

*A Historical Handbook for*  
**GLACIER/WATERTON**  
*Lodge Employees*

*Visitor Experience as History*

*by the*  
*Glacier Park Foundation*  
*May 2017*

May 2017

Dear Waterton and Glacier Concession employees,

Welcome to Glacier and Waterton National Parks! One of the most profound truths evident in these wilderness areas is the influence they have on our minds and spirits. It is as if there is a haunting tune calling out to all who experience this special wilderness.

Why and how people are attracted? We've prepared this handbook to help you orient visitors to the hotel, and to enhance your own experience in working here.

The Glacier Park Foundation, which created this handbook for you, is a citizens' group primarily made up of former Glacier lodge employees. We have about 700 members, from all the lodges and from all eras. (Our oldest member, John Turner, drove a red bus in 1936!)

We seek to promote the public interest in Glacier, with an emphasis on historic preservation. We work cooperatively with Glacier Park, Inc., Xanterra, and the National Park Service. All of our directors and officers serve on a volunteer basis.

We publish a membership journal called The Inside Trail, which features articles on public affairs, Park history, and stories of Glacier. Past issues are posted on our web site, [www.glacierparkfoundation.org](http://www.glacierparkfoundation.org). We invite you to join us through the web site. (We offer a complimentary annual membership to current Glacier employees.)

We look back with great pleasure on our summers in Glacier and cherish the lifelong friendships we made there. We wish you a delightful summer!

Sincerely yours,

The Directors of the Glacier Park Foundation

## Introduction

“There’s something in the water here that calls us back to the mountains each spring,” Bill Wanzer, Glacier pioneer.

Visitors to Glacier and Waterton National Parks have explored the valleys and slopes for thousands of years. The first visitors were hunters and gatherers in search of food. Life was hard in these mountainous regions, so visitors did not stay long, choosing to build their encampments on the prairie in protected locations where they could find fuel for fire and protection from the elements.

Indians who ventured into the mountains came from one more forms; either as members of hunting expeditions searching for food, or as religious pilgrims in search of their destinies. These mountains were spiritual places. American Indian myths are a rich source of adventure and mountain legend.

However, when European influence arrived, the cultures of Plains Indians were overwhelmed by a new set of values. Land use changed from one of reverence to one of use. Land was to be owned and exploited rather than revered and respected. The power of technology changed the face of the land and the minds of the people who benefited from taming the wilderness.

Fortunately, parallel to this utilitarian set of values, a competing philosophy emerged from the American experience. They were calls to protect and preserve wilderness. People like John Muir fought to protect large natural areas. An important theme in their message was the attraction felt by all who experienced the lure of wilderness.

## People and Wilderness

We are part of a modern community. We live by a rule of law. We have the responsibility to live within legal limits. Simply put, we are free to use but not to harm the environment or endanger our fellow guests. Once we accept these rules, we also have an immense amount of freedom to explore the environment and to live out our dreams.

One of the deepest messages in the fight to preserve wilderness is the impact it has on minds and spirits. There is a haunting tune that calls out to all who visit wilderness. Naturalist Sigurd Olson identified this call as the “Pipes of Pan”. It is a harmony that beckons us to explore; to find answers in wild places. The music is strongest when we are young but never totally fades away as we grow older. People who are drawn to visit parks like Waterton and Glacier hear some level of this call.

Look at this calling from a physical perspective. For all but the past few thousand years, we, as a species, were hunters and gatherers. To survive, we depended on our personal physical strength and alert senses, instinctual responses. We are not that far removed from the days of those instinctual responses built into our genes. Though we no longer depend on them to survive, we are still attuned to the pulse of those ancient rhythms.

The impulses that draw us to wilderness areas are important clues to understand the reasons millions of us flock to rugged country each year. Before the hotels were the explorers, before them the hunters. Before them there was the open land. The key to understanding personal connections with wilderness are the emotions these amazing places draw from each of us. For those of us who visit or find employment in wild places such as Waterton and Glacier National Parks, we are drawn by a “call of the wild.”

Wilderness is the land we could not tame. It is a symbol of the life force that has driven us, as a species, to explore and achieve.

### ***“We are all guests in National Parks”***

We are all guests in National Parks. Some of us get to stay longer, but ultimately we all must leave. Some of us (seasonal employees) get to stay especially long, but ultimately we all must leave. Tourists stay for a few days. Employees get to stay for a summer season.

When we cross the borders into National Parks, for a visit or for employment, ***“we each become a part of that history.”*** You can talk about what you have experienced in the hotels and on the trails. Most of the adventures of the parks’ early years are still true of the parks today. The point is that people are drawn to these parks like “thirsty creatures in search of water”. The impulses that draw us to wilderness areas are important clues to understand the reasons why millions of us flock to rugged country each year.

The keys to our connections to parks like Waterton and Glacier are in the emotions these amazing places stir in us. Those of us who visit or find employment in such wild places are drawn by this “call of the wilderness”. There is no better device for breaking barriers between people than the disarming beauty of a mountain landscape. This bond runs deeper than barriers of age, life experience, or social status.

When surrounded by grandeur, it is hard to focus on our own needs. The immensity of nature overwhelms. We become small in a good way, a part of something larger and grander than ourselves. When such feelings are put into perspective, it is hard not to relate to shared levels of dreams and motivations we share with others in that environment. We feel from our souls.

Love of wilderness is something we all share young and old, rich and poor, guest and employee. For us, the lure of wilderness is the great equalizer. In the mountains, all who hear the call of wilderness are equals!

