANOTHER GPS VIEWPOINT—

I enjoyed the article in the December issue by Lee McKee on Global Positioning. Being a long-time user (and designer) of GPS equipment I would like to make the following observations and suggestions.

The question of toy or tool is valid. Persons who intend to use such equipment as a tool must have a good understanding of maps and navigation. Without this background, a commercial hand-held GPS receiver is merely a toy. This is because modern GPS receivers can supply you with only pieces of information and not the whole story. Lee makes this point very clear in the referenced article.

ACCURACY

The topic of accuracy is sometimes misleading although I would not call it sales hype. Manufacturers base their numbers on ideal conditions. Most users will never see ideal conditions and, in fact, mountains are about the worst conditions.

The real error is defined as a sphere having a diameter of approximately 100 meters. This is, as discussed in the article, strongly influenced by the Department of Defense using a method called Selective Availability (SA). SA is used to prevent "unfriendly persons" from having too much accuracy from this free service.

Reports from civilian users have indicated repeatable accuracy of 20 feet during times when Selective Availability is turned off. That's quite good for a \$200 piece of commercial electronics.

ELEVATION

In reference to elevation errors, the worst place to use elevation information from a GPS receiver is on the ground. The best place is in an airplane. This is because the optimum satellite geometry for any GPS receiver is in a shape known as a tetrahedron (kind of like a pyramid) where there are satellites above you and somewhat below you.

So for an airplane pilot this works great. It also works well for ship cap-

tains because they know their elevation. But it certainly makes it tough for hikers.

The reasons that your altitude reading bounces around so much are a combination of things including SA, poor satellite geometry, ionospheric conditions, and a thing called multipath.

Most people in Puget Sound know all about multipath by listening to their FM radio while driving the car and having it do all sorts of strange things. This is caused by reflections of signals from the hills and mountains combining in your antenna. The electronics do not know the difference between the original signal from the reflected ones... so you get them all.

GPS receivers suffer the same problem and this is at its worst in rugged mountain terrain. The newest receivers now have an averaging feature that helps to reduce this by averaging readings. However, conditions will never permit you to take better than marginal elevation readings while hiking so keep your altimeter handy!

WALKING WITH RECEIVER

And speaking of hiking, the bearing data provided by hand-held receivers while walking is again somewhat marginal. This is due to the problems of Selective Availability whereby anything less than 11 miles per hour is strongly influenced by SA effects.

Beyond 11 MPH the SA effects are considered minimal. (You could also walk with your compass in your hand and watch how much the needle bounces around for a comparison!) Try this in your car and you will see the correlation between speed and accuracy of GPS. The newer receivers also have speed averaging to help reduce the SA effects for walking speeds.

NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

Another point to remember about accuracy is the repeatability. If you mark a spot by saving it in the receiver, this does not mean that you can return to that exact same spot.

The error (yes, introduced by SA)

will be the same when you come back which means that you will be within the same 100 meter sphere as when you saved the waypoint.

But you must stop and think about this: 100 meters on something as big as planet Earth is truly amazing. Don't think it will stop there—using special techniques with multiple receivers, GPS accuracy (repeatable) has been reduced to an error the size of a golf ball. That's something that may be used to aid in landing commercial aircraft in the near future.

ENTERING DATA

Getting the data into your receiver prior to any trip is very important and not the easiest as Lee has discovered. However, there is new software available that makes this a bit easier and people living in Washington have some of the best coverage available. There is a package called TOPO! that uses scanned USGS 7.5 minute quads and a full digital elevation database. [Ed. Note: See separate and coincidental review of TOPO! on page 18.]

This makes extracting waypoints a snap but still leaves you with the chore of getting them into the unit. You can use additional software sold by the GPS manufacturers or other sources available on the world wide web to enter the data that then downloads it into the GPS unit.

We expect to see this mapping and downloading fully automated by next spring with the added benefit of uploading actual field data back onto the maps.

TOPO! has packages for the Cascades and Puget Sound including the Olympic Peninsula and the San Juan Islands. Your receiver will need a port for connecting to a computer to perform the data transfer and it is something I recommend highly for those considering purchasing a receiver.

The newer receivers also have a "breadcrumb" option that will save data suitable for a reverse route whenever

continued on page 25

LOIS SHELTON

Brother of Invention

—FACTOR IN DAD AS THE SECRET INGREDIENT—

Erik Spring came to his younger brother Michael's rescue last summer on a Saturday kayak exploration of Port Madison on Bainbridge Island. New to the sport and sporting nifty new vessels—Michael, 8, in a sturdy purple Dagger and Erik, 10, in a mammoth yellow Speedster tail-flamed in orange and red—put in neatly off the driftwood beach at Fay Bainbridge Park, followed by their dad, John, a skilled kayaker.

The seas were calm, all hatches and spray skirts were battened, and we eased into a 2-knot flood current, a free ride around Point Monroe to the bay.

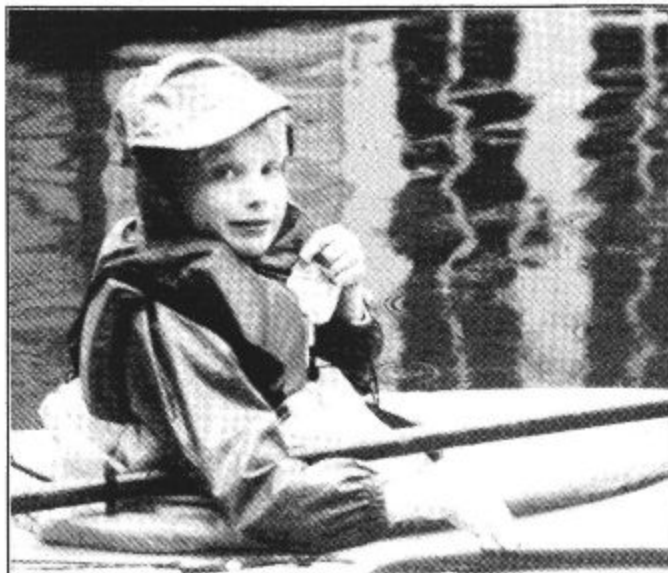
The day was blue-sky gorgeous—perhaps a little much so for Michael; for despite sunscreen, a hat, raft-ups for snacks and juice, plus a beach break, his paddling muscles suddenly gave out shortly after the turnaround spot. Like a sail with no wind, a burro with no carrot, Michael's kayak wasn't going anywhere. What to do?

On canoe trips when the boys got tired they could take a paddling break—or even a nap—and their dad would take over. And how many times had he salvaged the last mile or two of hiking

trail for their tired legs by hoisting one of them—or both—onto his shoulders? This was a bit more complicated: instead of just a pooped-out kid, it was a pooped-out kid in a very heavy sea kayak.

No problem. Erik had suggested to his dad earlier that morning, while they loaded gear from the cargo bay of their vehicle, that they throw in the kayak tie-down straps—“who knows what for . . .”—and John had agreed that it was a good idea.

Throughout a childhood spent adventuring in the out-of-doors, Erik had watched his dad problem-solve. Now Erik's brain clicked into gear: “Hey, Dad, remember those blue straps we stowed in your hatch? What if we tie



Erik Spring, in his yellow Speedster.

Lois Shelton

them together, make one big loop around your cockpit, and tether the ends to the grip handle on Michael's bow? Then you can tow him back behind you!”

Erik's plan worked like a breeze enabling Michael to help paddle at his own pace as the second half of a father/son team—almost like a tandem bicycle. Michael, in the spirit of true teammanship, gave a mighty boost to the towing effort once we were out of the protected bay for the last stretch to the put-in.

Safely back on shore we were in high spirits and congratulated Erik on his brilliant idea. Of course, everyone agreed, if you're going to invent an excellent rescue scheme, it doesn't hurt to factor in Dad as your secret ingredient.

△



Michael Spring, in his purple Dagger.

Lois Shelton

Lois Shelton, of Seattle, is a documentary filmmaker and an avid kayaker.

CHRIS WEIDNER

Tooth Decay

—LESSONS LEARNED IN THE WINTER OF '93—

Too much gear dangled around my stiff body as I nervously climbed above poor protection. The cold night had fallen during my lead; I was frightened. Never having used an ice tool before, I awkwardly scraped my way up the mountain of half snow, half frozen rock with one gloved hand, one tool and no crampons.

Iced up cracks and marginal pitons made it the scariest and most dangerous pitch I had ever led, without question; yet at the safety of the belay, I couldn't erase the smile from my freezing face. A part of me glowed with satisfaction and disbelief that I remained in control on such mentally challenging terrain.

Unfortunately, time got the best of us. With resignation, I created a suitable anchor and quickly rappelled off the first pitch of The Tooth near Snoqualmie Pass.

Just twenty miles from the Pass that morning of our first attempt, I realized that Tim's boots were still in my dorm room at the University of Washington. I had forgotten to pack my old pair for him to use on our climb! We lost two precious hours driving back and forth from Seattle, so by the time we arrived at the Snow Lake trailhead at 9am, both Tim and I realized we would have to race, or night would catch us.

Despite our efforts we lost the race and drove home defeated yet better prepared for another try.

On the 10th of January, 1993, Tim and I once again stood beneath the 330-foot south face of The Tooth at Pineapple Pass. Meticulously scanning the snow and ice-covered rock, my eyes identified the rappel sling I descended from only eight days before. This time we forgot nothing, and we approached via the Alpentel ski area which proved to be more direct.

Still, however, we were delayed by an Alpentel Pro Patroller warning Tim and me not to cross the slope in front of us because of the high avalanche danger. Heeding the professional advice of this man, we both agreed to continue



Tim, right, and me in the Alpentel parking lot the morning of our first attempt.

no farther although our disappointment was deep.

