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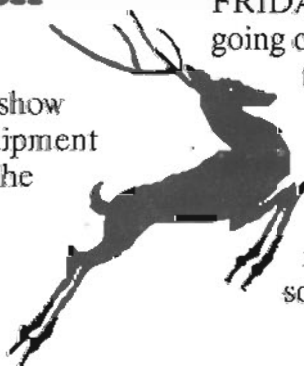
Peninsula Wilderness Club Events

December 1992

Peninsula Wilderness Club meets on the second Monday of every month at 7:30 PM at the Kitsap Unitarian Fellowship Church on Perry Avenue in East Bremerton. The public is cordially invited.

Meeting **December 14th**

Northwest Photographer Rod Soden will present a scenic and nature slide show with music. Ron will have various equipment to display during a discussion on how he operates in the field. A professional photographer for about 14 years, Ron owns and operates a gallery in Ashford near Mount Rainier.



Day Hike on the Skok

FRIDAY, JAN. 1ST: Joe Weigel will be going on an easy day hike along the north fork of the Skokomish River starting at Staircase. The trail goes through wonderful old growth forest and near deep blue pools of the river. Call Joe at 871-0291 if an easy relaxing hike on New Year's Day sounds good to you.

Upcoming PWC Events

Spruce Railroad Trail

SATURDAY, DEC. 5TH: Join Doug Savage for a relaxing stroll down the historic Spruce Railroad Trail along the shores of Lake Crescent. This will be an easy hike suitable for just about anyone in the Club. Frequent views of the lake and peaks beyond make this trip especially enjoyable. Call Doug at 698-9774 if interested.

Beginner's XC Ski Trip

SATURDAY, DEC. 12TH: Doug Savage will sponsor a cross-country ski trip for PWC's new to the sport. The place will depend on snow levels. Call Doug at 698-9774 if you are interested in learning how to XC ski.

Ski Hurricane Ridge

SATURDAY, JAN. 9TH: Join Lynn Howat for an easy day of cross-country skiing at Hurricane Ridge in the Olympics. Call Lynn at 598-3087 if interested.

Elwha River Backpack

WEEKEND OF JAN. 16TH, 17TH & 18TH: Join Michael Gardzalla for a easy back packing trip to Anderson Ranch on the Elwha River. This is a prime spot for watching herds of elk that spend the winter there. Give Michael a call at 479-1276.

Return to the Elwha

WEEKEND OF FEB. 13TH, 14TH & 15TH: Michael Gardzalla will be returning to Anderson Ranch for a second weekend of elk watching. Call Michael at 479-1276.

Down From the Mountain

By. Irma Ireland O'Brien

As I poured out the remains from my water bottle, I took a drink. A cool bright image appeared of a rounded white dome decked with a colorful entourage of people. Teeth flashed from burnt faces as they chatted, drank, and ate. I realized I'd just swallowed liquid snow from the top of Mt. Baker. Above this group hovered a red, white, yellow, and blue kite trailing streamers of red and white. A girl was stretched out on her pack resting. A man sat hunched over an open sack munching bar after bar of energy. Comments echoed about this mountain range and that, "Look at Rainier!" and "Yes, that must be Glacier Peak." A man with a blue cap and black tee shirt drank orange water talking to another with one boot off wearing an Al Jolson grin. A gal in a blue parka danced around the group pulling the string of the kite. Three more climbers trudged up the dome, one man flung his pack down, sat on top of it, and said how glad he was to be there. When asked how he was doing, the problem was his knee, not his feet. Everyone sat, except the fellow with Einstein hair; he wasn't taking any chances.

I saw myself sitting on the southeast flank peering into the dragon's hole that puffed as it snored. I was absorbed with the smells and noise of this living mountain of moving snow, crevices, and seracs. "The Sleeping Dragon", an appropriate name for this massive volcano, was given to the mountain by the original Americans. What a perfect place for a dragon to hibernate. This mountain exhaled yellow fumes that hissed and moaned through its fumaroles. Its breath vibrated toward the surface, causing mounds of ice and snow to crack and flow down its slopes. This mountain moves forever, like it was regulated by a time set shutter, sometimes expelling boulders far below on talus or moraines. As I sat engrossed in my thoughts, the cold wind brought me back to notice the group making noises and motions

to leave. I put on my windbreaker, hoisted my pack onto a somewhat energized back, and wondered why we were here?

In the course of six weeks, since Green Mountain, I've been asked that question on each trip. I signed up for the class because my daughter wanted us to become a mother/daughter climbing team. An honor bestowed by a sixteen year old I didn't want to miss. She knew I had climbed a couple of peaks by her age. Unfortunately, she made the Premiere Soccer team and dropped the class. My answer to my husband why I decided to continue was that it would be a good conditioning class for fishcamp. Also, it was a perfect chance to meet new friends to hike and climb with in the future. Green Mountain found the kid in me, I was elated with the rock climbing and repelling.

When asked on top of Little Si, why had I returned to the mountains after thirty years, "it was hard to live so close to mountains and not be on them." While following an enthusiastic, knowledgeable rope leader and fellow student on Mt. Angeles, my answer was "I'll be fifty this year and I'd better do this while I can." On Thorson Peak, I was quite envious of the two rope leaders, who scouted our route to the top in blowing fog. I wanted to be there. While roped to a dignified leader, some years my senior on Mt. Washington, I realized he possessed good mountain sense. That's the way I'd like to be; he was an excellent role model.