Also, many of the people who visit our hotels are past park employees or returning seasoned backcountry users. Instead of instructing people in the ways of your concession, you just might find yourself become the listener, the one who learns as well as instructs.

The youthful concession employee potentially shares the same deep feelings as the elderly tour visitor. Bill Wanzer’s words take on a new meaning; “There’s something in the water here that calls us back to the mountains each spring.”

What you have in common with those fellow guests is a shared enthusiasm for the place. It connects employees with tourists. “What we have to share are our stories”.

**“Each of us has a story to tell.”** There is something in the beauty and magic of this grandeur that beckoned us to embrace the allure and experiences of these special places. Call it the Pipes of Pan or another enchantment that draws us to our primitive roots, its promises of adventure and wisdom.

What draws us to visit? What adventures do we share? Is our life better for the experiences and memories we have shared with others? With every memory a story accompanies it that is both personal and shared. These stories, when put side-by-side, tell a story of not only our personal growth but the value of the parks and special places that evoke such responses.

**“Our stories are important!”** For those of us who visit, we cannot disconnect people from the place. When a view or an experience touches us deeply, it is a clue to deep connections we share with the land. Once we define the importance of these settings, we can better understand what it means and what responsibilities we have to protect it for the sake of future guests.

When we write down these experiences, we participate in the history of people in the park! The Glacier/Waterton story is written every day. When we visit, we become part of the Park History. Our stories merge with that of the land we visit. We remember, we learn, we teach.

### ***Congratulations! You are a Park Employee!***

**“As employees, you have responsibilities!”** In exchange for the privilege of spending an entire summer season in the parks, you accept responsibilities to meet the needs of your fellow guests with excellent service and accurate information.

As a representative of a park concessioner, your job depends on how well you perform your job duties. Both on and off the job, you are perceived as an authority on the workings of your employers’ properties, able to help guests meet their needs both inside the concession and within the parks’ boundaries. Your employee training will prepare you to answer many of these questions. Both on and off the job, you are the face of the concession operation.

**“Know the limits of your knowledge.”** If you are talking about a hotel or park event, give your answer your best shot. If you are asked about how to reach a destination, be honest in your response. Refer people to the best available sources for further information.

When with guests, you are likely seen as “an expert”. Guests will believe what you tell them. They may try to recreate some of your own experiences. After all, the exhilaration of the mountains occasionally leads to poor choices. If the guests are too ambitious, not in proper shape, without basic equipment or do not understand hidden dangers (sudden storms, dangerous wildlife, or nearby cliffs), you may be placing them in danger.

**Be helpful** when speaking of trail areas with facilities such as running water and bathrooms/outhouses (front country areas).

**Be cautious**, especially when your advice takes them further away from roads into backcountry areas. If a question is likely above your level of expertise, refer them to the Park Service or other experienced people.

**Note.** If you feel guests are not up to a challenge, or you don't know the answer yourself, refer them to a more experienced person, another employee or the Park Service for further guidance. If you don't know much about the people with whom you are talking, talk about experiences, not routes.

Learn to listen as well as give information, there is much you have to talk about with your guests. There is much to learn, as well as share with your fellow guests.

***“Know the difference between sharing enthusiasm and boasting.”*** If you make a mistake because you are careless or inattentive, you learn from it and move on. If you do harm another because of your bad advice, it becomes a consequence you must live with.

**IMPORTANT NPS INFORMATION.** All backpackers must sign out with the National Park Service. All off-trail explorers should also sign in with Park Service, or at the very least, let people know their destination, route and approximate time of return.

### ***Outside the Building: Advice for Guests wishing to explore***

- It is important to realize the limits of your knowledge and experience, as well as be able to estimate the experience and fitness of the guest.
- If a visitor has never spent time in your hotel, that suggests a certain level of basic information.
- If a person wants to hike, first find out what they have already done and how much time they wish to spend on the trail.
- If the questioners want to climb or otherwise go off-trail, it is probably best to suggest they contact the Park Service for guidance, or consult an available user's guide available at hotels and Park Service offices.
- If visitors wish to share information with you, this may be an opportunity to share personal enthusiasm and make a friend. However, be cautious.

### ***Always suggest “Basic Essential Trail Gear” to visiting guests.***

- light gloves,
- bandana (for head or neck),
- water and food (appropriate for the day and distance traveled), and
- light jacket (for protection from cold and moisture).

# Storytelling as History: A Primer

## Background

Our ancestors got their news by word of mouth from family, neighbors and people passing through their village. Important stories were orally passed on from generation to generation. Travel was difficult so news spread slowly out from its source. Permanent records were preserved by some as wall drawings on smooth rock surfaces or in caves. When writing was invented, important information was written down and protected in great libraries. When paper was invented, it became easier to generate and protect documents. With the advent of the printing press and later the computer, words became portable.

Today, there is so much information available to us from so many sources that the art of telling our own stories has all but disappeared. Information has become something written somewhere else by someone who lives somewhere else.

### ***An Adventure is worth re-telling***

***Each of us has a story to tell of what brought us to Glacier and Waterton Parks*** and calls us to return. There is something in the beauty and magic of this wilderness experience that beckoned us to embrace the adventures of these special places.

This is an arena where we can share our deepest feelings and share the joy and delights experienced in these hallowed places. This is where we can share those stories and anecdotes with our fellow guests and adventurers.

