

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOREST SERVICE

REPORT ON THE 1939 MOUNT BAKER

AVALANCHE RESCUE WORK

By  
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## SECTION I

### REPORT ON THE 1939 MT. BAKER AVALANCHE

#### RESCUE WORK

By William N. Parke  
(Former District Forest Ranger)

I was seated in the living room of my residence at the Glacier Ranger Station about 8 P.M. Saturday evening, July 22, when the door bell rang. On opening the door, I was met by a young man and a young woman, one of whom nervously exclaimed, "We have an accident to report!"

Looking past them, I noticed their cars on the street partly obscured by the large tree in the front yard. Not being able to see the cars very well, I followed the couple out to the front yard to investigate and asked them which car was damaged. "Oh, it wasn't a car accident," one added. "There was a snowslide on Mount Baker this afternoon and five of our party are missing".

It is hard to explain the many things that revolve through one's mind upon receiving news like this. One keeps thinking, and hoping, that the whole thing is a mistake--that it couldn't have happened. And yet here was the news of the largest mountain climbing tragedy in the Pacific Northwest. The need for immediate action was obvious.

Evelyn Rupert, women's physical education instructor, at the Western Washington College, and Rex Rolle, a member of the climbing party, were the couple who first brought out the news of the tragedy. Both looked to be at the point of exhaustion, for they had hurried down the ten-mile stretch from Kulshan Cabin with the news of the accident, and Rolle had, in addition, made the climb of the mountain that day.

The main facts of their story were that a party of 25 college students and faculty were making the annual climb of Mount Baker. They were about to go over what is known as the Roman Wall, a precipitous promontory on the south side of the mountain a few hundred feet from the top, when the snow avalanche started. They said the slide was about one-half mile long and had caught every member of the party. When it was over, the survivors assembled on a nearby ridge.

A check was made which revealed that five members were missing (later turned out to be six). Rolle had hurried back to the cabin where he picked up Miss Rupert and the two raced to Glacier with the news and to call for help.

The couple gave me the names of those missing. They were Alice James, Hope Weitman, Buelah Lindberg, Maynard Howatt, and Vene Fisher.

Those surviving were Rex Rolle, Glenna Rolle, Thelma Buehler, Chet Ullin, Julius Dornblut, Elizabeth Berris, Evelyn Johnson; Arne Johnson, Genevieve Strain, Esther Holberg, Don Wilson, Jim Bever, Jane McWilliams, Steve Turk, Natalie Smith, Carol Allen; Don Coss, Dr. Jack Cotton, Dr. W. C. Muenchken, and Loye A. McGee, dean of men at the college. It was later learned during further check-up of names, that Julius Dornblut Jr. was also missing, making a total of six who were lost.

In giving me this list of names Miss Rupert requested me not to give out the names of those missing to the newspapers until she had a chance to drive to Bellingham; report the accident to the College authorities; and notify the parents. This was considered advisable rather than have the parents learn of the accident through the papers next day. I promised her that I would not publicize their names. Miss Rupert then left for Bellingham and I took Mr. Rolle to the Glacier Forest office and proceeded to organize the search party, after notifying Harry Long in Bellingham, of the accident and telling him that I was initiating the searching work.

I immediately called CCC Foreman Don Blackman, who was the foreman on week-end duty at the camp. Some delay arose in getting him to the phone for he had gone to his residence, a few miles from camp, for a few minutes. A call was placed for Foreman Lawrence Burns who had previously secured my permission to take his family swimming at Silver Lake. I called Administrative Guard Rudolph Geri at Silver Fir Guard Station and ordered him to bring down the stretchers and bamboo poles that were at Austin Pass Guard Station and at the Mt. Baker Lodge. Administrative Guard Raymond Hornbeck was instructed to get the stretchers and poles to be taken to Silver Fir, so Geri could bring them on down. By that time I got Blackman on the phone and ordered him and six of the best CCC men then at the camp, with good hiking clothes, to report to the Glacier office as soon as possible. Packer Lloyd Larson had gone to Bellingham that afternoon to bring up a horseshoer, who was going to shoe the government pack stock, the next (Sunday) morning. I placed a call for him and after a short delay, contacted him and ordered him to return to Glacier immediately. Not being able to contact Burns, I sent a messenger to his house to see if he had returned but he hadn't. I left word with his neighbor to instruct him to report to the office as soon as he got back.

In the meantime, Protective Assistant, Donald Stickney, was detailed to gather rope, flashlights, emergency rations, pack boards, first aid outfits, portable Forest Service radio, and other miscellaneous articles that would be needed early in the search. From Rolle it was learned that provisions enough for our crew were on hand at Mulshan Cabin to last us all the next day. Sufficient blankets and beds were available at the cabin as were cooking utensils and other camp articles. We could borrow sun glasses, alpenstocks and ice axes from the women survivors of the ill-fated climbing party, and from what male members who wouldn't be available to help in the search. These and other items meant that our first rescue party could travel light and leave as soon as it assembled at the office. I made out a list of items and left it with Burns to gather and send up with Packer Larson on the pack string first thing in the morning.

Our portable radio would be used in sending messages to Church Mountain L. O. for relaying to Glacier RS (the Glacier R.S. radio has poor reception due to the transmission lines nearby.)

Burns and Blackman soon arrived, as did Tony Geri. Burns was left in charge of the office and besides myself in the first party were Don Stickney, Rudolph Geri, Don Blackman, Rex Rolle (who returned to Kulshan Cabin so he could accompany his wife back in the morning) and CCC enrollees Dick Walsh, Bob Smith, Bob Holter, Roy Wark, Robert McDaniel, and Lee Ewing. We travelled over the Mt. Baker trail after dark with the aid of flashlights.

Without pressing ourselves too much enroute to conserve our strength for the serious work ahead we arrived at Kulshan Cabin at 3:00 A.M. Rex woke Loye A. McGee, Dean of Men of the College, and in charge of the hiking party, and notified him that the rescue party had arrived. McGee arranged for beds in the mens' sleeping quarters and my party immediately stretched out on bunks for a short rest. I briefly discussed plans for obtaining equipment, meals etc., with McGee, ordered breakfast for 5:00 A.M., and laid down on a bunk beside Chet Ullin, Assistant Guide of the ill-fated climbing party. Chet said that he and Don Coss, guide, had recovered Alice James' body and had covered it up with coats and left it on the mountain. He said he and Don had covered every foot of the slide and didn't believe any of the others missing could have survived. I rested for an hour and arose at 4:30 A.M. to be greeted by the sound of sizzling bacon on the stove and the aroma of boiling coffee.

#### FIRST DAY OF SEARCH

By 5:00 A.M. our searching party was seated at the breakfast table and I noticed that all of us ate very little. Fortified by several cups of coffee, however, we mustered our forces together and after gathering sun goggles, ice axes, crampons, ropes, alpenstocks, bamboo probing poles, sunburn lotion, and light lunches, our party was on its way up the mountain by 5:30 A.M. This initial crew consisted of Don Coss and Chet Ullin, who were guides for the ill-fated climbing party, Don Stickney, Don Blackman, Dick Walsh, Bob Smith, Bob Holter, Roy Wark, Robert McDaniel, Lee Ewing, and myself. I left Tony Geri at the cabin to set up the portable radio when Lloyd Larson packed it in. I left instructions with Tony to transmit messages only that had received an official OK from Loye McGee, Dr. A. E. Bond or myself. I did this to insure against inaccurate news reaching the outside while I was on the mountain supervising the searching work. Both McGee and Bond remained at the cabin to take care of the evacuation of the other members of the climbing party who would be returning to Bellingham as early as possible.

The trip over Coleman Glacier to the scene of the accident, which occurred on Deming Glacier, was uneventful except for a little delay in getting the party in relays across a narrow snow bridge at a large crevasse a few hundred yards below the saddle.

Once across, the party continued to the rocky ridge at the saddle where we hurriedly ate a lunch while surveying the extent of the slide. Chet Ullin and Don Coss gave us an excellent description of the accident and it might be well at this point in this report to give a brief account of their version of the accident. I took several photographs of the slide area, as well as of our searching activities. The pictures serve well to give a pictorial account of our work and to supplement their description of the slide.

According to Chet and Don, the twenty-five members of the climbing party, in a zig-zag formation, were climbing the last steep slope on the south side of Mount Baker before entering the rather level top of the mountain. They were climbing the snow slope in the middle of Roman Wall. The time was about 1:30 P.M. and in another fifteen minutes the party would have reached the summit;

All of a sudden there was a swishing sound and a fine layer of loose snow began to sluff off the steep slope, gaining in thickness as it continued. The party was at the upper end of the sliding snow and before they knew it the members found themselves all sliding with it as though they were standing on a moving carpet. Some of them lost their balance right away and a shout went out from one of the guides to "Dig in". This they did only to find that when they sank their alpenstocks and ice axes into the moving snow, the force of the slide bent them over from the firm snow underneath as though they were blades of grass. Some swam, some crawled, but all of them were down then up again, all fighting to move upwards so the sliding snow would all finally pass underneath them. It was almost a case of every person for himself, but in some instances, the men lent helping hands to female companions wherever possible. Some of those that survived, and were in a position to make observations, stated that they watched some of the victims rolling around in the snow, bobbing up and down, first being under, then on top, as though they were pieces of driftwood being carried over rapids.

When the rumble of the sliding snow subsided, Professor McGee and Bond gathered the surviving members together on the rocky ridge between Mt. Baker and the Black Buttes, while Chet Ullin, Don Coss, and another male member (I failed to get his name), made a frantic search for the victims of the slide. These three men deserve all the credit for the early searching work for they risked their lives for the "life or death" search for the lost members. They threw caution to the winds and crossed and recrossed the slide countless numbers of times calling, probing with ice axe or alpenstock and listening for sounds that might come from a victim. They found Elizabeth Beers clinging by her fingers on the chute which passed between two ice falls near the middle of the slide. She collapsed when they released her. Continuing the search, investigating crevasses and every conceivable nook where they thought they might find a fellow member, they accidentally struck the arm of Alice James under about three feet of snow on a bench below a hundred-foot high ice fall. Hurriedly digging her out they found her body still limp and a little warm, even though she had been buried for three hours. Chet immediately tried to give her artificial respiration but after an hour and a half steady work found her body getting stiffer and colder. Their efforts had come too late!

Realizing that further delay on the mountain might mean serious results to them from exposure, and that the whole slide area had been covered thoroughly enough to convince them that the other victims were beyond aid, they returned to Kulshan Cabin.

