

Trail Maintenance 1997

by Forrest Clark

What has changed in trail maintenance in the last ten years? Not the actual work, but who is doing it. Five years ago trail maintenance in public forests and parks was mostly done by crews from the managing agency—workers paid with government funds. Today, government budget cuts and the reduction in logging revenues mean that land managers have almost no money to support recreation. The first item cut from their budget was maintenance of our beloved trails.

Five years ago, most of the ranger districts within Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest had 10–18 persons on each trail crew. Three years ago there were 4 or 5 and this last year the number has dwindled to one or two. Some districts and parks have no one working on trail maintenance.

Each winter storm causes trail damage. Besides the repair of storm damage, yearly maintenance of brushing, tread, and drainage repair is needed. The days of government funded trail maintenance are gone. Today, each of who wants passable trails must be willing to help.

Last year volunteers in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest contributed over 20,000 hours to trail maintenance. On a typical weekend you will find volunteers from Washington Trails Association (WTA), Volunteers for Outdoor Washington (VOW), The Mountaineers, Everett Mountaineers, Back Country Horsemen, local mountain bike groups as well as those involved in snowmobiling and back county ORV parks. To get the job done your help is urgently needed. There is a large backlog of damaged trails.

To help coordinate the volunteer effort, the Volunteer Trail Coalition (VTC) has formed. Its mission statement is:

- To encourage all trail users throughout the state to be involved in volunteer

trail work, while assuring that individual organizations retain their identities on work projects that they sponsor.

- To voluntarily exchange information of common concern in a frequent and convenient manner that contributes to the effectiveness of the individual trail organizations and provides an effective means of obtaining and sharing resources.
- To maintain a network to track the efforts and accomplishments of trail organizations individually and collectively, as well as to aid in effective evaluating and planning future efforts.
- To provide an easy and central means for new volunteers, organizations, land managers, and others to find out about trail work opportunities, ways to contribute resources, and be referred to the appropriate volunteer organization within our network.
- To establish a training program that provides consistent, well understood common standards for trail work and an opportunity for training key individuals as leaders, to ensure that all trail work is performed in a safe, competent and environmentally sound manner.

The Everett Mountaineers Lookout & Trail Maintenance Committee (LOTM) is sponsoring between 15–20 trail maintenance opportunities this year. As usual we will also be heading up a large effort on National Trails Day, June 7, 1997. Last year 123 volunteers helped to rebuild and reopen the Old Sauk Trail. Our goal for this year is 200 volunteers. The LOTM would like to personally invite you, your family and friends to participate. The day ends with a barbecue, T-shirts and prizes. It is sure to be a good time for all that attend.

Upcoming events:

- Mar. 23 Lord Hill Work Party and Basic Trail Maintenance Training Workshop, 8:30 A.M.-3:00 P.M.
- Apr. 19 Lord Hill Work Party and Drainage Workshop, 8:30 A.M.-3:00 P.M.
- Apr. 20 Skykomish Ranger District
- May 24 Skykomish Ranger District
- June 7 National Trails Day—White Chuck Bench Trail, 8:30 A.M.-3:00 P.M.

Call Everett Branch Director of Trail Maintenance Shelby Weible, (206) 259-2363, or LOTM Chair Forrest Clark, (206) 487-3461, to sign up for any of the above events. We still have several openings for crew leaders this year and will provide your training free of charge.

Publication Deadline

The deadline for our next issue is May 7, 1997. Contact Loretta or Russell at (206)316-7973. You can E-mail your submissions to deadrat@u.washington.edu.

Avalanche Forecasting Endangered

The Avalanche Forecasting Center may be reduced or eliminated due to budget cuts at the U.S. Forest Service. Your letters of support are requested. For more information contact Larry Donovan, Winter Sports Specialist, 206-744-3404. You may write to Dennis E. Bschor, Forest Supervisor, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 21905 64th Ave. W., Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043.