Explore those instincts, draw from their truths and tell your stories so that others may benefit from your exhilaration, observations and insights. In the writing and telling our stories we best understand the values this place has added to the quality of our lives.

### ***Hiking Template***

Keep track of your mountain adventures. (You may wish to use a Journal Template like the one on the next page). Make the time to take notes. Be true to yourself, your thoughts and your feelings.

### ***Example Stories ...***

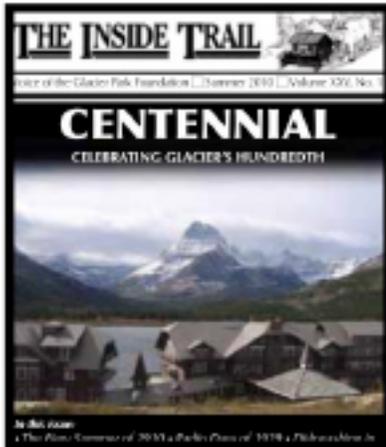
Let me share some of the experiences and stories of employees who shared the delights of endless summer days under these Northern Rocky skies.

Please feel free to use the contents of these stories as anecdotes or as part of presentations. Whether you work with individuals, or large groups, or just read them for your own enjoyment, use these as examples of true events that occurred prior to your special moments in the Northern Rockies sun.



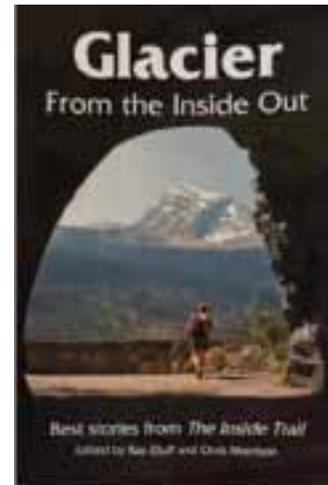
# SAMPLE VISITOR STORIES

*from the pages of:*



## ***The “Inside Trail”***

*Journal of the Glacier Park Foundation  
John Hagen and Rolf Larson, editors*



## ***“Glacier from the Inside Out”***

*by Ray Djuff and Chris Morrison*

**General Note.** *Each concession area has its own special “characters” who help bring the varied personalities and charm of park areas to life. Please share those times and individuals with your fellow employees and park enthusiasts.*

***If you wish to share your writing:***

*The Glacier Park Foundation is always in search of articles to publish in the “Inside Trail” journal.*

*This publication focuses on the lore and history of Glacier National Park. We invite submission of historical, scientific, or anecdotal articles, commentary, poetry, or artwork for publication.*

*While working as an employee in Glacier or Waterton (or as a visiting guest), take notes, write down your thoughts, and insights. Share your experience with others who love the beauty of this special wilderness.*

## Glacier from the Inside Out, pages 115-116

### **The rowboat race**

Ray Kinley (as told to John Hagen)

(Many Glacier Hotel 1919, 1922-77)

Among the Many Glacier bellmen during the 1920s was Whitey (so called because of his "cotton top" blond hair). Whitey was a varsity rower at a prominent eastern college. He had been the champion sculler on Lake Charles and liked to boast about the fact.

Some friends of Ray Kinley's impishly told Whitey that Ray was also a champion oarsman and he was bragging that he could beat him in a contest. Whitey hardly believed this was true, since Ray had lost one hand in a train accident. However, the bellman rashly agreed to race Ray across Swiftcurrent Lake and back in Captain William Swanson's rowboats.

The lake that year was very low, and Ray's friends had noticed a sunken log peeping up out of Burch's Bog, near the icehouse. The boat crew obligingly towed this log around to the Many Glacier boat dock.

Then, the night before the race, Ray's friends placed eyescrews in the bottom of one of Swanson's rowboats. Replacing the boat in the lake, they wired the heavy, water-soaked log to its bottom.

Next day, a huge crowd gathered for the race. Whitey confidently took his place at the oars of the boat which was wired to the hidden log. Ray boarded another boat alongside him.

As the race began, Ray shot out ahead of Whitey, who was amazed to find himself almost dead in the water.

Then Ray pretended to be rowing frantically to hold a narrow lead, pulling alternate oars with his one good hand. However, he had no trouble keeping ahead of Whitey, whose labors were nullified by the enormous drag of the log.

Finally, Whitey decided to throw in the towel. Seeing the point of the hoax, he made no more boasts about his rowing prowess.