Digging an avalanche pit and examining snow crystals kept our attention for a limited time. The sky was clear, the temperature cold and our desire for the summit boiling within us. What a shame not to take advantage of the perfect day, but Tim and I realized that one should never gamble with unstable snow conditions.

As we considered our next move, we noticed that the Alpentel Ski Patrol was removing the fences from the slope we wished to traverse and opening it up to the first chairload of skiers starting down the mountain! Obviously, as we originally suspected, the slope was safe to cross, so we packed in a rush and regretted losing a full hour that could have been spent getting us closer to the top.

At 1:30pm I excitedly began the first pitch with full knowledge of the impending fear that is part of the ascent for me under these conditions. There simply are not many options for protection when the rock is plastered with fresh snow, and climbing upward feels insecure at best. Our late start on the face proved to be a huge mistake. The

week before, I started climbing at 4pm, so we erroneously calculated that our earlier start provided plenty of time to reach the summit.

Perched on a ledge 100 feet higher, I belayed Tim up to where I sat. He had trouble at the steep, rock bulge where I was most scared, but without much delay he climbed on. Continuing another 60 feet to a dead tree, Tim yelled, "Off belay!" and it was soon my turn for a top-rope.

Using the pick of my ice tool on a tiny edge of rock, I pulled myself through the crux of the second pitch—a great lead by Tim. Next, I encountered mostly steep snow in which I kicked steps for security. I found myself nervous yet thrilled 40 feet out from my only protection. Small trees

poked their tops through the snow for the remainder of that pitch so I slung them for protection and the belay.

By the time my partner reached me, dusk was upon us, but turning around was not an option this close to our goal. I sat for over an hour straddling a tree while Tim led his last pitch. It was here that my body grew very cold, and the sun's final rays disappeared beneath the Cascade mountains above I-90.

Fifty feet up I faced a featureless, 75-degree rock slab with an iced-over, six-inch ledge for my clumsy boots to fumble upon. I traversed left on the ledge, and with sheer determination managed not to fall. When I finally reached Tim in total blackness, he was a mere 30 feet from the summit. I congratulated him on a bold lead as we exchanged gear for the remaining scramble to the top.

My friend and I shivered uncontrollably on the windy summit of The Tooth at 5:30pm where we muttered a "good job" to each other before preparing a rappel. With all our clothes on, we continued to shiver during the epic descent. The wind constantly stripped our warmth faster than we could gener-

Chris Weidner

ate it. Our bodies craved fuel. My headlamp faded to nothing with the intense cold. As I straddled the dead tree two rappels down, I imagined the ecstasy of warmth inside the countless cars I watched make their way home. My thoughts drifted toward my girlfriend Julie and my family. How deeply I longed to be with them all, and to be warm! I pondered the risks and rewards of mountaineering and seriously questioned why I was climbing The Tooth. Is it worth it? Should I really spend my time climbing mountains when there are numerous comfortable and risk-free recreations to choose from?

"I need more time ... the midpoint is gone!" Tim yelled. I snapped out of my dreamy state back into the harsh reality of cold. Each of the next four rappels required careful estimation of our rope length because uneven rope ends can be deadly when rappelling. Triple-checking my harness and rappel setup before

each descent was time-consuming, but necessary.

After an eternity, Tim and I stood once again at Pineapple Pass with the most dangerous portion of our descent now behind us.

I washed down a rock-hard bagel and a half with a couple of gulps of ice water. As I feared, my lifeless headlamp did not respond to a fresh bulb, so I slogged through deep snow at Tim's heels until moonlight graced our path.

Thirty minutes later, we eased ourselves over a steep snow ridge and carefully downclimbed until we arrived at our abandoned ski poles and snowshoes. The time was 9pm. We crossed the "dangerous" avalanche slope, and successfully boot-skied our way through the moguls back to the Alpentel parking lot where a single car awaited our late arrival.

Our starving bodies quickly led us to a diner in North Bend after fourteen

and a half hungry hours of climbing. As Tim and I went over the day, we both recognized numerous bad decisions we had made during our climb that could have cost us much more than our comfort.

This ascent taught me, among many other lessons, to be conservative in all aspects of a climb—especially in the winter. As Tim and I drove home, I pictured myself, freezing, straddling the dead tree and longing to be warm in the car.

A few minutes passed in thought before I found the nerve to ask, "Hey, Tim, what shall we climb next this winter?"

△

Chris Weidner, of Seattle, spends his summers working for Cascade Alpine Guides. He is currently studying at the UW.

Toy or Tool *continued from page 23*

they are turned on and getting position fixes.

HERE'S ADVICE

I'm on my fourth generation receiver now and I can say that they have improved considerably over the past five years not to mention the drastic reduction in price. The 12 channel receivers can track in worse conditions such as tree cover and acquire a fix much faster. Best of all, they cost less than single channel receivers did only a year ago.

You may be asking if these things are

worth their weight and time required to learn how to operate.

My best advice is this: If you hike on established trails or visit the same locations often, then GPS is not for you. If you prefer "simpler is better," then GPS is not for you.

If you go above timberline, hike in the winter and/or off-trail and become thrilled at the idea of a whiteout, then GPS is for you.

Together with a map, altimeter, AND compass a GPS receiver will help you save energy and provide vital information when there are no visible land-

marks to sight on. I have put them to the test and so far found GPS essential to my preferred method of navigation. This is only after reassuring myself time and again during good conditions that I can trust my instruments.

△

Dale Klotz, of Seattle, works for Boeing as a semiconductor design manager. He has been chair of the Mountaineers Snowshoe Committee for 4 years.

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LEE MCKEE ✓

Lopez Island

—A PADDLE TRIP IN THE SAN JUANS—

Last fall our local paddle group headed to the San Juan Islands for an extended weekend paddle. Our center of attention was Lopez Island. For flexibility the plan was for two nights of car camping on Lopez and one night of kayak camping on James Island, lying to the east of Lopez on Rosario Strait.

To avoid the crowds and ferry problems of the busy summer season, we selected the 12th through the 15th of September for our trip. There are two public car camping areas on Lopez—Odlin County Park near the northwest tip and Spencer Spit State Park on the northeast side.

Both have toilet facilities and running water, although the nitrate content of the water at Spencer Spit is such that campers are currently cautioned about using it for drinking water. Neither has showers; the only available one is at Lopez Village; the showers at Fisherman Bay are supposedly for marina guests only.

We chose Spencer Spit as our base camp because we could make reservations to ensure a spot. All the car-accessible spots are in the forest so there are no water views. Several walk-in spots do provide some water views but they still are located on a bank up from the water. Even the Cascadia Marine Trail spot is a little ways from the water.

There are five possible boat launch sites on Lopez: Odlin County Park, Fisherman Bay on the west side (a fee

is charged), Mackaye Harbor on the southwest end, Hunter Bay on the southeast side, and Spencer Spit.

With sunny weather and little wind forecasted, we decided to paddle the southwest end of Lopez for our first paddle on Friday. The Mackaye Harbor boat launch is at the end of a dirt and gravel road but is easily found (see *The San Juan Islands Afoot & Afloat* for directions).

The shoreline is mostly rocky so you essentially launch right from the concrete ramp. A fairly large parking area is a little way up from the ramp but there are no restroom facilities.

We headed across the harbor to the entrance of Barlow Bay, then followed the rocky and cliffy shoreline around Johns Point, exploring nooks and crannies as we went. The water was calm with a gentle swell coming in from the Strait of Juan De Fuca.

Entering Outer Bay, we headed toward the Agate Beach picnic area which includes 600 feet of public shoreline. It's located about two-thirds of the way down the inner bay and can be identified from the water by a short stairway from the adjacent road down to the shore. Outhouses are up the stairs and across the road. Agate Beach made a great lunch stop on this sunny day—you can even find a small agate or two if you look hard enough.

After lunch, lounging in the sun, and some rock skipping on the calm water

our group of two doubles and four singles headed northwest toward Charles Island. A number of small islands, rocks, and reefs in this area are part of the San Juan Islands National Wildlife Refuge. All are closed to public access and boaters are asked to keep a minimum of 300 feet from them so as not to disturb the birds and seals.

A number of seals kept popping up their heads to watch us with curiosity as we made our way between Long and Charles Islands and headed into the southeast end of Davis Bay. A lagoon in the south end of the bay looked interesting, but turned out to be blocked off a short way in and full of gunky water.

It was getting to be late afternoon and time to be heading back. Until now we had seen little current action. Out in the main channel the current was changing from flood to ebb, and as we paddled between Charles Island and Lopez, current lines started to form, reminding us to be watchful.

We awoke Saturday morning to a forecast of increasing winds and an incoming weather system. Consulting the charts and predicted current conditions for various spots, we decided to launch from Spencer Spit and explore Lopez Sound, a somewhat protected body of water between Lopez Island and Decatur Island to the east.

To launch at Spencer Spit we drove an access road that goes down from the camp area to the spit where we

Planning Tips:

- The San Juan Islands are an extremely popular summer destination. Expect *long* (hours) ferry waits—especially on weekends.
- When leaving the islands to head back to the mainland, only a certain number of vehicles are loaded at each stop. You should check with ferry personnel at the dock for advice on when to show up. We were told to show up two hours before a scheduled sailing if we wanted to make sure we got on a

particular boat—and this was on a Monday in mid-September!

- San Juan Map #314 produced by International Travel Maps of Vancouver BC is a great source of information. Its scale is 1:70 000 and it contains information on all of the islands, including campground, park, and beach information and location.

From it you can tell which shorelines are public and what, if any, facilities are available there. Available at Metsker Maps in Seattle.