After listening to their description of the avalanche our searching party continued to the slide area. We were joined at this moment by Prof. Kibbee, Ray Bright and another volunteer searcher who received word of the accident about midnight and had hurried to aid in the search. We found Alice James' body as Chet and Don had left it. (It is shown in one of the accompanying photographs.) We padded her body with coats and jackets and wrapped it thoroughly in canvas sheets that we had taken off the bunks at Kulshan Cabin for this purpose. Making an improvised tobaggan, I started a group of men out with the body. About this time, one of the searchers yelled from the large crevasse at the bottom of the slide that another body had been found. This turned out to be that of Julius Dornblut Jr. It was buried underneath about three feet of snow, and tracing the course it must have travelled from the top of the mountain, it had passed through the chute where Elizabeth Beers was rescued, and like Alice James' body, it had plummeted over the hundred foot high ice fall below which Alice's body was recovered, and continued over the bench and dropped down an added seventy feet to the bottom of the crevasse. Some of the photos give a clear picture of the area in which the bodies were found and of the distances they traveled. In spite of continued searching, no other bodies have been recovered to date. *They never were.*

Some of the dangers of conducting this rescue work in its earlier stages should be recognized. The recent fall of snow, which up to that time had not diffused with the older layers, was continually sliding down the mountain. I posted relays of CCC boys as sentries at salient points with instructions to keep their eyes continually peeled for additional snow slides. The first few hours that we were on the mountain several small slides started without warning and the sight of them made us realize that other large ones were highly possible. One could almost hear a slide start before one could see it and it emitted a slight swishing sound, then a rumble, and if it got to be of much size it roared like a waterfall.

As a result of the danger of additional slides, and the warmth of the weather opening up the ice field, we found it especially dangerous working in crevasses or under ice falls. During the heat of the day, from about noon until 4 P.M., we were forced to be extra cautious for melting snows cut large chunks of ice from the ice falls and crevasses and these dropped off without warning. Whatever work we did near such points was done during the cooler part of the morning, leaving the heat of the day to work on benches or out in the open where everyone could enjoy clear vision of the whole ice-field. The more men that were working presented the problem of keeping track of the whereabouts of each man at all times, and insofar as possible no one was allowed to work unless at least two others could keep him under continuous surveillance.

Aside from these lurking dangers it was a harrowing experience to be working in a snow and ice field looking for dead bodies. Every thrust of a bamboo probing pole, an ice axe, or an alpenstock or every jab of a shovel might strike some part of a human body. We all were anxious to find the bodies and so end the search and yet we all experienced an inward feeling of fear of what we might see when we reached one.

Before the end of the first day of search it was recognized that the search was no longer a matter of life or death and we thereafter settled down to a systematic search going over the safer areas first and the more dangerous ones later. Every possible safety factor was observed attendant to working under such circumstances.

As the presence of small snow slides on Deming Glacier became more pronounced during the heat of the first day, and because the rescue party was pretty tired after an almost sleepless night, it was decided to abandon the first day's searching operations about 4:00 P.M. We left what equipment would be needed to continue with the search to save packing it up each day from Kulshan Cabin.

After passing over the large crevasse just west of the saddle, we came upon three CCC boys who were struggling with the body of Julius Dornblutt. I had detailed Professor Kibbee, Ray Bright, and another volunteer searcher to help these boys pack in the body while the rest of us continued with the search. As it turned out these three had left the CCC boys with the task of dragging the body from the large crevasse just west of the saddle to Kulshan Cabin while they rushed to the cabin with the news of finding Dornblut's body. The three CCC boys were almost helpless in the soft snow and we threw our weight into the task of taking the body down the mountain.

When we reached the edge of the snow we placed the body on a stretcher that we had left there on our way up in the morning. Several photographers were present to take moving pictures of our rescue work and took several shots of us carrying the body to the cabin. Among these photographers were C. L. Edwards of Paramount New, Chalmer D. Sinkey, and wife, of Movietone News, and Charles Perryman of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

In returning to the cabin I found Lloyd Larson packing up the body of Alice James. The body was so stiff from lying out in the snow on the mountain that it was difficult to pack on a pack horse.

Inside the cabin Tony Geri had the Forest Service radio SPF-7 set up and in working order. He had transmitted several messages by McGee and Dr. Bond and it was late the following day that any of our own news releases were sent out. All radio messages, both incoming and outgoing, were properly filed and copies retained. The important ones which give a chronological order of events in the searching work form a part of this report. Other messages ordering supplies are on file, but because of their bulk they are not considered valuable to be included in a report of this kind.



That night I discussed various points on camp management and rescue activities with Dr. Bond and Loye McGee. I transmitted a radio message to Supervisor Flory giving him a list of Forest Service and CCC participants in the search. Plans for the morning search were formulated. All three commercial photographers requested to go up with the searching party in the morning and I consented to let them go with us as they agreed not to interfere with our work in any way.

#### SECOND DAY OF SEARCH

The second day of the search (Monday, July 24), found a crew of fifteen men leaving Kulshan Cabin at 5 A.M. Besides myself in the party were Don Stickney, Don Coss, Chet Ullin, Don Blackman, Sam English, Ray Bright, and the six CCC enrollees. Newsreel representatives, C. L. Edwards, Charles Perryman, Chalmer Sinkey and wife, accompanied us. The photographers were apparently not used hiking and, except for Perryman who went to the avalanche area, they remained well below the saddle and did not reach the digging operations.

The intensity of the sun shining on the snow fields and the warmth of the weather during the daylight hours made working conditions fairly uncomfortable. The glare of the sun and the slight wind burned most of the party quite severely. We used different kinds of sunburn lotion but found most of them unsatisfactory. The reflection of the sun on the snow even burned the insides of our nostrils and in fact, after the third day on the mountain many of us had our noses almost swollen shut.

The second day's search was uneventful. We continued working the large crevasse and the bench above it where Miss James' body was found. The main part of the party was concentrated at these two likely locations for it was there that the snow had piled to its greatest depth, and, of course, two bodies had been recovered from this area. However, Chet Ullin, Ray Bright, and I went above the largest ice fall and probed around just above it where the snow had piled up to depths of four to fifteen feet. We found that ice pockets were forming at night from the previous day's melting snow, making probing quite difficult: one would probe an alpenstock into the snow and strike something solid, a foot or so underneath the surface, only to find that upon digging it out that it was a big chunk of hard-packed snow and ice. By the end of the of the second day of searching, we gave up the use of alpenstocks and ice axes pretty much for probing work, and resorted to merely honey-combing the area with holes dug <sup>with</sup> shovels. Bamboo probing poles were useless after the first day, and only an instrument with a sharp point could be used. This brings to mind that bamboo poles used in rescue work should have alpenstock points put on one end of them.

Small snow slides around us became more pronounced in the early afternoon and it was decided to stop digging operations shortly after 2:00 P.M. At 4:00 P.M., the party returned to camp where we found Lloyd Larson busy packing Dornblut's body on a pack horse. I discovered that Sinkey and Edwards had taken a bunch of faked rescue pictures, some using Mrs. Sinkey as a fake body being dug out of the snow.

I did not think that these faked pictures were needed at all, and the results on the screen, in view of the fact that only one girl's body had been recovered, thus it would tend to lead everyone to believe that Mrs. Sinkey was Miss James, would certainly not set very well with Miss James' relatives and friends. I consequently made an attempt to intercept these pictures as noticed by copies of radio messages for that evening, but we were unsuccessful in so doing.

The arrival of three Park Service men that Major O. A. Tomlinson of Mt. Rainier N. P. offered us was certainly appreciated. Park Rangers, Bill Butler and Jack Broadbent, and Park Guide Bruce Smith reached Kulshan Cabin in the afternoon and I met them when I returned with our party late the second day. These men are trained mountaineers, very pleasant to work with and I can safely say, that had they not arrived when they did, our overhead would have had to work double.

It was necessary to send and receive a number of radio messages during the evening of July 24. Plans for the following day were discussed with Dr. Bond, McGee, Butler, Broadbent, and Smith. I planned to leave Stickney at camp to act as camp manager because our searching work was by then considered to be routine work with prospects of it lasting for days, and perhaps for weeks.

Mr. S. A. Weitman, father of Hope Weitman, one of the young women lost in the slide, and a son arrived at Kulshan Cabin late in the afternoon and asked permission to accompany the party to go up the mountain in the morning. Mr. Weitman and son had driven from Thornton, Washington, hired saddle horses at Glacier to take them to the base camp, and arrived with low oxfords, light weight overalls, and, generally speaking, were ill-attired for mountain climbing. We furnished them with sufficient clothing to permit them to make the trip in comfort.

### THIRD DAY OF SEARCH

The searching party arose at 3:30 A.M. on the third day of the search (July 25) and by 4:45 A.M. we were on our way up the mountain. Included in the party were Bill Butler, Jack Broadbent, Bruce Smith, Ullin, Blackman, the same CCC crew, Sam English, Mr. Weitman and Son, and myself. We proceeded to the avalanche area, at the edge of which I stopped Mr. Weitman and allowed him to remain with a CCC boy who was stationed as sentry. I did not allow him to assist in the digging, but I permitted his son to work with the crew. The day's work was uneventful except that we dug up an alpenstock with a broken thong beside the spot where Dornblut's body was recovered. We also found a pair of glasses at the bottom of the crevasse that were later identified as belonging to Vene Fisher, one of the youths who was killed. We remained at the avalanche area until 4:00 P.M. and returned to Kulshan Cabin.

During the evening the usual number of radio messages were received and transmitted. The hired 10-man crew that I had ordered previously for relief purposes, arrived and were placed under the leadership

of Max Eckenburg, the most competent mountaineer in the Forest Service organization, (either short term or permanent), on the Mount Baker. The hired crew was largely made up of trail laborers from other districts. Mr. Weitman left for Glacier with his son right after supper.

Plans for the following day's search with Eckenburg, Butler, Broadbent, and Smith were made. These men were to take the relief crew to the slide and I was to remain in camp with the other crew which, by that time, was a sorry looking outfit. All of us had painful cases of sunburn.

It is to be noted from the radio messages, that steps were being taken at this time, to establish a side camp at the saddle, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile away from the slide. Reasons for not establishing a camp at this location before this were that it was expected to obtain results sooner than we did, and we did not have the proper equipment for camping in ice fields. It was learned from the Park Service men that it would be possible to borrow Forester tents and primus stoves from the Park Service at Paradise Inn. The radio messages give a running account of the efforts made to get this and other equipment for establishing this side camp.

McGee and Bond left for Bellingham Tuesday, as did Don Cass. Chet Ullin planned leave in the morning. When Chet left, the last of the college representatives were gone. A. D. Fisher, brother of Vene, arrived and planned to go up the mountain with Eckenburg's crew.

#### FOURTH DAY OF SEARCH

I arose with the search crew at 3:30 A.M. on the morning of the fourth day of the search (Wed. July 26), checked their equipment and gave the hired crew instructions as to their responsibilities, etc. Max Eckenburg was placed in charge of the crew, and Bill Butler, Jack Broadbent and Bruce Smith served as guides. Sam English and A. D. Fisher were also included in the party, which left camp at 5:00 A.M.

The first search crew remained in camp all day to doctor up our sunburned faces and to clean up the camp, cut a generous supply of wood for the cabin, repair equipment, oil shoes, and other incidental tasks, besides to enjoy a much needed rest. A number of radio contacts were made that day and definite plans for establishing a side camp at the Saddle were started.

The searching party returned to camp shortly before 6 P.M.