## Glacier from the Inside Out, pages 195-196

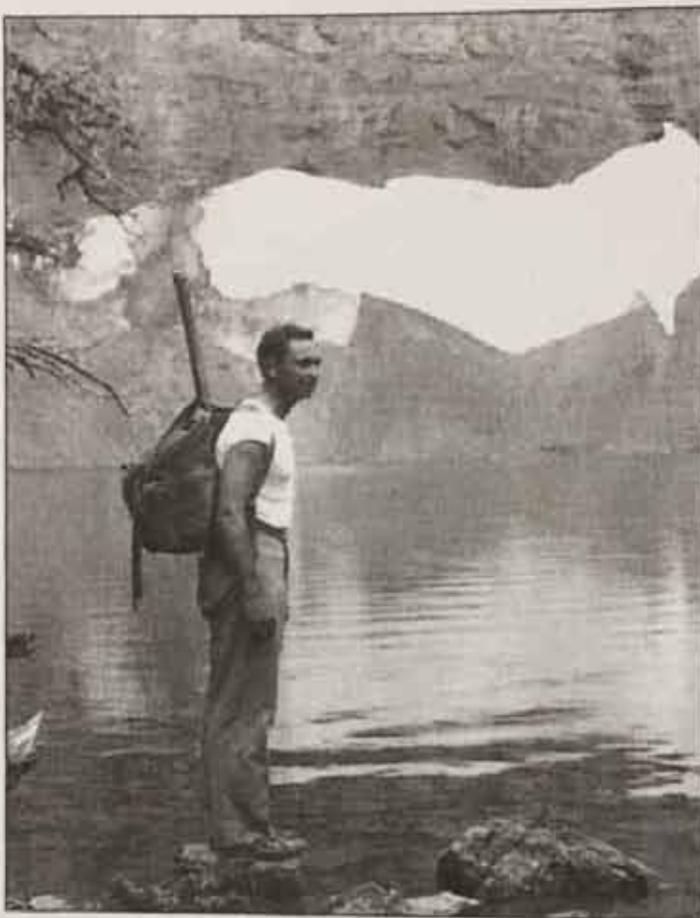
### Moose fishing at Kootenai Lakes

Chet Bowers

(Glacier Park Transport Company 1941, 1946)

Dick Fossum, the Glacier Park Hotel Company's auditor and general cashier, and I were in Waterton about 1950 when we heard of the sizable brook trout to be found in Kootenai Lakes, about one mile south of the head of Upper Waterton Lake. We rented an inboard 12-foot dinghy from Slim [Udal], who operated the Waterton boat rentals, and took off at 6 the following morning equipped with fishing gear, beverages, and insect repellent. After a couple of hours putting down the western shore we realized that, at three to four knots per hour, it was going to be a long day.

We beached the dinghy about 11 a.m. and packed our gear in to Kootenai Lakes, which are really a group of meandering sloughs. We had caught a couple of nice brookies and were wading along a bank thickly covered



Chet Bowers at Crypt Lake in 1941.

Courtesy, Chet Bowers

by four to five foot brush when a loud crashing sound followed by the appearance of a young bull moose got our immediate attention.

It was close to rutting season and I could count the veins in his fiery red eyeballs. Foss and I tried to walk on water, but were soon up to our chins as we bounced our way to the opposite bank. Swimming was not an option as our boots were full of water.

We arrived back at the Waterton docks about dusk. Slim was glad to get his boat back, and we had again proven that adage, "Any day is a good day at Waterton."

## At GPL in the Flood of 1964

by Hugh Morgan (*Glacier Park Lodge 1963-64; Many Glacier 1965, '67*)

The fiftieth anniversary of the record Montana Flood of 1964 arrives in June, 2014. The damage has long since been repaired. Insurance claims are settled. Other disasters have come and gone. But the images of that time linger in the memories of at least two 19-year-old Glacier Park Lodge employees.

Becky Thacker and I made our way north that year in late May or early June as the University of Arizona class year wound down. Glacier Park's winter-based Tucson staff was making the same transition, all coming to prepare the lodge and the rest of the park for summer visitors.

It was raining when we arrived, continuing to rain heavily for a number of days. About the end of June's first week, the ground had become saturated and rivers had swollen to what we'd call now 500-year-flood stage. Reports arriving at the lodge included word that the West Glacier bridge was out at Highway 2, and that the Two Medicine River had taken out the bridge on route 49 between Glacier Park Lodge and Kiowa Junction. Many Glacier was isolated from Babb by the loss of a bridge. Great Northern rail lines had been washed away in several places west of East Glacier and compromised to the east.

Glacier Park Lodge, still in the opening stages, had no visitors, but was accumulating refugees from the immediate community -- some flown in by helicopter. It was on higher ground. Further uphill at the lodge water supply, Cy Stevenson and Howard Olson were working to produce potable water after a

primary line was washed away. (See *Glacier from the Inside Out*, Chapter 8) Drinking water had become a valuable commodity. In the dispensary, Becky, as a third-year nursing student, was an acceptable volunteer to help administer vaccines to prevent cholera or typhoid from the contaminated water.

A favorite employee gathering place, the fish hatchery, was washed away. Rain kept us all indoors while our inner selves longed to hit the trails and enjoy the usual blossoming spring weather on our days off. So how would normal return -- and when?

The time and dates are hazy now, but I remember the arrival of the first convention, a gathering of Montana Junior Chamber of Commerce ("JCs") members and the beginning of the visitor season. A couple of railway cars, arriving from the east,

the limits of the grand hotel.

I was working the early morning shift as a houseman on lobby cleanup when one JC (probably concluding an all-nighter) stumbled toward the stairway leading to the men's room on the floor below. He was making a speech to no one in particular referring to truth, beauty, and the American way. As I collected barware and refuse, I watched the fellow arrive at the stair top.

In one smooth movement, still holding his glass, he began a headlong roll down the stairs. He staggered to his feet again at the bottom, glass still in his hand, and found his way into the lavatory. I was more surprised and amazed than worried. But very shortly, I went downstairs to see how the guest was faring. At one of the full-length urinals, he had collapsed on the floor. I contacted

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*We had survived the flood. We would survive the guests. The old lodge still stood tall on high ground, and eventually the water supply would be reconnected, the gardens would grow, and the sun would shine on Glacier Park and Montana again.*

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were pushed onto a seldom-used siding beside the East Glacier depot, uncoupled and left. Out poured the JCs, with their party already started and the social hour well underway.

