



# CHARITY MOUNTAIN

I don't know why it took me so long to find my way into the mountains. As a semi-retired spelunker with a personality attracted to living on the edge, mountain climbing would seem a natural attraction--especially after I moved to the Pacific Northwest.

But almost four years passed before I went up into the Cascades. Then, my initiation was nearly my termination.

It was Charity Mountain. Just about the coolest near-death promotion in the history of radio.

Barely two days after I was fired at Seattle's KISW for not being hip enough to go to Van Halen concerts and throw up, I was in the office of Bob Bingham at KYYX being hired to do mornings. The new station was owned by Seattle radio legend Pat O'Day.

KYYX had signed on less than a year before, and had begun to show up in the Seattle ratings. Pat O'Day had much bigger plans.

O'Day could easily be called the King of Radio Hype. His personality was radio hype. Probably no one alive ever used the medium as effectively to create excitement for a well-drawn promotional idea.

In the '60s at KJR, Seattle, O'Day had overseen one of the country's most successful Top 40 stations, built around a lineup of super jocks that included Larry Lujack, Lan Roberts, and Jerry Kaye.

The station was famous for zany promotions.

When John Lennon proclaimed the Beatles "bigger than Jesus Christ," Pat went on the air and announced that beginning with a statement to be aired the next Friday, KJR would not play all of the Beatles records. This sent a thunderbolt through Seattle, because KJR had proclaimed itself Beatle Heaven before almost any other station in the country. The music industry was alarmed. Young girls were threatening their parents with self-inflicted violence. All because Pat O'Day said that starting with a major announcement the next Friday, KJR would not play all of the Beatles records. And he had the gall to insist that once Seattle's youth had heard him explain why, they would understand and support KJR.

Well, come Friday, the whole world was listening to KJR. News directors from stations across the country were calling, insisting they be hooked up to a phone feed to record the reasons why the legendary Pat O'Day was not going to play all the Beatles records.

Of course, at 5 o'clock, to the sound of the utmost hoopla, Pat O'Day announced that, as promised, KJR from that moment was not going to play all the Beatles records. They were going to interrupt all the Beatles records; and when you heard them do it, if you were the 95th call (KJR was at 95 on the dial) you would win \$500.

Another year, KJR practically invented the treasure hunt. The station creating maximum excitement about a hidden treasure which the listener could only find by tuning in every possible minute.

KJR's treasure was buried somewhere east of Lake Washington, and as the days went on, this fact was a curse to any property owner in that part of the region. So many yards began to be mysteriously dug up that the FCC threatened to take away KJR's license.

In 1971, Pat staged the first ever choreographed fireworks show on Lake Washington. The thirty-five minute program coordinated the music of KJR to pyrotechnics above the lake. The response around Lake Washington led the Washington State Patrol to close the Mercer Island floating bridge--Seattle's main east/west artery--until 1:30 the next morning.

When KJR celebrated its 50th birthday, Pat created a birthday cake at 10,000 feet for the entire city to see. He had twenty-five skydivers with rocket pods attached to their feet ignite at twilight over the city's major interstate route.

He even allowed Lan Roberts to create an uproar about UFOs, and then at a nighttime gathering of believers promoted by the station, Pat hired a small plane to fly overhead above 10,000 feet and drop an expert parachutist with a high-powered flashlight. As the chutist descended toward the station's "encounter sight," he flashed the light on and off in the clear Seattle evening.

Lan Roberts, who had no idea of Pat's subterfuge, nearly suffered a seizure during the live broadcast of the "object's" descent. At 1500 feet, of course, the parachutist turned off the light for the final time, and veered away from the station's landing site, coming down undetected a half mile away.

When Pat tried to tell Lan, who was the firmest of believers, that he had staged a hoax, Lan bellowed at him, "you're a goddam liar." And, of course, he was right.

Pat O'Day was the jive generation's P.T. Barnum. A master promoter. Five-eight, thinning hair, irrepressible enthusiasm. Terrible disc-jockey. He moved people with his mind, not his voice.

Early in his career, he realized the fortune there was to be made in teen dances. All those libidinous youngsters longed to dance the wild Watusi to wailing guitars, and Pat knew if he would just provide them the venue, they would make him rich.

He used KJR to promote his dances, and the money from the dances to promote even bigger dances. Good God, this Top 40 radio was a perpetual motion machine! Sure, he had to start at the high schools--presenting co-sponsored fund-raisers; but with a platoon of no-nonsense lieutenants who were very convincing at post-dance accounting sessions, the first (and by far largest) batch of greenbacks always went to Pat O'Day and Associates.

This was an All-American success story. Radio begat rock 'n roll, which begat teen dancing, which begat Pat O'Day. His organization soon became too big for high school gyms, and moved on to teen clubs all over the Northwest, including the legendary Spanish Castle.

Pat could rightfully be credited with launching such Northwest superstars as the Ventures, the Kingsmen, and Jimi Hendrix.

He was everywhere; and, by gum, he made millions off those delirious teenagers. Before he was through, Pat O'Day and Associates had grown into Concerts West--the largest concert company in the world. And all because Pat O'Day could promote the hell out of an idea.

Eventually, Pat bought his own radio station in Honolulu. Then he purchased KYYX in Seattle, and set about creating another perpetual motion machine.

His first program director, Tony Stone, provided him with his greatest promotional coup since the halcyon days of KJR.

Tony had been brought to Seattle from Anchorage, Alaska, where his station had done a charity fund-raiser called Charity Island. The concept was

simple. A jock was "marooned" on a small island in a real lake across from the radio station, and couldn't get off until his listeners had pledged \$15,000 to a chosen charity. It made for good radio, and the week of live broadcasts from the island played well with the people's imaginations.

The thing was a big success, and it made Tony think even bigger.

In the distance beyond Anchorage lurks the biggest mountain in North America--Mt. McKinley. Twenty-thousand two-hundred feet of menacing snow and ice. If he could just get a jock to climb that monster and broadcast live...

But, Seattle intervened. Tony was hired to program KYYX for Pat O'Day. But hey, Seattle has Mt. Rainier, so he took the Charity Mountain idea with him.

Realistically, Mt. Rainier offered a much greater potential for a Charity Mountain. Its 14,000 foot elevation and closer proximity to civilization were much more manageable. The Seattle marketplace offered a media bonanza. The chosen charity, the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Washington, leaped at the idea.

The Governor of Washington, Dixy Lee Ray, even agreed to rename the ancient volcano Charity Mountain for the entire week of the climb--August 27 through August 31, 1979.

The live broadcast would lead into the annual Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon, which was a big event even on the local level. Heck, KYYX might get on the big show with Jerry himself!

All they needed was a jock who could climb a mountain. But in radio, where you sit down for a living, this was not an easy thing to find. That's where Terry MacDonald came in.

The morning personality at KYYX at the time was Bobby Simon. "B.S. for the Great Northwest." Great guy. Adequate disc-jockey. No athlete.

Bobby had probably used the stairs once a few years back, but was much more attuned to elevators, La-Z-Boy recliners, and big mugs of cold beer. The true disc-jockey, but no jock.

So, when I was fired at KISW, the plan found its man in the minds of Pat O'Day and Bob Bingham, who O'Day had brought over from KISW months before. Here was a morning man who was strong like a farm animal, and needed a gig. They had this great idea for a promotion, and just needed somebody who could carry great weight to dizzying heights, and be able to talk at the same time.

Terry MacDonald was the answer. A match made in Heaven. That's where it nearly ended up.

I went to work at KYYX early in July. To let you know that Pat O'Day hadn't changed much over the years, the first promotion they ran when I was there was the Spacelab Survival Helmet contest. The Spacelab's power supply was waning, and the craft was expected to crash into the atmosphere and hit the Earth anywhere from the Pacific Northwest to the northeastern coast of Canada. Pat wasn't about to let such an opportunity fly by.

The station asked listeners to design the ultimate Spacelab Survival Helmet--something you could wear on your head which would save your life when the Spacelab crashed down on top of you. As testimony to either the creativity of the station's listeners, or the lack of anything to do in the Northwest most of the time, hundreds of entries poured in from all over Western Washington.

The winning entry involved dozens of overlapping steel plates, a radar dish, a remote controlled deflector shield, synchronous flashing lights, and a warning buzzer--all built into a snug-fitting hat.

It worked. The designer survived.

Charity Mountain was another story entirely. I almost didn't.

The station's pre-promotion began early in the month of August. It was standard Pat O'Day hyperbole, tempered by the fact that I was going to scale this angry mountain where so many had died over the years--all in the name of charity. The promotion had it all. Busboards. Billboards. A jock who could walk upright.

I told myself I should spend the weeks before the climb getting into shape, but what the heck. I figured a lot of people climb Mt. Rainier in two days, and we were going to take four, so I could do it on guts. They, of course, didn't tell me we were going to take one of the tougher routes--through the Kautz Icecliffs to Point Success.

August 18, 1979 my family and I drove up to Paradise, where the climb would begin one week later, to have a look at the old volcano. My kids thought it was a cute old mountain. My wife thought I was crazy.

Northwesterners simply call it "the mountain." It is truly breathtaking, rising almost three miles above the nearby waters of Puget Sound. Rainier features the largest mass glaciation in the lower 48 states--over thirty-five square miles of ice, with 26 officially named glaciers. It has attracted climbers from all over the world ever since the first ascent of the mountain in 1870. Its massive size and icy nature are still a threat to anyone venturing onto its slopes.

From just above Paradise, Rainier is imposing. On a clear day, you can see nearly to the top, some ten miles away. Below the rounded summit cascade massive snowfields, white-blue icewalls ready to collapse, crumbling volcanic buttresses raining bullet-speed rockfall, and thousands of yawning crevasses waiting to swallow anything unfortunate enough to fall into them.

I was pretty impressed standing there. I'd never had an ice-axe in my hand, never worn crampons, hadn't been roped up since my caving days a decade before, and here I was ready to push off for that far distant summit in the company of two professional guides who I'd never met--all so Pat O'Day could set up the Fall rating book for big numbers. Great idea, Pat!

I finally got to meet my guides at the kickoff press conference the Friday before our departure. What a pair! Dave Bishop and Rob Newsom of the North Cascade Alpine Guides.

You'll never find two more distinct characters.