Several pieces of wearing apparel had been dug out of the snow at widely distributed places but in spite of concentrating on digging near the places where these articles were found, no more bodies were recovered.

The Park Service men agreed to remain one more day, which fitted in with our plans perfectly.

One member of the hired searching crew refused to go back up the mountain in the morning and after eating supper left for Glacier,

Several radio messages were received and transmitted during the evening, most important of which had to do with the plan for establishing the saddle camp. In view of the fact that the saddle camp was planned to be established Friday, and that the hired search crew would be released when this camp was in order, I planned on using this crew Thursday and rest up the CCC crew for back packing the saddle camp in Friday. Consequently the searching party for the fifth day of the search was the same as for the previous day, except for the one man who quit.

#### FIFTH DAY OF SEARCH

I arose with the day's searching party (Thursday, July 27) at 3:30 A.M. and checked it out at 4:15 A.M. Fourteen men comprised the party. I remained in camp and made plans for establishing the saddle camp, Friday. Several radio messages were received and transmitted during the day, chiefly concerning the establishment of the camp. The CCC crew remained at Kulshan Cabin continuing to doctor up sunburned faces. Two of the CCC enrollees were severely burned and, as they were suffering considerably, I released them in the morning and sent them back to the CCC camp for medical treatment. The rest of the crew worked at odd jobs around the cabin, and some worked on the trail near camp.

The day's searching party continued with the routine search but aside from the occasional pieces of wearing apparel or equipment that were picked up, no further clues were found as to the location of additional bodies. The party returned to the cabin at supper time, approximately at 6:00 P.M. Church Mountain Lookout, George Dawson, was able to view the search party as it came across the snow fields west of the saddle and radioed this information to the base camp each day. By doing this, the base camp could time the arrival of the search party at the end of each day's work, and have meals ready for it when it returned.

During the late afternoon, Lloyd Larson arrived with the supplies and equipment for the camp at the saddle, and during the evening we sorted out, proportioned, and packed it in individual pack sacks and pack boards.

The usual number of radio contacts were made during the day and evening. The Park Service men, Butler, Broadbent, and Smith, left for Glacier after supper.

#### SIXTH DAY OF SEARCH

Friday morning, July 28, found the whole camp arising at 3:30 A.M. All available help was used backpacking the supplies and equipment to the side camp at the saddle.

Max Eckenburg, Don Stickney, Tony Geri, Sam English, eight hired searchers, Don Blackman, and eight CCC enrollees left Kulshan Cabin at 4:30 A.M. The party could not all traverse the large crevasse below the saddle so Max, whom I left in charge of this camp, Howard Puull, the only volunteer among the hired search crew to join the camp, and Sam English continued over the crevasse and the remainder of the party assisted them in hoisting the supplies and equipment to the east edge of the crevasse from where the saddle camp crew could pack it on to the camp site. The back packers returned to Kulshan Cabin while the side camp crew spent the rest of the day in establishing their camp. They were joined by Herb Graybeal and Don Coss Friday evening. Graybeal remained as a member of the saddle camp for the balance of its stay, while Coss helped in the search Saturday and returned to Bellingham, Sunday. Another volunteer (name on file at Glacier) searcher joined this camp crew during the week end and remained with it until it was abandoned the following Friday (August 4).

I left Tony Geri, Silver Fir Administrative Guard, as radio operator and coordinator of activities at Kulshan Cabin. He was to keep in contact with the saddle camp crew via radio, as Eckenburg was furnished a PF radio set. A small CCC trail maintenance crew was left at the cabin to work on trail work and to assist the searching crew in case backpacking or transportation of additional bodies was needed.

The remaining CCC enrollees, the hired searchers, and myself left for Glacier after lunch.

#### REMAINDER OF THE SEARCH

Eckenburg and his crew at the saddle continued with the search, doing their intensive digging during the cooler morning hours, and laying off during the heat of the day when the danger of additional slides and the opening up and closing of crevasses became more pronounced. The crew covered the entire slide area, but concentrated on the lower crevasse and the bench above it as most of the snow from the avalanche had piled up in these two places. Tunnels were sunk and trenches ten feet deep were dug in the lower crevasse where snow from the slide had piled up from forty to fifty feet deep. The work continued until Friday, August 4, when the crew broke camp and returned to Glacier that evening.

Assistant Supervisor Fromme, McGee, Dr. Bond, Chet Ullin and myself met as a committee in Bellingham on Wednesday, August 3 and discussed plans for continuing with the search. Funds were low and it was necessary to take subscriptions from the Western Washington College students to meet the costs of the searching work. The Forest Service donated its own personnel and half the cost of supplies while the College paid for the remaining share of the cost of supplies and for the hired searching crew. It was agreed by this committee, that the search would be abandoned in its present magnitude and all present searchers were to be called off the mountain. Small searching parties sponsored by the College, were planned to be organized for week-end visits to the area to look for bodies should any be exposed through the melting snow, which was estimated to be going at the rate of six inches

a day immediately after the slide, and about 3 inches a day thereafter in clear weather. All searching parties were to check in and out from the Ranger Station at Glacier, arrange for a radio schedule as a radio was left at Kulshan Cabin for this purpose, and to check on supplies needed for current searching parties. I arranged for a generous supply of provisions to be left at the cabin, and of course perishables had to be taken in with each party.

As a result of this committee meeting, the program continued as planned. Chet Ullin made a couple of visits to the area accompanied by volunteer searchers, as did Don Coss. Hap Frisher, well known member of the Mt. Baker Hiking Club, also made a couple of trips to the scene of the avalanche. All of these trips were made at widely separated week-ends, and only during good weather, although a couple of trips were spoiled at the last moment by inclement weather.

These parties reported that many crevasses had opened up, and some of the crevasses which were open where our parties were searching, closed up again. Deming Glacier was estimated to have moved down the mountain approximately 100 feet in the sixty days succeeding the avalanche. These facts further complicated searching activities, and the hopes of recovering additional bodies gradually diminished with the approach of fall.

As a general guide in any searching work that might be done this coming summer, I believe that the likeliest place where additional bodies may be found is in the large crevasse where Dornblut's body was recovered. This is the base of the slide and the place where by far the greatest deposit of snow was made. I believe that this crevasse will remain open for many years until it moves well down the mountain. Chunks of ice and other deposits of snow will naturally fall into this crevasse from time to time, perhaps burying the bodies to greater depths, but I am pretty much convinced that if any more bodies are to be found, they will most likely be found in this one crevasse. I don't mean to say that parties should not look elsewhere over the slide area, for it is possible that one or more bodies might have lodged near ice falls above, but by far the greatest possibility of locating the remaining bodies lies in the larger crevasse at the bottom of the avalanche.

#### CONCLUSION

The preceding information gives a running account of the history of the avalanche and of the searching work that followed. Much more, in fact volumes could be written about these subjects.

This report in itself, is not complete for it does not contain a map of the area, nor does it contain newspaper clippings. Perhaps clippings may be filed in the Supervisor's office. The list of the searching crews is not 100% accurate for sometimes volunteer searchers would join in the work for an hour or two and then leave as suddenly as they had come. A number of photographs were taken of the slide and of searching activities.

Not all of the photos belong in our official collection. The photographs which I took, and which form a part of this report, are the only official photographs of this searching work. I have printed a concise description on each photo to facilitate easier identification. Others taking photographs were Loye McGee, Art Coss, Don Coss, Dr. Bond, Dr. Muencker, Lin Jenson, Rolt Jenson, Dave Jenkins, Bob McBeath, Sam English, Chet Ullin, Ray Bright, Max Eckenburg, and the three commercial photographers--Perryman, Sinkey, and Edwards. Perhaps some of the women survivors of the climbing party also took pictures preceding and shortly after the avalanche.

*See  
Life  
file.*

A record of the cost of this searching work was kept and copies were filed at both the Glacier and Bellingham offices.

This tragic ending to what was going to be the twenty-second successful annual W. W. College Mt. Baker climb is not the first fatal climbing accident on this mountain--nor will it be the last. The only other casualty to come to my attention occurred in 1912 when the president of the British Columbia Hiking Club stepped backwards while taking pictures and fell headlong into a crevasse. His body was spear-headed into the icy cavern and could not be extricated until the following morning. He had frozen to death during the night.

Before closing, mention should be made of outstanding work performed by members of the searching parties. Chet Ullin and Don Coss both felt terribly bad because they had been assistant guides during the climb and apparently believed the responsibility rested upon their shoulders. This accident could have happened to any party. The fact that both these fellows worked feverishly, under terrific mental strain, in the most dangerous places, immediately after the avalanche occurred, in a vain attempt to rescue the victims--(they freed Miss Beers)--speaks of their sterling qualities as mountaineers. Their continued efforts in our searching crews were equally as fine.

Dr. Bond and Loye McGee served well in their work around the base camp. The Park Service men were exceptionally high calibre men and their knowledge of glacier work was generously imparted to all members of our parties. Sam English, Herb Graybeal, (and later Hap Fisher and the other volunteers at the saddle camp) are to be commended on their splendid work. All of the Forest Service personnel performed in its usual efficient manner. Special mention is made of Max Eckenburg whose leadership and knowledge of mountain climbing is a marked asset to the Glacier District where such activities are so important. His performance was superb. Don Blackman and his crew of CCC enrollees did yeoman service and certainly worked under the most severe conditions that any of the parties had to contend with.

In addition, our searching parties are indeed indebted to the Western Washington College and the Mt. Baker Hiking Club for the use of their Kulshan Cabin as a base camp.

Mrs. Ella Higginson, Bellingham's noted poet and writer of prose, touched and stirred by the tragedy on Mt. Baker wrote "A Sepulchre of Snow" which is reprinted in this report because it reflects the opinion of a number of people who have talked about the possibilities of finding the remaining bodies.

A SEPULCHRE OF SNOW - by Mrs. Ella Higginson

Of all beautiful burial places on this lovely earth, if I might choose my own, my choice would surely be to lie in the depths of a crevasse, covered with perpetual snow; and with my name invisibly etched by God upon a majestic mountain for an enduring moment.

Think of the sunrises and the sunsets; think of the moonlight on those silvery slopes; think how large and brilliant are the stars that keep ceaseless watch over those silent places.

Through the ages to be identified with one of the most beautiful mountains known; to lie there forever, on the silver crest of the world, close to God-- my brothers, do you know anything lovelier after death than this would be?



SECTION 11

RADIO MESSAGES

(SPF-7) Gooding "Bellingham Herald" to Associated Press  
Trans. 4:00 P.M. 7/23

Glacier, July 23, 1940. A fifteen man searching party probed Mount Baker's western slopes today in an effort to locate bodies of five Western Washington College students killed in a sweeping avalanche Saturday afternoon.

A sixth body, that of Alice James, Arlington, was recovered Saturday evening by members of the annual college hike party. The body will be brought out by pack horse over ten miles of tortuous trail Sunday.

The avalanche swept down on the twenty-five hikers from the Roman Wall, 100 feet below the summit, as they were scaling the mountain.