Up they walked along the soggy grass and gardens from the station, and settled into the lodge without regard to circumstances or the hour of the day. Considering the difficulties of the flood, the nonchalance of the JCs was striking. Nothing bothered them! They met, they visited, they drank, they slept -- they tested

others to help. I'm sure he survived.

That experience convinced me that everything would be all right after all. We had survived the flood. We would survive the guests. The old lodge still stood tall on high ground, and eventually the water supply would be reconnected, the gardens would grow, and the sun would shine on Glacier Park and Montana again.

*(Hugh and Becky married in 1990 and live in retirement together near Tucson, Arizona.)*

# HIGHLINE MEMORIES



*On the Highline near Haystack Butte (Don Loeffler photo)*

*Barbara Loeffler on the porch at Granite Park Chalet (Don Loeffler photo)*



*By Don Loeffler (1939-42, 46-47)*

One day I led my tribe (children and grandchildren) on a hike from Logan Pass to Granite Park and down to Many Glacier Hotel. We had hardly started down the Highline Trail when we came across an English tourist who had a death grip on the cable provided by the Park Service for the faint of heart along the cliffy first pitch of the trail. He was frozen in place facing into the rock face at a spot where the trail is carved into the cliff above a long drop to the road. He was pleading, "Help me! Somebody please help me!" Providence had brought us there to assist him out of his predicament.

Our twin granddaughters came to his rescue. They took his hands – one in front and one behind – and inched him back off the exposed ledge. Shortly afterward, a climber slipped off the face of Mt. Clements, directly above the Visitor Center. We sat on the trail and watched the proceedings as he was rescued by a helicopter. When the rescue was concluded, we continued the trek. My youngest granddaughter asked, "Mr. Trail Guide, what other events do you have planned for us today?"

On another occasion, Barbara and I were hiking the Highline ourselves in the vicinity of Haystack Butte. We rounded a corner of the trail and came across a middle-aged couple dressed for an afternoon stroll in Central Park. They were trying to photograph a large bighorn ram standing directly in front of them. The first words we heard were, "Sylvia, make him pose! Get him to turn his head this way!" The man (who tipped the scales at a good 300 lbs.) was fumbling with his 4 by 5 speed graphic. I informed them that they were in a very dangerous situation. No sooner had I spoken these words than the ram sprang off for the Continental Divide, sending down a small shower of stones on us from above. We often wondered what this couple was doing miles from the road with inappropriate clothing and no food or water – but they did have a big beautiful camera and lots of film.

Many years ago, on still another section of the Highline, we stopped for a tasty repast of pemmican, Kool-Aid, and crackers. As I spread the crackers with my trusty sheath knife, a couple of marmots closed in on me. I carried this K-Bar knife in a sheath that I had

crafted while on Guadalcanal during World War Two. I had it on my person all through the war in the Pacific, and it had great sentimental value to me.

As I admired the beautiful view of Heavens Peak, one of those little buggers made away with my sheath. He was most likely attracted by the years of sweat imbued into the leather. The marmot scrambled off over the rocks with me right on his furry tail. I was not about to let him get away with my World War Two keepsake. Up and down the scree we went. I pelted him with rocks as he eluded me, my sheath in his mouth. Finally he dropped it and scurried under a ledge. He presumably thought, "That dude wants this thing a whole lot more than I do." All this action took place amid catcalls of "Run!" "Faster!" "Hurry!" etc, etc. I knew they were meant as words of encouragement – but for whom?

On that trip, we planned an overnight stay at Granite Park. The thought of tucking ourselves into bed with those stove-warmed rocks was a pleasant vision indeed – particularly after the exhaustion of going a couple of rounds with that furry one at close to 8,000 feet!

# NYACK

## Hiking Adventure in Glacier Park's Great Southern Wilderness

by John Hagen (*Many Glacier*  
1970-80)

In the heart of Glacier's backcountry, full of history and romance but seldom visited, lies the beautiful Nyack Valley. Like Lorien in **The Lord of the Rings**, this lovely woodland is girded around on all sides by wilderness and water, easily glimpsed from afar but arduous to visit.

Most Glacier veterans have viewed the Nyack Valley from U.S. Highway 2, across the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. Many have stared down into the valley's upper reaches from the trail between Dawson Pass and Cut Bank Pass. But the valley is so remote and so isolated that only a handful of hikers have ever actually set foot there.

### History of the Nyack Valley

Ironically, the Nyack Valley was one of the major corridors for travel through the region in bygone eras. Cut Bank Pass was used by Indian scouts and war parties crossing the mountains — by Blackfeet raiding westward and Kootenais and Salish raiding eastward. Pitamakin (Running Eagle), the legendary Blackfeet warrior maid, is said to have led war parties over this pass and down the Nyack Valley.

Red Eagle Pass, which connects the Nyack and St. Mary Valleys, also was a legendary Indian trail. In 1858, a furious battle took place there as Blackfeet pursued a Kootenai band that had been camping on



*Hikers ford the Middle Fork of the Flathead River with a rope to begin a trek through the isolated Nyack Valley. (photo courtesy of John Hagen)*

the shores of St. Mary Lake. The Kootenais (accompanied by white scouts who had antagonized the Blackfeet) managed to drive off the attackers and escape down the Nyack Valley.

A number of expeditions travelled from the Flathead River up Nyack Creek and over Cut Bank Pass. A.W. Tinkham reconnoitered in 1853 in search of a transmountain railroad route. Mistaking Cut Bank Pass for Marias Pass, he reported that it was not a suitable route for constructing a roadbed.