Dave Bishop was a good Aryan boy. Six-foot-two and built like a horse. Light haired, chiseled features. Shoulders that looked like they could carry a yak up a mountain. It was evident looking at him that he would try to conquer whatever got in his way, even if that meant running head-on into it. Dave was his Mother's pride--a Pre-Med student at the University of Washington, and very serious, though he tried hard not to show it.

Rob Newsom was a completely different case. Put simply--Rob was a hippie. A tall, bony Louisiana longhair who'd come up out of the swamps and now liked getting up high, he wore granny glasses, a goofy grin, and a funny Panama hat over those long tresses. Rob impressed me as a mellow sort who might like to sit in a tent and tell a good story more than struggle uphill in a bad wind. I immediately liked him, especially when he told me he was the best high-altitude cook in America.

The highlight of the press conference was when Rob confirmed that he and Dave would both be carrying substantial weight to the top of the mountain, but it would be nothing compared to the weight I appeared to carry even before I put on a pack. (I weighed two hundred and fifteen pounds at the time.)

The following Monday, September 27, 1979, we got together in Paradise. The station's engineer, Don Winget, had set up "base camp" in a deluxe Winnebago outside the Paradise Ranger Station, complete with mixing board and all the technical gear needed to do a live broadcast all the way up the mountain, and relay it by phone lines to the station in Seattle.

Don Winget just might be the best radio engineer in the world, so we were in good hands. He'd convinced a company in Florida to supply us with two FM-quality walkie-talkies and two top-quality sports play-by-play headsets. We were going to have to carry about twenty pounds of C-type batteries with us, but that's why Dave Bishop was along.

With all this technical setup, we would be able to broadcast from separate locations simultaneously, plus carry on a conversation with the jocks on the air, or anyone anywhere on the telephone. It was pretty sophisticated.

Since we were scheduled to leave base camp the next morning, we spent Monday evening doing phone bits with Burl Barer, the night jock back at KYYX. We also spent most of the night drinking prodigiously from a bottle of Jack Daniel's that Rob Newsom brought along for the occasion.

The next morning we were in great shape to start out. Why face great pain without a great hangover, right?

Dunham Gooding, who owned and operated Northwest Alpine Guides, was there to see us off, as was the head of the Seattle chapter of the Muscular Dystrophy Association. He filmed some going-away sequences with us which he planned to use on the telethon starting Friday.

The plan was for us to reach the summit via the Kautz Icecliffs Friday at noon, broadcast all afternoon from the summit, then descend to Camp Muir on the mountain's standard route, spending Friday night there.

Saturday we would come down to Paradise, and drive the Winnebago to Ashford, outside the Park's gates. From there a helicopter would whisk us to the

Westin Hotel in downtown Seattle, where we would land in the street, then be escorted to the main broadcast location, there to present a pretty large check on behalf of the KYYX listening audience.

It was a great idea.

Because we had plenty of time to get to the summit by Friday, we didn't depart Paradise until almost noon that Tuesday, September 28th. Dunham Gooding accompanied us up the Skyline Trail toward the Nisqually glacier. My education began almost immediately.

"The secret to good mountain walking, Terry, is in keeping your weight on your skeletal structure and not your muscles," Dunham advised. "Rob and Dave will be showing you a lot of different techniques up there, but the most important lesson is to learn to walk right. Don't wear yourself out, keep your weight over your feet, don't bend over, and don't make any fast moves. You'll get to the top taking it one step at a time, one foot in front of the other. And if you keep your weight on the downhill leg with a locked knee, you can rest a beat every step, and really conserve your energy."

"And if I give this frigging pack to Dave, I can conserve even more energy," was my reply. "Whatever happened to the golden age of porters and Sahibs?"

"You got the wrong kinda guides, Mr. Mac," Rob Newsom laughed. "Matter of fact, soon as we get you up high enough where you really need us, you'll be making us breakfast, or we won't bring you back."

We wound our way up verdant pathways lined with summer flowers. Tiny streams sang a song about going to the ocean. Birds flew for the joy of it. Marmots whistled a happy tune.

Finally swinging down toward the Nisqually glacier, we said our good-byes to Dunham Gooding.

"Be careful up there, Terry," he advised. "Go strong and follow your guides' lead. They know what they're doing. I've given you my best men. Now, get to the top and raise a ton of money; then come home safe."

As soon as we stepped out onto the glacier, I had the sensation you get when you push away from shore on a small boat. You can still see land, can practically touch it, but you are instantly in a different world.

The glacier was a wind-blown plain, where gritty cold had spent eons marching to the sea. The wind, echoing the collapse of seracs, passed through me. Below our feet millions of tons of ice shifted into a momentary new balance, while somewhere above, a crow cawed out a warning.

The frozen river was true wilderness, barely a mile from a crowded parking lot. Put those cars here, and within time, they would surely disappear. Only the ice would remain. The overwhelming feeling was the neutrality of nature--of awesome, determined time.

Up here, we were simply pilgrims.

Rob, Dave, and I trudged the flat expanse of the Nisqually Glacier, listening, breathing, and stopping when it came time to strap on our crampons. These soles of steel with their twelve sharp points are security on ice. With them

on your boots, you can walk up an extremely steep freeze, much like you walk up a slab of rock next to a stream in summer.

The Nisqually Glacier exhibits all the classic topographic features of the glaciations that once covered much of our Earth. As the glacier travels down the river bed, it throws off moraines both to the side and to the front. Different forks of the glacier can create lateral moraines running along the main fall line. My first home in West Seattle, for instance, was built on a lateral moraine left behind by receding glaciology.

At the edge of the Nisqually, the three of us crossed the final moraine, and walked up into the gully known as "The Fan." This is a large watershed stacked deep with boulders, which opens at the top into a massive, fan-shaped bowl. The first time I trudged up it, though, I nicknamed it something much stronger than "The Fan."

There is no secret to walking up a boulder gulch with a lot of weight on your back. You try to step from boulder to boulder, without transferring all your weight uphill until you are sure of your footing. The only problem is you can't be sure of that footing until you transfer all your weight. Often, when you've made the final commitment, it is just enough to throw off the balance of the boulder, and it slips--taking you with it.

Rob and Dave immediately moved far ahead, leaving me cursing my way up the slippery hill of stone. "The Fan" bends toward the mountain at the top, and soon, my two guides completely disappeared. Great, I thought, I'll be all alone when I break my leg. At this rate, they'll hit the summit Friday, and I should

get there sometime Sunday afternoon. Lord, how could an ex-basketball jock get into such rotten shape?

"C'mon MacDonald," a Rebel yell echoed down toward me, "the mountain is collapsin' faster 'n you're climbin'." This was just the first of a continuing volley of one-liners aimed at my poor flatland soul.

Dave's voice was next to ricochet down the gulch. "Hey Rob, you didn't bring along that crane I told you to rent, did you? We could hook it up to the old guy and wench him up here."

Reverse psychology never worked with me. I stopped and cussed at them, and then stopped and cussed some more. Their bait was a great excuse for me to stop every five or six steps.

"If you were half the guides you say you are, you'd be down here guiding me right now," I yelled up at my invisible companions.

"Listen, Mr. Mac," Rob Newsom cackled at me, "if we was down there with you right now, they'd take away our guiding licenses for moving like the dead. I've seen rainfall get uphill faster than you."

Finally I swung around the dogleg, and saw Rob and Dave at the top of the gully, their packs off, sunning themselves on large boulders. They were enjoying my suffering immensely.

"Real sadists," I muttered.

As I stepped off the final boulder on that stairway to hell, I could see that the right side of the gully had opened onto a buttress that jutted out over the glaciers below. Beyond the buttress, the entire south face of Mt. Rainier was

exposed in the afternoon sun. Right to left lay Gibraltar Rock, the teetering Nisqually icefall, the Fuhrer Finger and Fuhrer Thumb routes; and seemingly right above us hung the immense Kautz icecliffs. Below them, I could see the huge snowfield known as "The Turtle," and leading to it, Wapowety Cleaver, our next day's destination.

"This is as far as you go today, recruit," Dave Bishop said to me as I stumbled up to boulder where he lay. "Good work. Slow, but good."

"He's not talkin' too fast for ya, is he, Mr. Mac?"

"Cause...if...you...need...us...to...talk...slow...we..will...sure...oblige." Rob Newsom had a full head of Southern fun in his eyes.

"Why don't you two just hurry up and jump off that cliff over there," I replied. "Now, where the heck do I get rid of this pack?"

"We thought the coolest place to sleep tonight would be under the stars right out there on the point." Rob indicated the far edge of the buttress overlooking the Wilson and Nisqually glaciers. "Drag your pack over there, Sahib, and this humble porter will prepare your Lordship's sup."

Drag was the word; I followed his order to the letter. Although we had only gone about two miles in the three and a half hours since we left Paradise, I was blitzed. This walking uphill with weight was tougher than it sounded.

"You burn more calories mountain climbing than any other activity, that's a fact," Dave declared as we settled in to cook dinner.

"Oh, I think you might burn a few more calories as an oarsman on a slave ship, but not many," I remarked. My thighs were already beginning to show the first signs of a good strong cramp.

"Just let me get a little gumbo into you, and you'll be fine," Rob said.

The gumbo did work its magic, and soon I was being indoctrinated into the lingo of this new sport. Dave and Rob carried on a long conversation peppered with words like "snargs," and "belays," of "getting gripped," and "buying the farm."

The stars began to come out as we dined in the high air and watched the shadow of the mountain march east toward Montana. I immediately became a fan of my two companions--Dave the quasi-serious pre-med student, and Rob the bohemian swamp fox.

I especially liked Rob; he exuded a good cheer anyone could love. Skinny like an ice-axe, his sharp features topped by a mane of shoulder-length hair--he confided to me early that first night that his nickname was 'June'. It seems that years before, a friend under the influence of some psychotropic substance had stared at him and proclaimed that Rob looked just like this guy's Aunt June. From that moment, Rob was "June" to close friends.

His accent was about as far South as you could go without falling in the Gulf of Mexico; he would often break out in a song like a June bug humming in the heat. You could tell he had spent countless evenings growing up singing on the front porch in his family choir. In the light of the camp stove fire, I saw a guy I felt I'd like to get to know better when we got off this mountain.

Dave Bishop was a lot more distant personality, but still good people. He smiled easily, though by nature he was more reserved. If Rob had sung at his Daddy's knee, Dave had spent long evenings in his youth mapping out the future under the guidance of strong-minded parents.