During the grueling backpack up the Brothers, I became aware of age, pain and slowness. But the second day on rack and snow, when roped to a cool confident leader, I found his attitude contagious. I climbed that peak like I was thirty pounds lighter and ten years younger, amazed at what thinner air can do to you. Yes, the Brothers was a peak experience. Even if it took two days for the pain to vanish.

(Continued next page)

Down from the Mountain *(Continued)*

When talking with team mates, they revealed a variety of reasons to take the class and climb mountains. Some had hiked for years and wanted to get off the trails to learn confidence on snow, scree, rock and peaks. Other found the class an excellent guide service for future climbs. Some had couch potato partners and needed to be out. Others were building up for "the big one", Mt. Rainier. One had climbed Rainier, but was still confronting his phobia of heights. A rope leader said that he took the class as a forty-fifth birthday present to himself. I could relate to that, I'd love to climb Rainier for my fiftieth. The comment that almost knocked me off the Roman Wall of Baker, "Climbing was getting to be like downhill skiing which was equal to sex." I agreed that both were exhilarating, but thought the feelings were different.

I've discovered that we climb mountains for many reasons, but these reasons are only part of the answer as to "Why were we there?" The best comment came from a young observant team mate. She was impressed how the rope leaders liked to be with the students and seemed to care. I must admit, I've been impressed with the dedication of the rope leaders, which are men of all ages, sizes backgrounds, experiences, and philosophies, even a female. They show up at each lecture of which I'm sure several have heard more than a dozen times. But they are there ready to sign up and volunteer for the weekend peaks. Some of which they have climbed again and again. I didn't understand why they were willing to put themselves out for us neophytes. Kent's a knowledgeable and entertaining lecturer, but has his information and jokes changed that much over the last several years? This skilled, magnanimous, mountain leader had gathered a very capable and dedicated group of rope leaders.

So why were we there, I asked again as I licked my tongue over swollen cracked lips,

sighed through burnt nostrils and felt my blistered ears. To endure pain? I realized that the Jolson look wasn't in jest. I remembered my reply on Baker's steep descent when my team mate told me he was confronting his fear of heights. I said "I was there to learn fear and to find a healthy respect for it." I still chuckle at Kent's comment "nobody wants to be roped to someone who's fearless." Around our cooksite the night before the summit, my rope leader said that he couldn't talk to just anyone about climbing mountains. Most people couldn't relate and had nothing to say. This I'm finding out. It's the class and weekend trips that brings together kindred spirits of those who have experienced "the freedom of the hills" and return again and again.

I'll be coming down from the mountain for the next several weeks. My head's filled with flashbacks of sights, sounds, and feelings; exhilarating memories to keep. I already miss the sharing, knowing this is the last class and now it's up to me to insure there'll be more summits. I thank Kent, my trusted rope and trip leaders, and team mates for the camaraderie of a most rewarding class. There is a definite feeling of satisfaction when I gaze at a distant mountain and know that I've been there. As I leave for Alaska's fishing grounds, I recall another quote "fishing is a disease, while climbing mountains is a passion." Why do I climb mountains? I'm not sure, but I know there's nothing quite like it!

Door Prize Winner

The Club Vice President Harry Wilson was the lucky winner of a Life-Link snow saw at the November meeting. The door prize is donated each month by Judd from the Mount Constance Mountain Shoppe. Thank you Judd, and congratulations to Harry.

PWC Events (Continued)

Day Hike Along Lake Mills

SATURDAY, JAN. 23RD: Join Doug Savage for a day hike on the scenic Lake Mills Trail in the Olympics. The hike is a fairly easy four miles round trip. Call Doug at 698-9774 if interested.

XC Ski BonJon Pass

SUNDAY, JAN. 31ST: Charlie Pomfret will be going for a day of cross-country skiing on the logging roads above Quilcene. The destination will be BonJon Pass, an easy to moderate level trip depending on snow conditions. Call Charlie at 697-1876 if interested in going along.

Welcome to the Club!

The membership of the Peninsula Wilderness Club extends a warm and hearty welcome to the following new members:

Seabury Blair
Jeannette Rogers
John Rykala
Caryn Seifert

Wanted:

Kid's ski stuff (downhill).
Boots; size 8 or 9; Skis 100 cm.
Jim Groh 779-5421

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Club Officers

PresidentLynn Howat598-3087
Vice PresHarry Wilson	...479-1322
Secretary	.....Kathy Weigel	...871-0291
Treasurer	.....Kevin Kilbridge	871-2537
Entertainment	...Joe Weigel	....871-0291
Refreshments	...Sandy Sauer	....876-0137

Newsletter Staff

Don Paulson	.....692-5086	(Editor)
Jim Drannan	.....479-4171	(Proofing)
Jim Luddon	.....373-0431	(Address data base)
Helen Schwartz	...377-9822	(Feature Writer)
Judy Guttormsen	..779-6457	(Conservation Corner)
Stenwick Family	..779-5314	(Printing/mailling)

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