An army detachment from Fort Shaw (near the present Great Falls), commanded by Lieutenants Charles Woodward and John Van Orsdale, travelled eastward through the Nyack Valley in 1873. Just a few months earlier, Yellowstone Park had been established as the prototype American national park. Van Orsdale first made the proposal that the Glacier area should be "set aside as a national park."

In 1883, the Harvard geologist Raphael Pumpelly led an expedition of eminent scientists up Nyack

Creek to Cut Bank Pass. Among other diversions, he and his colleagues climbed Mt. Stimson (10,142 feet), the hub of the valley and the second-tallest mountain peak in present-day Glacier Park.

Soon after the park was founded in 1915, a ranger station was built close to the mouth of Nyack Creek. The nearest bridges over the Middle Fork were miles to the east and west. The Park Service used a basket on a wire across the Middle Fork as a primitive means of access to the station.

At some point prior to 1910, the name "Nyack" became attached to the valley. The word (meaning "point" or "corner") apparently is of Delaware Indian

origin. Jack Holterman, author of "Place Names of Glacier Park," suggests that the name may have been bestowed by Delaware Indian scouts who accompanied early white explorers.

### Hiking into the Nyack Valley

Hiking into the Nyack Valley is an amphibious adventure. The trail crosses many fords which range from ankle-deep to thigh-deep (or deeper), often on sharp or slippery stones. A well-prepared hiker carries an old pair of shoes with good treads for use at the fords, and continual changes of footwear rank with one's strongest memories of the valley.

The most imposing ford is the first one, across the Middle Fork of the Flathead. The river

is broad, about a hundred feet across, and moves quite swiftly. At midsummer, it is about thigh-deep, but contains some deeper channels and holes. The bottom is made up of heaps of slippery, shifting rocks which can abruptly pitch you off balance and soak all your gear.

The best route for crossing the river changes from year to year, as the spring floods shift the underwater rocks around. The Walton Ranger Station often can give hikers useful advice on where to make the Nyack ford. The general area for crossing is the old Nyack village site, on a lane which turns off Highway 2 above a horseshoe bend in the stream.

Having crossed the Flathead and entered Glacier Park, one quickly encounters the Boundary Trail which follows the riverbank. A few hundred yards along it, one reaches a second ford, across Nyack Creek. The creek is substantial, and the ford across it is likely to be thigh-deep.

While sitting on the creekbank changing shoes in 1977, I had a remarkable wildlife experience. A bald eagle glided down the stream and passed within ten feet of my face, its wings outspread and nearly motionless, riding the currents of the breeze.

Just beyond the ford, the Nyack Creek Trail intersects the Boundary Trail and passes upstream into the valley. One can follow this trail for a few miles in and out as a leisurely day hike, or





*John Hagen and Paul Hoff study the cataracts near the mouth of Nyack Creek in August 1979. (photo courtesy of John Hagen)*

*Submit your own favorite backcountry tale for an anthology on "Hiking in Glacier" in our Spring Issue.*

continue far up the creek, which extends for more than twenty miles.

### **The Nyack/Coal Creek Circle**

In 1979, five Many Glacier employees hiked the 38-mile Nyack/Coal Creek Circle in the course of a single day. The party included Barb Kaiser (now Burch), who probably set an all-time women's distance record for Glacier Park, Steve Bergen, Paul Hoff, Hervey Smith, and me.

We started from Many Glacier about 5 o'clock in the morning, drove the long winding route down the east side of the Park, crossed Looking Glass Pass, and went up Highway 2. We reached the old Nyack townsite at sunup, and scouted the riverbank for the ford. The Walton ranger's information had not been precise, and every route across the Middle Fork seemed to be marked by holes or channels of deep blue water.

We had brought a hundred-foot rope along, and I tied one end to my waist and splashed across at the likeliest-looking point. The deepest channels were hip deep, and the current was strong, but I barely managed to avoid slipping on the rocks and being pitched in over my head. With the rope in place, the rest of the party was able to wade across more securely, holding onto it as a guide.

We crossed the second ford and started up the Nyack Valley Trail. The creek flows through several impressive deep gorges, with water frothing in torrents and cataracts. A beautiful mist rose over these gorges in the light of the rising sun.

As the morning drew on, we passed Threetops Mountain and Threesuns Mountain and began to circle Mount Stimson. Stimson rises more than 6,000 vertical feet from the valley floor,

and displays impressive tiers of cliffs. I was reminded of Gordon Edwards' story (in "A Climber's Guide to Glacier National Park") of climbing down Stimson at night without a flashlight, "feeling our way down the cliffs."

We ate our lunch and continued on, changing shoes incessantly to make a series of vexatious fords. The trail would cross the creek and then perversely cross it back again within the space of a few hundred yards. We passed the site where the old Red Eagle Pass trail used to branch off to St. Mary. The trail was largely washed out during the flood of 1964, and is choked with brush and tremendous deadfalls. It looked forbiddingly overgrown, and I felt a wistful twinge of regret at the loss of this historic trail.

The afternoon became densely overcast as we passed the Cut Bank Pass trail junction and

*Dinner on Surprise Pass in August 1979. Clockwise from left: Steve Bergen, Paul Hoff, John Hagen, Hervey Smith, Barb Kaiser. (photo courtesy of John Hagen)*



rounded back southward and westward. We climbed up through forest and underbrush over the wooded hump called Surprise Pass. Through this stage of the hike we were particularly vigilant and vocal, since in that era Surprise Pass was used as a release point for bears which had misbehaved and been trapped elsewhere in the Park.