Still, he exhibited an independent streak. He was certainly going to be a doctor, but that wouldn't keep him from what had become his abiding love--the chance to get out into the wilderness a hundred nights a year.

"The main reason I want to be out here is right up there," Dave said, pointing to the newly displayed depths of the universe. The altitude and distance from city lights had, during our conversation, brought out more stars than seemed possible.

After we cleaned up the supper dishes, we crawled deep into our sleeping bags and drifted to sleep to the background harmonies of the Big Bang. Meanwhile, fifteen hundred miles to the northwest, freak atmospheric conditions were beginning to marshal themselves.

We slept the sleep of the unaware.

Next morning it was up early in the incredibly clear high mountain air. There were no songbirds up this high; the wind provided the music, while across the valley, a single marmot whistled his land claim.

We pre-recorded the voice tracks to be inserted in that day's morning show, packed up our camp and set out for our next night's stay, fifteen hundred feet above us along the Wapowety Cleaver. We hadn't gone a quarter of a mile

before we got into our first really steep snow. We strapped on our crampons, and the boys broke out the instruction manual.

They taught me "The French Technique."

This method of walking is not as steamy or glamorous as it might sound.

"The basic idea behind the French technique is to keep the maximum number of crampon teeth in contact with the snow or ice," Dave explained. "This means the steeper the snow, the more you face outward and downward. On really steep slopes, you can almost end up facing downhill while you ascend."

"The other important reason for utilizing the French technique is to conserve muscle energy," Rob added. "By shifting the vertical axis of your body through foot placement, you can distribute the load to different muscles in your legs, and not just burn out your quadriceps. Hey, it may seem a little awkward at first, but it really is an elegant way to walk. Weight over your feet, standing completely erect. Use that rest step; spread the load. Before long, you'll be a climber."

Within a hundred yards, I was feeling pretty accomplished. Too soon, we emerged above the snow slope onto Wapowety Cleaver--one of many ribs of rock splitting the mountain's southwestern side. Mt. Rainier, being a volcano, is constructed of ice, snow, and crumbling igneous rock.

"Just a big old collapsing dirt pile," Rob sneered.

As we stepped onto the cleaver, I learned one of the great truisms of climbing. On loose rock, it's one step forward and two steps back. Very anti-Leninist.

"This would be a great sport if it weren't for gravity," Dave interjected between heavy breaths.

We ascended the cleaver through almost a half-mile of this slippery scree, heading for our second campsite below "The Turtle." We hadn't traveled very far that second day, and that night would not be as painful as the first; part of this improvement owed to my lack of a hangover.

We set up our second camp by building a rock enclosure for our tent in the late afternoon sun. Rob and Dave then took over the walkie-talkies to transmit the latest installment of what had become 'their show,' as I stretched my weary carcass on a large boulder nearby.

The format for the Rob and Dave Show had evolved over the last two days to consist mainly of solidly promoting the beauties of the mountain climbing, mixed with a healthy dose of derogatory comment about the physical incapacity of the slug they were stuck with for a client. These dialogues were delivered in the form of on-the-scene reporters direct from Mount Rainier--commentary from the true stars of this event.

"This is Dave Bishop reporting live from Mt. Rainier. Standing with me is my fellow guide, Rob Newsom. Hey, Rob, look at that creature lying on that rock down there."

"Yeah, Dave" Rob answered, "that is one ugly fat thing, for sure. From my extensive studies of high altitude fauna, I do believe we are in the presence of the quite rare glacier whale."

"I think you're right, Rob. I don't know whether we should chase him off, or harpoon him with an ice-axe and put him out of his misery."

"You know, Dave, if it wasn't for this spectacular amphitheater spread out before us, I don't know if it would be worth it exposing ourselves to such a beast."

The beast below had fallen asleep, respite from his pain being much more important than defending his existence against these so-called "professional guides." Tenzing Norgay and his brother Sherpas would be appalled at how they were treating me.

The next morning, we once again pre-recorded the voice tracks to be inserted in the morning show, and packed up for the first extended climbing of the route.

From our campsite, almost our entire path was displayed above us. First "the Turtle," then Camp Hazard (where we would spend our third night), the Kautz ice cliffs, and finally the steep snow slopes leading to Point Success, at 14,150 feet the 'third summit' of Rainier. From there it would be a simple traverse across the summit plateau to Columbia Crest, the highest point on the mountain.

"The Turtle" was where I discovered some of the inner truths of mountaineering. At the bottom of the slope, I was a third-day novice; by the end of the day, I was hooked, my life changed forever.

We roped up, and began a slow, three-pointed traverse of the massive snowfield. I quickly fell into a comfortable rhythm as Rob and Dave broadcast

while we walked. They each wore a headset, and their comments were recorded at the base camp Winnebago. Their words set the tone for one of my most enjoyable days in the outdoors.

"You know, Dave, a lot of people down in the valleys are wondering what the heck we are doing up here," Rob began. "They've got important things to be doing, and here we are asking them to not only join us in their minds, but contribute money to the Muscular Dystrophy Association to urge us on. They probably think this is all a lark for us."

"It's pretty far from that for me, Rob," Dave answered as soon as he heard the squelch from Rob's microphone shut off. "I got sixty pounds on my back. It's darn late in the year for us to be climbing Rainier by the Kautz Icecliff route. Late this afternoon, and especially early tomorrow morning, we are putting ourselves right in line for a potentially disastrous icefall. I can think of a thousand other places in the mountains where I'd rather be right now, but this is the place where we're doing the most good."

"You got it," Rob replied. He was in the lead up the steep snow, and he stopped as he cut-back round a corner so that Dave could catch up to him. "When they first approached us to do this climb, I thought it'd be a simple thing. We'd go out onto the glacier with this out-of-shape disc-jockey and coax him up the slopes. We'd bring him down to a lot of hoopla, and then we'd go climb a real mountain. But then, last night in my sleeping bag, I started thinking about all those kids we're doing this for. I pictured all those little kids, who would give anything to be up here with us, but they can't be here because they can't walk."

They lay in bed at night and dream about what we're doing, but they'll never see what we're seeing right now, because God didn't bless them with the same legs he gave you and me. Suddenly this climb got to be a lot more important."

Rob was taking his steps and breaths in a distinct rhythm up the mountain while he delivered this message, and it was several seconds before he continued.

"You know, I've never climbed for anybody but me. I've sought out some of the scariest, hard-bitten routes in the West just to satisfy my craving for the edge. And suddenly last night, I saw how much energy I've wasted. This climb may not be the toughest thing I've ever done. It may not get me written up in Climbing Magazine. But if it helps one kid who might have gotten Muscular Dystrophy to someday come up here and struggle up this snow slope, it'll be the greatest thing I've ever done."

Dave stayed silent when Rob had finished, and together we kicked steps up past the 10,000 foot level. At this altitude, all the weight they were carrying was beginning to really make itself felt, and I could tell they were setting a hard pace to get to that night's campsite. I was determined to keep up.

We moved like a spindly multipede, Rob, then Dave, then me. Each of us focused on doing the things we had learned to do--reach up and set your ice-axe, step up with the outside foot, then the inside foot. When you reach the ice-axe position with your inside foot uphill, you are in balance, and the three-step dance starts again. Breathe in through your nose, and blow it out through your mouth. This forced-air breathing increases your intake of oxygen, and provides a

rhythm-track to your kickstep. Above, the air glistens with a cleanness you only find in the high places, and a little voice tells you this is why people come up here. They don't come to die, or conquer, or fall. They come to see how good it can be, away from the stress and the masses. Sure, I was going to hurt in the morning, but I knew that for the rest of my life, I would hurt more if I didn't come up here.

In what seemed an amazingly quick time, we stepped off the top of "the Turtle" into the rock gullies below Camp Hazzard. As Rob took in the rope, he paid me one of the finest compliments I'd ever heard.

"Mr. Mac, we stone cooked up that old Turtle today. Way to go. You are now officially a climber."

With that lofty approval ringing in my ears, I followed Dave and Rob up the rocks to the promontory that is Camp Hazard.

An aerie at 11,000 feet on the southwest side of Mt. Rainier, Camp Hazard is one of my all-time favorite places. It juts out from the mountainside directly below the Kautz Icecliffs. The only reason Camp Hazard is safe from icefall off the cliffs is the gully directly northwest of the camp, which swallows all the collapsing material from above. It would take the collapse of most of the icewall for Camp Hazard to be wiped out, an event which almost occurred while we were there.

I was on the walkie-talkie direct to the radio station when the avalanche hit. Rob and Dave had gone out to the very end of the promontory to watch the sunset.

"Terry, you've got to come see what's happening outside," Dave said determinedly, sticking his head inside the tent minutes before the collapse.

"Watching this sunset is what mountaineering is all about."

"I'll be right out, Dave," I answered without enthusiasm. My climb up the Turtle had been spiritually rewarding, but physically exhausting. Besides, I grew up in Arizona. I'd seen hundreds of stunning sunsets. "I just need to do a live bit with Burl Barer, and then I'll come."

I was wearing headphones, and had just learned from Burl that we had reached the \$20,000 level in pledges--a figure beyond Tony Stone's hopes--when I felt a giant rumble from uphill behind the tent. I also seemed to sense, more than hear, screams from out toward the promontory where Rob and Dave were standing.

Whether it was my fatigue, or inability to leave a broadcast unfinished, I didn't immediately jump out to see what was happening. Thirty seconds later, Rob stuck his head in the tent, his eyeballs still wide.

"Good Lord, Terry, will you take that damned headset off," he said breathlessly. "Come out here and see how close you came to checking out of this hotel."

Outside, no more than fifty feet uphill from the tent and continuing all the way to a newly formed hole in the icewall, was debris from a massive ice avalanche.

"It looked like half the wall was coming down toward us," Dave said. "The only question was whether it had enough force to get to the tent. Rob and I

thought you were a dead man; then, it veered off into the gully, not twenty yards from where you were sitting. We yelled and yelled, but you were on those stupid headphones."

"That would have been a helluva live broadcast," Rob laughed, "you careening ten thousand feet down that gully. You would have stopped talking a long time before you stopped sliding, of course, but people would have paid big bucks for copies of 'the Fall of TMac'."

It was evident that in late summer, the Kautz Icecliffs were not a real safe place to visit.

"And tomorrow morning," Rob added, "we have to walk up underneath that monster, cross the gully, and climb the backside of the icecliffs to get up toward Point Success."