All twenty-five were knocked down. Miss James and Maynard Howatt, Seattle; Julius Dornblutt, Alderwood Manor; Vene Fisher, Coupeville; Hope Weitman of Thornton, Washington; Beulah Lindberg, Simms, Montana, were unable to escape.

The tragedy, one of the worst ever to occur on Mount Baker, was the first in twenty-two years for the college.

Cause of the avalanche, estimated to be more than one-half mile in length, was laid to sodden snow and extremely hot weather.

Leading the searching party were Don Coss and Chet Ullin, climb guides, and William Parke, U. S. district ranger. McGee and Dr. E. A. Bond of the college were in charge at search headquarters at timberline Kulshan Cabin.

The Glacier C.C.C. Camp was also assisting along with the Forest Service.

(SPF-7) McGee to Burns Trans. 6:05 P.M. 7/23

Burns, Glacier R. S. :

Bodies will be leaving within 45 minutes by horseback. Please meet packtrain at end of trail. Will be dark upon arrival.

Give whatever aid possible.

(SPF-7) Parke to Flory Trans. 8:45 P.M 7/23

Favorable progress being made by searching party.

Doubtful if more men will be needed at the present time as only a limited number can be worked effectively. Will notify you if a relief crew will be needed at a later date.

We are not taking any unnecessary chances in our searching work and relatives of all members of our party should be notified to this effect as I am sure considerable concern will be in evidence as to the safety of the men.

Mr. McGee, of the Western Washington College requested that the names of all Forest Service and CCC men participating in the searching work be released to all news agencies. The list of names is as follows:

William N. Parke.....	District Ranger
Don Stickney.....	Protective Ass't.
Rudolph I. Geri.....	Admin, Guard
Lloyd Larson.....	Packer
Don Blackman.....	CCC Foreman
Dick Walsh.....	CCC Enrollee
Robert Smith.....	do
Wark Roy.....	do
Lee Ewing.....	do
Everett Remington.....	do
Robert Holter.....	do
Robert McDaniel.....	do

(SPF-7) Long to Parke Rec. 10:25 A.M. 7/24

I do not want you to feel that we are afraid that you are not doing your job thoroughly, because we know that you are going the limit, but we are wondering if you have sufficient number of men to have proper relief in your present crew.

If our CCC boys are not equal to the task, specify the type of men you want and we will get them (at any cost).

We want to guard against any possible comeback as to the progress being made in this season.

We want to do everything in our power to rescue these bodies. We will supply you with a sufficient number of men to make this search continuous. We do not want any let up whatsoever in this search. We want to guard against any possible criticism by the press, the readers and also the relatives of the victims. The relatives are still hopeful. We must continue our search with the same hope and interest. Do not spare the expense.

We will supply you with anything you desire; equipment, men and supplies of a nature that aid you in the progress of this search.

(SPF-7) Professor E. A. Bond to President Fisher Trans. 10:30 A.M. 7/24

President Fisher:

A crew of 7 men from college  
3 Forest Service employees  
7 CCC men  
4 camera men

A searching party of 17 are searching today. Weather conditions good except warm. We have all equipment and supplies that are necessary for the time being.

Are there any suggestions?

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Geri Rec. 2:17 P.M 7/24

Weitman, father of Hope Weitman is on his way in. See that he is taken care of. But advise him against going up the mountain except with the rescue party.

(SPF-7) President Fisher to Parke Rec. 2:25 P.M. 7/24

Miss Elizabeth Beers who was in the climbing party, reports that she saw where Miss Beulah Lindberg went down. She says that Miss Beulah Lindberg went down near the precipice where she (Beers) was rescued. She came near going over this precipice. She saw Mill Lindberg to the right of her (right going up mountain) as Miss Lindberg was carried over precipice near ice buttes. Miss Beers feels that Miss Lindberg is in this area. This is the area where Miss James' body was found.

Note: One of the party on the hill saved Miss Beers by grabbing her by the arm.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke Rec. 3:20 P.M. 7/24

Hiatt wants to go over plans for tomorrow with Parke at first opportunity after Parke returns to camp.

(SPF-7) Parke to Long Trans. 5:00 P.M. 7/24

Mr. Chalmer, Don Sinkey, Photographer for Movietone News, and C. L. Edwards, Photographer for Paramount News, took faked pictures of the rescue work; this was considered as detrimental to the rescue work. The Forest Service should wire Jack Haney, News Editor for Movietone News at 460 West 54th Street, New York, New York, and W. P. Montague, News Editor for Paramount News at 544 West 43rd Street, New York, and instruct them that all faked pictures must be censored.

Also wire C. L. Mathiew, Editor For News of the Day, at 450 West 56th Street, to request copies of all pictures taken by these three news agencies during our searching work; to be forwarded to Forest Supervisor in Bellingham, Washington, immediately as they are to be used for Forest Service education and other purposes.

(SPF-7) Parke to Burns Trans. 5:17 7/24

Lawrence Burns:

Meet. C. L. Edwards, of Paramount News, and Chalmer D. Sinkey, of Movietone News: they left Kulshan Cabin about 3 P.M. on the Mount Baker Trail.

Inform these men that all faked pictures taken by them this morning must be censored as the Forest Service considers such pictures a detriment to our work. We are wiring the editors of their respective news agencies that all faked pictures must not be printed.

Also inform them that though we appreciate their efforts in getting their pictures, we feel that they have a sufficient number of good shots of our actual searching work so that faked pictures are not necessary. Tell them I appreciate their efforts in coming up here.

Trans. 5:20 P.M. 7/24

No bodies have been recovered today.

News release later this evening.

(SPF-7) McGee to Burns Trans. 6:03 P.M. 7/23 BULLETIN

Burns:

Glacier Ranger Station

Body of Julius Dornblutt Jr. recovered.

Part of searching party still on hill. Searching party OK.  
Release to all news agencies.

I. A. McGee

(SPF-7) Parke to Long Trans. 7:45 P.M. 7/24

H. H. Long:

In reference to my message regarding censoring all faked rescue pictures taken this morning by Mr. Sinkey and Mr. Edwards, I might add that some pictures were taken of Mrs. Sinkey who was acting in the role of one of the bodies caught in the avalanche.

(SPF-7) Parke to Long (cont.) 7/24

I do not know if we have the power locally to stop such faked pictures from being released; it is my thought that we should inform the Regional Office and, if necessary, the Washington Office to censor all faked rescue shots. These include all pictures taken of men not members of the searching party, performing in this work for the news shots by engaging in digging operations, including that of digging up a body.

Both of these photographers took such a great deal of pictures of our men actually in our rescue operations that faked pictures are not necessary.

The photographers took these faked pictures without Forest Service approval and left Kulshan Cabin before my party returned from searching operations. I made an effort to head them off before they left Glacier but they had left for Seattle.

It may be possible to secure immediate action to censor these by reaching them at their Seattle addresses before the films are sealed and sent to New York for composition.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 8:45 P.M. 7/24 URGENT

Hiatt:

I am grateful for the arrival of the three Rainer National Park rangers as their experience in working in snowfields will be of inestimable value. I also appreciate the assistance of Chet Ullin and Don Coss, both of whom were members of the ill-fated climbing party. Both of these men are in need of rest and Don Coss is going to remain in camp tomorrow while Chet will accompany us again tomorrow, as well as the three Park Service rangers. Other volunteer men have returned home and it will now be our full responsibility to carry on the rescue work. I am sending Long a list of our future needs, as to men and equipment.

Program for tomorrow: 4:00 A.M. ....Breakfast  
4:30 A.M. ....Lv. Kulshan Cabin  
2:00 P.M. ....Start Return Journey.

Members of the party besides myself, will be the three Park Service men, Chet Ullin, Don Blackman, Vance Alberg, Sam English, and six CCC men. We left all equipment at the scene of the avalanche, so that we will be able to make good time in travelling. It takes four hard hours to reach the avalanche from here. Work will continue to about 2 P. M. when we will start return journey. Early departure is necessary because of snow slides which begin about this time each day in this area. I will not permit men to work under these hazards.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 8:45 P.M. 7/24 (cont.)

Fifteen men were actually engaged in digging operations today; relief crews will be needed tomorrow so that part of our present crew can rest Wednesday.

I shall appreciate any comments or suggestions you may make. We are doing everything in our power at the present time and with the reliable leadership of the Park Service men, we will be able to split up our crews into smaller units. Am retaining Stickney at the cabin as camp manager.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 9:45 P.M. 7/24

Lawrence Burns was left a list of equipment brought in by first party. For confirmation this party brought in 15 long bamboo poles for probing work, 10 headlights, 1 electric lantern, 3 pair colored glasses, sunburn lotion, 6 pack boards, and a large first aid kit.

We had been informed that bedding, cooking outfits, food for one day for whole crew, were available at the cabin. Climbing outfits composed of alpine sticks, ice-axes, colored glasses, crampons, tarpaulin ropes, etc., were to be secured from members of the climbing party, especially from women survivors who would not be working in the rescue work.

We are making a list of our needs this evening and will send it in immediately to go up with tomorrow mornings' pack train. Some food, ordered by the college, we have been using. We ordered food on different occasions. A record of these orders should have been kept at Church Mountain and at Glacier.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke Trans. 9:45 P.M. 7/24

How many men can you work safely on your job? If you can work more men safely than you have would you rather have more CCC men tomorrow or more experienced men day after tomorrow. Burns ready to bring in crew of CCC men if needed tomorrow.

(SPF-7) Parke to Long Trans. 10:15 P.M. 7/24

Your message received and can definitely say now that the searching work will likely have to continue for some time. It should be recognized that we are working under considerable difficulty having to observe all safety factors attendant to digging operation in crevasses surrounded by snow fields in which smaller slides are in evidence each afternoon. The avalanche piled up snow to depths of fifty feet and it is unwise to work large crews in concentrated areas. We are making every effort to cover every square foot of the avalanche in which the bodies are likely to be found and are digging down to depths of 5 feet in all of these areas. It is likely that some of the bodies are buried in depths up to fifty feet. If this is the case it will take months to recover the bodies.

We are operating at these smaller depths first in order to cover the maximum surface area as soon as possible. Our crews have stood up exceptionally well but we will need relief crews tomorrow to relieve some of our men Wednesday. Then we will work in shifts. I would like an experienced cook immediately, also 3 CCC flunkies. These should arrive here early tomorrow afternoon.

In addition, I would like to have Max Eckenburg called in from Chilliwack tonight and report here as soon as he can make the trip.

I would also like to have an additional ten men of exceptional hiking qualities and endurance to report here not later than tomorrow evening so that they can secure sufficient rest tomorrow night to enable them to work effectively Wednesday morning. Five of these men can be key CCC men, but I would like to have at least five possessed of qualities of leadership. Perhaps five of them could be secured from our fire guard list, possibly one or two of these could be P.A.'s.

Our food supplies have already been satisfactorily taken care of, some of it jointly with the College. We will request additional supplies from time to time. For the most part, our equipment has also been satisfactory though most of it has been borrowed from members of the original climbing party.