We ate a hasty meal on the pass and continued down the Coal Creek Valley. The Coal Creek trail passes under many dramatic cliffs and spires, including Mount St. Nicholas (famously the most dangerous climb in the Park), Battlement Mountain, Peril Peak, Caper Peak, Mt. Doody, and the Cloudcroft Peaks.

### **A Space-Blanket Bivouac**

The endless fording had put us behind our projected schedule. We were benighted several miles short of the Flathead River. We passed a patrol cabin in which a backcountry ranger was prepar-

ing his dinner over a cheery fire, and pressed on into the gathering dark.

We reached the riverbank about 10 o'clock. The night was inky black. The river was flowing swiftly under the branches of great cottonwood trees. The ford there — the Coal Creek Ford — was unfamiliar to us, and we were concerned that it might contain deep holes into which a person could slip and be swept away.

We decided the prudent course was to bivouac on the riverbank and then to make the crossing at first light. We had brought along space blankets — lightweight sheets of aluminized polyester film that come in a package the size of a billfold but can cover an adult. We wrapped ourselves snugly in these blankets and went to sleep in the dewy grass. The night was cold, and without the blankets we would have been unable to sleep, but the space-age technology proved its worth.

The film held our body heat and allowed us to sleep quite comfortably until dawn.

At daybreak we crossed the Coal Creek Ford, which proved to be very gentle and shallow. We all had ravenous appetites after trekking the previous day on a diet of trail mix, candy bars and beef jerky. We walked down Highway 2 to the Stanton Creek Lodge, where we ate an enormous breakfast — omelets, mountains of hash browns, and sausage.

After breakfast, two of us jogged five miles down the road to the Nyack ford to retrieve the car that we had left there. We drove back to Many Glacier grateful for this picturesque adventure on one of the wildest trails in the Park.



# A Night on Chief Mountain

*Chief Mountain (photo courtesy of Bret Bouda)*

*By Don Loeffler (Glacier Park Lodge, Sun Camp, Many Glacier 1940-42, 46-48)*

The mysteries surrounding Chief Mountain have been enough to attract mountaineers for many years (bison skulls, etc.). First of all, its location on the eastern edge of the front and its imposing shape and isolation make it worthy of exploration.

This has been the case going back to the late 1700's when it first appeared on early English maps identified as King Mountain. Its name was changed to Chief out of respect for the Blackfeet Indian tribes who lived in the area.

Visible for a hundred miles away, this spectacular monolith stands out from the rest of the landscape with its vertical sides and flat top summit ridge. It is a perfect geological aberration exhibiting the mighty Lewis Overthrust. This makes it all the more intriguing to climbers.

Our story starts with a jeep ride from Many Glacier Hotel up over an overgrown truck trail to the slope of the mountain's south side. Our route followed an almost dry creek-bed - Otatso Creek - to within three miles of the peak. At this point,

slope. Some of these were the size of a two-story house. We climbed one of these monsters to chart upward progress.

We figured out the safest way to work our way up to the ridge con-

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*We then discovered that what appeared to be a simple summit ridge was actually a series of closely spaced serracs. . . . We had planned to get to the summit ridge and merrily skip along a sidewalk in the sky - but the mountain responded: "Not so fast!"*

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we drove our jeep into some bushes and covered it with branches to hide its existence. (Though now that I think about it, who was going to be wandering about up there looking for something to steal?)

We encountered a very large boulder field with massive chunks of limestone that had separated from the mountain and rolled down the

necting Chief, Ninaki, and Papoose. The identities of those peaks were obvious considering their size and location. (Ninaki was called Squaw in earlier days.)

Once we reached this ridge, it was an easy hike to the northeast to the block of the mountain itself. We then discovered that what appeared to be a simple summit ridge was

*(Continued from previous page)*

actually a series of closely spaced seracs -- free-standing columns about ten to twenty feet apart. Their tops were all at the same elevation, making them appear to be connected. We had planned to get to the sum-

with an occasional lightning flash. Time to get down from our perch up in the sky! These threatening storm clouds were moving in on us very fast. What to do? Take a chance on a rapid descent or stay put and

mountain, taking extra precautions to avoid the little ice pockets that had not yet melted away. After a couple of false leads, we crossed the large scree slope at the bottom of the monolith. We still had to find our way through a few scree slopes that ended with steep little cliffs. No real problems there.

The word HILTON was uttered regarding future night's lodgings as we returned home in the Jeep. We got back to Many Glacier Hotel just in time for dinner.

The section of the mountain on which we bivouacked was included in the great rock avalanche of August, 1972. The avalanche peeled off a section of the northeast face estimated at about one hundred thousand tons. The roar could be heard from Lake McDonald to Cardston, Alberta. The rock of the entire mountain is like a giant deck of cards with El Diablo doing the dealing.

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*We spent a strange night on the mountaintop, full of thunder and St. Elmo's fire dancing off everything metal that we had gathered together.*

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mit ridge and merrily skip along a sidewalk in the sky - but the mountain responded: "Not so fast!"

We could not locate a cairn to indicate the true high point of Chief Mountain. However, we did discover an interesting artifact. We found an old weathered golf tee where some enterprising duffer probably set a new world's record for the longest drive!!!

About 4 pm we noticed some disturbingly dark clouds, illuminated

hunker down against the oncoming weather? The visibility was dropping fast and the light rain was turning to ice crystals. After some discussion, we unanimously agreed that we must stay put.