"I sure hope Point Success lives up to its name," I said softly. The awesome explosion of tons of ice right over my head had brought the mountain's menace to life. It wasn't all glorious sunsets and crystalline air alive with the sound of music. This damned pile of glazed rotting rock didn't care whether we lived or died.

With that thought in our minds, we turned in for the night at Camp Hazard.

Friday, August 31, 1979 dawned brilliantly clear, and we stepped out of our tent in excited anticipation. Our most technical climbing was right in front of us. Through the icecliffs to the top.

We hurriedly strapped on crampons, took several promotional pictures, and Dave stayed behind as Rob and I set off for the crossing underneath the Kautz Icecliffs.

"I'll follow right behind," Dave said. "I figure the next three hundred yards are going to yield the best pictures of the climb; I'd like to get them from here."

Rob and I were to climb up underneath the icecliffs, dip down through the gully, and traverse back along the opposite wall until we were just fifty yards across from Dave's camera position. The plan was to move as fast as we could, so that we were in the line of fire for the shortest possible time.

"Terry, here is where I can't give you any slack because you're a client," Rob advised, looking me directly in the eye. "My life is on the firing line as well as yours, so I expect you to move as fast as I do. No breaks for breath, no holding up, just move your butt. Got it?"

"Just move your butt," I answered. After the previous night's bombardment, nobody had to encourage me to get out from under those teetering icecliffs. I was ready to run.

"Then let's do it!" Rob yelled.

The two of us were roped about forty feet apart as we left Camp Hazard for our final day's climb to the summit. Overhead, not a cloud hung in the sky.

The weather had been so perfect during our entire ascent, no one had bothered to check the forecast. The Weather Bureau at Boeing Field had, in fact, been tracking conditions that were later that day to coalesce into the largest early

season storm in the history of Mt. Rainier, but you couldn't have guessed it as we stepped down into the Kautz icecliff gully.

Dave described it all live on one of the two walkie-talkies, as Rob and I made all possible haste beneath hanging tons of frozen disaster.

The journey from Camp Hazard to the middle of the gully was an eighth of a mile uphill, a thousand heartbeats for Rob and me, maybe two hundred for Dave.

"O.K., they're in the middle of the gully. So far so good." I probably would have phrased the report a little different than Dave. "They'll have some overhanging protection under that far wall now, but they're still not really out of it until they climb up over the icewall straight across from me. I suppose Terry is realizing right now, if he hasn't before, what he got himself into when he agreed to come along on this journey.

"Now, they're skirting the bottom of the opposite cliff, moving fast. Rob has put his ice tools into the wall above him, and is stepping up onto the big bulge. This is where you can tell how elegant a climber Rob Newsom is. Easy placements, real graceful movements with those long legs, and he's over the hump. Now, he'll run out the rope, and set a solid standing belay so he can hold Terry as he comes up.

"And there goes the rookie. Not quite as elegant, for sure. As a matter of fact, not elegant. But he's getting there. He's ready to step around the nose of that big bulge...and darn, he's fallen. He's taken a tumble, but Rob's got him on a real tight rope. So now he just has to get back on his feet.

"Not your knees, Terry! Your feet. Get up on your feet. Get the heck off your knees!" Dave screamed at me right there, live on the air.

"Whew! That's a lesson to be learned. When you're climbing, don't crawl-climb." The mountaineering class went on, with my listeners getting the instruction while I got raw knees. I then committed maybe the biggest sin possible in that situation. I pulled up on the rope. Just enough of a tug to get me back on my feet; as Adam probably said, `Hey, it was just a small bite."

"Pulling up on the rope! Busted!" Dave Bishop was not going to let an ultimate mountaineering sin go unreported. "Terry MacDonald climbs like a tourist!"

The praise rang up and down the gully, mingling there with ghost voices of great climbers passed, who probably joined Dave's echo in a big spiritual raspberry. I didn't hear this, of course, and didn't care. I was at least back on my feet, and the hell over that hump. A living tourist, and etiquette be damned.

We emerged from the gully into a giant down sloping amphitheater. It's called The Kautz ice chute. Five hundred feet of steep, but relatively safe ice climbing amongst terraces and suncups. Below, the chute drops onto the much broader Kautz glacier. From my vantage point, that slope went down forever.

Rob brought me over to the middle of the chute, sank a snarg into the hard snow at his feet, and tethered me to it.

"We'll wait for Dave here, TMac. And then we get to have some fun up there in the suncups."

Behind us, you couldn't even see the gully which had threatened us not ten minutes before. Dave emerged from around the snow shoulder blocking that view, and quickly joined us.

"Finally, some climbing, even if it is only five hundred feet," he enthused. "Robert, if you don't mind, I'd like to lead this section, pretty please."

"Mr. Dave, it's yours. Get on up there. And have some tea ready for me by the time I get there."

"At the speed you took that gully, I probably could."

"You're a smartass, boy. Now, show me what you got."

Of such partings are great friendships cemented.

Dave tore into the Kautz ice chute like any good Aryan might wish to tear into Alsace-Lorraine. Here the two personalities of my companions diverged. For, where Rob was very precise, almost dainty in his ice-tool placements, Dave swung for the fences with his. If Rob was a consummate Oriental water-colorist in his approach to ice climbing, Dave was a muralist. He kicked, he drove, he smashed the ice again and again, as if by the sheer force of his blows he would not only guarantee the security of his next move, but also demonstrate to this ancient edifice the meaning of the verb 'to conquer.'

Unfortunately for Rob and me, every time the mountain gave up a little bit of itself in appeasement, it came raining down on top of us. Suddenly, we were foot-soldiers looking for a foxhole.

"Hey, damn Dave, I was only kidding. You're not a smartass. Seriously." Rob ducked a twenty mile and hour ice-cube that just missed making him a Van Gogh. "Jesus, Dave, will you take it easy. Oh, Christ, Terry look out!"

Down the chute headed right for me came a small ice-sculpted lawn-bowling ball. Not too big; just enough to break your thigh. There was nowhere to run. I couldn't get away. I took it on the thigh.

"Jesus, Terry, when something like that comes down the slope at you, turn your pack into it. Take it on your pack." Rob was the most upset I'd seen him.

I fought back a major league cry as I replied, "Thanks for the lesson, Mr. Guide. Now, could you just pull out a replacement thigh from your pack there? I don't think I can move this one."

The ice ball had hit full on, shattering into a hundred high speed pellets. Fortunately, my left thigh hadn't shattered, but I could feel the beginnings of a Babe Ruth of bruises.

"Probably wouldn't do any good to tell you to rub ice on it, would it?" Rob said, and then laughed like a maniac. No more concern for whether I would ever walk again, let alone have to be rescued off this damned dirt heap. No--he laughed. I swear I saw the Devil seize his features for just a flash. He showed me right there that these mountaineers are really deep-down sadomasochists of the very worst sort.

I laughed maniacally, too. They had me, damn it. With this kind of pain, who could be having more fun?

"Come on up," Dave yelled from a terrace a hundred fifty feet above us, where he set up a belay. He was smiling like a madman, too.

"Yeah, we'll come up, and throw you off," Rob yelled back up at him. "Terry, you're the end man on this move. I'll climb up to Dave, and when I get there, disconnect yourself from the snarg, pull it out, and come on up. Watch out for any sharp edges on the suncups. They can cut you if you hit them right."

Suncups are jagged-edged depressions caused by the melting of an exposed snowfield. The heat trapped inside the depression increases the depth of the suncup, until they look like this entire wall--razor sharp swales of snow.

Rob clipped a carabiner into the rope leading to Dave, and hefting his two ice-tools, quickly ascended the fifty yards to Dave's perch. In keeping with his style, he hardly knocked any loose ice down on me. My thigh wished for all it was worth that Rob had led this pitch.

And then I climbed my first serious ice. Granted, it was only a forty-five to fifty degree slope, but it looked tough enough to me. Besides, I only had one ice-tool. Ergo, instead of the classic four-point ascent, where you climb by making sure that no two points leave the ice at the same time, I had to get up it with three points and a fist leaning against the wall.

Forty feet up the slope, the angle steepened, and I stepped up into the suncups. Miniature neves penitents they were, praying to the same God as I that they wouldn't fall.

I tried to stay in the small indentations Rob and Dave had left, but the ice was so hard it made little difference. Because the climbing wasn't vertical, I

could lean into the wall, take the ice-tool out and set it overhead, step up left, then right, and exhale heavily. Drive the axe. Left. Right. Exhale heavily. About half way up, I took a break and realized where I was, and what I was doing, and let out as loud a rebel yell as Rob Newsom probably ever heard. Hot damn, I was ice-climbing!

I actually got up to the belay position pretty rapidly, and expected some major congratulations when I got there, but neither of my partners said anything. Rob simply went about leading the next pitch after he clipped me into Dave's secondary snarg.

And so we went. Three climbers doing about as good a job as you can do on a non-technical volcano--climbing up into the cerulean sky, as satisfied as a trio of earthbound souls could be. We didn't say more than a few sentences for the next hour. We just climbed, absorbing it all.

At the top of the ice-chute there was a major bergschrund we negotiated by traversing to the right, out over the ice cliffs. Dave led this final pitch, and brought Rob and me up to his position above the bergschrund.

"Well, it wasn't Liberty Ridge, but it was sure fun!" Dave declared; we nodded.

We were three smiling boys as we sat down and broke out the food bags. Munching happily, we pondered the best climbing of the trip. Five thousand feet below us, a single white glider banked up into a thermal. A lucky man enjoyed a God-given lift, while a mile overhead, our spirits matched the incredible weather.

We had nearly three thousand feet to go that day, so we packed and began the ascent up the steep flanks toward Point Success. This section was probably more vertical than the ice-chute below, but because it was snow, we were able to kick easy steps and climb together.

The hours flew by as our three-man train chugged on. Every half-hour or so, Dave would turn around, face out, and sit down--a welcome signal that we could do the same, right where we were. There was very little verbal communication going on--just a sublime resonance extending into the bright late morning. Still, not a cloud in the sky. No birds this high. Just us, and our breath. And up there beyond this shoulder, the summit--14,411 feet, the highest point in the state of Washington.

The summit plateau of Mt. Rainier is a massive, mile-wide snow top dominated by three domes--Point Success, Liberty Cap, and Columbia Crest, the broad snow ridge which is the true summit. In between all three major domes are vast snow-engorged saddles.