The ten men coming in tomorrow, and Eckenburg, should be equipped with some good sun glasses of the darkest color possible and of the highest quality. These glasses should have air vents so that the eyes will not sweat. These men should also be equipped with good calked boots, several pairs of socks, towels, toilet articles (if desired), and good jackets to protect them from strong cold winds. Bedding is already here.

We are working with the highest spirit possible under the circumstances. We will do everything in our power to get the bodies out as we are aware of the tremendous anxiety that the parents concerned have. I appreciate your backing in this work and will most certainly not let you down. If we find that we need anything you can bet that we will call you and not spare the expense on the effort.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 8:35 A.M. 7/25

In reply to your messages of last night.

We can work only ten to fifteen men safely at the scene of the accident due to presence of additional smaller slides. The main slide is about half mile long and about five chains wide, covering approximately twenty acres.

A small radio, possibly a PF set might be helpful at the avalanche; so send one up at the first opportunity and a radio operator.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 8:35 A.M. 7/25 Con't)

It is not safe as yet to work larger crews but I will notify you immediately if I deem it advisable to increase the manpower over what I ordered in message to Long last night.

No cook is needed at the avalanche but we might establish a small side camp at the saddle later on if we feel that we can work more effectively by this means. Will notify you of this matter later today.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Stickney Rec. 10 A.M. 7/25

Camp Manager:

New men have been ordered from Bellingham. Will be guards from other districts as far as possible. Time of arrival is still uncertain. We will advise you as soon as possible.

Eckenberg and three CCC flunkies should arrive at cabin by noon.

(SPF-7) Parke to Fromme Trans. 4:05 P.M. 7/25

Mr. Fromme:

I am sending in tomorrow with Don Coss three rolls of film, financed by me and taken with my camera, of various scenes of our rescue work. Part of one film was used in taking family pictures. Am having you take these rolls to you for developing and whatever pictures you consider of any use, can be included in the Forest Service collection. I want a copy of all negatives and a print of each picture that is good.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke Rec. 3 P.M. 7/25

Ranger Parke:

Ten men and cook will leave Glacier at 6:00 P.M. They had dinner before leaving so will not need much after getting into camp. They are all Forest Service employees from other districts, mostly trail men. They are all good men and experienced.

What do you think of the following plan?

Continued search balance of this week, with present crew. Working them in two shifts on alternate days. If not successful by that time, move a camp of 5 or 6 men into saddle near avalanche and let them handle the search from then on. Camp in saddle can be supplied by CCC Back packers from Kulshan Cabin. If you think camp on mountain advisable, figure out equipment needed so we can start rounding it up. Also suggest you take a day in camp, yourself, tomorrow as you have a whole summer's work ahead yet on other activities and there is no call to give your self off on this job. Mrs. Parke and family are fine. Am returning to Bellingham tonight leaving Burns in charge here, but can come back anytime if necessary.



(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke Rec. 7 P.M. 7/25

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Parke:

R. O. feels that work of recovering bodies no longer an emergency with lifes at stake and therefore question of financing has come up at present time. Are waiting reply to a wire to Washington, requesting approval to continue. We are also requesting financial aid from county sheriff's office. This is not for publication and is given you at this time as it may have some effect on your plans. Will advise as soon as additional information is received.

(SPF-7) S. A. Weitman to Hiatt Trans. 7:00 P.M. 7/25

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Hiatt:

In comfort and sympathy to relatives and all concerned in this accident, I wish to say that I have been on the job all day and have gone into every detail with the men in charge. They are capable and all doing everything possible to recover the bodies, which I feel certain will be forthcoming in due time.

Sincerely,

S.A. Weitman  
Thornton, Washington.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 7:08 P.M. 7/25

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Hiatt:

We will have news bulletin for release in about an hour. Will try to answer your last message at that time. Would appreciate if you remain at Glacier until we can formulate our plans for the next few days.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 8:15 P.M. 7/25

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News Bulletin to Hiatt

Our party of 15 left Kulshan Cabin this morning at 4:45 and was favored with the best weather for our rescue work that we have had to date. Included in the party were Mr. S. A. Weitman and son of Thornton, Washington, who wanted to visit the scene of the avalanche which claimed the life of his daughter, Hope Weitman.

(SPF-7 Parke to Hiatt Trans. 8:15 P.M. 7/25 Continued)

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Several likely spots in which bodies might be found were carefully searched and one crew covered the large crevasse at the base of the slide quite thoroughly. We found no bodies but recovered an alpenstock which had a broken thong as the result of its being torn away from the wrist of one of the victims. A pair of gold rimmed glasses were also found and it is believed that they belonged to either Vene Fisher or Julius Dornblut Jr. They were found in the large crevasse approximately thirty feet away from the spot where Julius Dornblut's body was recovered. A handkerchief was also found.

The danger of more slides appears to have lessened and the crew was able to work without this mental hazard today for the first time. As a result of this were able to do much more work than on any previous day. A relief crew of 17 men will return to the avalanche early tomorrow. Inasmuch as the snow is now rapidly melting it is expected that some of the bodies will be more easily recovered. The snow has piled up in depths of three to about fifty feet in crevasses and consequently considerable delay might result if some of the bodies are buried very deep. The two bodies which were recovered, were buried under about three feet of snow.

Two airplanes circled around the mountain this afternoon apparently to observe our rescue activities and perhaps to take pictures of the avalanche.

Can you send us some back issues of various newspapers tomorrow with Lloyd Larson? We are anxious to know what we have been doing the past few days so we can write it in our diaries.

(SPF-7) Bruce Smith (Park Service Guide) to Clark E. Schurman at Paradise Inn. Trans. 1:40 P.M. 7/25

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Mr. Clark Schurman  
Guide House, Paradise, Rainier National Park

Work progressing well due to able leadership and the excellent cooperation and teamwork shown by the men.

The Schurman harness has proven itself to be an excellent time-saver for the rescue crew.

Thursday night was given as my deadline. Is it possible to secure an extension? If not, please contact Mr. Sedgren to find out if he wants his car sent around.

Butler and Broadbent send regards.

Sincerely,

Bruce B. Smith

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt      Trans. 8:50 P.M.      7/25

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Hiatt:

Regarding your last message I heartily endorse your suggested plan. I had planned on establishing a camp at the saddle tomorrow and remain here in camp in the morning to supervise its establishment. I had also planned on alternating crews so you can see our minds run along the same channel. A camp at the saddle would be advisable and I will plan on establishing one there at the end of the week if the remaining bodies are not found by that time. I will have a list of equipment and supplies ready in ample time should the camp be necessary. Rather than backpack the camp outfit to the saddle I believe it more practical to drop it from airplane for I scouted out this possibility this afternoon and it is a perfect setup for using airplane.

How long will it be advisable to use the three Rainier Park Service men? They are exceptionally good men and I am grateful in having them sent up here.

Please inform Mrs. Parke and family that I am getting along fine. Would like to have Blackie check on the wood supply at home and help out Mrs. Parke whenever possible.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt      Trans. 9:05 P.M.      7/25

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To Hiatt:

My last message to you was written before I received your latest message on this present schedule. Consequently I will await further information from you regarding finances before planning on the establishment of a camp at the saddle.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke      Rec. 10:00 P.M.      7/25

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To Parke:

I feel we should proceed with search as planned until definitely ordered to cease. But should hold up establishing camp at saddle until tomorrow to see if we hear from Washington. Keep Park Service men balance of the week if they are willing to stay, for as long as you have a large crew lack of funds will probably make CCC backpacking of camp to saddle necessary if it put in.

(SPF-7) Stickney to Burns      Trans.      7/26

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Burns:

We want 3 CCC trail men with trail maintenance tools and personal effects for one week sent up tomorrow. There is sufficient bedding here.

(SPF-7) Weitman to Parke Rec. 8:30 A.M. 7/26

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Parke:

I have now contacted father and mother of Vene Fisher. They say that glasses found in crevasse yesterday fit description of those worn by Vene Fisher. Possible that Fisher's body is close by. Dornblut had case in pocket. Not sure that his glasses were not in case, perhaps you know.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 9:30 A.M. 7/26

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Hiatt:

Regarding Mr. S. A. Weitman's message to me which I received this morning about the gold rimmed spectacles found in crevasse yesterday, Chet Ullin checked the spectacle case in Julius Dornblut's pocket but did not open it to see if glasses were there. The spectacles match those worn by Vene Fisher in his picture on the front page of Monday's Herald. Vene's brother, who is here, could not positively identify them. Would suggest that check be made with Julius Dornblut's parents. The identification number on the glasses B&L Hi Bo 1/10 12K G.F. Perhaps an optometrist's check on this will clear it up. Chet Ullin is taking them out today.

(SPF-7) Parke to Long Trans. 9:40 A.M. 7/26

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To Harry Long:

Plan on keeping Tony Geri either at Kulshan Cabin or at our proposed camp at the saddle for as long as this search lasts. He is needed for radio operator and other duties. Consequently it is imperative that we fill his position at Silver Fir until Tony returns. If funds are available for this replacement, I would like to have Blackie Burns contact Lewis Hammond immediately to take Tony's place and give him the necessary instructions for the job. Hammond's address can be found on his last 676.

(SPF-7) Parke to Flory Trans. 9:55 A.M. 7/26

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To Supervisor Flory:

Am wondering if Ranger Thornton would like to visit the scene of the avalanche tomorrow with me. As you know, the avalanche was entirely on the Baker River District (being on Deming Glacier), and inasmuch as this was the logical place to work from and because I was in a better position to give immediate aid, I assumed the responsibility without consulting you, though I informed Harry Long in advance of my intended plans. I am sure Walter would like to visit the scene of the tragedy and understand the action I have taken.

(SPF-7) Parke to Flory Trans. 9:55 A.M. 7/26 Continued

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If Walter is to accompany me tomorrow he should reach Kulshan Cabin early tonight so he will get ample rest before making the climb.

(SPF-7) Schurman to Smith Rec. 7/26

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To Smith:

All Rainier men wanted back as soon as possible.

(SPF-7) Long to Parke Rec. 5:15 P.M. 7/26

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To Parke:

In reference to your note concerning Ranger Thornton, inadvisable for Thornton to be there tomorrow because he has his hands full with present duties. It was logical for you to handle this search regardless of district boundaries because of your nearness to the scene. Your action is appreciated by Thornton as well as all others concerned.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 6:45 P.M. 7/26

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Hiatt:

Can only get one Forest Service employee to join crew at Saddle Camp tomorrow. CCC men are anxious to go there but would suggest establishing 5 man camp now. Is it O.K. to use two CCC volunteers to fill our crew at Saddle Camp? Reply immediately as I must make plans for tomorrow right away.

(SPF-7) News Release from Parke to Hiatt Trans. 7:00 P.M. 7/26

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News Release to Hiatt:

A party of sixteen men again visited the scene of the avalanche today, leaving Kulshan Cabin at 5:00 A.M. No bodies were recovered today but an Argus camera carried by a victim was found on the same bench that Alice James body was found.

