

Chock Full o' Nuts

Winter
2003

The newsletter of Women Climbers Northwest

Winter Trip Schedule

WCN has an exciting array of ski trips planned for the next few months.

We are organizing another ski weekend in Central Oregon, plus a Methow Valley hut to hut ski in March. Please see page 3 for further details.

SAVE THE DATE!

**Ms. Carabiner Party is
Saturday, January 25th.
See page 3 for details.**



Sunset on a tropical island

Adventures Down Under

I spent all of this past November in a most amazing place—Australia, the land down under, the land of reversed seasons, vegemite, kangaroos and koalas! It was the most extensive vacation I had ever taken. The adventure began about two years ago, as Seattle Frontrunners started the preparations to organize a team to compete in the Gay Games, which are held every four years. The games are an international athletic competition open to all, exemplifying the spirit of participation and inclusion. They have been held in various countries since 1982. The last games in 98 were held in Amsterdam. For 2002, the decision was made to hold the Games in Sydney, Australia, in the Southern hemisphere—“under new skies.”

About 85 Seattle athletes seriously trained during most of 2002 for the competition. The most moving event for me of the entire games were opening ceremonies. Seattle, along with 13,000 other athletes from all over the world, marched into a packed

stadium filled with throngs of cheering spectators. I competed in the 5K and 10K races and wound up winning medals in both of my events. It is worth mentioning that Seattle Frontrunners won a total of 130 medals in our cumulative events. This is more medals than any other team who participated! I spent 10 days in Sydney, watching as many athletic events as I could, hanging out, and exploring the city. Fellow WCNER Mary Yocum also participated in the games, competing in the Olympic distance triathlon.

After the games were over, the real adventure began! When I began the planning for my participation in the games, I thought that I could not travel all the way around the world for ONLY 10 days! I had to see more of Australia as well. So, despite my seriously underemployed state, I began making plans for further travel, and thought about where I wanted to go. I considered New Zealand. Various people had told me that New Zealand, although beautiful—covered in high glaciated mountains and temperate rainforests, was very similar to the Northwest. I wanted to have an exotic and completely new adventure. So, I decided to head up to the town of Cairns in Queensland, in the Northern tropical area of Australia.

The first day after our arrival in Cairns, my friends Sabina and Kyli, and Kyli's 76 year old Mother, left on a 3 day sea kayak trip. We paddled for about 3 hours each day,

continued on page four

About the club: Women Climbers Northwest is a nonprofit organization formed in 1983 to promote climbing and other wilderness activities among women. Our roots are in rock climbing and mountaineering, but women of all outdoor persuasions are welcome. In other words, girls really do want to have fun!

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(Post office temporarily disabled. Stay
tuned, we will have a new PO Box soon.)

Liability Waiver: Participants agree to assume all risks associated with their participation in events coordinated or publicized by Women Climbers Northwest (WCN).

GEAR GAL

Some Brief Thoughts on Underwear

Gear Gal is not going to bore you with everything you already know about modern long underwear. Such as how synthetics and the new merino wool can actually keep you warmer when damp from sweat or from the elements. About how quick-drying it is. About how cotton (and silk) underwear actually steal heat from your body when damp. About how a synthetic or wool base layer is probably the most important gear you own if you adventure in winter, cool, or damp environments. No, Gear Gal is referring to something more delicate. Perhaps not exactly what you'd find in Victoria's Secret, but similar. Yes, panties, boxers, and bras.

Those of you who don't wear any of the above can just thumb on past this column (you naughty girls, you!) But those of you who have sat in a chairlift encased in your high-tech long undies, your high-tech stretch fleece layer, your awesome waterproof/breathable outer shell, but suffered from soggy bottom as your cotton underwear absorbed moisture; or you have suffered tundra-butt on a freezing day, may be interested in reading on. So may all of you who have had an exerting climb up a peak, or a hard workout on a groomed Nordic trail, and suddenly realized that the combination of your soaked-with-sweat bra facing the fierce wind-chill of a downhill descent may be responsible for a frostbite-induced, non-voluntary, and quite unneeded mastectomy.