There are two craters at the top of the mountain, remnants of past volcanic activity. The older, western crater is joined to the much more impressive eastern crater by the Columbia Crest summit ridge.

The completely enclosed eastern crater, more than a quarter mile across, is pockmarked by numerous fumaroles which have melted small caves between the ice and rock. Several early Rainier summiteers survived bad storms on the mountain by taking shelter in these steam caves, although a few reportedly experienced steam burns while hunkered down in the holes.

Rainier is a pretty amazing mountain--scene of over 60,000 ascents and roughly three dozen deaths. Its sheer thirty mile wide mass helps the mountain make its own weather.

As Rob Newsom, Dave Bishop and I swung up over the shoulder of Point Success that Friday, August 31, 1979, Mt. Rainier pulled to itself the biggest early-season storm in its history.

We saw the beginnings of the monster about 300 feet below the summit plateau, as a massive lenticular cloud suddenly surrounded the top of the mountain. I had no idea what it was, but Dave's anguished scream fifty feet ahead was all I needed to hear.

"Oh my God!" were Dave's words.

"What's the matter?" I yelled up to him.

"Never mind, just get up there," Rob shouted from behind. A gale suddenly picked up all around, as if it had been waiting in welcome.

Within a minute, a full-blown storm began to blow. It was the most startling change in weather conditions I have ever seen. One minute glider planes, the next a hurricane. We struggled against the sharp new gusts, and reached the summit plateau just in time to witness the mountaintop disappear into an ugly black cloud.

"What the hell is going on?" I hollered at my companions.

"Listen, Terry," Rob answered tensely, "this is a mother storm. We've gotta build a tent platform quick, and get in out of this thing. We can't waste any time. We're gonna put it right here."

So, on the broad southern shoulder of Point Success, looking across the great saddle toward where the summit used to be, Dave, Rob and I began to dig an eight-foot-round platform in the snow. We kicked frantically at the built-up crust, plunging our ice-axes' adzes deep into the slope; all around us, Mt. Rainier wailed and howled and screamed as if we hurt her with every axe-plunge. Thick, windblown snow began to fall, and quickly, visibility deteriorated to only a few feet. The crevasse forty feet away disappeared, as the temperature plummeted twenty degrees in less than ten minutes. Rob slid the tent poles into their sleeves as the intensifying storm tried to rip it away from him. Dave and I finished the platform, drove all our ice axes into the fabric loops around the perimeter of the tent, and dove inside.

"Whooooeee," Rob exclaimed once we had zipped up the door, "that's as fast as I've ever seen a storm come in."

"Maybe we should have called base camp at least once since I followed you out of Camp Hazard this morning," Dave surmised.

That was, in fact, the exact reason for the lack of warning. The air traffic controllers at Boeing Field had attempted to let us know about the rapidly changing conditions we were climbing into, but in the pure enjoyment of the day's climb, we had left the power off both of our walkie-talkies.

It didn't hearten us at all, when we finally established communications, to hear that this storm was building thunderheads to thirty-five thousand feet, and there was no let-up in sight.

Thus began four days of increasingly desperate conditions. The savage snow and winds did not decrease noticeably until Saturday evening. We estimated peak winds at 50-to-60 miles per hour.

Our tent was positioned on the lee side of Point Success, and by Saturday night, windblown snow had buried us several times. From Friday afternoon until Sunday morning, we figured eight feet of snow was dumped on us. Every couple of hours, one of us went outside and dug out the perimeter just to keep us from being buried.

We also realized late Saturday that so much snow had fallen, and the temperature had dropped so low, it had impacted our axes in ice. We were completely marooned at 14,000 feet; even if the weather broke, it would be suicidal to downclimb Rainier without ice-axes.

"A damned fine how do you do!" was Rob's description.

As soon as our situation had become clear, the National Park Service went into a full-blown rescue mode. The entire NPS Ranger staff was put on alert, and the U.S. Army was called in from Fort Lewis in Tacoma. The Army flew a giant Chinook helicopter, which could operate at 14,000 feet, to Paradise.

That chopper would try for days to pluck us from the summit, but could only make three attempts per day before they had to return to Ft. Lewis for fuel.

The chopper became a tantalizing frustration after the first two days of heavy snowfall. The weather five hundred feet over the mountain cleared on Sunday, but the wind was still so violent that it created a ground blizzard around the top of the mountain. We could go outside into a near total whiteout that might just have well been a continuing rampage. The wind would whistle, and the snow would blow, and beyond it all we could feel the beating of the helicopters rotors overhead--so close we could taste salvation, but it was no help to us below.

The Mt. Rainier guide service, which has led eighty percent of the mountain's summiteers to the top, assigned their two top climbers, Phil Erschler and George Dunn, the job of getting to us at the earliest moment if the copter rescue didn't work. They talked to Rob from our base camp Winnebago before setting out for Camp Muir at the height of Saturday's storm.

"Hell, June, what are you doing up there, anyway?" was George Dunn's question to Rob. They had been at Mt. McKinley base camp together the year before, where not many made it to the top of North America's highest peak, but a lot of folks got to know the good Southern cooking at the tent where the longhair lived.

"Shoot, George, we're just keeping a campsite open for you, so you can come up and relieve us for a few days," was Rob's reply. "We'll leave you the cookware and the rest of our food, borrow your ice-axes, and come back and get you as soon as we charm some of those sweet ladies down in Paradise."

"Well, listen, Rob, we're going to try and get to you by Sunday afternoon, so sit tight. We don't know how bad it is above Disappointment Cleaver, but if it's

humanly possible, we'll wade the whole route, and bring you some ice-axes. Then we'll all get down here to some serious beer. How's that sound?"

"Serious beer it is, Mr. Dunn. But listen, man, it's pretty terrible up here, and I can't believe you'll find anything but some really bad avalanche conditions from just under the Cleaver all the way to 14,000," Rob warned. "So don't be taking off up into any whiteouts, George. If it stays as bad as it is now, there's no use you putting your rear ends in the same holes we've deposited ours into. You hear?"

"Robert, when have we ever let a little snowfall keep us from our appointed tasks? Now sit tight and keep the tea water brewing."

"See you Sunday, George."

Erschler and Dunn spent Saturday night in the raging storm at Camp Muir, and Sunday morning set off before first light to fight their way across Cathedral Rocks in blizzard conditions. Both being world-class climbers, they were able to make it all the way to the top of Disappointment Cleaver; but at 12,700 feet they were turned back by snow so deep they were swimming through it. If ever there were two men strong enough to swim two-thousand feet uphill through steep Cascade mountain snow, it was George Dunn and Phil Erschler; but they finally had to turn back.

Rob, Dave, and I were relatively calm considering our predicament. We had food and fuel enough to last until the next Wednesday, so we settled down hoping to wait out the weather.

There were some rough emotional times when we talked to our wives, mothers, and sweethearts by phone using our walkie-talkies and Don Winget's communications system. As the tension increased, so did the emotion of these conversations with loved ones who sounded so close.

I also had a chance to talk to Bob Bingham, the general manager of KYYX, and my message was short and strained.

"Bingham, this was your idea. Now, get me the hell off this mountain."

"We're doing our best, Terry."

"No you're not, Bob. We're still up here."

Tony Stone was meanwhile doing his best to milk the developing disaster for all it was worth. That, of course, was his job. He went on the local Muscular Dystrophy Telethon to assure everyone that all that could be done for us was being done; in fact, he expected us to be rescued at any moment. He also got the call letters of the radio station into every conversation a good half-dozen times. Very important.

The national press was alerted by United Press International and the Associated Press in Seattle, and soon the entire country, which had been suffering from what electronic journalists call 'the slow news days right before Labor Day,' was riveted to the growing drama at the top of the Northwest's greatest peak. Quickly, Pat O'Day's little promotion had become a climb beamed 'round the world.

On top of the mountain, the storm slackened Saturday night. In fact, about two o'clock Sunday morning, I awoke at the strong urging of my bladder; when I finally built up the gumption to brave the cold, I stepped out under a perfectly clear, star-lit sky. In a distant valley, the lights of Yakima twinkled temptingly.

I dove back into the tent and called base camp in Paradise, waking up Dunham Gooding, who had come down from Bellingham to help however he could. Dunham would become our main contact to the outside world.

"Dunham," I shouted excitedly, paying no attention to the fact that I had just roused him from a deep sleep, "call the Army and tell them it's as clear as a bell up here. Tell 'em to get that copter up here."

"Terry, do you realize it's two o'clock in the blasted morning? They aren't about to fly a copter to 14,400 feet in the dark to try and pluck you from who knows where? Do you think they'd be able to see you in this darkness, and if they did, do you think they'd be willing to land that chopper at night? Do you?"

Upon reflection, I hoped they might. They fought the Vietnam War with helicopters, and they didn't stop fighting just because it turned dark, did they? It would seem they'd put at least as much effort into saving three healthy young American boys in their hour of darkest need. To me, it was a good idea for America. A patriotic thing.

"Forget it, Terry, go back to sleep. If this weather hangs in there, we'll get you off at first light."

Unfortunately, this enticement faded by morning to a returned tempest of ice and cold. If it was possible, the wind was even stronger, the chill even more demoralizing. The snowfall, which had dropped off for most of the last fourteen hours, now reached new heights of intensity.

It was Sunday afternoon, September 2, 1979.

Dave, Rob, and I each took turns going outside to dig the tent out of the deepening snow. Because we hadn't moved the tent onto a new level before the axes became impacted, it was now at the bottom of a pretty deep trough. Our job was to keep it clear, and thus keep ourselves from being buried alive. And, just as important, we had to keep from breaking a tent pole.

In the middle of the third trip outside that Sunday afternoon, Dave slipped while scooping snow and fell full-weight against the main load-bearing pole on the north side of the tent. It snapped like summer kindling. The sound of the breaking aluminum wasn't very loud, but it might as well have been a cannon fired at our heads.

"Damn, how could I do that?" Dave moaned when he crawled back in out of the gale. "How the damn Hell could I do that?"

"Won't do any good to get yourself any more depressed, Dave," Rob consoled him halfheartedly. "We just gotta figure how we're gonna survive with a broken tent that won't stand another full day."

"You know, we could try and let the snow build up over us and then mold it around us like an igloo, don't you think?" My suggestion seemed as plausible as anything we might come up with.