We spent a strange night on the mountaintop, full of thunder and St. Elmo's fire dancing off everything metal that we had gathered together. The sun finally came up bright and clear. We started our way down the



*Mountaineers' Departure: The Chief Mountain climbing party assembles outside the dormitory at Many Glacier. Left to right: Steve Farbotnik (Philadelphia), John Arthun (Norway), Don Loeffler (Minnesota), Al Jurciukonis (Philadelphia), unknown, Joe Obenski (Doylestown, Pa.). Don's future wife Barbara Burrets is in the background at left. (photo courtesy of Don Loeffler)*

## Lake McDonald Memories



THE MUSICIANS IN THE RESTAURANT



MANAGERS - MC DONALDS



MC DONALD LAKE

PASSENGER'S IDENTIFICATION AND SEAT RESERVATION COUPON		Conductor's ★ Push
NOT GOOD FOR PASSAGE TO BE SHOWN TO CONDUCTOR ON REQUEST. IF YOU LEAVE YOUR SEAT PLEASE TAKE THIS WITH YOU.		
IMPORTANT IF YOU CANNOT MAKE TRIP ON TRAIN AND DATE SPECIFIED PLEASE IMMEDIATELY CANCEL RESERVATION.		
TRAIN NAME WESTERN STAR		
RAILROAD GREAT NORTHERN		
SEAT	CAR	TRAIN NO.
A244	301	3
FROM ST. PAUL, MINN.		
TO GLACIER PARK, MONT.		
LEAVE 8:45 AM		
VALID ONLY WITH RAILROAD TICKET NO.		
CODE NO. IF ON DIAGRAM	QHG 149	
Form C. R.	GOOD ONLY ON DATE	
Not valid unless stamped by Railroad Ticket Agent and good only on the date indicated herein.		
STAMPED HERE		
Issued by GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY CO.		
Which acts only as agent and is not responsible beyond its own line.		



(photos courtesy of Mary (Bigelow) Connelly.)

*The people, the place,  
the magic ticket that  
brought us there.*

By Mary (Bigelow) Connelly (Lake McDonald Lodge 1952-53)

In 1952, I was taking a summer class at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, where I was earning a degree in education. Towards the end of the class my friend, Fran, asked me if I would like to work at Glacier National Park with her for the last half of the summer season.

I don't know what Fran's connection was to the Park, but she got jobs for my sister Ann and me. We did not have to go through the ordinary application process. On July 26, Fran, Ann, and I boarded the train called The Western Star at St. Paul's Great Northern Depot.

Ann and I were assigned to the laundry at Lake McDonald Lodge, while Fran worked at a different hotel. We had never traveled outside of the Twin Cities in Minnesota, so we were very excited about this new adventure.

The laundry was in a separate building away from the lodge. Our job

was to take the sheets that had just been washed and feed them into a series of metal rollers. These rollers were several feet long and about a foot in diameter. They were very hot, and if you touched them you would get burned. We would feed the wet sheets into the rollers, and they would exit dry and pressed.

We had so much fun working in the laundry! It was very hot and steamy,

*[M]y friend, Fran, asked me if I would like to work at Glacier National Park with her . . . I don't know what Fran's connection was to the Park, but she got jobs for my sister Ann and me.*

and the work was hard, but we found ways to make it fun. The people on the other side of the rollers would fold the clean linens. For a laugh, my sister and I would feed the bed sheets into the rollers all scrunched up, just to watch the reaction of the people folding on the other side!

I remember taking cat naps during our morning break. I was so tired because we would stay up late partying some nights. I had no problem sleeping deeply for 10 or 15 minutes on the folding tables in the laundry and then getting back to work.

We spent a lot of our free time exploring Glacier Park. We would often go on long hikes to St. Mary Lake and to Many Glacier, taking the Garden Wall trail. The trails were very narrow in places with a long fall if you stumbled. When we were too tired to hike anymore, we could always get a ride home from the “gearjammers” who drove the Park’s red buses.

My sister and I came back to work at Lake McDonald in 1953 as waitresses. We were all young and trim, because waitressing involved a lot of walking and lifting. The serving trays were huge and carried five plates full of food. We would carry them shoulder high through the dining room on one hand. When we arrived at a table we would swing the tray down to a nearby service table. You were very fit by the time you left that job!

The kitchen was crowded, but the process there was streamlined. I remember a neat contraption that was used to cook eggs for breakfast. It had a series of metal cups that dipped into boiling water to soft-boil or hard-boil the eggs.

We had a quintet of professional musicians in the dining room for the evening meal. They played classical music with string instruments (piano, violin, bass, cello). It was

beautiful to hear that music as we worked.

One time I served a family with a daughter who was trying to decide where to go for college. They asked me where I went and I told them that I attended St. Catherine’s. I later found out that she decided to go there in part because of our conversation, and we ultimately became friends.

The vivid memories of my time at Glacier show how much the experience meant to me. Prior to working there I had been so wrapped up in my studies that I didn’t have much time for fun. Although the work was hard, there was plenty of time to hike in the Park and spend time with other workers from all over the world. It has been over 60 years since I worked at Glacier, and I still cherish the memories. I can almost smell the air perfumed with the fragrance of the outdoors!



*It has been over 60 years since I worked at Glacier, and I still cherish the memories. I can almost smell the air perfumed with the fragrance of the outdoors!*