The method of probing for bodies was abandoned yesterday and shovels are now used entirely because of the fact that ice pockets are numerous in the snow for appreciable distances.

The snow is melting rapidly on the glaciers. Measurements have been taken and found that the snow melts an average of over six inches per day. At this rate it is expected that the snow will soon disappear at those places where the snow piled up to depths of four feet or less. If the bodies are not at these lower depths then searching operations will be confined to where the snow piled up to depths of as much as fifty feet.

Notify Chet Ullin about recovering the camera.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke                      Rec. 8:40 P.M.                      7/26

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To Parke:

Shortage of funds and other considerations make it necessary to reduce searching crew. Continue work tomorrow on same basis we had planned and at the same time, move camp up to Saddle. Other than CCC these can be selected from any members of your present force. Personnel left to your judgment. If possible suggest that you use crew that are resting tomorrow to move camp to Saddle and release all of them that will not be held in the upper camp, so they can get out to Glacier and be returned to their stations tomorrow night. If you have any objections to the plan please advise in return contact.

(SPF-7)                      Dawson to Parke                      Rec. 9:00 P.M.                      7/26

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To Parke:

Blackie wants to know what changes there will be in grub orders and CCC crew with trail tools.

(SPF-7)                      Parke to Hiatt                      Trans. 10:20 P.M.                      7/26

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To Hiatt:

Regarding your last message I will attempt to reduce crew as suggested. However, it will be impossible to move camp to saddle tomorrow for we have no tents, bedrolls, or other equipment necessary for this camp on hand.

I had planned to borrow two Forrester tents and two primus stoves from the Park Service.

It seems to me, that we should secure these tents and stoves from the Park Service and if this meets your approval, please contact Mr. Clark E. Schurman, Guide House, Paradise Inn, Rainier National Park, immediately and perhaps these articles can be speeded to Glacier tomorrow in order to arrive here Friday morning so they could be packed to the saddle Friday afternoon. This seems like a lot of trouble but these articles are quite necessary. Our own tents are too heavy and would not likely stand up in the saddle where the wind is quite strong.

It is impossible to work any crew tomorrow and expect it to get out to Glacier and return to their stations tomorrow night. Consequently I plan retaining all men until Friday morning when I will release those men not selected for the saddle camp.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. 10:20 P.M. 7/26 Continued

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Please reply to this message tonight so I can start making out a new list of supplies and equipment needed so some of the articles can be brought up in the morning.

(SPF-7) Parke to Burns Trans. 10:25 P.M. 7/26

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To Burns:

Cancel all previous orders. Hold Larson in morning until we are able to make out list of equipment and supplies which he can bring up.

(SPF-7) Long to Parke Rec. 7/26

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To Parke:

No special reason for rushing move to saddle. You are to use your own judgment. After receiving your message last night I contacted Mr. Flory and President Fisher. We appreciate your judgment in the action taken so far and will back you 100%. We expect a wire from Portland but carry on as you see fit and we will back you if it takes an act of Congress. I am getting the equipment you ordered and will have it on hand when you need it.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans. (eve) 7/26

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To Hiatt:

As you probably know, there will undoubtedly be a number of curiosity seekers attempting to visit the scene of the tragedy this weekend. Our work is complicated enough that we cannot spend the time to look out for their safety and their housing facilities. I would strongly recommend that we give sufficient newspaper publicity to this effect and it will be necessary to post a 24 hour sentry a short ways up the Mt. Baker trail to turn back all persons not to be used for searching work. We should solicit the aid of Hap Fisher, of the Mt. Baker Club, and Chet Ullin, of the College, to pass on the qualifications of all persons who might be of value to us. These two men should get together immediately and all applicants for memberships in our parties for this coming weekend should be checked and those passed on given written permission to pass our sentry. I feel that this will be a big problem which it would be well for us to give ample study immediately and you could act as chairman of a committee of three, including Fisher and Ullin, and work out anything you wish. Chet Ullin has been with me all week, being assistant guide of the ill-fated climbing party and can give you some good suggestions as to number to be allowed to come up, equipment to bring, etc. The sentry should be posted Friday afternoon and remain on duty until Sunday night. It will take some hard-nosed men for the job and they will have to be used in shifts.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt Trans (eve.) 7/26 Continued

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I only want those qualified men here that will be willing to abide by our instructions and positively do not want anyone, no matter how good a man he is, who takes a lone wolf attitude. Publicity seekers should be black-balled.

(SPF-7) Parke to Long Trans. 7:20 A.M. 7/27

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To H. H. Long:

Your message received at midnight. Plan on establishing camp at saddle Friday. Urgent that we receive the two Forrester tents and 2 Primus stoves from C. E. Schurman, Guide House, Paradise Inn, Rainier National Park.

The Park Rangers inform me that these tents are Mr. Schurman's personal property and are likely at his home in Seattle. If this is true, then we should not encounter any difficulty in getting these articles to Glacier this evening so that they can be brought up tonight by special messenger. These articles are extremely light weight.

We should beg, borrow, or steal 6 air mattresses for this crew as we have 5 Forest Service men lined up for this crew in addition to a volunteer member. These air mattresses will be necessary articles inasmuch as this crew will have to sleep on the snow. I believe that by rustling about we can borrow these mattresses and they should arrive at Glacier by this evening also.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke Rec. 7:45 A.M. 7/27

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Parke:

Use of CCC inadvisable. We will try to pick up two experienced men in Bellingham and send them out Friday or Saturday.

(SPF-7) Long to Parke Rec. 8:40 A.M. 7/27

---

Parke:

Keep man on if you can use them, until more definite news from Portland.

(SPF-7) Parke to Long Trans. 10:02 A.M. 7/27

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To H. H. Long:

Your message of last nite received.



I am holding in CCC crew today as several cases of acute sunburn is in evidence. Two of the worst victims are being sent out today. It is expected that the terrific glare of the sun on the snow will take its toll of members of the relief crew so our party is being reduced in numbers by natural means. I want to retain all present crews until tomorrow evening, or until we have completed back packing supplies and equipment to the saddle camp. The picked members of the saddle camp crew will be working under numerous discomforts so we should do everything within our power to make them as comfortable as possible.

I have sent in a grocery order to Burns which I expect Larson to pack up today. If the tents, mattresses and stoves arrive this evening, we can have them brought up by messenger and be ready to back pack the whole camp up to the saddle without full crew tomorrow.

I plan on leaving Eckenberg in charge of saddle camp and he will have separate radio for communication. I intend keeping saddle camp for one week. I also plan on retaining Geri here at Kulshan Cabin as radio operator and as a coordinator of all activities after <sup>1</sup> return to Glacier either Friday evening or Saturday. I want to retain a small CCC trail betterment crew here for a few days longer to patch up the Mt. Baker Trail which is in bad shape in spots.

The three Park Service men went to avalanche early this morning and plan on leaving for Mt. Rainier either tonight or tomorrow morning.

The snow is melting rapidly and if the bodies are not exposed in the shallower depths then they must have fallen into crevasses some of which were filled with considerable depths of snow. If all bodies are not recovered by the end of next week we should abandon the system of constant search and thereafter make periodical searches depending upon how rapidly the snow will melt.

The bodies will be in perfect state of preservation for, perhaps months if they cannot be recovered; so I see no reason to continue to use such large crews but rather to let nature take its course in so far as possible.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke Rec. 11:20 A.M. 7/27

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Bill Parke;

Tents and stoves will arrive in Bellingham today and will be sent to Glacier at once, also will send air mattresses if we are able to obtain them. We cannot purchase these so are attempting to borrow. Your plan to establish saddle camp on Friday O.K. If you need any of the crew who are working on avalanche today to help establish this camp it will be O.K. to use them and release them Saturday. Park Service wants their men back because of Fire Danger, so release as soon as possible. Would appreciate being advised of personnel to be left at Saddle Camp as soon as you have selected them.

(SPF-7) Parke to Burns      Trans. 8:35 A.M.      7/27

Burns:

Hold Larson at Glacier until we can complete an inventory of equipment and supplies here. We will then request additional stocks which Lloyd can bring up with him later this morning.

(SPF-7) Hiatt to Parke      Rec. 5:45 P.M.      7/27

To Parke:

Don't know yet what time the stoves and tents will be here, but will give you a ring when they do. Can't get air mattresses. Can't buy. Advertised over radio and can't get them. Give me a ring when party off Mountain reports.

(SPF-7) Parke to Hiatt & Stickney      Trans. 6:45 P.M.      7/27

Hiatt:

Rush tents and stoves here as fast as can when they arrive. If can't get them by special messenger this evening, will hold men in morning to pack them in tomorrow. Imperative that we get them to Saddle by tomorrow afternoon. Forget air mattresses. Will use canvas and blankets from here.

To Stickney:

Forget waterproof tarps. Will use canvas and blankets as mattresses from here.

(SPF-7) News Release from Parke to Hiatt      Trans. 8:50 P.M.      7/27

News Release for Hiatt:

Our party of 14 men again worked at the avalanche today leaving Kulshan Cabin at 4:15 A.M. No bodies were found in spite of a thorough search of likely places where bodies might have been buried.

The snow is melting rapidly in the hot weather encountered on the mountain. Should this warm weather continue it is quite likely the remaining bodies will be recovered shortly unless some are buried under several feet of snow, in which event it will take weeks to recover them. Various pieces of wearing apparel worn by victims of the tragedy are picked up daily.

Plans are being made to establish a small camp at the saddle between Mt. Baker and the Black Buttes. This will enable this party to work during the cooler hours of the day when danger of other slides is at a minimum. It is expected to keep this camp at the saddle for one week.

(SPF-7) Geri to Parke Trans. 7:00 P.M. 7/28

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Parke:

Contact established with Saddle Camp at Mt. Baker. They have set up tarp and are as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. Camp is at bottom of Cinder on rock.

(SPF-7) Geri to Parke Trans. 8:00 P.M. 7/28

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Parke:

Two men arrived here at 7:30 P.M. One being Don Coss, whom you know, and the other, one Herb Graybeal who bears a note from Hiatt. Graybeal is well known to me and I will, without hesitation, say that he is qualified for the searching work. Both have been at the Bellingham office and missed you on trail.

Graybeal has volunteered his services for the week if his help is needed. Don Coss plans on returning to Bellingham Sunday night.

What are your wishes in regard to this?

(SPF-7) Parke to Geri Rec. 9:00 P.M. 7/28

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Am glad to get this information. Would certainly be indebted to Graybeal if he can stay as a member of saddle camp for the next week. Ample bedding and supplies at camp for him.

(SPF-7) Parke to Burns Trans. 12:40 P.M. 7.28

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Burns:

Send truck up to meet 9 men at end of trail at 2:30. Arrange transportation to Concrete.

Is there anyone at station going to Bellingham? One of above party wants ride.

(SPF-7) Geri to Burns Trans. 12:45 P.M. 7/28

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Burns:

Men are ready to leave. If there is any important message for Parke send at once. 8 men including Parke and Blackman.