"I suppose we could try that, Mr. Mac," Rob answered.

"But I don't think much of anything is gonna work. A broken tent pole means a broken tent. And a broken tent in this situation probably means a collapsed tent before long."

Despite our total gloom, we began several hours of attempting to mold the snow around us with our hands. What occurred in that time frame are some of the most memorable moments in my existence, as we silently ran our hands over and over again across the inside of the tent in an attempt to build an igloo from the inside. It may have been crazy, but at 14,000 feet, with a massive winter storm blowing outside the tent, none of us wanted to go out there and find a better answer just yet.

So by flickering candlelight, a trio of distraught adventurers tried to hold back their doom. The realization that just the other side of the Gortex™ tent fabric was a cold and lonely death hung in the air like frozen breath.

Hours later, we went to sleep feeling that our efforts had been somewhat successful. Though the tent had begun to sag on the side by the broken pole, the snow it was holding had seemed to solidify enough to let us catch up on some rest.

While we slept, Nature must have enjoyed a good chuckle. Here we were thinking that the architecture we had woven with our hands would hold up any weight She might drop on us. That was a good one!

Not only would She dump an incredible amount of snow on us in the next four hours, but because we had stopped clearing the trough around the tent, She now tried to suffocate us.

Dave and Rob were sound asleep when I jerked up in my bag in the middle of the night unable to breathe. I gasped twice and realized I had maybe ten seconds to go into action before I blacked out.

Diving to the pocket next to Dave on the broken-pole side of the tent, I grabbed the Bic lighter we always kept there. Screaming for Rob and Dave, I frantically struck the flint again and again, but the damned thing wouldn't light.

Realizing that there was practically no oxygen left in the tent, I dove for the door, and unzipped it. I was confronted with a solid wall of snow, with no sign of the world above. We were buried deep in the side of this mountain, and were just about to die there.

With Dave and Rob right on my hip, I started tunneling out and up, pushing the snow back onto them as I went. Three, four, five feet I tunneled in my desperate grasp for breath. It took at most fifteen seconds, but seemed an eternity.

Finally, I broke through the top crust and out into the air around Point Success. The atmosphere shot down past me to where Rob and Dave sucked it in greedily.

We were saved. We could breathe. But what we found when we crawled back down to the tent took that breath from us.

The entire left side of the tent wall had collapsed to within a foot of Dave's sleeping bag. What had once been a perfectly round interior suddenly looked like some giant demon had sat down on it. To get back in his bag, Dave had to squeeze around the major bulge hanging over him.

The tent was hours away from collapsing.

"Well, it looks to me like it will hold until morning," Rob said unenthusiastically. "Don't think there's anything for us to do but get some sleep and get ready to evacuate come daylight."

"Evacuate? In this weather? Where do you think we could evacuate to, Rob?" My enthusiasm for this whole adventure had reached an all-time low.

"Listen, Terry, we gotta get away from this tent before it totally collapses, which puts us out there. And instead of standing around and freezing to death, we'll probably try and get over into the summit crater and see if we can cuddle up next to one of them steam geysers. Unless you just want to give up and let it bury you here."

Given that choice, I went back to sleep, mentally prepared to walk out into the maelstrom the next morning.

Monday, September 3, 1979 dawned in a ground blizzard. The overhanging tent bulge crushed down on Dave as we awoke. It was evident that we were only hours away from trying to survive outside, if we could.

The morning started wrong with a call from base camp; Tony Stone wanted us to be ready to go on the national Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon that afternoon.

"You're scheduled to hit the air at 1 P.M." Tony told us enthusiastically. "That's absolute prime time on the Jerry Lewis show. You guys are big national celebrities. We've had calls from Good Morning America, the Today Show, NBC News! Everybody wants a piece of you. What a windfall for the radio station! You guys are doing fantastic!"

"We guys are also dying," I said to him with some real bitterness. "There's no way we'll be able to go on the Jerry Lewis show, Tony. We'll be evacuating this tent before then, and you can't expect us to talk to him while we're out there trying to find someplace to live!"

"God, Terry, I think the sheer drama of struggling to survive for the sake of Jerry's kids is unbelievable. Don't you think you guys could just talk to him while you're hiking to wherever you're going? Christ, it's Jerry Lewis!"

"Jerry Lewis my ass!" Rob toned in. "You tell Jerry Lewis to come up here and die for his kids, and then we'll talk."

"I can understand your being upset, Rob," Tony answered. "But, Terry, you're still up there on behalf of the radio station. I expect you to be able to appear, for even a short bit, on the Telethon."

"Sorry, Tony," I answered, "it's my day off."

With that, we stowed the walkie-talkies and began preparations for leaving the tent before it collapsed on us. It took until 12:45 P.M. for us to get everything organized and step out onto the summit snowfield into an furious storm.

At exactly 1 P.M., with Jerry Lewis somewhere in Las Vegas steaming over being stood up, we watched the remains of our North Face dome tent collapse

under tons of snow. Rob dug into the rubble and ripped out a five-foot-square section of the tent for a possible marker; we then turned our backs on the only safety between us and death since the tempest hit.

We were faced with a thin window of survival. We had to find shelter before the combination of wet, wind, and cold could kill us.

With visibility down to fifteen feet, we headed off in the general direction of the summit crater--three desperate climbers with no tent, no ice axes, food for one more day, fuel for two more.

The snow had consolidated enough so that we were only wading up to our thighs as we slogged to the northeast. Still, combined with several days of lethargy, the effect was easily sapping what energy we had.

I had to stop every ten steps and gasp for air. The pain in my chest was excruciating. We had only gone about five hundred feet when I yanked on the rope to get the others to stop.

I couldn't hear Rob's scream from the front of the rope when he realized I had stopped. He knew how fast we had to find shelter. This was no time for taking a breather.

Reluctantly, I struggled to my feet and resumed the grinding slog.

The slope had increased as it kicked up to the summit, so the going was even slower and more painful. I was not only breathing furiously, I was actually crying out with each step. The raging wind gave no encouragement.

Two hundred feet farther, and both Rob and Dave could feel that I was fading fast. Dave got on the walkie-talkie to Dunham Gooding at base camp.

"Dunham, we're dying up here," was his objective judgment. "Terry can't go much farther, and Rob and I aren't sure where we're going. We've got to stay around the summit, but the wind is just taking it out of us. I've started to lose muscle control in my hands, and my feet are freezing. If we don't find something pretty soon, we're done."

The gales of Rainier screamed their agreement.

At the end of the rope, I lost my balance and fell downhill into the snow. My sleeping pad, which I had folded underneath the top compartment of my pack, came loose and rolled down the summit snowfield toward Wilson Headwall. The wind caught it and flung it away.

I was totally knackered. The idea of cutting the rope and letting the others go on without me briefly flashed through my mind, until I remembered that I never carry a knife. So, whatever happened, this umbilical tied the three of us together until the end.

Just then, Rob--who was leading the desperate march-- glanced down to the slope on his left and noticed a small hole in the snow next to a rock. He instinctively kicked the hole with his foot, and the snow around the hole collapsed to expose a much bigger hole, a much bigger rock. One more good kick on the other side of the rock, and the hole had become the size of two men, with an evident crevasse below.

I couldn't hear it, but Rob let out a war whoop that put the storm rage to shame. He knew what he had found, and it was now just a matter of bringing us to him, so that he could confirm it.

The Good Lord had given him the instinct, or the good fortune, to find a summit bergshrund--the place on a glacier slope where the steepness of the summit pyramid flattens out a little bit to join the summit snowfield. Right there, the downhill section of the glacier often pulls away from the steep slope, leaving a maze of caverns and crevasses encircling the top of the mountain. These holes are hidden most of the year, but late in the summer, they often open up.

Rob was still whooping and dancing when we got up to him. He knew we would survive, and now it was just a matter of finding a way down into the crevasse.

"David, you belay me from up here, and I'll go down and see what I can find," he yelled over the storm.

The entrance to this giant hole was a forty-five degree snow-slope that disappeared from our view into the darkness below. Rob put on his headlamp, and gingerly lowered himself down the slope.

The rope played out thirty, forty, fifty feet, and we heard another maniacal war whoop.

"God of mercy!" Rob screamed. "Get down here, boys, we're gonna live! We're gonna live! We're gonna live!"

Dave belayed me down to where Rob was standing, on a snow shelf forty-feet below. It was evident after the first ten feet into the crevasse that we had

found a major snow cavern. Once my eyes adjusted to the light, the entire spectacle opened below me.

The cavern was bathed in a bright gray glow. Tiny sculptures of ice adorned the interior walls. The cavern was easily sixty feet down by two hundred feet deep. All along the lower interior right wall ran another crevasse that looked like it fell interminably to the interior of the mountain. This crevasse opened up at the far end of the cavern, just beyond a major ice buttress.

Rob was dancing and screaming like a madman when I got down to him. His face had an other-worldly look to it. His lips were blue, his nose a weird, near-green color. It was evident even to an untrained eye that my trusty guide was going hypothermic.

"Yeah, yeah, we ain't gonna die! We're gonna live, Mr. T. We ain't gonna die."

"Right, Rob, you did great. Now, take it easy and let's get Dave down here."

Bishop was with us momentarily, and he saw right away that Rob was in bad shape.

"Robert," he said, "we need to get you into your sleeping bag. You've gone hypothermic and you look real bad. Terry, you and I need to carve out a sleeping platform in that ice buttress back there."

"But why not right here?" I asked.

"Because this late in the season you can't trust a snow slope to support you overnight. It might collapse, and we'd all disappear into the maw of this damned mountain. Now let's get back there and get to work."

We trudged the hundred feet to where the outside slope met the ice buttress. There Dave and I began to kick a platform into the solid ice with our crampons. It was really hard, and Dave was soon experiencing hand cramps once again. Then his legs began to cramp up.

"Terry, I don't think I can go on. You're gonna have to finish this platform. My hands! God, they won't let go!"

"Listen, Dave, take it easy. You and Rob sit right over there, and I'll get this platform done."

"You'll have to get Rob into his sleeping bag, then get some hot water started. The only thing that's going to fix us both is hot water for tea."

So within the bowels of Mt. Rainier, I finished the job of cutting the platform, tenderly put my two guides into their sleeping bags, and went about boiling some water for them. I felt real paternal care for these two galoots. They had saved me; now it was my turn.

