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MRNPA NEWS

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From the Summit

by David L. Berry, President MRNPA

The Challenges of the MRNPA

I begin my first effort at writing this column a bit tongue in cheek with a slight apology to the great Northwest adventurer and author Dee Molenaar as I have used a slight variation of the title of his most excellent book about the history of the Mountain that is the very reason for the existence of our organization (Mr. Molenaar, if you are reading this please accept my apologies)

However, before I begin to wax eloquent (?) I would be remiss if I first didn't offer my and our heartfelt "THANK YOU" to John and Jane Titland for their many years of dedicated service to this group. Their love of Mount Rainier has shown through in everything they have done for this organization for many many years, and believe me, we all look forward to their continuing support and dedication for many years to come.

Now to continue with my thoughts from the title of this article and why I used the word challenge in the first place. . As an organization I believe we stand at a crossroads where we will have many challenges to face and we have many very important decisions to make for the future of our organization. (continued on page two)

Bill Butler: The Living Legend of Mt. Rainier

by Chick Garrett



"Ah'll hep you." Those words, spoken in soft Tennessee drawl, were heard all over Mount Rainier for over 30 years. They have been heard by errant hikers in springtime, by skiers with fractured legs in mid-winter, - and even by experienced mountain climbers who tumbled into yawning crevasses through either miscalculation or the terrible whims of The Mountain That Was God.

Some of those people never heard the soft, kindly words of the man who came West from Tennessee. They were dead.

William J. (Bill) Butler, who retired (now 33 years ago) as assistant chief ranger at Mount Rainier National Park, is living proof that a man CAN become legendary in the short span of three decades.

From the Summit (continued from page 1)

Let me here remind all of us the reason MRNPA was established to begin with. I am quoting from the recently produced informational brochure about MRNPA.

"Mount Rainier National Park Associates is a non-profit, volunteer, citizen's watchdog organization dedicated to the preservation and wise stewardship of Mount Rainier National Park. Our goals...Maintain Restore Nurture Protect Appreciate the natural resources of Mount Rainier National Park."

We are part of this group because we believe everything that is good and beautiful about the world's most wonderful Mountain. The fact that that Mountain is in our own backyard and that we love it so is why we exist as an organization. We care about everything and every decision that effects the present and future of the place the world calls Rainier. Because we care and because we are concerned for the Mountain and its' future we have to do all we can to help and be a part of the process that decides the future of our Mountain. To do this effectively I believe there are challenges that must be met.

Membership

I believe that in order to be effective to attain our goals, we have to have a broad base of interested people involved in what we all know is important. There are several individuals who have for many years been the leaders and movers of what MRNPA is and does. Many of you may be aware of, and many may not be, of the fact that the by-laws of MRNPA was recently changed for several good reasons. One of these reasons was to help in the orderly transition of officers from year to year. As with any volunteer organization, it is sometimes very difficult to get members to "volunteer" for positions of leadership within the group. One of the main reasons the by-laws were changed was to promote an easier more orderly transition of leadership. We now have a system where the current president will become a Past President, the current President Elect will become the President and someone will become President Elect. This works well in theory, but if someone in the membership does not step forward and become the President Elect the transition process stalls with the current leadership (thus the reason John T. was President for four years. (Thank you, John.)

The Challenge:

Let us all examine the reason we are part of MRNPA. I am sure all of us have reasons that are as varied as our individual membership. But let us do more and let us do better!! Let us ask our friends and neighbors if they too don't care deeply about the future of Mount Rainier for ourselves and for future generations. Let us ask them to join our ranks and be a part of something important. With more members come more ideas, a broader base of public

support and public voice, more members to do the important trail and re-vegetation work we already do and more people to step up to the leadership roles and support roles that will keep MRNPA a very real and very important part of the future of The Mountain.

General Management Plan

As many of you are aware the Administration and Staff of the Park Service of Mount Rainier and the Denver Service Center have recently held a series of public meetings providing those in attendance with many alternatives for the possible future of Mount Rainier National Park. The key and operative word is "possible". Several of our members attended these meetings to listen to the NPS as well as the general public. Members of the Board have met and discussed our perceptions as they relate to the presented materials and our reaction to what the NPS had to offer. Future issues of this news letter will contain our specific response to those public meetings.

The Challenge:

MRNPA will continue to listen and respond to the alternatives and ideas as presented by NPS and MRNPA with all matters that we feel are important and germane to the future of Mount Rainier as we feel it should be. We need all of our members to add their voices and ideas to our efforts.

The Centennial Celebration

Our organization has been invited to participate as a partner in the Centennial Celebration for Mount Rainier National Park. This is really a great opportunity for us to become a real and viable part of what is happening at Mount Rainier and to make a real and lasting impact for ourselves and future users of the park.