- *The San Juan Islands Afoot & Afloat* by Marge & Ted Mueller is a good all-around guide to the islands. It includes information on facilities, launch sites, and general history.
- *Kayaking Puget Sound, the San Juans and Gulf Islands* by Randel Washburne is a good guide for specific trip ideas and precautions.
- *San Juan Current Guide* by Island Canoe is a good reference for determining current conditions when planning a trip.



Lee McKee

Paddling by Charles Island, near Lopez Island's Mackaye Harbor.

offloaded boats and equipment. Then we drove back up the hill to a parking area. The spit is a jumble of logs, but if you walk a little way to the south you can find a path that is cleared through the jumble—it is in the vicinity of the Marine Trail campsite sign.

As we set out there was little wind but the look of the sky hinted at changing weather. Following the shoreline of Lopez, we beachcombed from our boats, and at one spot came across six or so redheaded vultures perching on logs in the upland shore area. Perhaps they were waiting for their next meal to float in—hopefully not one of us!

We continued about 3½ miles down the shore to Lopez Beach 315 which is a day use area accessible only by boat where the tidelands are public. The shoreline is rocky and cliffy but we found a little nook where we could land and have lunch. To the east we could see small Ram Island in the entrance to Lopez Pass, the narrow channel between Lopez Island and the south end of Decatur Island.

By now it was close to 1:30, and the sky was getting overcast. A halo around the sun was a definite indicator of changing weather, so rather than continuing down the sound into Hunter Bay, we decided to make the ¼-mile crossing to Ram Island and check out Lopez Pass, planning to return to Spencer Spit along the Decatur Island side

of Lopez Sound.

The shoreline of Ram is rocky, but the tideland is public so you can go ashore if you carefully select a landing spot. We paddled up the south shoreline to a small point on the east side.

Here the flooding current through Lopez Pass, which was predicted to be at about 1.5 knots, has to make a sharp bend, causing a number of swirls to form a little off shore and a definite eddy line.

We paddled quickly around the point to get past the current, then continued along the shoreline to the north end of the island and the narrow channel between it and small Cayou Island. Here the flooding current from Lopez Pass picked up speed as it flowed through the constriction.

Some small standing waves were forming where it opened up into Lopez Sound. We angled out from the channel and again paddled quickly to get past it before it could suck us through.

Safely past, we reached the shoreline of the southwest end of Decatur and followed it before cutting over to Center Island which lies about ¼-mile offshore. By now the wind was picking up from the northeast, and we could see waves and whitecaps starting to form out in the sound. It was time to be heading for home—but we still had to cross the sound!

Leaving Center Island, we headed to-

ward Trump Island which also lies about ¼-mile offshore. It's about ½-mile between the two but nearby Decatur did provide some wind protection as we paddled.

We were somewhat scattered due to different paddling strengths, and gathering together again in the lee of Trump Island, we agreed that we should stay close together for the just-over-a-mile crossing back to Lopez. After a brief rest, we left the protection of Trump and headed out. The wind seemed to ease after a bit and with steady paddling we made the crossing with no trouble.

Late in the evening the predicted rain moved in, and we awoke the next morning to rain, forecasted high winds and a Small Craft Advisory. This was the day we had planned for breaking camp and making an overnight trip to James Island, but discretion won out.

We hung up our paddles, with part of our group opting to pack up wet equipment and head home, while the other half switched to water travel on a Washington State Ferry and spent the afternoon visiting Friday Harbor on San Juan Island.

△

Lee McKee, of Port Orchard, is Pack & Paddle's business manager.

MAURI PELTO

High Water, Deep Snow, Few People, Many Bugs

—1997 FIELD SEASON OF THE NORTH CASCADE GLACIER CLIMATE PROJECT—

The reports were early and frequent last winter of "deep snow extending to unusually low elevations ... The most snow since the mid-1970s." I was delighted for the glaciers and looking forward to the extra summer skiing.

The Department of Agriculture maintains a web site (www.nrcs.usda.gov/data/snow/) that reports weekly and daily snowpack conditions throughout the west. I was able to follow the snow depths of the past winter and compare them to other winters using this data.

Table 1 compares snow depths at three sites during the last 14 years; only 1991 was comparable to 1997. My main concerns, gleaned from 1991, were how terrible would the bugs be and how many measurements could I complete?

MOUNT BAKER

On July 29, Kate Johnson (UPS), Seth Lemke (Michigan Tech) and I headed to Artists Point on Mount Baker. The road ended at Heather Meadows. From there it was an all-snow hike to Artists Point. The descent from the

normal parking area to the Ptarmigan Ridge trail was quite difficult. Hiking out the always-popular Ptarmigan Ridge trail on a beautiful evening, we not only saw no one, but there also were no tracks.

The steep snowcovered slopes were tricky—Kate had the chance to practice her self-arrest. The next morning we finished our hike to Camp Kiser, and surveyed the terminus of the Sholes Glacier. The glacier was entirely snow covered and the terminus had retreated only 9m since 1994.

The next morning we skied across the Sholes Glacier, through the Portals and down onto the Rainbow Glacier. Many of the crevasses were still closed. We skied from crevasse to crevasse (75 in all) checking snow depth.

The typical depth of 1997 snow remaining was 3.75m versus the normal 2.75m. Snow extended all the way to the terminus. The terminus was exposed and had retreated 22m since 1995 and 13.5m since 1984. Only in 1991 had snow reached to the end of the glacier.

That night high winds drove us out of our tent, which we carried downslope to a sheltered locale.

Seth wondered in the morning why we had camped on the ridge. I replied, "It would be our only chance—we'll be valley bound the rest of the field season."

We hiked back to Artists Point, again seeing no footprints on the ridge—3 days, no hikers. After descending to Austin Pass we hiked into the Lower Curtis Glacier.

This dramatically crevassed glacier had considerable blue ice on

the steep serac-riven terminus. The terminus has now retreated 98m since 1985, and 8m since 1996. Snowpack on this glacier was also 0.8 to 1.1m above normal.

GLACIER PEAK

With the weather looking good, we hiked into Glacier Peak the next day. We hiked in the early morning hours to Kennedy Hot Springs, lounged there until late afternoon, and then ascended to the terminus of the Kennedy Glacier, where we made camp.

The strong glacier winds precluded setting up a tent, but given the clear sky and steady altimeter this was a wonderful opportunity to observe the heavens.

Our goal on Glacier Peak was to finish mapping the terminus changes on this glacier that had occurred since C.E. Rusk's visit in 1906. The first day we ascended from camp at 5800 feet to the top of the Vista Glacier at 8000 feet, then descended to the terminus at 6200 feet.

The ends of both the Ermine and Vista Glaciers are right next to each other and were both snow covered. Through tedious probing through the snow we were able to locate the termini of both.

Retreat since 1984 had been 105m on Vista and 108m on Ermine. Both termini are flat and lack crevasses, indicating retreat will continue. We measured the snowpack thickness in each crevasse on our way back up the Vista Glacier, finding snow depths to be 1.2m greater than in 1994. The ski down the Kennedy to camp was wonderful.

The terminus of the Kennedy Glacier advanced 320m from 1949 to 1979, and has since retreated 151m. The terminus is currently at the top of a steep basalt flow cliff, and will quickly retreat up this slope.

After navigating through the crevasse maze of the lower Kennedy Glacier, we exited to the Scimitar Glacier. This glacier has a steep rock-strewn terminus

Year	Lyman	Rainy	Thunder
1984	67.5	34.6	
1985	52.5	38.6	
1986	53.4	35	
1987	57.6	39.4	
1988	63.6	38.5	
1989	66.4	40	45.1
1990	69	45.1	47
1991	97.9	64.6	45
1992	59	41.3	23.7
1993	43.5	27.8	19.3
1994	47.7	33.9	28.2
1995	80.7	55.7	33.1
1996	74.3	52.3	29.9
1997	91	57.9	47.2

Table 1. Maximum snowpack water equivalent at three North Cascade locations, measured by the US Department of Agriculture snowpillow network. This is the data source for snow depths in Michael Fagin's Washington Online Weather.

that advanced 350m from 1949 to 1979, and has retreated 98m since.

The lower 200m of this glacier is stagnant. Without motion, this section will melt away, but because it is still quite thick, this will take time.

The following day was our longest march of the summer. We left camp at 6:30 to ascend in the shade to the Dusty Glacier on the east side of the Peak. This 3000-foot climb was much easier in the cool shade, with crampons providing perfect traction.

At 9000 feet we traversed the top of the Ermine and Dusty Glaciers to North Guardian Glacier. The crevasses on the Dusty Glacier are the largest I have seen in the North Cascades—not as numerous as Boston or Coleman Glaciers but awesomely wide.

We were able to observe several accumulation layers in some of these crevasses. We then measured their thickness just as you would the thickness of tree rings. In this case 1996 was close to as thick as 1997 would be by summer's end; 1992 to 1995 were all thin; and 1991 was similar to 1996 in thickness.

Thus, three of the last seven years have seen healthy snowpacks on the upper portion of Glacier Peak. We descended the nose between the Dusty and North Guardian Glacier, steep to be sure, forcing us to kick many steps.

The final 2000-foot glissade to the end of the North Guardian Glacier took 5 minutes. The termini of both North Guardian and Dusty had advanced from 1949 to 1975. Retreat had begun

by 1979 on both glaciers and has totaled 120m on North Guardian and 210m on Dusty Glacier.

Dusty Glacier is terribly crevassed and active at the end, and would probably not be retreating much except it ends on a very steep andesitic rock slope. North Guardian is very active and crevassed above, but has a thin inactive terminus that will continue to retreat up to 6400 feet where it ended in 1946.

We also observed the terminus of the Chocolate Glacier from the North Guardian. This glacier descends a narrow canyon, allowing the terminus to extend down to 5900 feet, a 230m retreat since 1979.