Thank the Outdoor Goddess that someone finally figured out these important parts of our bodies may appreciate a little high-tech attention (I am not talking electronics here, ladies.) We all now have wonderful choices in synthetic briefs, boxers and bras, to keep us warm and cozy. They can be found in many local outdoor stores, via mail order, or through online stores such as rei.com.

Gear Gal has found the panties (usually available in both mid—and lightweight) to be a very welcome addition to her wardrobe. The lightweight ones feel just fine even on a warm day. All of these little charmers are usually made of fabrics like Patagonia Capilene, REI MTS, and Cool Max, which help to wick away moisture from your body, keep you drier, and keep you warmer even when wet. They dry out incredibly quickly, so you can wash them at the end of the day and most likely have clean panties in the morning. They are great to wear while skiing, hiking, mountaineering, or any other situation in which you want to add a little protection and a little something extra under your long undies. (Yes, you can wear long underwear without briefs. But the briefs add one more layer of warmth to those delicate

places, plus they help keep your long underwear cleaner during long trips.)

Synthetic boxers (in a woman's fit) do the same thing, and more. When you don't want to add more layers or go to a heavier layer, boxers add just a little extra warmth from your waist all the way to mid-thigh. Gear Gal loves these things—they are far more useful than she would have thought in her wildest dreams! The black ones can double as workout-looking shorts for those of you who prefer for your gear to do double-duty. And for those of you who have always had a secret desire to don men's underwear, here is your chance to do it and be cool and techie at the same time. Take a walk on the wild side!

Gear Gal has one warning. You may not want to substitute these babies for all of your underwear all the time—as any woman who has ever had to use a tube of Monistat can attest. Gear Gal suggests that when you reach camp for the night, you change into those nice dry cotton undies to sleep in.

Speaking of cotton, beware of bras. Many of the supposedly high-tech, moisture management sports bras on the market these days boast of their modern construction. Then they blow it all when they make the next-to-skin liner out of cotton or a cotton blend. The entire over-the-shoulder-boulder-holder may even have cotton blended throughout.

In these situations, they just negated the entire idea of a bra that keeps one's boobies safe from the cold and damp. Gear Gal urges you to carefully read the fabric content label on the bra before you buy it. (By law, that label must be factual). If you purchase via mail-order, be prepared to return the item if the catalog or online write-up conveniently or mistakenly ignores the fact that the cotton industry has wormed its way in next to your sensitive skin.

Another option is to skip the sports bra approach altogether, and go with a very lightweight microfiber nylon or polyester bra from a department store. Nordstroms has a pullover microfiber bra with no snaps. It dries in seeming nano-seconds because there is no additional padding. It is extremely lightweight, thus good for backpacking and mountaineering. The drawbacks: it LOOKS like what it is—a bra—so wearing it sans shirt will be rather risqué. And those of us who are extremely well-endowed (which, thankfully, Gear Gal is not) may not obtain enough support from this minimalist bra.

Gear Gal hopes you have found this column useful. You may address questions you have on outdoor gear or clothing to the Gear Gal c/o the WCN Chock-Full-of-Nuts newsletter editor.



Women Climbers NW Calendar

WCN Birthday Party and Ms. Carabiner Contest

When: Saturday, January 25th, 7 pm

Here's your opportunity to shine! Drag that old bridesmaid's outfit or prom dress out, layer on the pancake makeup, and compete for the title of Ms. Carabiner!

Contact:

Barb Buys: buyssfe@earthlink.net
255-7053. Barb's address is
6519 21st Ave. NE

Australia Slide Show Potluck

When: Friday, February 7th, 7 pm

Where: Home of Clare Parfitt,
4911 Fremont Ave N #204

Contact:

Clare Parfitt: clarep@drizzle.com
206-633-4734

Central Oregon Ski Weekend

When: President's Day Weekend (February 14th-17th) Some of us may go for the entire four days. Most of us will be going for 3 days.