Old News from the Really Boring Business Meetings

This news was compiled from the Jan. and Feb. business meeting and the Feb. Executive Committee meeting. If you can locate our missing Secretary, please tell our Branch Chair. Once again the most uninteresting part of the Executive Committee meeting is the wordsmithing of the Singles Committee Charter. Three years in the making and featuring language carefully crafted to achieve the precise ambiguity we crave, the charter is ready to unleash onto the membership for a vote. The use of the word “that” as an indefinite referent is especially creative. The charter appears to maintain the current operational assignments of responsibility; activities that are under the domain of currently existing committees, such as hiking, stay that way. A controversy about the right to use club ropes climbed out of a can, but was quickly stuffed back in. Kris Stebbins will coordinate the banquet Nov. 15 at Mill Creek Country Club. The salmon bake will be on Oct. 5. Membership Services Chair Dana Miller and her children performed a one-act plea of desperation. Open positions include promotions, greeters, and contact person. Bicycling says that the Bicycle Center on Hwy 99 will give a 10% discount to Everett Mountaineers. Call Shelby 206-259-2363 if interested in this year’s Seattle-To-Portland trip. MOFA needs victims for the April 5-6 class; contact Duane Sandrin, 206-486-

7644. It’s your chance to act hurt. The peacocks have requested that the blood run red this year. The backcountry safety class will be on April 23. The ten essentials class will be on April 30. Our Scrambles Committee will help the Wenatchee Branch start a scramble class. Singles activities were affected by the weather. Their planned BBQ site was underwater and the train trip to Vancouver has become a bus trip due to landslides. Singles like the astronomical parties featuring the Hale-Bopp comet so much that they forget to tub. But isn’t the comet best viewed at dawn? Once again Ron Smith, our Social Committee, could not thank anyone for bringing treats to the meeting. The Tacoma Branch as instituted a conservation requirement for all courses. Our Conservation Committee donated \$100 to the friends of Miller Peninsula State Park. Our conservation committee and the Everett Community College conservation club are cosponsoring an Earth Day festival, April 19, at the college, featuring outdoor activities with conservation themes. A work party completed 350' of new trail at Lord Hill Park. Forrest Clark claims to be representing us when he attends volunteer appreciation dinners for the many other organizations he belongs to, but he hasn’t brought us any doggie bags. Bill Iffrig wants to know: Are the meetings still boring or was that only when Roy was Chair?

Fifty on Mount Rainier

by Lewis Turner

How do you celebrate a half-century of life? I had been thinking about how to acknowledge this life peak since I started climbing. Why not culminate this experience on top of the Northwest’s highest peak? This article is about that trip, and how The Mountaineers got me there.

When I first started backpacking 20 years ago in Oklahoma, I read all of the books that I could find on the subject. I also accumulated equipment, and on my first trip, was surprised that my pack weighed 75 pounds. All of my Okie friends thought I was pretty strange to backpack—why would anyone want to walk around in a forest carrying a bunch of weight on their back? I never figured out why backpacking wasn’t fun and consequently, quit after a few years.

In 1984, I escaped to Washington, paradise compared to Oklahoma. Western Washington isn’t flat, brown, cold, or hot. Mountains are only one or two hours away, as are desert and ocean. Washington has been my mecca for outdoor recreation. A friend and I started doing day hikes, carrying minimum weight in tiny fanny packs. After a few years of trail hikes, I wanted a greater challenge. I wanted to pick a compass bearing and have the skills to follow it, no matter where it pointed. As a first step toward this goal, I joined The Mountaineers, an organization that offered several adventurous outdoor courses.

Because of schedule conflicts, six years went by until I was able to enroll in a scramble course. Everett’s 1992 course was great and scrambling was fun, but the elevation gain was tough. I became more fit as the season progressed, but going up was still difficult. I’ve learned that most people who take the scramble course do not continue after the first year. I think it’s because of the physical effort required in this sport and lagging motivation to maintain physical fitness during the inactive winter months. Everyone knows how getting back in shape is painful. My solution—Winter Travel Course and snowshoe trips. Scrambling also requires a strong sense of humor which is why people who scramble or climb are my favorite people. They have positive

Lake Byrne August 23–25 1996

by George W. Swan

Lake Byrne is a popular high alpine lake in the Glacier Peak Wilderness. Getting there is a one-way trip of 8.25 miles with a 3,500' gain. Over the past few years various Everett Branch members have participated in revegetation projects at this site. On Aug. 24, S. Cole, D. Gill, J LaMont, P. Nelson, M. Robertson and C. Strandell carried packs and tools from the trailhead to join G. Swan at the lake. Stacey Meyers and Robin Morissette were the U.S. Forest Service representatives from the Darrington District.