The last 200m of the glacier is debris covered and relatively inactive. Like the Boulder Glacier on Mount Baker this glacier, after advancing 450m from 1950 to 1975, is now going to complete a retreat to this same point in the near future.

Table 2 lists the terminus changes of the last century on Glacier Peak area glaciers. All of the glaciers on the immediate slopes of Glacier Peak advanced from 1950 to 1975. The remaining glaciers, except for the Suiattle, which barely advanced, maintained a steady retreat.

The difference is due to the steep slopes down which the Glacier Peak



Mauri Pelto

Crevasse showing annual accumulation layer.

glaciers flow, which result in rapid adjustment to climate change, such as the warmup after the Little Ice Age (1350-1850). The Kololo Peak glaciers on much gentler slopes have yet to complete their adjustment to the post Little Ice Age climate. In the case of Milk Lake Glacier this meant complete disappearance by 1995.

The 3000-foot climb back to the Kennedy Glacier went very quickly; it was too steep to rest comfortably, and we switched leads every 5 minutes, kicking steps up the steep 1500-foot high slope at the edge of the Dusty Glacier. The weather remained fine for the ninth straight day, but hazy conditions prevailed again. Not one day did we have a truly clear view spanning the North Cascades.

In camp that evening our altitude began to rise. My rule is if the altitude rises by 200 feet at a given location, watch out; if by only 100 feet or less, not to worry. If the change is between 100 and 200 feet a minor front is approaching. I also know that this pressure drop and consequent elevation rise usually occurs more than 12 hours before bad weather arrives.

At 5am the altitude was up 200 feet, and we left. Gale force winds in the morning literally pushed us down to treeline.

It was not until mid-afternoon that thunderstorms struck. By then we were on the banks of the South Fork Skykomish River at San Juan Campground. I always do extensive stream measurements here and most years it is a pleas-

Glacier	Little Ice Age-1950	1950-1979	1979-1997
Scimitar	-1600	350	-98
Kennedy	-1700	320	-151
Milk Lake	-250	-100	-250
Ptarmigan	-1050	75	-95
Vista	-1900	105	-105
Ermine	-1800	170	-108
Dusty	-1800	280	-210
North Guardian	-1550	160	-120
Chocolate	-1780	450	-230
Cool	-1500	180	-130
Suiattle	-2400	15	-28
Honeycomb	-1750	-290	-328
White River	-780	-140	-95
Unnamed	-370	-60	-210
White Chuck	-1300	-330	-175

Table 2. Terminus change of glaciers around Glacier Peak: From their Little Ice Age maximum to 1950, 1950 to 1979 and 1979 to 1997.



Dusty and North Guardian Glaciers, on the east side of Glacier Peak in 1955. Note the more extensive crevassing of an advancing glacier.

ant and refreshing wade. This year it was in most places impossible to cross the stream because of the high water.

COLUMBIA GLACIER

The next day found us at the Columbia Glacier above Blanca Lake. Seth and Kate had been treated to a rare bone-numbing ford of the stream at the lake outlet, high water having drowned the logjam crossing. Only the very end of the glacier was not snowcovered.

Three weeks prior to our visit Harvey Schmidt from Portland of the Mazamas Club had led a group of three into the Columbia Glacier and had emplaced stakes in the glacier to measure the melt rate.

Melting in the previous 20 days had been 1.78m, quite high. Snow depths on Columbia Glacier were 1.2m greater than normal. The terminus had retreated 3m since 1996, 105m since 1984.

Streamflow was 60% above normal, forcing several more bone-chilling fords of the glacial stream, measuring stream depth at 1m intervals across the streambed in six locations.

LYMAN GLACIER

Our next stop was Lyman Glacier. It was amazing on the hike to Spider Meadow to see avalanche snows in the woods below Spider Meadow in mid-August.

We had managed to camp very high thus far, and bugs had been only a passing hazard during our hikes in. Spider Meadow was our first true illustration of the oft-repeated phrase in *Pack &*

Paddle last summer—the bugs were innumerable and hostile.

After enjoying the meteor shower we headed at first light to Lyman Glacier. This glacier ends in a steep 40-foot-high cliff into the uppermost Lyman Lake. This lake was still frozen and we were able to observe the ice cliff from up close.

This glacier continues to rapidly retreat, 88m since 1986; 778m since 1929, and will soon follow the example of Milk Lake Glacier. However, the rapidly expanding upper Lyman Lake will be another wonderful alpine lake.

MOUNT DANIEL

The last field area, Mount Daniel, was, as in the previous two years, still deeply wrapped in snow. The snowpack was slightly less than in either 1991 or 1996 on both the Lynch and Daniel Glaciers.

Daniel Glacier for the second straight year remained snowcovered right to the terminus, allowing no retreat. The end of the Lynch Glacier above the beauti-

ful new jade-green lake continues to retreat slowly.

The snowpack on Lynch Glacier averaged 3.1m in 1997; 3.25m in 1996; and 2.15m from 1985 to 1995. The bugs at camp above Peggy's Pond were bad even by North Woods standards, Seth confirmed.

Overall, North Cascade glaciers gained volume in 1997. The gain averaged close to 0.5m in thickness added to the average spot on these glaciers.

The termini continued to retreat, as it would take several more good years such as 1996 and 1997 to halt the previously rapid retreat.

Snowpack west of the Cascade divide was much higher in 1997 than in 1996. East of the divide 1996 snowpack was quite similar or even higher than 1997 at elevations above 6000 feet.

The 1997 snow season provided extensive snowpacks for longer than 1991, but the overall snowpack depths in early summer were the same or slightly less than in 1991, which featured a very snowy spring.

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Mauri Pelto is the director of the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project, based at Nichols College, Massachusetts.



Eastside of Glacier Peak in 1988.

Mauri Pelto

RICK HALEY ✓

The Mountains of Eastern Oregon

—PART 1: WE COULD USE A GEOGRAPHY LESSON—

John Roper's suggestion that eastern Oregon is "just a more benign, southerly version of eastern Washington..." (*P&P, February 1997*) indicated that many of us Washingtonians could use a geography lesson.

Eastern Oregon is a vast array of mountains and deserts, with innumerable hiking opportunities ranging from the parched sand dunes of the Alvord Desert to remnant glaciers in the Wallowa Mountains.

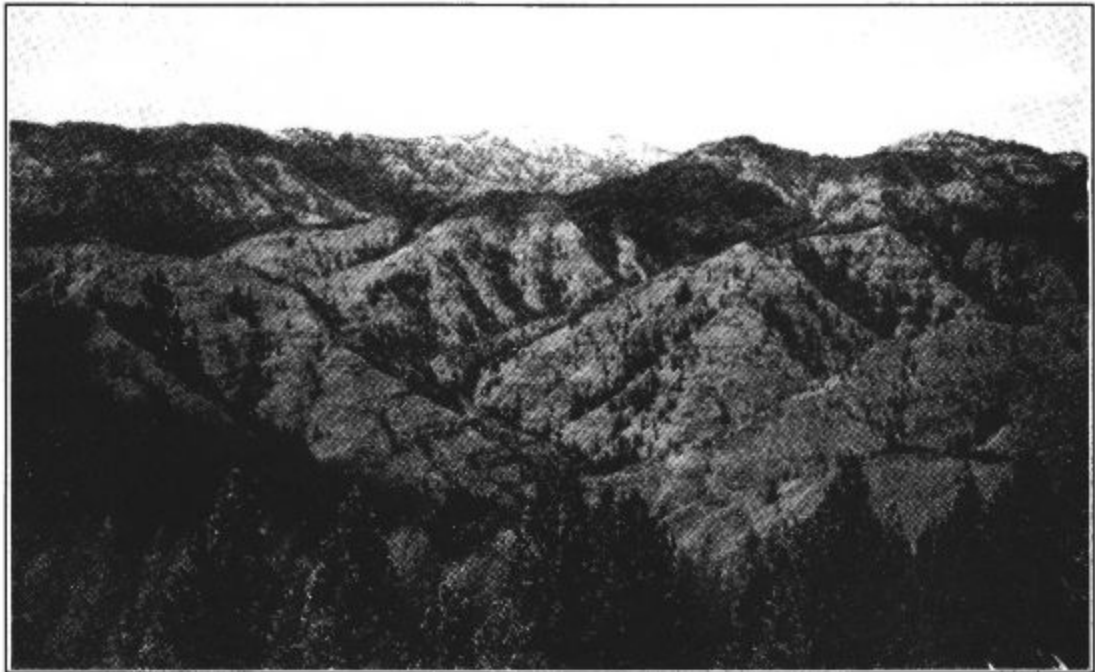
In contrast to eastern Washington, where the southern half is mostly private land, most of eastern Oregon is in public ownership, either Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management. Although some

of the public land suffers from the usual timber harvest, grazing, and mining deterioration found in all western states, there are many declared wilderness areas and additional *de facto* wild lands.

Another contrast with eastern Washington is in the number and variety of mountain ranges scattered across eastern Oregon. Unless you are in the Columbia Basin wheatfields (which occupy only the northern 10 percent of eastern Oregon), you are never without a mountain view.

Although there are no 10,000-foot peaks, mountains over 9000 feet are found in the Strawberry and Wallowa Mountains, on Elkhorn Ridge, and on Steens Mountain.

In addition to mountain areas which fit our Northwest image of forests, streams, peaks, and meadows, the southeast corner of the state contains large expanses of mountainous desert, where conifers are replaced by mountain mahogany and geology dominates



Typical Blue Mountain country; Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness.

Rick Haley

the botany.

Eastern Oregon can be divided into two provinces: The Blue Mountain complex occupying the northern half of eastern Oregon, and the Basin and Range zone of the southern half.

While this oversimplifies the area from geological and biological standpoints, it is useful in that within each province are commonalities across the miles.