Where:

The home of Mary Yocom in Redmond, Oregon. Mary, the hostess with the mostest, will be graciously offering up her home again. We will both lift and Nordic ski at Mt. Bachelor. For non-skiers, or if the snow is terrible, there are a variety of hiking/snowshoeing options in the area.

Contact:

Mary Yocom: 541-548-2930
email: MYocom6689@aol.com

Methow Valley Hut to Hut Ski Weekend

When: Weekend of Friday-Saturday, March 14th-15th. You will need to take that Friday off from work, since we will need to leave Seattle early to allow for the long drive and have time to ski to the hut before dark.

Where: Methow Valley, on the Rendezvous trail system. This is one of the finest Nordic skiing areas in the country. We will ski in to the Heifer hut, which is 5 miles from the trailhead. We have the hut reserved all to ourselves on these nights.

Details: Once at the hut, we can leave our gear, and explore a variety of ski options, both on the trail and backcountry. You need to bring skis (or snowshoes) a sleeping bag, food and clothing. The hut provides sleeping bunks, pads, cooking utensils, and has a wood stove for heat as well.

Contact: Clare Parfitt: clarep@drizzle.com, 633-4734. Please indicate if you are interested in coming by contacting me by February 15th. Cost will be approximately \$50 per person, depending upon the number of people going. I will need a check from you around this time.

Join WCN!

Join the email list:

If you would like to keep in touch with other women to plan trips, or just to discuss a particular issue, join the WCN e-mail listserve.

To subscribe to the list, send a message to: majordomo@scn.org Keep the subject line blank. In the body of the message, type: subscribe womenclimb END.

Join the mailing list:

To get on the newsletter mailing list, send \$20 along with your name and address to:
Sonja Bring, 1538 17th Ave. E, Seattle WA 98112

Housemate Wanted:

Room in West Seattle Price: either \$450 or \$325. Big room: \$450/month & some util. OR very small bedroom for \$325, but shared large guest room/office space and storage for outdoor gear. Avail. Feb. 1. One housemate wanted to share my 2 story, 2 br, 2 bath townhome in West Seattle. Semi-private bath, house is furnished, BR are not. Share kitchen, LR etc. Excellent bus service, shopping relatively nearby (including PCC).

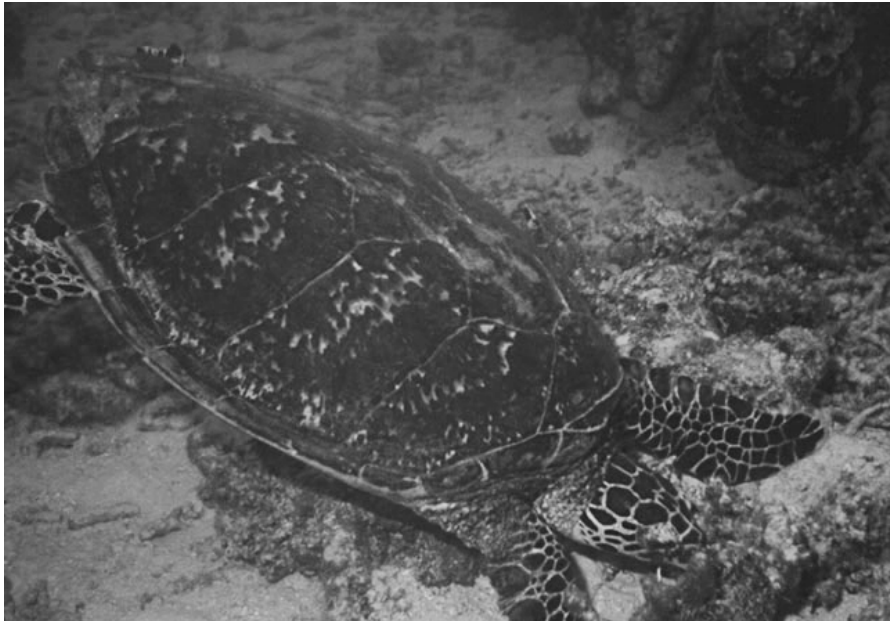
Location: Puget Ridge Cohousing, an "intentional neighborhood." Numerous amenities: fully-tooled shop; laundry; basketball court; Common House; fooseball, pingpong, and pool tables; garden space if desired, etc. NS/no pets/light or non-drinker/no illegal drugs, please. Thank you for visiting this website before replying to my ad:
<http://www.scn.org/pugetridgecohousing/>