The Challenge:

At this time the exact extent and parameters of our involvement have not been totally defined. By the printing of the next news letter we will know the full extent of what we can accomplish and what we would like to contribute to this celebration. We need all members ready, willing and able to make things happen and be a very real presence during events leading up to the Centennial of Mount Rainier National Park.

I would like to close with an apology to the membership of MRNPA. I am not a writer. If you have managed to stay awake after reading the preceding I'm sure you will agree. In writing this column I have already exceeded all I had to write while I was President of the Mountaineers, Tacoma Branch for a year. The reason this news letter is late in reaching your mailbox is solely my responsibility. Bette Filley who does such a marvelous job in producing this news letter has been after me for months to submit something. Well, here it is, for better or worse. My personal challenge for the future will be to get off my

From the Summit (continued)

and learn to write enough and to communicate to all of you the comings and goings of MRNPA and to do it in a more timely fashion.

In future issues I will continue to identify challenges, goals and opportunities for MRNPA to help guide and lead toward the future of Mount Rainier National Park. Here's to meeting our challenges and goals!

Bill Butler: The Living Legend of Mt. Rainier, continued from page 1

Bill Butler is still alive and living in a nursing home in Lacey. Unfortunately he is suffering from Alzheimer's Disease, but he was able to attend the Annual Old Timer's luncheon at the Park in September. We add our tribute to this remarkable dedicated man.

An article in the Saturday Evening Post by Virginia C. McNeill and William L. Worden, published in November of 1949, said "Bill is not everywhere in Mount Rainier National Park's 378 square miles. He only seems to be."

Husky, 6'1", Bill Butler's story begins long before skiing first began to burgeon as a popular Northwest participating sport - but it was long after that his friends began to realize this shy retiring man of the mountain actually was weaving a legendary story about himself, one which he so desperately at times sought to erase from the records and public notice.

Some 150 friends - long-time Mount Rainier acquaintances, skiers, mountaineers, hunting pals and members of the Northwest Mountain Rescue Council - feted Butler at a surprise party in Tacoma, Wash. upon his retirement. It had to be a surprise, or who would guarantee Big Bill would put in an appearance!

Marty had connived with two other longtime friends, John Anderson of Ashford, and Bill Hayes of Tacoma - as well as Hirst - to bring Bill to the Scene.

It took similar connivance, and perhaps much more elaborate, to deliver The Man of the Mountain to Hollywood a few years back for the TV show "This Is Your Life." Preston P. Macy, then Mt. Rainier Park superintendent, later admitted to being a key pawn in the chess game with Marty which brought bashful Bill before the glaring TV cameras, and visible tears gave deep emotion inside away as he heard the tribute shared by perhaps millions of Americans.

Let's go back and trace Bill Butler, perhaps figure how Lady Fate steered him to the slopes of the fifth highest peak in the continental limits.

He was born October 29, 1908 in Chattanooga, Tenn. At 19 he was the pride of that city's "McCallie High School" - had participated in football, track, was a member of the student senate, and received an "outstanding" award.

With this background, Bill arrived in Seattle on a clear summer day, bound for Alaska, a young man's dreams of adventure probably foremost in mind.

The young Tennessean looked to the southeast where the white cap of Mount Rainier stood out like a sentinel. With only 20 dollars in his pocket, he bought a newspaper which was crammed with details of a tragic drama unfolding on Mount Rainier's icy slopes.

Returning from Rainier's summit, half a dozen men roped together, had plunged down a slope to the brink of a crevasse. Forest Greathouse, athletic director at Seattle's Lincoln High School, had plunged over it and died. Edwin Wetzel, a Wisconsin attorney, had lost his way on a desperate trek for help and perished. Charley Brown, park ranger, and party leader, risked a summer snowstorm and hurling rocks to rescue survivors and recover the bodies.

It sounded like a challenge. Bill Butler started walking toward Mount Rainier. The lad who never had climbed more than a 1,000-foot "hill" in the Old Smokies of Tennessee found himself approaching higher elevations on the second night. He slept on the floor of an abandoned cabin, used a strip of old unhinged door for a blanket, and went on to the famous mountain that was to be home to him for the next 30 years.

The die of Butler's adult life was cast. The next day he got a laborer's job at Longmire, at 40 cents per hour, and was out of Mount Rainier only briefly from that day until his retirement.

He worked as laborer and fire-fighter and spent one winter shoveling snow off roofs to keep them from caving in.

By 1931, the young temporary summer ranger was blushing telling old maids and young maidens, "You all get off heah," as they stepped from buses, warning them about feeding the bears and reminding one and all that Alpine flowers were not souvenirs to be plucked and taken home.

It was July 9, 1931, that Robert K. Zinn fell to his death in a crevasse near the austere protuberance of Gibraltar Rock.