This handy bunch worked at various sites. One project on a steep slope up to

Little Siberia involved the major construction of check dams using lots of rocks carried to the site from about a quarter-mile away. Another project consisted of collecting large rocks, ferrying them on a raft across the lake and then hauling them uphill to a site for a lake vista. Some took part in a layering project on one of the trails. This consisted of dipping plants into a hormone solution and then planting them. A detailed photographic record was undertaken at each site. It was very hot work; fortunately Deanna kept using her filter to pump gallons of water for us all to drink—a great service.

personalities and a sense of humor.

By my second year of activities in The Mountaineers, I'd received so much from the organization that I felt I had to give something back. I had many doubts about being a trip leader; fear of responsibility, level of fitness and lack of experience come to mind. As a compromise, I assisted instructing the 1993 Scramble Course. Guess what? I loved it! Helping with the course made me feel good about myself, and about what I was doing. I started thinking that maybe even being a trip leader might be OK. Besides, if you're not mature and confident enough at 50 to be a leader, then when?

I took the plunge and volunteered to be an assistant leader for a scramble trip up Mount Baring. I researched the scramble route. I talked to leaders who had done the trip previously; some felt it was very difficult, some felt it was not very difficult. Being a leader seemed to involve more than I had anticipated. I had so many things to think about, plan, and anticipate: route finding, social skills, equipment, weather, organization, contingency plans, safety and fun.

Unexpectedly, I became the leader of the Baring trip. My boots shook. My ice axe slipped. Speech was difficult. Would I do a good job? Could I get the group to the summit? Could I get us back down safely? Thick fog, sleet, snow "bombs" falling from trees, route finding difficulties, lack of experience, and fear, caused me to turn back at 350' vertical from the summit. At the time it was a very difficult decision, and one that I questioned for a long time. But safety was the final determinant.

The trip taught me a lot. I was forced to make difficult decisions on my very first trip as a leader. But overall, the good feelings from the trip encouraged me to continue to lead. There's a real joy in leading, and providing a fun and safe trip for others. Picture yourself and some close friends making it to the top of a Cascade peak, enjoying the view of countless other majestic peaks; or snow shoeing through a white forest with freshly fallen snow delicately covering the trees as though placed there by a dreaming artist.

In 1994, I took the Basic Climbing Course, but I first had to talk my body into it. I didn't want to fall from high places, hang off of a rope on a vertical rock wall, or dangle gingerly from a thin

crack. Surprise! The climbing course was a blast! Compared to scrambling, it was more physically, technically, and mentally challenging. The physical challenge was the weight of the climbing equipment. Where was my fanny pack? I've learned that each additional Mountaineer course means more weight. This may sound perverse, but after taking Basic Climbing I wanted to obtain even more skills. I thought—Intermediate Climbing Course. No rocking chairs yet.

I climbed Mount Rainier on the last weekend of June. Because of the hot weather, we decided to hike up to Camp Muir in the evening. We left Paradise on Thursday at 7 P.M. and arrived at Camp Muir six hours later. Like the first day of most overnight climbing trips, the hike to Camp Muir was not particularly fun. My pack was heavy. My focus was primarily fixed on the boots in front of me as I took step after step and breath after breath, continually thinking that the end must surely be close. However, climbing by headlamp made the trip interesting and unlike any other; there was only me, darkness outside of my small circle of battery-powered light, a few friends, and millions of brilliant stars.

The climbers' hut at Camp Muir was almost full, so we quickly set up the only tents in the area, crawled into them and fell into deep sleep. We had decided to do Rainier as a three day climb. We weren't in any hurry, and the extra day would allow us to acclimatize to the altitude. On Friday we just lazed around camp. We ate, slept, talked, ate, slept, and watched a few new tents being set up and a form of panhandling peculiar to the mountains. A few solo climbers at Camp Muir wanted to join others' rope teams, a prerequisite for safely crossing crevassed glaciers. I remember listening to two young men making their pitch. They asked, "We have ice axes and those spiky things for our boots, but do we need anything else?"

We left Camp Muir shortly after 2 A.M. and observed a rare and wondrous sight, a line of mysterious fireflies slowly moving up towards the night sky. We watched the fireflies bob slowly up and down above the Cowlitz Glacier until they faded away near Cathedral Rocks.