**Contact Elaine Powers at
writetoep@hotmail.com, or
206-762-7405**



Australia, *continued from page one*

then camped on beautiful uninhabited islands, on beaches littered with coral, shells and coconuts. The first island we camped on was also a bird sanctuary, and hundreds



Underwater photo of a large sea turtle seen while diving

and hundreds of nesting terns flew back and forth as we watched the sun set. During the afternoons we swam and snorkeled. The water was so warm, and was a crystal clear turquoise! No need for a wetsuit or paddling jacket here! The guides on this trip were two Aussie guys with a wonderful sense of humor. They told us stories about the Aboriginal culture, and the history of their country. They especially enjoyed teasing Kyli's Mother. They would paddle with her in a double kayak, then go off and find the biggest waves to surf in, her nervously hanging on, and say "Crikey, Mums!" The guides prepared fabulous meals for us, our only duty was setting up our tents. It was such a refreshing change to have someone else do all the planning, bring all the food, and do all the cooking.

The most exciting component of my adventure in the tropics was scuba diving! I had always wanted to dive, and so took a

class here last fall from WCN's Elaine Field. Elaine's enthusiasm for the sport was evident, and very contagious. We completed our open water dives off Alki, and a whole new world opened up for me. We explored several small wrecks, and saw bright orange anemones, many different kinds of starfish, numerous fish, and a baby octopus. Now I have yet another sport to buy gear for!

I signed up for a 3 day liveaboard dive trip to explore the Great Barrier Reef. The reef is around 2,500 miles long, is the largest reef in the world, and contains the richest amount of marine biodiversity. I boarded the boat in Cairns, along with about 30 other people, and we headed out for a 3 hour trip to the reef. (No, not a 3 hour tour!) I found that seasickness is a formidable malady if you are a landlubber not used to this sort of thing! Fortunately, I had seasickness medication, so after awhile, all was fine.

We completed a total of 11 dives during the 3 day trip. The underwater world I saw lived up to all the hype. I saw an unbelievable array of tropical fish in every possible color, a moray eel, a blowfish, a venomous lionfish, giant clams, and large sea turtles which I swam with. On our last dive, we saw a small reef shark. Australia has by far the highest concentration of poisonous snakes, spiders, fish, and jellyfish of any country in the world. (Not to mention saltwater crocodiles, which are known to snatch people away who even dangle their feet in the water near mangroves!) I saw my share of the poisonous animals. It was fine as long as you didn't surprise or touch anything!

We completed two night dives, which were a little scary. During one day, the current was rather strong, and upon surfacing, we found that we had been swept far from the boat, requiring a long swim back against



the current. One of the night dives was on the evening of this day. The guides had told us that they don't pick people up in their little dinghy at night if the current sweeps you off. Everyone had visions of being left behind by the boat in the darkness, so we all swam uncomfortably close, kicking each other with our fins, all afraid of becoming separated from the group!

Between dives, we were pampered. The crew prepared fabulous meals for us, and cake, scones, and hot chocolate and tea were waiting after every dive. After we got out of the water, there was nothing to do except lounge around on the upper deck, eat, read, or take a nap. After a few hours, when the nitrogen in our bodies from breathing compressed air was down to a lower level, we put our wetsuits back on and repeated the whole process.