Truck for CCC enrollees at 3:30 P.M. 8 in party.

Tell Mrs. Parke to have hot water on.

(SPF-7) Eckenberg to Parke Trans. 7:00 P.M. 7/31

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To Parke:

Bad weather being taken right in stride here at Saddle Camp. Storm tents are doing a fine job as our sleeping quarters, our food, Primus stoves, and eating quarters, have moved down into a room dug out of solid snow a short distance from tent.

We are looking forward to getting a bit of digging done on slide area as soon as weather permits. There is no cause for worry of how we are up here when weather looks bad below. We are well established for all time. Everyone is fine. There is plenty of humor with us at the time, Howard Paul being far in the lead. Everyone is happy and quite glad to be here.

(SPF-7) Eckenberg to Parke Trans. 8:20 A.M. 8/2

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To Bill:

I see little chance of recovering any of the remaining bodies by continued digging due to conditions that have to govern all such activity at the scene of the slide.

We have found that digging can not be done in early morning now because snow has settled to where it is practically ice in early morning hours. Yet if one waits until it softens up a bit, why ice walls above are also softened up to where remaining to dig becomes nothing but foolish.

So, I believe the only thing that remains sensibly safe for the Forest Service is to patrol area thoroughly until Thursday night, and bring camp down off the mountain Friday.

I suppose continued digging would, after a time, bring to light more victims, but I can see no way of doing this without endangering seriously those who are digging, which may cause a repetition of the tragedy.

Therefore, please have an answer ready by Wednesday night as to our abandoning camp here at the Saddle, Friday A.M. If you wish to continue camp we can plan on added supplies being brought up here.

I might add, that it seems nature's course is the only sane way left, and I can see no way of bettering it, no do I see why all concerned should at this time, in the face of events just passed, would want to.

So will wait for your decision by radio by Wednesday night.

(SPF-7) Parke to Eckenberg Rec. 10:30 A.M. 8/2

Max:

Your last message received. Am going to Bellingham at noon today (Wednesday) to confer with College authorities and Forest Service men regarding financing of Saddle Camp. Do not expect to return to Glacier until tonight; so will try and have an answer ready by 9 P.M. tonight.

Glad to get your account of conditions at slide, for I can use it as an arguing point in our meeting this afternoon.

(SPF-7) Parke to Geri Rec. 8:45 P.M. 8/2

Toni:

Base camp to be abandoned Friday morning. Arrange with Max to help back pack all equipment and supplies now at Saddle Camp to Kulshan Cabin. Check on all grub supplies that can be left at Kulshan Cabin and turn this list in to Church Mountain not later than noon tomorrow.

(SPF-7) Parke to Eckenberg Rec. 8:45 P.M. 8/2

Max:

Plan on abandoning Saddle Camp, Friday morning. Take all equipment and supplies to Kulshan Cabin. Toni and crew can meet you at the lower crevasse and help you back-pack to the cabin. Other instructions will meet you there.

Try to leave a rope ladder over lower crevasse so other searching parties can make a safe climb from Kulshan Cabin to Saddle Camp.

(SPF-7) Eckenberg to Parke Trans. 7:30 P.M. 8/3

To Bill:

Seven pack loads came down off the mountain today beginning the evacuation of camp in Saddle. Four loads remain on top to be brought down tomorrow. Five fellows will leave cabin at 5:00 A.M. tomorrow for the top and should be back by 1:00 P.M.

It will be impossible with the equipment we have, to build any kind of ladder over crevasse, so please inform all who plan to use this route that they will have to traverse around large crevasse regardless of exposure to hanging ice walls.

I might add that crevasses are appearing in greater numbers each day, and so this route will afford a real problem within a short time. However, the high camp will be taken care of by 1:00 P.M. tomorrow. Have you anything lined out for crew after that time as to coming out or what?

SECTION III

COST OF RESCUE WORK AND SEARCH FOR BODIES OF VICTIMS  
OF MT. BAKER AVALANCHE WHICH OCCURRED ABOUT 1:30 P.M.,  
JULY 22, 1939. DETAILED STATEMENTS, TIME REPORTS, ETC.  
ARE FILED IN "I-COOPERATION-MT. BAKER AVALANCHE" FOLDER.

Paid by Western Washington College of Education:

For Labor	\$175.50
Subsistence	81.06
Other Supplies	<u>40.40</u>
	\$296.96

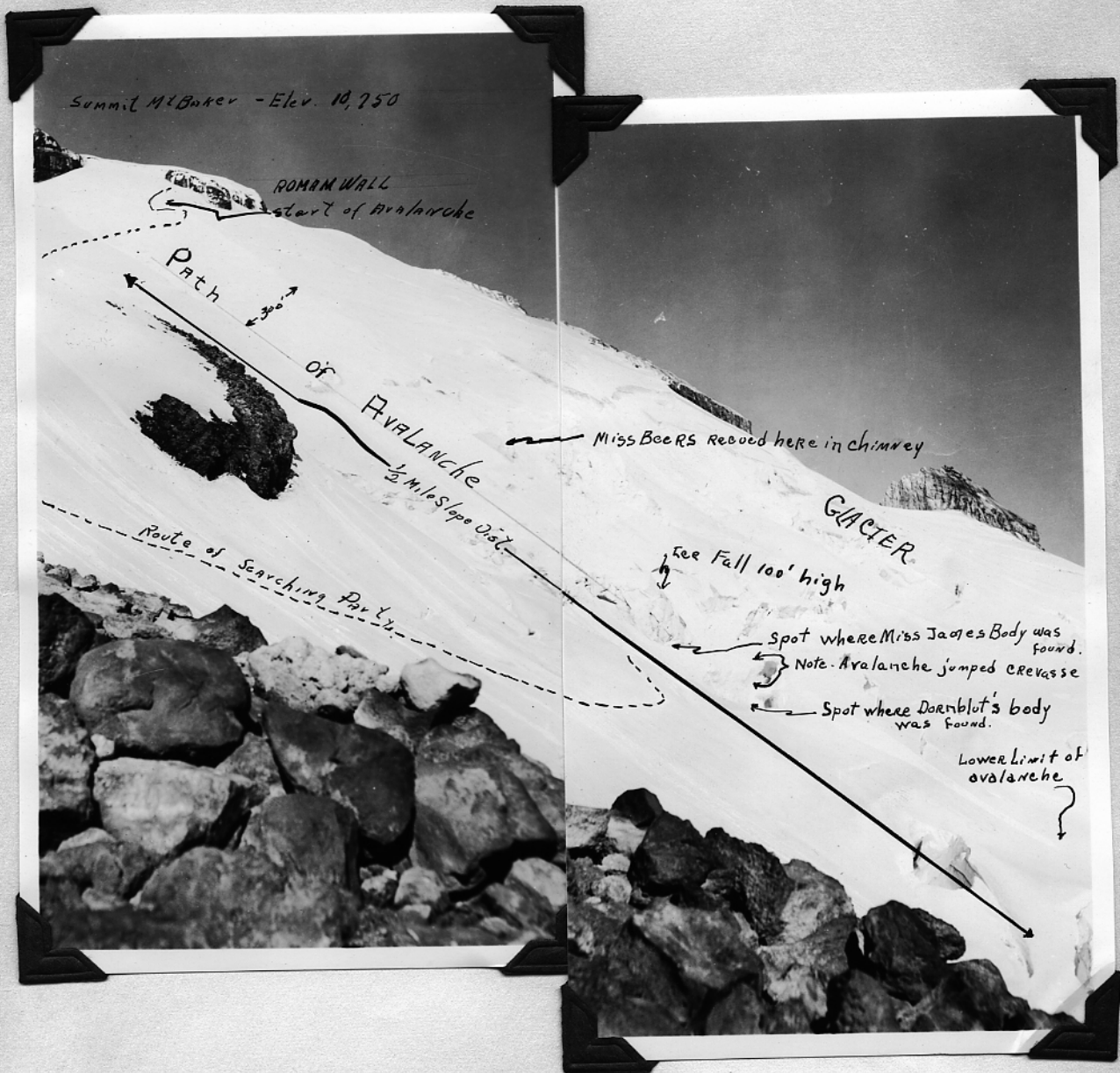
Paid by Forest Service:

Labor	248.75
Subsistence	<u>110.99</u>
	\$359.74

All Forest Service overhead and CCC Enrollee services  
contributed and not included in the above costs; also the For-  
est Service pack horses were contributed, including forage  
while engaged in this work.

SECTION IV

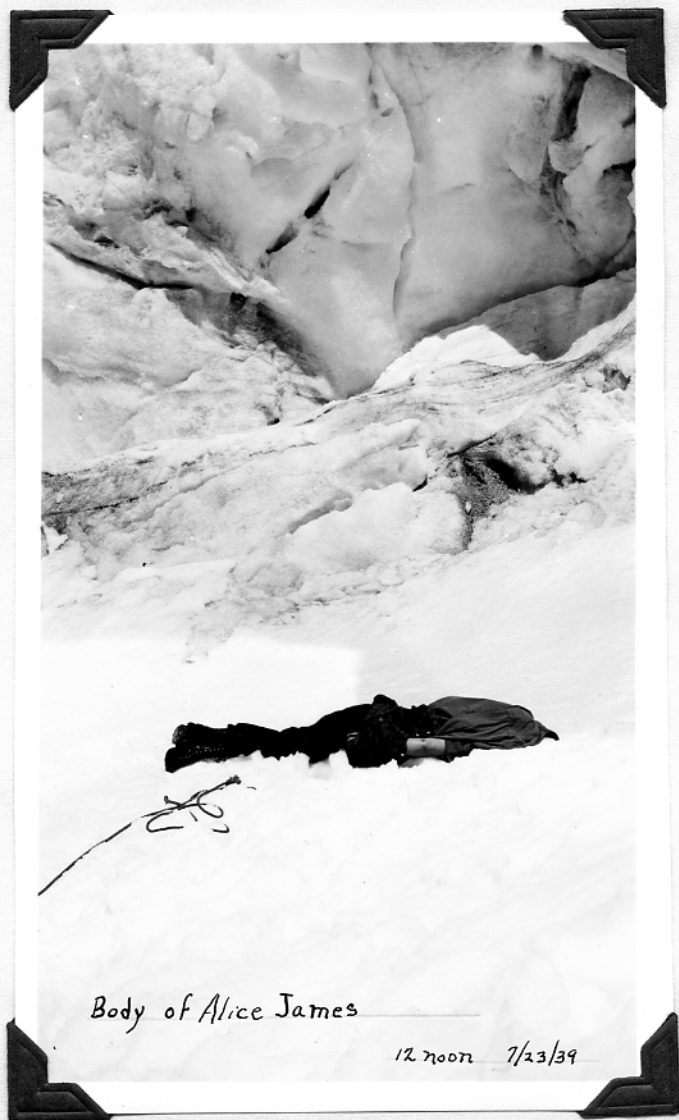
PHOTOGRAPHS





Part of Rescue party pulling body of Julius Dornblut down west side  
of Mt. Baker