The Blue Mountains

The Blue Mountain complex stretches from the Ochoco Mountains near Prineville to the northeast corner of the state, where the highlands suddenly give way to the baking abyss of Hells Canyon. The Blues are often considered together even though the various mountain ranges are of different geological origins and the flora and fauna change across the range.

What they share in common are large expanses of coniferous forest and relatively high levels of precipitation com-

pared to the Basin and Range province. Most of the ranges are forested above 4000 feet elevation, and mountains under 8000 feet are generally forested (usually sparsely) to the summits.

In the lower canyons and foothills, ponderosa pine is the predominant tree species. Mid-elevation forests are usually dominated by Douglas-fir or grand fir, with some other species such as western larch and lodgepole pine appearing in favorable microclimates.

The highest ranges have montane forests of subalpine fir, mountain hemlock, Engelmann spruce, and whitebark pine. With a few exceptions, the wet-forest trees such as noble and silver fir and Alaska cedar are absent. Western redcedar is confined mostly to streambanks and is absent from many ranges.

The forests are generally sparser than wet-side hikers are used to, although decades of fire suppression have created grand fir thickets in some areas. Understories are also often sparse and conducive to cross-country

travel. I have yet to encounter devil's club in eastern Oregon.

Starting from near Prineville and extending northeast, the major ranges of the Blue Mountain Complex include the Ochocos, the Aldrich Mountains, the Strawberries, the Blue Mountains proper, Elkhorn Ridge, and the Wallowa Mountains.

There is a general trend toward increasing elevations in this series, from the 6000-foot timbered ridges of the Ochocos to the 9000+-foot rock and snow peaks of the Wallowas. There is a corresponding trend in precipitation—the Ochocos are quite dry, with precipitation over 20 inches per year only in the highest parts, while the Wallowas are comparatively lush, with up to 45 inches per year (mostly snow) in the center of the range.

These ranges provide a wide diversity of hiking experiences, as will be discussed in the following sections.

The Ochoco Mountains

The Ochoco Mountains are the first range one encounters traveling east from the Cascades. The foothills begin just east of Prineville, and the range extends eastward to the South Fork of the John Day River.

The Ochocos are typified by rugged, timbered ridges and small streams flowing through sometimes impressive canyons. The name is derived from the Paiute word for willow, and many of the streambanks are indeed choked with willows.

Lower elevations in the Ochocos are dominated by ponderosa pine forest, while higher elevations are forested with Douglas-fir and grand fir. Common large mammals include mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, cougar, bobcat, black bear, and badger. The foothills have antelope.

The avifauna is diverse and entertaining, and on my trips I have been particularly impressed by the number and variety of woodpeckers and warblers, but many other forest birds are represented as well.

The rocks are a bewildering array of sedimentary, metamorphic, and igneous formations. Some of the most famous fossil beds in North America are in or near the Ochocos, and thunder eggs and other geological oddities are found in other parts of the range.

The best hiking in the Ochocos is found in the three small wilderness ar-

reas: Mill Creek (17,000 acres), Bridge Creek (5500 acres), and Black Canyon (13,000 acres). Except during hunting season, use of the areas is generally light although like many places it seems to be increasing every year.

The wilderness areas are characterized by wild canyons of varying ruggedness surrounded by high ridges that usually have roads on them. Mill Creek canyon features two impressive rock formations, Stein's Pillar (outside the wilderness) and Twin Pillars (inside the wilderness).

Cross-country travel in the wilderness areas is usually quite feasible thanks to open slopes and sparsely-timbered flats, although steep hikes out of the canyons should be expected.

These canyons are best visited in the spring, but the optimum time varies each year with spring weather and winter snowpack. Go too early and you'll be trudging through snow and suffering very crisp mornings. The late arrival may encounter blistering heat.

Ticks are numerous in the early spring, and the rattlesnakes emerge with late spring warmth. Black Canyon in particular is locally famous for its population of *Crotalus viridis* and indeed I have encountered quite a few vipers during my visits. By late summer, all but the largest creeks are dry, and the Ochocos become a dusty place.

So why go there? The landscape is unlike anything you will encounter on the wet side, with sparsely forested rimrock leading into labyrinth canyons and spring-green slopes covered with balsamroot and *Clarkia* under the huge ponderosas. Lewis' woodpeckers and golden eagles provide a different sort of birdwatching.

And you'd think an area with low precipitation would provide plenty of dry weather, but it has rained on us so many times that we call it "being Ochocoed."

The Ochocos are excellent for family car camping. There are some developed sites but the best camping is in dispersed spots along the creeks or view locations on the ridges. Dayhiking from car camps can be as simple as walking through the ponderosas to the top of the nearby butte for a view.

Dispersed and developed sites can also be found near the wilderness areas for an optimum combination of car-camping and dayhiking.

The Aldrich Mountains

The Aldrich Mountains occupy less space than the Ochocos but present a more impressive front as seen from Highway 26 between Dayville and Mount Vernon. They are separated from the Ochocos by the canyon of the South Fork John Day River, which provides access to both the eastern Ochocos and the Aldriches.

South of the main ridge, the Aldriches fade into a jumble of ridges that meld with the southern Ochocos into a solid mass of timbered mountains that extend southward almost to the town of Burns. These mountains, while perhaps not part of the Aldriches proper, are continuous with them and will be considered here.

These mountains get drier as one proceeds farther south to the point that the slopes leading down to Burns are sparsely timbered with junipers. Most of the Aldriches are found within the Malheur National Forest (headquarters in John Day).

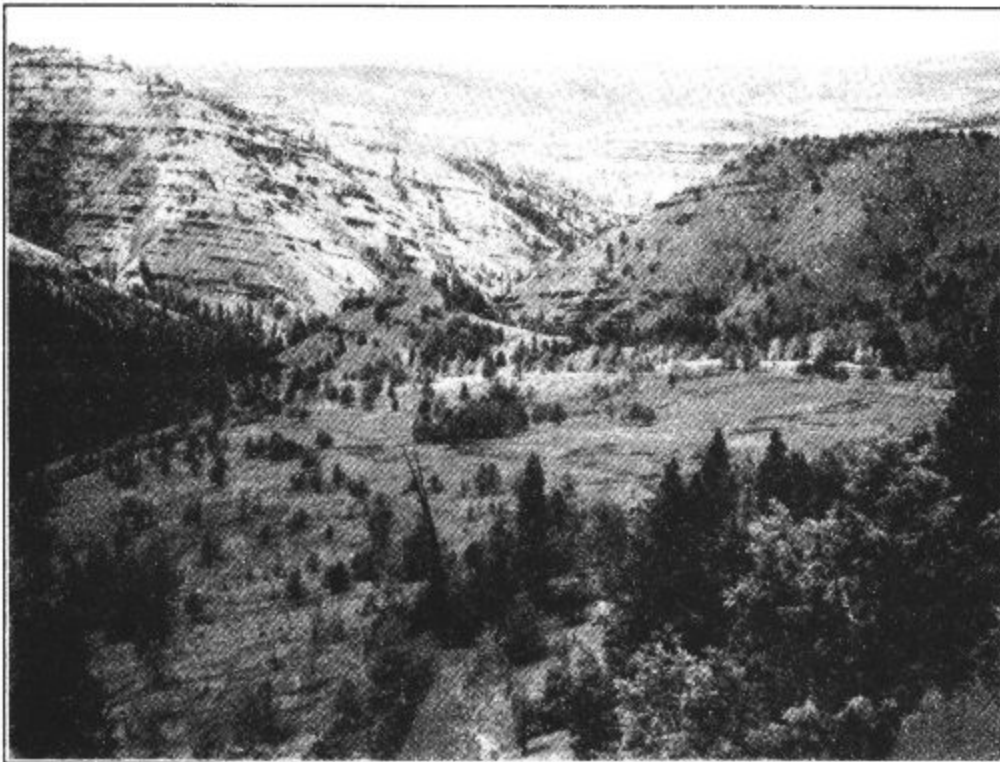
The Aldriches suffer from excessive roadiness. There are no declared wilderness areas and few large roadless areas. Timber harvest and grazing are common. However, these are some of the least-visited mountainous areas in the west—if you can find a place where the log trucks aren't running, you are likely to find large doses of solitude.

The charms of the Aldriches, like the Ochocos, are more subtle than bigger mountains—the unexpected meadow full of grass widows, the shooting stars growing from a mossy spring, the pleasant hike through pine forest to a modest viewpoint on top of a butte. The lower portions of the Aldriches are probably just as snaky as the Ochocos.

The Strawberry Mountains

The Strawberry Mountains are found south and east of the town of John Day, separated from the Aldriches by Canyon Creek, rich in early mining history. The Strawberries are big mountains, with quite a bit of land over 7000 feet and topping out at 9038-foot Strawberry Mountain.

Because it features the lakes, meadows, long-lasting snowfields and large, craggy peaks commonly sought by backpackers, the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness Area is more frequently visited than most other areas in the Blue Mountain complex (the exception being the Wallowas).



Black Canyon Wilderness in the Ochoco Mountains.

The wilderness is of moderate size (68,700 acres), dominated by the main ridge of the Strawberries. A highline trail runs roughly east-west along the crest of the ridge.

The main (and most crowded) access is by Strawberry Creek, south of Prairie City, with easy access to most of the lakes and Strawberry Mountain. Other, less popular, access points come from the south.

The Strawberries begin to exhibit some Rocky Mountain-like floral characteristics that are expressed even more in the Wallows. Because of the higher elevations, snakes are not a problem—I've never seen a rattlesnake over 5000 feet in Oregon.

The rocks are mostly dark and of volcanic origin. The Strawberries are in the Malheur National Forest.

