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Mount Rainier: 'The Mountain'

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By Prosy Abarquez Delacruz, J.D.
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"OF all the fire mountains which, like beacons, once blazed along the Pacific Coast, Mount Rainier is the noblest in form, has the most interesting forest cover, and ...is the highest and most flowery...[it] should be made a national park and guarded while yet its bloom is on." – John Muir, as quoted by Nicky Leach, *"The Parks of Washington."*

Ninety miles of Wonderland Trail exists in Mount Rainier (it takes 10 to 14 days of walking non-stop). We walked a 2.6 mile-portion on August 21, which included crossing a bridge over a raging White River, and continuing to a forest of tall Douglas firs and cedar trees.

White River's headwaters come from Emmons Glacier of Mt. Rainier, while numerous waterfalls empty into its riverbanks. The White River comes down east to the edge of the park, then, north and heads

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west towards Puget Sound.

Inside the forest, mushrooms grow on fallen logs (aka as 'nurse logs') which help the growth of understory species, including orange raspberries and red huckleberries. We even saw a twisted tree, as if braided together from roots to its tops. By Whom, and what forces of nature led to its twisted growth?

Another trail we took was Emmons Vista to see "the Mountain," with Shadow Lake reflecting the evergreens surrounding the lake's circumference.

Beyond the trees are colorful meadows of Subalpine Asters, magenta paintbrush, white Sitka valerian, and Pasqueflower Seedhead (like bushy toes), which when opened, reveal a beautiful white flower with yellow stamen.

We hiked four miles from the campground into the Wonderland Trail, with the White River to cross another morning, twelve waterfalls and a most gorgeous Mountain framed by gray rain clouds — a partial blue sky with white clouds cloaked to its backside to luxuriate in, one cold morning, at 11 degrees centigrade, with clouds blanketing its front side.

Summit for soldiers and civilians

On August 23 at Mount Rainier, I met a support group to the summit climbing group, "Summit for Soldiers." They were undertaking a post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) Awareness campaign. According to their website, "each year there are over 6,200 veteran suicides and over 38,000 total suicides each year making it the 10th leading cause of death in the US."

Their mission statement reads: "Our Mission is to utilize Mountaineering/Adventure based programs as a venue to lead a 50 State Awareness Campaign that will draw attention to the issues and obstacles associated with PTSD, to promote the resources/programs that are available to our veterans, and to grow a fraternity of warriors who will help us create a trustworthy and approachable environment for our brothers and sisters who are suffering."

The support group started their climb from White River campground, where I met them that morning. They were intending to hike to Glacier Basin, a trail of 6.5 miles.

Weather-permitting, the premiere mountaineering group will climb Mount Rainier, to a summit of 14,411 feet.

Dan Mazur, aka as the Hero of Everest, led them. He rescued Australian Lincoln Hall on Mount Everest on May 25, 2006.

Hall had been presumed dead at 8,600 meters, but Dan, along with his fellow climbers, Andrew Brash (Canada), Myles Osborne (UK) and Jangbu Sherpa (Nepal) abandoned their own quest to reach Everest and rescued Hall.

The soldiers spoke of proactiveness, of having a mental awareness pack kit in the form of a buddy pair — similar to the tool kit soldiers carry in their tour duties. Having a proactive mental health program is aimed also to military leaders, increasing their sensitivities in detecting the emergence of symptoms of trauma, instead of healing a soldier reactively, after a full syndrome of trauma manifests.

As I conversed with another climber, he spoke endearingly of his tour of duty in the Philippines and how he craves to eat pancit and adobo.

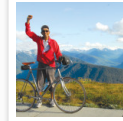
Two of the climbers provided security detail to former Pres. Bill Clinton and one mentioned his Filipina doctor, Dr. Connie Mariano, a former US Navy Rear Admiral and now a founder and the CEO of Center for Executive Medicine in Scottsdale, Arizona, where she cares for CEOs and their families.

In the same parking lot, I met two civilian summiteers to Mount Rainier. They were packing their packs (about 40 lbs.) heavy, to contain a shovel, sleeping bag, foam, ready to eat freeze dried meals, power bars, and something to heat water that they will find in the streams to reconstitute their meals.

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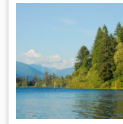
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Brad, 24, is a general contractor who rehabs weathered homes; Shane, also 24, is a warehouse supervisor. Together, both friendly Caucasian males will walk the Glacier Basin Trail from White River Campground, a 3.4 mile ascending trail. They will climb some more to Camp Curtis, and after an overnight's stay to acclimate at 8,690 feet. They will go to Columbia Crest, at 14,000 feet.

Summit is a term for climbing a mountain. It is a conquest of what one can do and what one cannot, at any given time. It is a life's quest of "Having fun as you get to know your own limits," Brad said.

I asked what prepares them for a climb to Mt. Rainier. Shane hikes miles daily, while Brad bikes 60 miles each day, unless walking or climbing a mountain.

Origins of park trails

During the Depression era, Pres. William Mckinley started the Civilian Conservation Corps to stimulate the domestic economy of the US, which was at a slump.

Young men, ages 18-25, found jobs working on national parks' infrastructure projects. They built trails, they built cedar log homes that are now visitor's centers and they helped build and pave roads to the national parks. They were paid \$30 a month salary, with room and board, with \$25 sent to the corps' relatives, pumping up the local economies across America, according to the *Tahoma News* of July 1-September 2, 2013.

We had generous young Americans as pioneers, who were not self-centered, and who built a legacy of nation building, as well as securing their families.

These young men were not recruited to fight wars in foreign lands, as a subterfuge to defend the investments of the social elite, e.g. the unjust war in Iraq that has now ended, instead, these are the Civilian Conservation Corps, who selflessly worked for America's national goal of building this nation from within, as well as contributing to their families' upkeep, that the local economies grew, where their families lived.

Even after 80 years, what these civilian corps has built, are preserved for millions of families to enjoy at present, and I dare say, being used by Brad, Shane, Summit for Soldiers and us as campers/hikers.


While we may not be summiteers, think about what life would be like, if each of us had a goal to discover America's national parks?

In Mt. Rainier, all one can think of is Gratitude, Grace, God and America — a nation undivided and united by the splendors of its national parks, now 59, and a most glorious and noble one, Mount Rainier, aka "The Mountain."

* * *

Prosy Abarquez-Delacruz, J.D. is a parishioner of the 100-year-old Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, which starts its new chapter of 101 years. She retired as regional administrator from the California Department of Public Health, a state agency, after 27 years. She served as a Commissioner of Civil Service and LA Convention Center for LA City municipal government for 3 years. 2013 is her 5th year of writing for Asian Journal, including Balibayan Magazine. She enjoys exploring national parks in the USA and other countries, like Costa Rica.

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