The platform was just wide enough for two and a half sleeping bags. I put Rob on the inside, Dave in the middle, and because I had no sleeping pad, I built up a support platform for my bag using all our packs. My sleeping position was going to overhang the deep crevasse on the far end of the cavern. As I lay down on my back, the bottomless hole disappeared into darkness seventy feet below.

The walls of the cavern were bathed in an eerie light that gave the place the feeling of an ice palace. I expected to hear angelic voices, maybe see a ballet troupe dance through en pointe. Outside the storm raged in the night, but in our temporary safe haven, we were enjoying a constant five degree respite. We could last in here as long as the fuel did.

I fed my guides their tea, made them a small supper, and called in a walkie-talkie report to base camp. They told me Associated Press wanted to do an interview with me, so I had Dunham call AP and hook us up; we did the interview, and I crashed exhausted into my sleeping bag. The oblivion down to my left didn't even bother me. I slept the sleep of the dead, given a second chance to live.

Before I drifted off, I realized that we would have to get off the mountain the next day, or we might never.

Overnight, I dreamed that I was changing the diapers of a new baby girl I had never seen. My wife was then seven months pregnant, so that was a good sign--don't you think?

Tuesday, September 4, 1979. 6 A.M.

I woke up first, since I've never been real good about sleeping on top of a couple of packs with a hundred foot drop next to me. The first thing I saw as I gazed up to the cavern entrance was a bright round circle of light on the upper wall; the sun was shining outside.

I roused Rob and Dave, who both appeared completely recovered from the problems of the previous evening. They were just as excited as I to see the sunshine on the cave wall. They fell out of their sacks as fast as they could, and grabbing a walkie-talkie, made their way up to the entrance to the bergschrund.

What they saw up there brought out a couple of lusty yells that I could hear without monitoring my walkie-talkie.

"We can see the summit! We're right below it!" Rob was so happy I feared he might go hypothermic on me again. "Hey Dunham, c'mon man, get that helicopter up here. We can see all the way to Oregon."

Dunham came on the line, likewise excited about the seeming break in the weather.

"Man, that's good news! Now, listen, you guys spread that piece of tent fabric out and sit tight. I'll run over and tell them to warm up the copter and get up there as fast as they can."

Dave and Rob got real busy being excited, slapping each other on the back and enjoying the magnificent winter-like view to the south. Across the summit snowfield, they could make out the top of the Wilson headwall route, and far below could see some of the snowfields above the Fan where they had taught me the French technique so many long days ago.

I didn't know whether I should stay in my sleeping bag, or go running up to the cave entrance and join in the anticipation.

"Hey, Terry, there's really no reason for you to come up here until we know if the bird is gonna get to us," Rob advised over the walkie-talkie. "We'll keep you posted."

Communications were established between our base camp, the helicopter, and Chief Park Ranger Bob Dunnigan, who had overseen the rescue since the first.

"Okay, the sun is really out man," were Rob's first words to Dunnigan. "Are you coming, or what?"

"Listen, can you identify the location where you are?" Dunnigan asked us as soon as we were all on line together.

"We're on the outside of some hill, and we aren't in the summit crater," Rob answered. "C'mon, let's do it!"

"Can you hear me?" I asked.

"Yeah, I can," came the Ranger's reply.

"Well, Dave just dropped down into the crevasse and told me that Point Success is opposite where the sun is right now. That would put us northeast of Point Success, I think."

"Yeah, that's what I think, too," Dunnigan answered.

"The summit is northeast of Point Success, right?" I asked.

"That's right."

"And we're in between Point Success and the summit."

"Yeah, that's what I still think."

"And that means we're just southwest of the summit, probably on the slopes leading to the top on an almost direct line between Point Success and the summit."

"I think you're right, Terry. O.K."

"We're putting boots on. I'm gonna keep this headset on and stay in contact with the guys, and I'll be the last one out of here."

"Terry, now stay in the hole 'til we get there," was Dunnigan's advice. "There's no reason to expose yourself."

As if to reinforce what Bob Dunnigan was saying, the light on the crevasse wall darkened as clouds once again surrounded the mountain.

"The helicopter is on it's way," Dunnigan broke in. "The helicopter is on it's way."

"Damn," Rob said over the walkie-talkie from the crevasse lip. "I don't think he'll be able to see us with the bank of clouds that just moved in."

And this proved to be the case. The wind picked up, snow began to blow, and fifteen minutes later, the helicopter's first of three possible rescue attempts for the day was thwarted by a small blizzard that struck right at the heart of our hopes.

Again and again, the Canadian pilot, who was flying the helicopter in an exchange program with the U.S. Army, circled above the clouds, but didn't see anything of the top three thousand feet of the mountain. So, he returned to Paradise.

"Keep your spirits up, guys," Dunham advised. "These clouds are gonna keep blowing in and out all day, according to the Weather Service."

What he didn't tell us was that the U.S. Weather Bureau at SeaTac Airport was warning of another major storm moving southeast out of the Gulf of Alaska, and due to arrive at Mt. Rainier late that afternoon. The storm was of such size that it might well be a week before any more rescue attempts could be made.

8 A.M.

"Dunham, it looks great up there right now!" I called to base camp with renewed hope. "The storm's gone, and Dave says he can see forever to the southeast."

"Man, that's wonderful news," Dunham replied. He had been talking off-line to Dunnigan and the Army people since our first aborted attempt that morning; their plan was to keep our hopes bright, not let us get down.

"We're still waiting for liftoff, we don't have it yet," Bob Dunnigan broke in. "Dunham, I suppose this gives everybody a better appreciation of what it takes to pull one of these things off. It doesn't just happen at the drop of a hat."

"Well, all of us are really touched by the amount of effort that's going into this," I said truthfully. "You know, we owe you our lives when we get off of this thing."

"No, you don't owe us a damned thing," Dunnigan replied. "We just want to get you off."

"We're doing it because we love you. You don't owe us anything," Dunham added.

"They are warming up the ship now."

"It is brightening intensely on the crevasse walls," I reported. "Dave and Rob have walked out a little ways, so I'm a little out of touch with them, but it is really bright up there."

It didn't stay that way. For the second time that day, the Army helicopter came up for no reason. The weather blew in, as if in anticipation, thwarting us again. They had fuel now for one more pass over the mountain before they would have to return to Ft. Lewis and refuel.

9:30 A.M.

A half-hour had passed, and the mountain cleared again.

"We've got to make this next one work, Terry," Dunnigan told me, "so be sure it looks really good up there before you bring us up. I know it's tough because they take fifteen minutes to get there, but let's do as best we can predicting one of these big windows you're describing."

"Well, it seems to be holding," I answered. "It's really bright on the crevasse walls again. Very bright."

"Man, it's really bright up here, let's go for it," Rob said from the crevasse lip where he and Dave had retreated after confirming that we were indeed on the southwest slope of the summit. "C'mon man, fly that bird. I think this one's gonna hold."

"O.K., they are airborne," Dunnigan advised. Back at the radio studio in downtown Seattle, a dozen people sat in the control room monitoring this continuing conversation with a mike open so we could even hear their cheers of encouragement at the news that the copter had lifted off on its last pass of the day.

"Now check this," I yelled into the walkie-talkie. "Dave has come down here and told me there is a flat area three hundred yards below us, between us and the Wilson Headwall. Also, when you get here I don't have my shoes on yet, so don't leave without me."

Everybody along the line had a good laugh.

"Keep you sense of humor, that's important," Bob Dunnigan said.

"Read this, we can see a half mile on the surface," Rob reported.

"One half mile visibility on the surface," Dunnigan repeated to the copter pilot.

"Give us a wind velocity and direction if you can," Dunham asked.

"From the west southwest at twenty-five," Rob replied.

"It's very bright up here," I added, "the wall in the crevasse looks like it's on fire."

"O.K., are you preparing to get out of the crevasse now, Terry?" Dunnigan asked.

"Terry, did you read that, are you preparing to get out of the crevasse now?" Dunham echoed.

"I can't get my boots on; they're frozen."

"What, did you guys turn your boot heaters off to conserve fuel?" Dunham asked.

"How close is the bird; are we close?" I asked, with visions of me crawling up out of that hole in my socks.

"The ship is at 13,000 feet on the northeast side of the mountain, circling to the southwest."

"I wish I could get these damned boots on!"

"I think they should be hearing the helicopter shortly," Dunnigan interjected.

"We are hearing him now. We are hearing him now," came Rob's reply from above.

"Terry. I'd advise you to go out of the crevasse now." Dunnigan said. "Right now, the helicopter can see parts of the summit."

"Do you have any report on ground visibility, Rob?" Dunham asked.

"Well, man, ground visibility is messed up, but it's changing every fifteen seconds. We just gotta pray for a hole."

"According to the helicopter, it doesn't look like any good holes."

"Wait a second, here comes a hole."

"Yeah, well these holes are moving too fast to land a bird."

"Hell, we got infinite visibility right now to the south, but we can't hear the helicopter."

"Is everybody down there reading this?"

"Yeah, this stuff is going right onto the helicopter."

"Okay, this is Terry, I'm gonna come up out of the hole."

"Hey, Terry, there's really not any sense in that, man," Rob advised. "It's really cold out here."

"Yeah, I'd stay in, Terry," Dunnigan agreed.

"Do you understand, Terry, we'd like you to stay in?" Dunham asked, and when I didn't reply, he repeated, "Do you understand, Terry, we'd like you to stay in the hole?"

"I understood that."

"O.K., here's our hole. But we can't see or hear that helicopter," Rob said with some dispirit. "We can see to Oregon right now."

"Are you kidding?" Dunham laughed.

"I can hear the helicopter!" Rob yelled. "I can hear the helicopter. It's just to the southeast of us. Now all we need is a little break."

"Fantastic," came Dunham's reply.

"O.K. here's the hole. I hope they're looking."

"Bob, they've got a hole," Dunham said to Dunnigan at Park Headquarters.

"We can see the helicopter!" Rob nearly blew my ear out with his scream.

"We see the helicopter!"

"Did you hear that?" I yelled.

"We read you. We read you. You see the helicopter," came Dunham's answer.

"If he'll just stay right on his line, he'll see us. Wait a second! He's coming right toward us! I bet we're gonna have a break, too. We are! Okay, this is it! All right, all right! He sees us! He sees us!"

"All right! Yeow!!" I could hear Dave's scream outside the crevasse nearly as well as Rob's across the walkie-talkie.