South of the wilderness area, the Strawberries are reduced in stature and meld with the timbered ridges south of the Aldriches to form a long continuous stretch of mountainous country of modest elevation that extends clear back to the southern Ochocos.

Like the other two ranges, the areas south of the Strawberries are quite heavily roaded and mostly provide opportunities for uncrowded carcamping and moderate dayhiking.

Just east of the Strawberries lies the

Monument Rock Wilderness Area. This small area (19,700 acres) is probably similar to the lower Strawberries, although I can't tell for sure since I've only viewed it from the highway. Elevations reach near 8000 feet at Bullrun Rock and Monument Rock.

The Blue Mountains

The ranges north of the main stem of the John Day River are what most people mean when they refer to the Blue Mountains. These ranges extend more or less continuously northeast for nearly 150 miles, from near Spray, Oregon, to the southeast corner of Washington near Clarkston.

There are many subranges but most are known primarily as the Blue Mountains, or more poetically, the Blues. The Blues are mostly dark basalt and for the purposes of this article do not include the Wallowa Mountains or Elkhorn Ridge, which are made up of different types of rock and are usually referred to separately.

The western Blues (Malheur National Forest) are similar to the Ochocos and Aldriches in height and topography. Sparsely forested canyons lead into the higher parts of the ranges which are forested in ponderosa pine and grand fir.

Most of this part of the range (tra-

versed by Highway 395 between Long Creek and Mount Vernon) also suffers from excessive roads, although from the map it appears that there are some unroaded canyons.

Farther east, at the border of the Malheur and Umatilla National Forests (headquarters in Pendleton) is the Vinegar Hill/Indian Rock Scenic Area. This mostly unroaded area contains granitic peaks up to 8100 feet. There are some trails marked on the map but I can't give a first-hand report of the conditions there.

North of the Scenic Area is the North Fork John Day Wilderness area, 121,800 acres in four units. The largest section is dominated by the canyon of the North Fork John Day River, a large stream with many tributaries.

The other units are separated from the main section by small roaded corridors and generally contain small tributaries or bordering watersheds that flow to other drainages.

Although the main stem of the river probably sees a moderate amount of traffic, the side trails in this wilderness should provide large doses of solitude. Like most eastern Oregon roadless areas, the major traffic comes in the fall during hunting seasons.

Part II continues next month.

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Rick Haley, of Anacortes is a part-time biologist and a full-time father to toddler James.

WILLIAM N. PRATER

Sherpa Inc and the Snowshoe Story

—BILL AND GENE PRATER: THE WESTERN SNOWSHOE PIONEERS—

The Sherpa snowshoe—the original “Western” snowshoe that heralded the rediscovery of snowshoeing—reflects a good many years of modification and experimentation by my late brother Gene and me as we started farming together in 1951 at the east edge of the Cascade Mountains near Ellensburg.

Being mountain climbers, we wondered if snowshoes could possibly work effectively in mountainous terrain. If so, we could extend our high country exploring and climbing through the winter months when our expanding farming operation was a bit less hectic.

Once we decided to find out about snowshoes, we each purchased a pair at a military surplus store in Yakima. Though we both chose 10"x56" Yukons, Gene's were Lunds and mine were made by Snowcraft. Both pairs were equipped with the leather bindings sold at the store.

By the end of our first season on these rawhide webs, we were definitely convinced that this was the way to go to gain more of the “Freedom of the Hills” in the winter season.

Naturally, to improve performance, we focused on adding traction to make climbing easier. Some things worked, others didn't. Our first two modifications were to spiral-wrap rawhide thong around the varnished, wood side frames to provide better traction, and to remove as much of the snowshoe tails as possible to make it easier to make switchback turns. We also liked the advantage gained by using angle aluminum traction across the front crosspiece.

Tricouni nails along the side frames did not prove satisfactory.

By our second snowshoe season, other members of the Sherpa Climbing

Club were also trying out new webs and often joining us in pushing routes up the slopes of the Cascades. Trailbreaking became noticeably easier when more in the party were able to spell off one another.

On one trip in bottomless powder, as we were trying to gain the crest of a spur ridge leading to Kendall Peak, we happened to make a major discovery.

As we took turns trying to mush a switchback trail up the ever-steepening white stuff, Gene complained that it surely seemed like the rear of his snowshoes sank in deeper than mine, making his more prone to slide backward. I suggested that maybe it was “technique” or maybe he was “stepping too heavy”—which didn't satisfy Gene a bit! Fortunately we gave up this effort and mushed rapidly straight down the slope before, as naive novices, any avalanche wiped us out!

But, once we were back at the trailhead with all our webs lined up side-by-side against the Jeep wagon, Gene exclaimed, “The Lunds and the Snowcrafts are not the same!” The hinge thongs of the Snowcrafts were at least 4" farther forward! Needless to say, Gene soon made the modifications to his Lunds so they had the hinge thong 4" farther forward.

By the third season, the bindings—now dubbed “wet-noodle bindings,” by Dr. Don Fager, a Sherpa climbing companion from Wenatchee—seemed to provoke the most frustration.

We hashed over alternatives that might work, and also drew some ideas from fellow Sherpa “Doc” Lasher, then of Seattle, when he joined us on climbs.

With the purchase of the thickest cowhide we could find, we devised a

binding that wrapped around virtually the whole toe of the boot and laced up with a strap that crisscrossed many times over the top of the boot toe and around homemade hooks to make a very secure fit.

This secure binding, that would stay on all day long, made winter mountaineering much more feasible. And, these bindings could be put on and taken off with mittens on—even with big insulated Mickey Mouse boots!

Soon worn hinge thongs were being replaced with steel rods with welded lace-in end loops. This was a considerable step toward improved snowshoe performance and durability. With the heavy use we gave our snowshoes, it was not long before the worn rawhide under the boot heels also was being replaced with a more durable solid rawhide sheet or a plastic wear-pad over the rawhide lace.

In the late 1950s, Gene became pretty adept at trimming, steaming and bending the wood frames of these G. I. surplus wooden snowshoes to create a rounded tail and making them an amazingly better mountaineering snowshoe. Soon all of our snowshoes, including those used by our wives and many friends, were all brought up to the higher standards.

These innovations worked so well that they were sought after by an increasing number of snowshoeing friends. Eventually we used up the whole cowhide making hook bindings for friends.

Small improvements were made on into the 1960s. By this time the major manufacturers of wood frame snowshoes—Tubbs, Snowcraft and Lund, to mention a few—were making some new and improved designs. They were lacing more of their snowshoes with the greatly improved lacing made from neoprene-coated nylon fabric.

After the harvest of 1966 I left the joint farm operation and went back to school in Tacoma, for the next two winters—taking engineering classes. Afterward I took a job in an engineer-

Resources:

Snowshoeing, by Gene Prater/
Dave Felkey, 4th edition, \$16.95.
The Mountaineers, 800-553-4453.
Sherpa Snowshoes, 444 S Pine
St, Burlington WI 53105; 800-621-

2277.

Prater Snowshoes, 3740 Cove
Road, Ellensburg WA 98826; 509-
925-1212.

The Snowshoer magazine, PO
Box 458, Washburn WI 54891;
715-373-5556.

ing office in Tacoma where I did full-time design drafting. In spare time at home, though, I began research on the feasibility of making hook bindings of synthetic material with traction—pressed on a metal hinge-rod mounted on snowshoe frames of high strength aluminum with synthetic decks.

After a couple of years of enjoyably challenging design work, I was offered a position with another company that was starting up a fascinating new project. I took the position, but unfortunately the project flopped, was dropped, and so was I. This was all at the same time as when the SST was dropped and the great Boeing layoff in the Northwest occurred. While looking for jobs the next few months that winter, I concentrated on completing the design and testing of a hook binding, made from synthetic materials, which would fit on all existing snowshoes.

By the spring of 1971, with my wife Barb's help, I decided to go into full time binding production in the lower floor and garage of our house near Tacoma. After checking with club members about using the Sherpa name, we incorporated the business as Sherpa Design, Inc.

Soon we were sharing the many hats of running a manufacturing business—sales, marketing, advertising, purchasing, production, quality control, etc. While Barb continued designing and fine-tuning the management systems, I continued work on aluminum snowshoe design and testing, and in addition completed the final design of the binding, using the same proven hook and strap boot attachment system, but with the much improved aluminum hinge-rod traction. A patent search was made and a patent was applied for.

With no hinge-rod snowshoe on the market at the time, we contacted our friend, Baird Morgan, then the CEO at the Tubbs Company, and came up with an agreement with Tubbs to lace a Sherpa hinge-rod into a certain number of their newly introduced 10"x36" Green Mountain Bearpaw snowshoes and market the new binding on them. They even went out with a cute little yellow "Sherpa/Tubbs" logo on them.

By the summer of 1973, our line of aluminum snowshoes was ready to market—along with the hinge-rod, traction bindings. Five models were marketed, along with a Traction Kit for wood snowshoes and a detachable Snow Basket for ice axes. Through a

fluke in a supplier's paint supply, those first snowshoe frames ended up coated with bright yellow polyurethane paint on the aluminum, rather than the color originally selected.

Interestingly enough, although the small Featherweight snowshoe (8"x25" with a 173-square-inch flotation area) was originally designed primarily for children and small framed individuals, with use in the Cascade Mountains, that model soon became the prime mountaineering snowshoe for people of virtually any weight. At first, men purchased these snowshoes in almost every instance for their wives—and then with experience began to realize that under most of the Cascade snow conditions and parties climbing with rotated leads, the Featherweights had adequate flotation and were a lot easier to handle than any larger size.

The new product line was shown for the first time at a booth at the NSGA Sporting Goods Show in Chicago in 1974—in drastic contrast to all the exhibitors of wood frame laced snowshoes. Sales were far from explosive, but did increase steadily over the years.