Two experienced rangers led a party up to recover the body. At Camp Misery many a rugged climber had found physical agony, mountain sickness -- the 12,000-foot altitude a too quick change. On this body-rescue ordeal, first the leader, and then his assistant, encountered the retching sickness.

Young Butler led the party out onto the glacier below the towering Nisqually Ice Wall. The sun shone, and melting ice sounded ominous warning 1,000 feet above. And avalanches ground past nearby.

Repeatedly the party was forced back to the 12,700-foot level. Finally, Butler and Frank Willard, today living in Shelton, were lowered on ropes into the crevasse -- a slit in the ice which at any moment might encompass all within it under the strain of the glacier. But Zinn's body was hauled out on ropes.

The young man from Chattanooga was doing what he had read about upon arrival in Seattle not too long before.

Jobless at the summer's end, Bill twice attended Washington State College at Pullman, but each spring he was back on the slopes of the mountain he loved.

Through these years he would much rather look an avalanche square in the eye than a female, being shy as he was on the distaff side.

Yet in 1935 he often found himself near the mountain inn where Martha (Marty) Botten, a Seattle Business College girl, waited on tables for extra money. Let's call her Marty the rest of the way.

Only one thing was, Marty liked to dance and Bill was like the buffalo who preferred the open prairie, or the mountain goat who liked to view crowds from way up high, and far away.

And the dancing, even though Marty could ski well and liked mountain scenery just as did Bill, led to an episode old-time Longmire residents still re-tell.

One this particular evening, Bill wanted to go hiking in the moonlight; Marty wanted to go to the dance at the Inn. As you might guess, Marty went dancing. Bill went hiking. Temporary ranger Butler climbed Little Tahoma Peak, starting at the unheard of hour of just before midnight.

Said Marty later "The district ranger wanted to know where Bill was the next morning. I said I hadn't seen him since about 10 the night before. The ranger gave me a bad time, saying it was all my fault. Bill was back at work a little after 8 a.m., one of the few

times he ever was late for work. I guess he really didn't want me to go to that dance."

Little Tahoma, an almost straight upthrust of glacier rock, never had been climbed at night...nor will it be again, if NPS rangers have their say!

The same year, Marty doubled for Sonja Henie in the movie "Thin Ice," which was filmed at Mt. Rainier. She just wore a wig and skied -- as did the former Gretchen Kunigk (now Mrs. Don Fraser).

All of which must have been too much for Bashful Bill, for he and bride Marty honeymooned in Tennessee that fall.

A bit of the Bill Butler legend followed in order. Oldtimers, recounting how Bill (with Marty along) spent the next winter as ranger at Paradise Valley, tell of the time he carried a kitchen stove on his back 2,000 feet through the snow from Narada Falls up to Paradise.

One old-timer added: "Bill told a friend, 'I didn't mind the stove, but it was that sack of flour in the oven which kept shifting around.'"

Another said it was a sewing machine Bill toted up the steep, snowy slope to Paradise. Even a davenport was mentioned. Maybe Bill carried them all.

One thing for sure, he was a skookum guy.

Among early notable rescues in which Butler took part came in January of 1936 when Delmar Fadden, 19, attempted to scale the White River side of the ice-bound peak alone. It was 17 days later that a dark object was spotted at the 13,000-foot level, and Butler was in the rescue party, guided by plane.

Wendell Trosper, one of the climbers, reported later:

"All the party had frozen feet when we got beck down. It must have been 40-below. Those who reached the body were Butler, Robert Buschmann, Ome Daiber, Paul Gilbreath and Chief Ranger John Davis.

"They decided to leave Fadden's body at the top of Steamboat Prow, at an elevation of 10,000 feet. Davis and Butler went back the next day. Coming down, Davis slipped on a 45-degree Ice slope. Two men and the body, in a seemingly hopeless tangle, slid toward a crevasse.

"Butler fought for a grip with his crampons, took ahold, and the slide stopped half a dozen feet from the lip of the crevasse."

Butler became a permanent Mount Rainier National Park ranger in 1936 by direct presidential order from the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt, his outstanding service as a member of the rescue party on Rainier being cited.

The FDR order gave Butler civil service status without examination, the only such appointment ever made on a comparable basis.

Butler became assistant chief ranger at the park in 1938. The next year he was leader of a Rainier rescue party which assisted at Mount Baker, where a group of college students had been caught in an avalanche.

They never found one body of the several climbers killed, but Butler later received an official Forest Service commendation for his rescue efforts. It's most unusual when one jealous service tenders recognition to another.

In 1941 Leon Brigham Jr., son of the now long-retired Seattle High School athletic director and long-time Garfield coach, was killed during a Rainier summit climb. Butler and Gordon Patterson went down into a crevasse and enabled the party to recover the body.

Many will recall the tragic episode in December, 1946, when a Marine Corps aircraft with 32 aboard vanished between San Diego and Seattle.