While staying in Cairns, Kyli and I also went on a canoe trip, and did a long day hike through the rainforest. While on these outings, we saw a type of small kangaroo, numerous cockatoos, a jungle chicken (we laughed about this) sea eagles, a rare "frog mouthed" bird, a flying fox, and a river eel. The most notable thing about the rainforest around Cairns was the amazing variety of bird life. Everywhere, a cacophony of bird song was heard. You really got the sense that you were in the jungle.

After our tropical adventure, we headed off to Uluru, formerly known as Ayers Rock. This area is in the center of Australia, the classic desert outback of legend. This area is all comprised of Aboriginal lands. We visited the cultural center there and learned about this history

and culture of these people. It was impressive to me to learn that the Aborigines have lived in Australia for at least 60,000 years. They are the oldest continual culture in the world. And, they were until very recently one of the most oppressed people in the world.

While in Uluru Kyli and I did some hiking in this beautiful area. Uluru is an immense red rock rising dramatically out of the desert landscape. It is not a mountain but really a rock. We did a 10 kilometer walk around the base of it and hiked in another area called Kata Tjuta, which are a series of red rock domes. At Uluru there was a scrambling climbing route up to the top. I really wanted to climb, but declined. The Aborigines ask you not to climb, since this is a sacred place to them. The route and hand rail to the top apparently exist because they were put there before the Aborigines regained ownership of the park in the 1980s. The handrail was not taken down to reduce the park's liability. The park service knows that people will still climb, even though they are asked not to. The desert and dramatic red rock and glowing red-

orange earth reminded me of the Southwest and Utah especially. It was brutally hot during the day, but at late afternoon and as the sun was setting the colors became alive and seemed to glow with an internal fire.

We then returned back home to Seattle. I have found the only disadvantage of a long vacation such as this is the painful adjustment required to your everyday routine again!

Good on ya, mate! Come see some of my photos from this wonderful trip. **I will be having a slide show and potluck on Friday, February 7th, at 7 pm.** (This is a different date from the date originally published in the last newsletter.)

Please RSVP to clarep@drizzle.com or 633-4734. My address is 4911 Fremont Ave N #204.

—Clare Parfitt



The massive rock of Uluru



Eldorado Climb a Success!

After the rescheduling of our annual climb due to nasty weather in early August, the weather goddesses managed to favor us and we picked an outstanding sunny late summer weekend in September to climb Eldorado. The climbers included Colleen Hinton, Nancy Kim, Mary Yocum, Barb Buys, Carla Schauble, and myself.

Top: Mary Yocum on the “knife edge” summit ridge.

Bottom: Mary and Carla Schauble on the summit.



The essence of this climb is legend. It can best be described as “grueling approach.” And, indeed, grueling it was. The trail got down to business immediately, as we had to first find the not well marked trail, then negotiate a log stream crossing. This was not dangerous, just annoying, with branches poking us and acrobatic moves required to get yourself and your pack across.

The climbers trail then climbed at an unbelievably steep grade, with no switchbacks. We finally left the woods and arrived at a boulder field. The relentless pitch continued, but now we were on large boulders! After more arduous work, we broke out into a beautiful meadow.

The hardest part was over and we were now rewarded with a stunning North Cascades backdrop. Across the valley we had ascended the dramatic hanging glaciers of Mt. Johannesburg were in full view. Forbidden was also seen as well as Sahale peak. According to Mary’s GPS, we had gained 3,500 feet from the trailhead in 1.5 miles. Yikes!