Later, after my 1976 climb of Denali and work along with Gene with the Appalachian Mountain Club's winter mountaineering classes in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, I completed the design of a binding with crampon-like teeth and superior traction. The binding was marketed as the Tucker Claw and was no doubt instrumental in keeping Sherpa snowshoes recognized as the top in high performance.

Sometime in the mid-70s, my brother Gene, too, began marketing his Prater Snowshoes. Today, his son Eric continues filling custom orders, working out of his shop near Ellensburg.

Even though Gene passed on a few years ago, his impact on the snowshoe community continues, in no small part through his book, *Snowshoeing*. His daughter, Connie, had considerable contact with Dave Felkey who made the updating revisions to the book for *The Mountaineers* this year. The new edition of Gene's classic, updated, but with all his original often humorous—but downright practical—recommendations, is



On Rampart Ridge, about 1972. Gene Prater, below, is on his first pair of prototype aluminum snowshoes; Dr. Mike Colpitts, above, is on Sherpa prototypes.

William N. Prater

books

A Sea Kayaker's Guide to South Puget Sound, by Ken Campbell. 1997; \$10.

This recently published book helps answer the question of where-to-go. The author is a sea kayak guide and instructor at Tacoma Outdoor Pursuits. If you attended the Sea Kayak Symposium you would have had the opportunity to attend Ken's slide presentation which included glimpses from a number of the trips described here.

The book details 19 destinations in the South Sound, from Capitol Lake in Olympia to Blake Island. Information for each destination is broken down into Vitals (trip length, degree of difficulty, and ponderables), Access, and Description. He has done a good job in presenting the information.

The book's Introduction also provides information on general paddling considerations such as safety, wildlife and a short section on "Access and Private Property" which I hope all paddlers will take to heart.

There's a lot of water to paddle in the South Sound and this book will help you discover some of it. If you can't find it in your local paddle store, contact Tahoma Outdoor Pursuits at 5206 South Tacoma Way, Tacoma WA 98409 (253-474-8155).—LGM

55 Hikes in Central Washington, by Ira Spring and Harvey Manning. Second edition. The Mountaineers, 1997. \$12.95.

Go east, say Spring and Manning to Puget Sound residents. Go for flowers, birds and wildlife, and rocks. Go for the *blue sky*. Yes, this is a good book



for January reading and planning. As soon as spring hints at arrival, you will be prepared for a foray into Central Washington.

The second edition has been completely updated (instructions for the Yakima Rim have been revised to match current conditions) and includes several new hikes. A few hikes have been removed, and some have just been combined so the number still adds up to 55.

If you do a lot of east-side rambling, you will probably want to retire your first edition and replace it with this one. It can be ordered by phone: 800-553-4453.

Winterwise, A Backpacker's Guide, by John M. Dunn. Second Edition. Adirondack Mountain Club, 1996. \$12.95

Singing the praises of winter's uncrowded trails and grand scenery, the author gives useful advice for travel on snow. The book's nine chapters cover such things as safety and first aid, food

and drink, clothing, navigation and overnighing.

Although Dr. Dunn emphasizes conditions found in the Northeast, most of the techniques and information apply to our mountains as well.

The book can be ordered by phone by calling the Adirondack Mountain Club: 800-395-8080 Monday through Friday.

Nevada Wilderness Areas and Great Basin National Park, by Michael C. White. Wilderness Press, 1997. \$14.95.

You may think of Nevada as paved-over wasteland, but it actually has fifteen wilderness areas with about two dozen peaks over 11,000 feet. We're talking real mountains here.

Each wilderness area has its own chapter, with general information as well as specific route descriptions. Sketch maps are included for each wilderness, and topos are reproduced at the end of the book.

Use is light. Restrictions are few, and no permits are needed. *Nevada Wilderness Areas* can be ordered by phone: 800-443-7227.

Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills, edited by Don Graydon and Kurt Hanson, with dozens of contributors. Sixth edition. The Mountaineers, 1997. \$24.95.

This book needs little introduction, and is mostly just referred to as "Freedom." It is used in The Mountaineers Club climbing classes as a text book, and is the essential reference for novices and seasoned mountaineers alike.

Freedom was the first title ever published by The Mountaineers, in 1960. The six editions provide a history of mountaineering and its technological advances over almost 40 years.

To replace your old, worn-out fifth edition, order by phone: 800-553-4453.

Sherpa Inc and the Snowshoe Story *continued from previous page*

now on bookstore shelves.

The devastating drought winter of 1977 (only 6" of snow at Snoqualmie Pass in February) caused a massive canceling of orders, and Barb and I sold our snowshoe business. At present, however, I am again active as a consultant doing design research for the company.

Last year Sherpa released a much-modified version of my clip-on binding, which I had developed in 1985. For mountaineers, the ability to simply clip on and take off snowshoes, even under adverse conditions, is critical.

With several dozen snowshoe manufacturers worldwide, we can be assured that competition will effectively drive

to the forefront designs most serviceable for the various snow regions and the varying tastes of the exploding population of new snowshoers.

△

Bill Prater, still snowshoeing, now lives in Cle Elum.

PANORAMA

NEWS FROM ALL OVER

BEARS—If you are interested in bears of any kind, you can learn tons about them through the *International Bear News*, the quarterly newsletter of the International Association for Bear Research and Management.

The *Pack & Paddle* office has been subscribing to IBN for several years, and we always find it interesting (although cerebral) reading.

To subscribe for a year, send \$20 to **Kate Kendall, IBA Secretary**
Glacier Science Center
Glacier National Park
West Glacier MT 59936.

AND SPEAKING OF BEARS—We told you last year about Sally Maughan's efforts to develop a black bear rehab clinic in Boise (*June '97, page 28; July '97, page 4*). Her goal is to rehabilitate and release orphaned cubs as an alternative to euthanizing them, and to work with other states to help them with their orphaned cubs.

Her fledgling non-profit association needs donations: freezers, towels, dog houses for dens, cans of condensed milk, boxes of oatmeal, and plain old postage stamps and cash, among many other things.

A donation will get you on the mailing list of her newsletter, "Bears First." Send to:

Idaho Black Bear Rehab
attn: Sally Maughan
6097 Arney Ln
Boise ID 83703.

AVALANCHE CENTER FUNDING

—After its funding was cut by the state legislature, the Northwest Avalanche Center was scheduled to close this month. However, Governor Locke will use \$35,000 from an emergency fund to keep the Avalanche Center open through this winter.

OLYMPIC PLANS IMPROVEMENTS

—Plans have been made for about \$136,000 worth of projects in Olympic National Park. The projects will be funded by money from the new Recreation Fees.

"By next summer," said Superintendent David Morris, "every visitor will be able to see the difference this source of funding can make."

Projects started in 1997 included rehabilitation of campgrounds, propagation of native plants for revegetation,

updating wilderness trip planning materials, and improvements to the wilderness information system.

Extensive trail clearing, maintenance and repair are scheduled to begin when weather allows in the spring.

ONP would like to hear from you. How do you want this money spent?

Write directly to the Chief Ranger.

Curt Sauer, ONP Chief Ranger
Recreation Fees
Olympic National Park
600 Park Ave
Port Angeles WA 98362.

MOUNTAIN LOOP HIGHWAY—A

few months ago, the Federal Highway Administration, Forest Service, and Snohomish County were prepared to begin writing a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Mountain Loop Scenic Byway, including options for improving the 14 miles between Barlow Pass and the White Chuck.

Over the course of the past year, however, members of the public have indicated they would like to see a broader analysis done in the DEIS.

Since the Mountain Loop currently falls under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, all three agencies agree that the Forest Service needs to be the agency to decide the scope of the analysis.

After some additional work to prepare, the Forest Service will open the collaborative process to the public. It is expected to begin in early '98. If you are interested in participating, contact **Mary Auld, Snohomish County, 425-388-3488x4510**, or **Lorette Ray, Forest Service, 425-744-3571**, by January 15.

SNOQUALMIE PASS PLAN—The

Forest Service has announced a decision to manage 212,000 acres in the Snoqualmie Pass area to benefit species dependent on old growth forest while working to maintain recreation.

The Adaptive Management Plan, as it is called, will apply only to National Forest land in the North Bend and Cle Elum Ranger Districts and not to private or state land in the area.

The plan calls for connected corridors of old growth forest to allow for healthy plant and animal species over long periods of time. That means there will be no programmed timber harvest, though there could be some thinning to give trees more room.

Existing ski areas, roads, trails and

campgrounds will be allowed to continue; however, new facilities or expansion of existing ones would require careful study.

To help encourage public input into the implementation of the plan, an Adaptive Management Area Subcommittee of local citizens will be established to represent a balance of affiliations and viewpoints.

KID EXPERIENCES WANTED—

Backpacking with Babies and Small Children was first published by Signpost Books in 1975, when Louise was editor and publisher. The first edition states, "This book is a compilation of advice and ideas from many different people, many of them readers of Signpost ..."

When I was preparing the second edition, Wilderness Press 1986, I turned again to Louise and her readers, who generously responded with suggestions, pictures, and interview appointments.

Now Wilderness Press has asked me for a complete revision—a third edition. This time I would like to ask for suggestions from *Pack & Paddle* readers too, especially from those who have used the second edition. I'd like your ideas, I'd like pictures, I'd like the opportunity to interview backpacking families.

Please contact me—a postcard or e-mail will do—and I will call to arrange a convenient time.

Goldie Silverman
3718 48th Ave NE
Seattle WA 98105
dongoldie@aol.com

STEHEKIN CONDOS—A Spokane doctor has proposed—and Chelan County has approved—a 13-unit condominium, a house, an electric tram, a sewage treatment plant, roads, trails, and an 8-slip dock at Loggers Point and surrounding highlands at the upper end of Lake Chelan at Stehekin.