As we were crossing the Ingraham Glacier in the dark, we passed our first "sweaty palm" zone, large crevasses below a steep, exposed ridge of rock called

Disappointment Cleaver. We safely negotiated the crevasses and arrived at the upper glacier just after sunrise. The glorious morning was windless, warm and fairly clear with the sun peaking over the horizon. We passed two exhausted climbers parked in sleeping bags by their guides. After completing this climb, I had respect for folks on guided trips who with no experience, but lots of determination, make it to the top of Mt. Rainier.

Up we went, finding ways over or around small and sometimes gigantic crevasses. They were shockingly deep cracks in the snow, several inches to tens of feet wide; they got darker the deeper they went, until they were the blackness of a bottomless pit. These crevasses were much bigger than the ones I had seen a week before on Mount Hood.

Six hours after leaving Camp Muir, we were at the top of Washington! One small step for man, a giant leap for a 50-year-old. We signed the summit register, and then spent a couple of hours on top in the warm, windless afternoon sun. It was surreal; we watched guides play Frisbee on a snow-covered moon crater.

Mt. Rainier feels significantly more remote than other mountains I've visited in the Northwest. Rainier is huge. The crater is at least a quarter-mile across. Rainier has its own valleys, ridges and sub-peaks forming whole ranges of mountains. Above Camp Muir, even in the presence of other climbers, I felt small, isolated and remote from civilization as if I were in Alaska or the Himalayas.

We started back late in the morning. The hot sun had made the snow cover slippery. I slipped repeatedly and each time visualized myself sliding down into a crevasse. Thus, we slipped into the second "sweaty palm" zone. My nervousness heightened because one in our rope team was weakened by altitude sickness. This was my first experience with this potentially dangerous condition. Our friend was mentally alert but physically very weak. He just sat down and stopped moving as though asleep. But when we told him to get up, he would respond verbally, slowly get up and continue downward. We reached the Cleaver; he kept slipping! I imagined him slipping and pulling the whole rope team into the exposed and heavily crevassed areas.

As we were traversing around the Cleaver, I heard "caw, caw." A crow sat on a tiny pinnacle on the very top of a ridge

"Fifty on Mt. Rainier," continued called Gibraltar Rock, close to Cadaver Gap. I don't know whether the crow was taunting, beckoning, or perhaps telling us to leave, but she provided a comfort in this remote and beautiful place, a familiar presence of a creature who could easily and confidently explore the mountain without danger of falling, slipping, or being hit by falling rock. When we descended below the Cleaver, we heard a roar. A large avalanche of car-sized rocks tumbled down the glacier to where we had been moments before! Thankfully, all of the rockfall disappeared into a hidden crevasse. Had we been a few minutes slower...

Our sick friend completely recovered within two hours after reaching Camp Muir. I felt good about the climb. The altitude hadn't bothered most of us and for me it had been an easier trip than previous glacier climbs. Thanks to The Mountaineers, I was able to stand at the end of my first half-century and laugh. Now I'm starting to think about what to do when I turn 60.

One of the best reasons for taking Mountaineers courses is to increase your skills and then give back some of what you learn by being a trip leader and course instructor. I think most leaders and instructors feel this way. Otherwise, how can you explain an organization of 15,000 that provides thousands of out door trips and activities, and operates almost entirely with volunteers? I encourage others to take Mountaineer courses, to experience adventures, to develop leader skills, and then to give those skills and experiences back to others by helping on courses and leading trips.

CPR Challenge

A CPR challenge will be offered June 4 and September 3, 1997, 6-7 P.M. before the monthly Branch meeting at the First Congregational Church. We will not show training videos or offer instruction; participants must come prepared to take the test and demonstrate their CPR skills. Class limit is 10 and the cost is \$10. Bring a stamped, self-addressed envelope with you if you want to be sent a card. Also, bring your last CPR card with you. Send the completed registration form to: Karen Sizemore, 3610 1/2 Oakes, Everett, WA 98201.

Registration form for Challenge Update

Wednesdays, June 4, 1997 or September 3, 1997

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Day Phone _____

Evening Phone _____

Make \$10 check payable to Everett Mountaineers. Circle your choice of dates.

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