"Does the helicopter see them?" Dunham asked Dunnigan.

"Yeah, the helicopter sees them, and they're coming in for a landing."

The screaming at that announcement came from deep within the crevasse, and two young climbers jumping up and down outside the crevasse; from Dunham Gooding at the console in the Winnebago, and a dozen delirious cheerers at the radio station in Seattle. Around the Northwest, tens of thousands cheered along.

"They see us. All right! They see us! God, we can't control ourselves. We're just crying." Rob's voice broke with the emotion built up over the last five days.

"Yes, Rob, they see you and are gonna land on the saddle above you to the west."

"They're gonna land! Oh God, thank you. They're gonna land."

"God bless you, Army," I cried into my walkie-talkie.

"Can you hear me now, Rob?" Bob Dunnigan broke into our emotion. "You've got to take control and get your party up to that helicopter. He's very low on fuel, and may have to leave the two climbing rangers he has on board and get out of there before he runs out of fuel. The climbing rangers have ice axes,

tents, and all the gear you will need to get off the mountain as soon as the avalanche conditions improve. But if you can, get that party to that helicopter and get the hell off that mountain!"

"Listen, I hear you. If that helicopter stays right where it's at, Dave and I will go back down and pack up all our gear, and we'll be over there in an hour."

"Rob, forget that gear. It isn't worth anything. Get Terry to bring up the rope, and get the hell out of there. Do you read me. You still gotta use your wits. Leave all your stuff, rope up and get out of the there!"

"You want us to start walking toward it and leave our stuff?"

"That's right. Run toward it if you can. Just get over there right now. They're real low on fuel."

I came up out of the gray light of the crevasse into the blinding brightness of the morning. On a saddle far off to my right, I saw the helicopter, held on top of the snow by the pull of his beating rotors. It was evident from even that far that the pilot was doing a helluva job keeping the machine from sinking.

"Okay, Rob, when you're ready to go, we want you to move as fast as you can," Dunham told his senior guide.

"We're doing it, man. Here we go. I tell you, this snow isn't any easier or more consolidated than it was." Rob was puffing heavily after only a few steps.

"It's up-to-the-hips time, but I'd swim over there if I had to."

Rob's effort was clearly evident over the walkie-talkie.

"Those rangers must really have headaches jumping out at 14,000 feet like this."

"Hey, Rob, the rangers are moving toward you. Can you see them?"  
Dunham inquired.

"We got a cloud in between us here," came Rob's reply. "Yeah, there they are, we're about three hundred yards from them. I wonder if they see me."

"They do see you, Rob. They do see you."

"It looks really good right now, Dunham. I think it might hold if the damn bird doesn't run out of gas."

"Rob that's our critical point." Bob Dunnigan was clearly apprehensive. "Just so you know, the pilot says he can only hold for a few more minutes, he's so low on fuel. You don't have to answer me, Rob, but just for you information, all the gear you'd need is off-loaded in case we have to leave you behind."

"That's far out," Rob replied. "We're getting there. Terry's going slow, but we're getting there. If I could kick him in the butt, we'd be over there quick. Terry, kick your feet in. Kick 'em in!"

I had turned off my walkie-talkie, and was again experiencing the total debilitation of being at altitude for five days, and then trying to walk through deep snow. Despite seeing my salvation in front of me, I dropped to the snow in exhaustion.

"Dunham, something's wrong with Terry!"

"What was that?"

"Something's wrong with Terry!"

I fell out of consciousness for a brief moment, then came back to reality. My lungs were bursting, my legs nearly useless. The thought flashed through my

mind that I was going to have cardiac arrest right there, within shouting distance of being saved.

"Dunham, get your guides to the ship," Dunnigan ordered. "We'll leave the rangers behind with Terry."

"There's no way to get him to the ship, huh?"

"Well, he's moving real slow, Dunham. And the bird is almost out of fuel. Better to get your two guys off."

Suddenly, my mind cleared, and I realized that I wanted to get the hell off that mountain. In my mind, I saw my wife, my daughter, and that unborn baby. With a final burst of energy, I got to my feet and slogged the painful two hundred yards to the rangers; each took me under an arm and half carried me to the back end of the Chinook, up the ramp into the body of the copter, and unceremoniously deposited me on the floor.

As I lay on my face, my fingernails dug into one of the sweetest feelings of my life. Metal! God-blessed, man-made metal! It meant that we had done it. We were going to survive. We were going to live.

The captain closed the back end of the Chinook, and almost immediately flew off the saddle.

Bob Dunnigan announced the news to the Northwest.

"Everybody is on-board. They've lifted off the summit. They're going to Grey Field, Ft. Lewis."

We couldn't hear the cheers; we didn't even notice the Army crew that had put their lives on the line to save ours. Our thanks to them would come later,

although I never did learn that Canadian pilot's name. What a hero! I would also later rent a car, drive to Paradise, and finally meet Phil Erschler.

Aboard the Chinook, Rob, Dave, and I just sat in our places, unable to speak, savoring the moment.

The captain slowly circled the summit of Mt. Rainier so we could once again see the sites of our trepidation and escape. The slopes of Point Success, the crevasse below the top that had been our true salvation. Above all, the snowridge of Columbia Crest, the true summit of the mountain, which we had never really reached.

But you'd have a real hard time convincing the three of us that we hadn't been on top of Mt. Rainier. In all the times I've been back, no summit experience there has touched it.

We flew back to a national press reception at Ft. Lewis. We appeared on Good Morning America, CBS Radio and the NBC Nightly News with David Brinkley.

The ratings at KYYX exploded in the book following Charity Mountain.

A lot of people thought Pat O'Day was such a hustler, he must have set the whole thing up.

And Pat O'Day--the High Prince of Hyperbole--decided that Charity Mountain was such a success, next year he just might kill a jock.

Just think of the numbers that would pull!



CLIMBERS ROB NEWSOME, Terry MacDonald and Dave Bishop, left to right, relaxed at Fort Lewis yesterday after being picked off the top of Mount

Rainier by a specially equipped Army helicopter. The rescue ended a four-day ordeal for the three men. —AP Laser-photo

## Disc Jockey Rescued Atop Rainier Had Given Up Hope

By Stan Nast

There were three times when he thought he might die, trapped by bad weather with two comrades atop Mount Rainier, radio disc jockey Terry MacDonald said yesterday after being rescued by Army helicopter.

MacDonald said he felt death was near and once, "I thought it was all over with."

He and the two professional climbers, Rob Newsome and Dave Bishop, who took him to the 14,410-foot summit, were safe yesterday, rescued by a helicopter from Fort Lewis who slipped through a hole in the clouds.

MacDonald, of Seattle's KYYX FM, and Newsome and Bishop of the North Cascades Alpine School in Bellingham, suffered no ill effects from their ordeal.

But there were some close calls, said the disc jockey.

"Heavy snow on the weekend buried our tent," he said. "It cut off all the air. We woke up at 3 o'clock in the morning. None of us could breathe. We tried to light a candle, but no one could get a match to light. I dived for the entrance and fought to the surface to let air in."

The two guides got out of the tent just before it collapsed from the weight of about eight feet of snow. Buried with the tent were their ice axes, which had been used for pegging down the tent.

Without the ice axes a descent would have been dangerous, if not impossible.

MacDonald said that from the collapsed tent they planned to go to a steam cave, in which other climbers stranded at the top have survived storms.

"Through the deep snow it took me an hour to go about 800 yards," he said. "I felt like telling Rob and Dave

to go on, that I couldn't make it."

They didn't find a steam cave, but they stumbled onto a large crevasse that sheltered them from the blizzard.

Waiting in the crevasse, he said he also gave up hope.

"We didn't think the weather would break," he said. "We thought the helicopter couldn't get in. My mind relaxed and let go. My determination softened. I thought it was all over with."

Then the three men saw the twin-rotor Chinook landing through one of the rare holes in the clouds.

"God bless you, Army!" MacDonald blurted into the radio by which he had kept in touch with the rescue team.

He had used the same sophisticated radio equipment to broadcast during the ascent, which was promoted as a drive for funds to fight muscular dystrophy. The climb started a week ago yesterday and the party stood on the summit Friday.

Bob Bingham, general manager of KYYX, said about \$27,000 was pledged by the time the drive ended Monday afternoon.

The broadcasts ended Saturday, Bingham said, because the three climbers were concentrating on survival.

An instant before MacDonald's joyous response to the helicopter's arrival, his voice was tinged with disappointment as he talked by radio with a KYYX van at Paradise and with Bill Larson, a National Park Service ranger.

When told that the helicopter was near the summit for the rescue, MacDonald described thick clouds shrouding the summit.

"The holes (in the clouds) are moving too fast for the helicopter," MacDonald said. That was the situation since Saturday, and was the reason the three men spent three unscheduled nights atop the highest mountain in the 48 contiguous states.

Yesterday's rescue came through a lucky break in the clouds.

"I was close to going back to Fort Lewis," said Capt. contiguous Jerald Fryer, pilot of the helicopter, who said he was concerned about his fuel supply.

At daybreak he had tried to get to the top of the mountain.

"I couldn't get near it because of the clouds," he said. "We landed at Ashford, just outside the park, to wait for the weather to clear and to load two rangers who were equipped to stay with the stranded climbers and who had extra provisions for them."

At Ashford there was no fuel for the jet-powered helicopter, said Fryer, a Canadian who is in this country for two years on an officer-exchange program. He is operations officer for the 243d Aviation Co. at Fort Lewis' Gray Field.

In a second attempt yesterday Fryer flew around the mountain top for some 10 minutes before spotting a hole through which he could make a landing.

"One of the rangers saw the three men in a big crevasse," he said. About 15 minutes later the climbers were aboard and on their way to Fort Lewis. Rangers Rick Kirschner and Kirk Storer had helped guide them through the blowing snow.

Fryer said he has flown two other successful rescue missions on Mount Rainier in the past 12 months.

Larry Henderson, information officer for Mount Rainier National Park, said he has no up-to-date figures for this year, but last year 3,088 of the 6,436 people who tried for the summit were successful.

Henderson also said that a four-member special rescue team that had waited at 10,000-foot Camp Muir for a break in the weather tried an assault on the summit late Monday night but was turned back by a white-out at 12,200 feet and arrived safely back at Camp Muir at 3:30 a.m. yesterday.