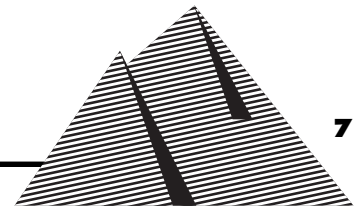
We camped in a beautiful spot in this meadow, with dramatic views all around us. The actual climb was a piece of cake! We climbed up through the basin, over a ridge, then onto the Eldorado glacier. Eventually we arrived at the famous knife edge summit ridge. It was just a short section, but mentally a little scary. There were several crevasses just below the steepest part, so we protected it with a few pickets. We were then at the top! What a view. We could see

Forbidden in all its glory, Moraine lake below, and to the North Baker and Shuksan. We lingered for a long time on the summit, then decided to descend on the rocks which formed another ridge, foregoing the steep snow.

Back at base camp, we enjoyed a cumulative Tasty Bite potluck. The full moon rose that night over Forbidden. The effort was well worth it!

—Clare Parfitt





Dreamer, or, “Are We Dreaming Yet?”

“Dreamer” is billed as a classic Cascades rock climb—ten pitches of solid granite, with no pitch easier than 5.7 or harder than 5.9, with slab and friction climbing on the lower sections, becoming crack and steep face climbing on the upper part of the climb. The climb is located on Green Giant Buttress, just outside Darrington, in the Copper Creek valley. It has been on our *Climbs-To-Do Shortlist* for while, and one beautiful weekend in August Reg and I were finally able to snag an opportunity to head out of Seattle on Saturday evening, to car camp at the trailhead for an early start on Sunday.

Trip Tip #1: Don’t go looking for vegan food in Darrington. Although, we did pretty darn well and actually found a Gardenburger at the local diner.

Trip Tip #2: When the book says of Green Giant Buttress, “its proximity to Seattle is somewhat offset by a long drive in on a deteriorating logging road...”, you’d better believe it! (Nelson & Potterfield, *Selected Climbs in the Cascades*). Either side of the narrow, single-lane road is lined with a veritable jungle having a contest to be the first to extend to the middle of the road. The abstract art I was imagining being created along the sides of the car while trying to ignore the scary squeaking and scraping sounds as we bumped our way through rocks, potholes, bits of tree, puddles, and mud, was actually quite real, as we discovered in the daylight! Not a road to take a new car on.

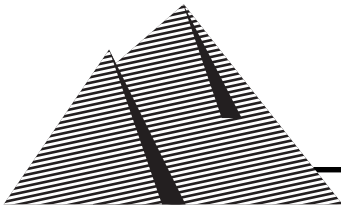
Though our experience on Dreamer that Sunday can hardly be called unpleasant, it certainly gets the award for Most Eventful Climb of the Summer. Starting off on a rather irritating note, after congratulating ourselves that despite the relatively late hour we had scored probably the only campable pullout before the logging road becomes REALLY impassable, we were just drifting off to sleep when the groan of a car in low gear rudely interrupted our Dreams. The car bumped past us, inches from our tent, which we had pitched tightly behind our car. We waited for the inevitable discovery that the road only gets worse from here, folks. Reverse, BUMP!, engine cuts out, two male voices argue the best way to push-start the car while executing a 6-point turn, in the middle of “our” pull-out, without running over the presumably occupied tent, or bumping the Jeep. The voices opt to camp just across the road from us (i.e., a few feet away). Just as our patience is starting to run out, the male voices settle down into their bivvy sacks. We’re going to get to know those voices a lot better sharing the climb tomorrow, sigh. And—heh, heh—they’re going to get to know OUR

voices a lot better when our alarm goes off at 5 a.m. tomorrow morning....