Here again Bill Butler emerged the central figure in a long and tortuous search from the crash date (December 4) until early July.

All aerial and land searches for plane and bodies failed. Distraught parents of the 32 servicemen joined in offering a \$5,000 reward - and the search became commercial in aspect.

Meanwhile, Butler, who knew Mt. Rainier as few other men, kept working on a hunch - and he never gave up. He studied known positions of the plane in flight, wind and weather reports.

Wife Marty recalls how, on Christmas Day, she served dinner to an aching mate; when Bill, on a lone climb to 6,000-foot Van Trump Park, had fallen, slamming his binoculars into his chest.

Time went by, but Butler persevered. He climbed high up on the mountain time and time again, studying glaciers from different vantage points.

Then, in July 4, 1947, Bill found what he was looking for. It was his day off from park ranger duties, and he climbed Success Cleaver, a 9,000-foot promontory visited by few people and never before reached by the route he had taken.

Sweeping the mountain with his binoculars, he concentrated upon Tahoma Glacier, where tons of ice moved ominously under the heat of the sun's glare. Then

he saw something which appeared to be neither rock nor ice, exposed at the foot of a cliff.

Bill reached a telephone by 10:30 p.m. Next day he was flown over the glacier, and one day later Butler led four mountaineers out onto the 10,000-foot-high glacier.

Base camp aids watched the party skirt crevasses, negotiate snow bridges, vanish behind the curtain of a sleet storm. All the while, as recounted by party members themselves, huge rocks and boulders pelted down.

But the wreckage was found. Butler later received the Navy's Distinguished Public Service Certificate - its highest civilian award - and the Park Service's Distinguished Service Medal.

And in the most characteristic gesture of all, Bill refused to accept the \$5,000 reward offered by the parents of the servicemen killed in the crash. Later a memorial to the victims was established at Rounds Pass, on the West Side Road.

A personal letter to Butler from then Secretary of Interior Julius Krug read:

"Your extraordinary act in rejecting a large monetary reward, actually placed in your hands, impresses me as an outstanding illustration of the high caliber of men who find their way into public service."

Bill received a \$2.41 raise per week about the same time.

To revert back to the early war years, Butler advised World War II ski troop trainees at the mountain. Uncle Sam figured he was a valuable guy to have around the home front, but when Butler's draft call came in 1944 he refused to apply for a commission.

The Army thus came through with its own unique logic. (And right here we can picture Bill's shy boyish grin were he to peek over the writer's shoulder at this juncture.) As a corporal and one of the nation's most experienced mountaineers, Butler was assigned first to the engineers -- then to graves registration.

Marty received two war souvenirs from Europe - a chamois- type medal which indicated Bill, then 37, had finished second in a race in Switzerland which embraced 1,500 competitors, and a pressed edelweiss from the Alps.

Through all the years (a secret from Bill) Marty has kept a scrap book. But never could she leave clippings concerning her spouse around, unfiled from the hideaway book. Somehow they seemed to disappear.

Happy days to our Man of the Mountain, who in the past has refused promotion to chief ranger because he wanted no truck with an indoor job behind a desk.

Bill and Marty retired to their home at Johnson's Point on Puget Sound. Marty passed away a few years ago

The previous article about Bill Butler was reprinted with permission of the Seattle Post Intelligencer. This article appeared in the P.I. Pictorial Review, Sunday, March 1964.

A Job Well Done!

Kudos to Sally Soest, Bob Berger and Jeff Goulden for the beautiful job they did on the new MRNPA flyers. They really outdid themselves. Contact any officer for copies.

GMP Comment Deadline Extended to Nov 30

In case you haven't had a chance to study the various alternatives of the General Management Plan, Superintendent Briggles has extended to deadline to November 30, and has placed the maps of various options at seven locations.

You can view them at:

Seattle: Mountaineers' Club House Library, 300 3rd Street West, (206) 284-6310

Tacoma: Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room, 1102 Tacoma Avenue So. (253) 591-5666

Yakima: Yakima Valley Regional Library, 102 N. 3rd St. (509) 453-1720

Olympia: Timberland Library, Olympia Branch, 313 - 8th Ave. SE (360) 832-6011

Eatonville: Pierce County Library, Eatonville Branch, 206 Center Street W. (360) 832-6011

Enumclaw: Enumclaw Public Library, 1700 1st (360) 825-2938

Packwood: Timberland Library, Packwood Branch, 109 W. Main Street (360) 494-5111

People who were unable to attend the recent public meetings and would like a copy of the meeting summary should write or phone the park as follows: Superintendent, MRNP, Tahoma Woods, Star Route, Ashford, WA 98304-9751. The telephone number is (360) 569-2211, X 2301.

*This GMP Will set the course of park management
for the next twenty years.
Be sure to have your voice heard!*

Mount Rainier National Park Associates

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