This proposal has been around since 1994, but was finally granted last August. The proposed development is ½-mile above Stehekin landing and would be visible downlake from as far away as Lucerne.

To find out more about this proposal and how it would change the nature of the remote Stehekin Valley, write to:

Stehekin Alert
PO Box 303
Stehekin WA 98852.

REST STOP

EQUIPMENT, RECIPES, TIPS

BOOT REPAIR—We just got Bill's trusty old leather boots resoled. Now it was my turn! The sole on one of my hiking boots split while hiking several weeks ago. My boots are made by Vasque. They could be resoled through a Red Wing Store in Tacoma but they send work out of state and it takes several weeks. I needed them sooner than that.

The people at Red Wing referred me to Proctor Shoe Repair. They did a beautiful job and had them done for me in four days. The cost was a little over \$50. They look like new and I tried them out this weekend and they felt great too.

Proctor Shoe Repair is located at 3817½ North 26th Street in Tacoma, just off Proctor Street in the Proctor District. The hours are Mon-Fri 9-5:30 and Sat 9-5. Ask for Harold. He's a great guy.—*Jane Habegger, Olympia.*

11TH ESSENTIAL—In August, eleven intrepid hikers joined Mountaineer leader Robin Howe on an 8-day backpack along the Chelan Summit Trail. All of us toted heavy packs with lots of gear, thinking ourselves prepared for any emergency.

In the middle of the trip the soles of Amy's boots parted company from the uppers, literally dropping off in the trail. Most of us had sandals or slippers for camp shoes so no tennies could be found for her and the trails were too rough for sandals.

What to do? We came up with various ideas ranging from 1st Aid adhesive tape to dental cement to wire. From his large pack (drum roll, please) Dave pulled out the 11th Essential—a roll of duct tape, the perfect all-purpose fixer. Ron cut many strips and ingeniously fastened the soles back on in such a way that Amy could still lace and adjust her boots. She did a few dance steps in her silver "moon boots" that morning and finished the trip safely shod.

Lee makes up verses to the tune of "The Happy Wanderer" about everyone on a trip and Amy's went like this:

Then poor Amy lost her sole
It just would not stick
With no foundation under her
A descent would be slick.

She also memorialized Dave and Ron:
Dave brought out his duct tape
All one hundred feet!
When Ron finished his design
Her moon boots were so neat.
I've been on other Robin trips and she

seems to attract "good folks" on her backpacks. Everyone helps each other, shares gear, hot water and food (we had a "tea party" one afternoon of treats from everyone including smoked oysters, crackers, candy and caviar!) and looks out for us slower hikers.

This experience reminded me that no matter how fast or strong or mountain-wise someone is, there is always something totally unexpected that can happen. And when it does, it is great to have friends with heavy packs and good skills nearby to help out.—*Kathe Stanness, Marysville.*

BOOTS: A CAUTIONARY TALE—Well, of course I knew I needed new boots. "But these are so nicely broken in ..." (like 15 years-plus).

Broken down is more like it, and I chose to notice this the day before our scheduled week-long backpack last summer. The soles, in fact, were separating.

Gregg heroically took them to the nearest open shoe repair shop (Lynnwood) for emergency repair. We were really happy they could do the repair, until I put on the boots and found them to be half a size smaller than previously. They had been re-stitched, all the way around.

I didn't know this would change the size of the boot, but would have thought that an experienced and ethical shoe repair person would know it. I plan to use these nicely stitched old boots as flower pots next spring.

I found a pair of boots I could wear at a small local shop. They were fine, but persist in giving me one blister in a predictable spot. The shop is tiny, but has a surprisingly good selection of non-high-tech foot gear. It's called **Outdoors Northwest** and is in the Safeway shopping center in Monroe, on Highway 2.—*Peg Ferm, Monroe.*

THREE-PIN BOOTS—Alico and Merrell are still making decent three-pin boots for touring. We found one used pair at the ski swap here this fall, but still had to buy one pair new, the Merrells, which are very light.

The Alicos are more traditional Norwegian welt. Anyone have a pair to report on?—*Eric Burr, Mazama.*

AVALANCHE AWARENESS—Paul Baugher of the Northwest Avalanche

Institute will give a free seminar to raise your awareness of avalanche safety. If you travel the backcountry and have not had avalanche training, this will be an eye-opener.

Paul is patrol director at Crystal Mountain Resort, co-owner and a guide with Mount Rainier Alpine Guides, a heli-ski guide, and a consultant to US snow safety operations.

The lecture is scheduled for Tuesday, January 13 at 7pm at Swallows' Nest, 2308 6th Ave, in Seattle. For more information call 206-441-4100.

HIKING WITH CRUTCHES—I noted with interest the article by Suzanne Follis: "Hiking with Crutches" (*December, page 24*). I, too, can vouch for these crutches. Five years ago, when we were living in England and for a brief time in France, I fractured my greater trochanter (part of the upper femur) in a skiing accident near Val d'Isere. A few weeks later, my French crutches were taking me for walks in Derbyshire, in the Lake District, and even halfway up Ben Nevis (until the snow got too deep) in Scotland.

Upon my return to the States, I began offering my crutches to those in need. They were in such demand that they never had a rest. I felt very secure with them and many Seattle Mountaineers have had the opportunity to use them. Surely they must be available somewhere in the US, but they only seem to offer the under-the-armpit variety. Perhaps one needs to know they exist and to ask for them (and perhaps pay a little more, but they are well worth it).

There is another helpful item I have noticed here in Germany. They have wonderful walkers for those who need more help than crutches can provide. I am sure they have developed these advanced aids because people need to be more mobile here; autos just can't go everywhere. At any rate, it is heart-warming to see older people walking with their walkers down country lanes chatting with their neighbors. How much better their attitude than if they just sat home in front of the TV.—*Shari Hogshead, Ingolstadt.*

READERS' REVIEWS are welcome on this page. Send to:
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PO BOX 1063
PORT ORCHARD WA 98366

EDITOR'S JOURNAL



Snowshoeing in Commonwealth Basin.

FROM THE MAILBOX—"GPSs are fine on water, necessary even, but should be outlawed in the mountains, along with cell phones and plastic flags, not to mention aluminum pots and sleeping bags."—*Bellevue*.

"Readers' reports are the backbone of *P&P*. I read it all as soon as it arrives in the mail. I particularly like your policy of keeping pressure group politics out of it."—*Portland*.

"Keep up the good work. I love *Pack & Paddle!*"—*Medina*.

"Thanks for the GPS article (December issue). My impression is that a GPS would be great at determining approximately where you are, but only if you know exactly where you are."—*Olympia*.

"*Pack & Paddle* brings me a delightful mini-vacation in the magnificent Pacific Northwest."—*La Jolla*.

"My dad and I enjoy your publication greatly. We had a great trip to Elk Basin in September, inspired by Karen Sykes' article. We shared the basin with bears every day and startled a herd of elk on the Mount Hopper trail."—*Bremerton*.

"I subscribed originally for the paddle reports, but love to hear about the backcountry hikes and climbs. Never knew there was so much out there in the mountains."—*Gig Harbor*.

VOLUME 7—It's true: this issue begins Volume 7 of *Pack & Paddle*. When I started Volume 1, Number 1, I put it

together on an old IBM typesetter. That machine is now taking up space in the storeroom. Does anyone want it? It might make a good anchor.

I do the typesetting these days on a computer, but not much else has changed. The office is still located in an upstairs room with a view of the surrounding forest. Yellow Cat still comes in to help with the proofreading, and Lee still does all the paperwork that I hate.

INDEXES—The '97 Index is complete and ready to mail. Yellow Cat has been busy sending out indexes to all the early birds, but there are plenty for everyone.

As usual, Lee has broken out snow trips and water trips into separate indexes. If you'd like the Water or Snow, just let us know, otherwise you'll get only the General Index.

The Index is absolutely free. We always appreciate self-addressed long envelopes and stamps. Phone, mail, or e-mail your index request.

HUMES RANCH—Marilyn and Verne Wade's story ("Geyser Valley Loop," page 19) mentions "the presence of a magical spell" at Humes Ranch.

I wonder if it's because Herb Crisler's spirit still lives there. After his death in 1985, his son Robert interred his ashes at Humes Ranch. See Ruby El Hult's book *An Olympic Mountain Enchantment* for the story of Crisler's life at Humes Ranch.

PERSIAN GULF—Professor Warren Clare, who normally spends his time quietly in Olympia, sends us a note that he is in the Persian Gulf aboard an aircraft carrier, cruising with the fleet. "What an experience for an old guy," he writes. He's staying in mountain shape going up and down all those shipboard ladders.

MYSTERY HIKER—You may have wondered what Mystery Hiker and Mr. Maphead have been up to. Mr. Maphead, at his tender age, has had a hip replacement that has temporarily slowed him down. The other hip is scheduled soon. In the long run, he hopes to be able to hike again.

Mystery Hiker has left her winter work at Stevens Pass to work for Windermere Realty in Lake Stevens. If you have a real estate question about that part of Snohomish County, give her a call: 360-355-4666. Her real name is Nancy.

By the way, Nancy says that when they start hiking again, they'll be known as "Nancy and Hipman."

EXPANDED ISSUE—To add to your holiday entertainment we made this issue extra long. It's something we can do only once in a while. We hope you enjoy the special treat this year.

See you in the backcountry.

Ann Marshall



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1997 INDEX

The 1997 Index for *Pack & Paddle* is now available. The Index is free (stamps and long self-addressed envelopes are most welcome). Write, phone, or e-mail your request, and indicate which ones you want:

- Snow Trip Index
- Paddling Trip Index
- General Index (includes Snow and Paddling)