Well, so much for getting them back. We are barely done with coffee and breakfast when two dead bodies across the way open one eye, yawn, stretch, jump out of their bivvy sacks, throw their packs on their backs, and have the cheek to hit the trail a good ten minutes ahead of us! The 40s must be slowing us down, darn. We hurried along the trail, nearly got sidetracked by following the 20-something Eager Beavers along a dead-end trail that became midgie-infested bushwhack hell, and returned to the correct trail up a dry creek bed (and the only way to get to the climb without bushwhacking). As the base of the buttress came into view, we found that the Eager Beavers had continued bushwhacking rather than turning back to find the right trail. They were now traversing slabs to get to the climb. Reg and I heard one guy yelling at the other to wait for him, bits of yelling back and forth. When we arrived at the base of the climb, we found there were two other pairs of climbers preparing to climb Dreamer also. The Eager Beavers were already scrambling unroped up the first slab of the climb, determined to be the first on the rock. The pair of climbers who would climb third, before Reg and I, explained what the commotion had been about. Apparently one of the Eager Beavers had slipped on the slabs while traversing, and had taken quite a long tumble before stopping himself. It later became clear that the leader of the pair was a very experienced climber, while the second was quite inexperienced. After the tumble on the slabs, the leader pressed on with nary an “Are you OK?” to his fallen partner. After hurrying up the first pitch, the leader yelled at the second to climb on, whereupon the second replied testily that he was not even tied in to the rope yet.

Shaking our heads, the three pairs following the Eager Beavers went about our business hoping that the climbers above would soon race up the climb without endangering the rest of us down below. As I was leading the first pitch, I heard the sound of angry/terrified expletives coming from the pair in the lead. Reg had looked up in time to see the second half of the guy’s screamer of a fall, while I (thankfully) missed the whole thing (except for the audio part). We heard from the third pair of climbers what they and the second pair had seen and heard from talking to the fallen climber. The second had told the leader that he was not comfortable using a gri-gri, but somehow the second’s belay device he

continued on the next page



Dreamer, *continued*

preferred to use went up with the leader, and he ended up using the gri-gri. The leader had not put in pro for about 40 feet, as estimated by Pair #3. He was clearly a good climber, and cocky about it. The leader fell to his last pro, a clipped bolt, what Pair #3 estimated to be about a 50 foot fall, before the second caught him. The leader was wearing no helmet. He was lucky to get away with what looked to be a badly sprained ankle and several nasty hamburger-flesh scrapes on an arm and a leg. His ankle was swollen up like a balloon. At that point, much to the rest of the climbers' collective relief, the pair had to rappel down. When I caught up to the leader at the top of pitch 2, I winced at his hamburger flesh and commiserated that it looked pretty painful. He assured me that "it looks SO much worse than it is." Boys!

Breathing easier, but definitely a little thrown off, the three remaining pairs of climbers were enjoying excellent rock and challenging moves, happily following each other up the climb, when Pair # 1 appeared to get stuck on Pitch 6 to the extent that Pairs 2 and 3 were stuck for probably a good hour and a half, in the baking sun. At some point, Army Dude, who is having a ledge party with Reg and I at the belay ledge for

Pitch 5, looks at his watch and exclaims that it's 3 o'clock. No way! says I, whose watch says 1 o'clock. Army Dude swears his watch is right, as he checked it against his partner's that very morning before they started out. Since his watch looks like the Swiss Army/GPS of watches, compared to my battered Women's Ironman Indiglo, I defer to Army Dude, all the time cursing that so much time has passed by unnoticed. At that point, the four of us stuck behind Pair #1 decide there's no way we're going to make it to the top of the 10-pitch climb and rappel back down, before dark around 8:30 pm.—and then follow a climber's trail back to the cars in the dark (headlamps notwithstanding). So, we reluctantly rappel down and head back. I did remark to Reg, as we stopped for a dip in the creek, that it seemed awfully warm for 6 o'clock. We get to the car, and to our disgust we find that the clock in the car matches the time on my watch. It was Army Dude's watch that was wrong! Still three-and-a-half hours of light, at least! We could have completed the climb! Damnation.

So, a strange day, but fun climbing, definitely worth a trip back to complete all ten pitches. And add more artwork to the side of the Jeep.

—*Colleen Hinton*

Women Climbers Northwest

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