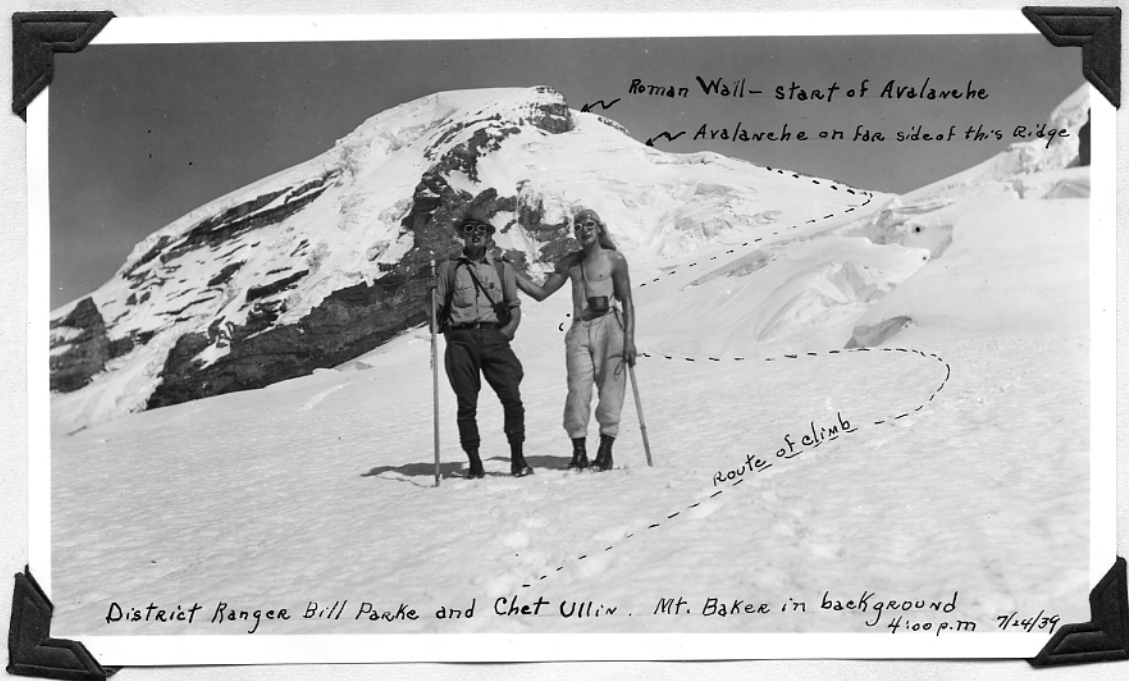
3:00 p.m. 7/23/39



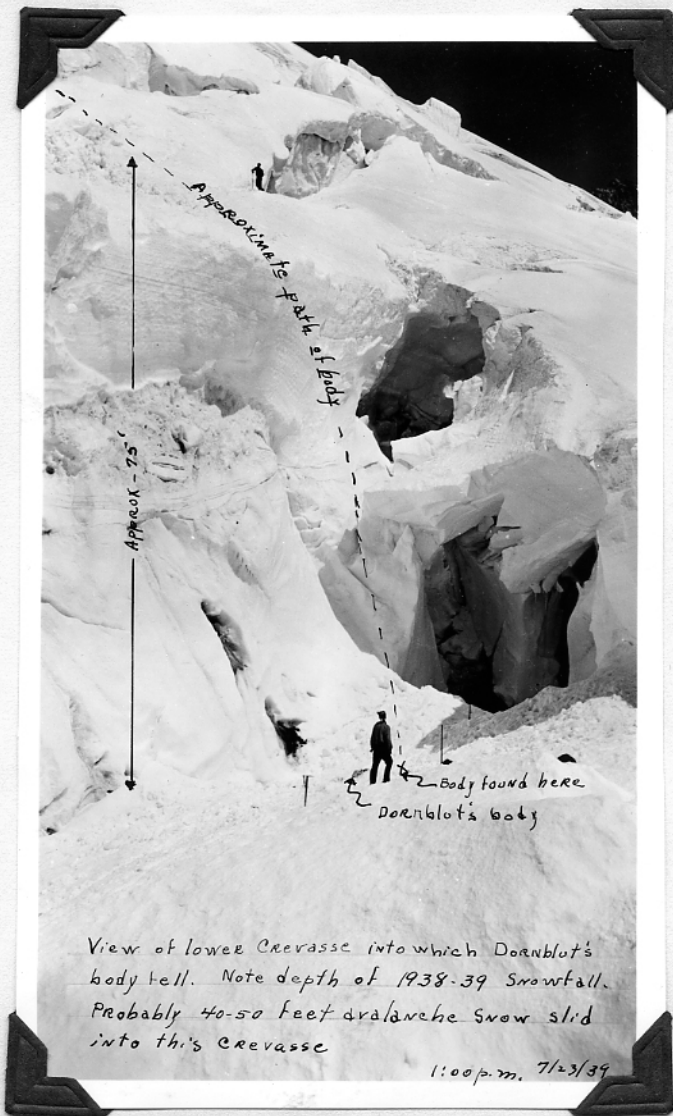
Body of Alice James

12 noon 7/23/39



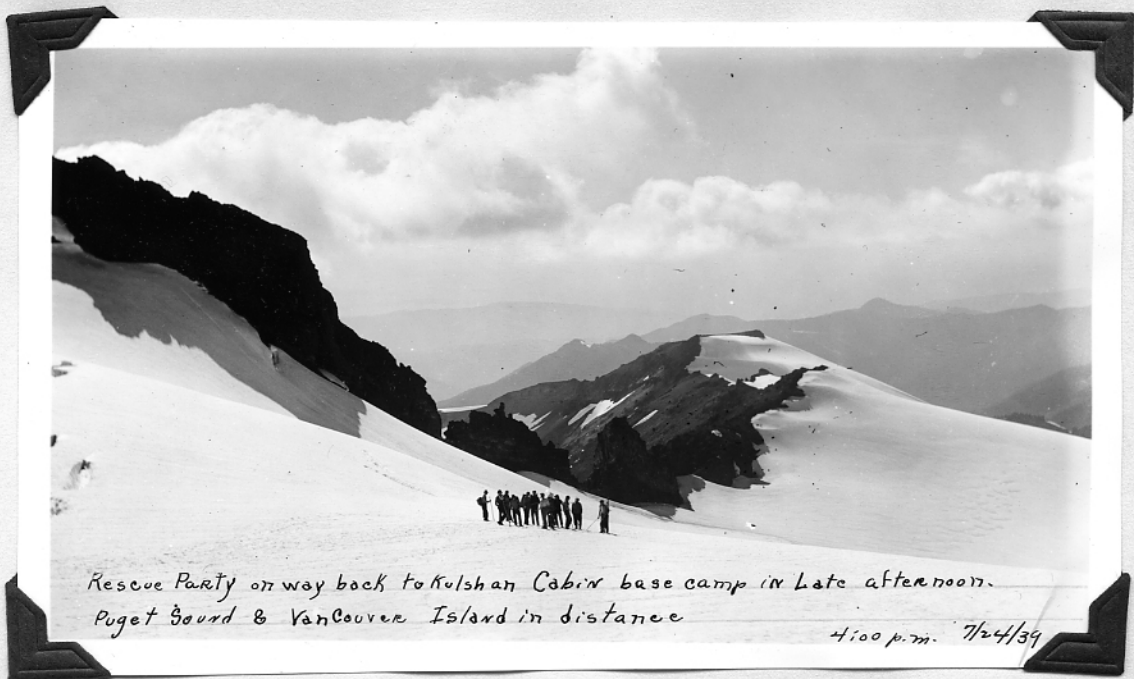


District Ranger Bill Parke and Chet Ullin. Mt. Baker in background  
4:00 p.m. 7/24/39



View of lower Crevasse into which Dornblot's body fell. Note depth of 1938-39 Snowfall. Probably 40-50 feet avalanche snow slid into this crevasse

1:00 p.m. 7/23/39



Rescue Party on way back to Kulshan Cabin base camp in Late afternoon.  
Puget Sound & Vancouver Island in distance

4:00 p.m. 7/24/39



PANORAM of searching Party crossing snow bridge on Coleman Glacier

10:00 a.m.

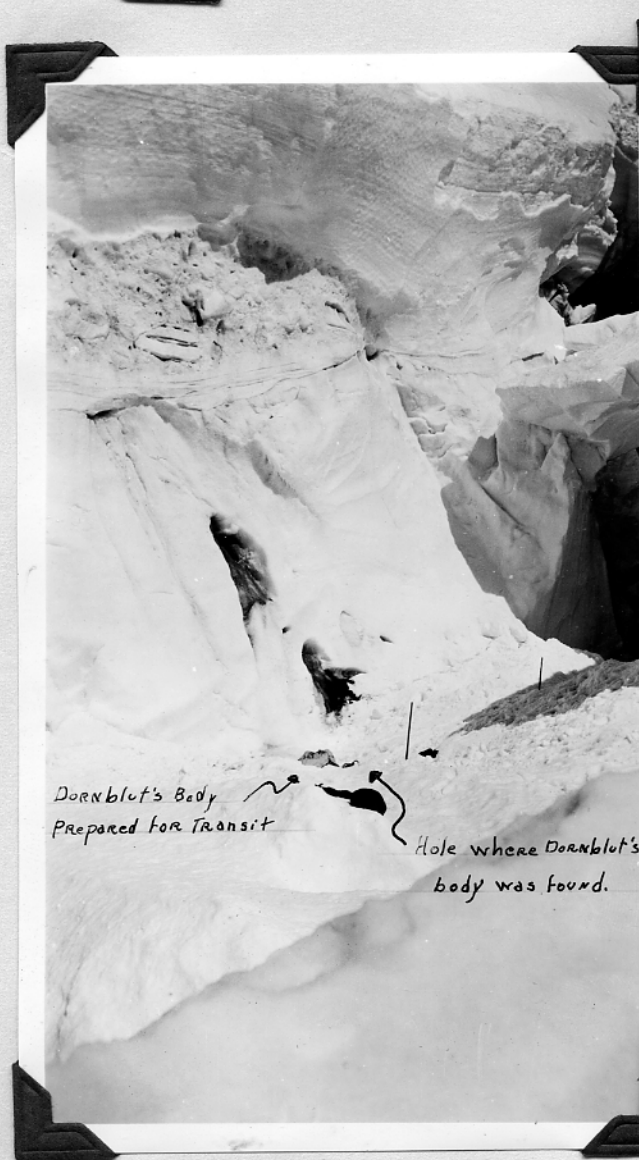
7/23/39

10:00 A.M. 7/23/39



Searchers (left to right)  
 Ray Bright, Chet Ullin,  
 Bill Parke, and Don Blackman  
 Looking over lower portion of  
 slide from rocky ledge

10: A.M. 7/24/39



Dornblut's Body  
 Prepared for Transit

Hole where Dornblut's  
 body was found.



Ullin, Bright, and Parke climbing  
 around large ice fall.

1:00 p.m. 7/24/39

SECTION V

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

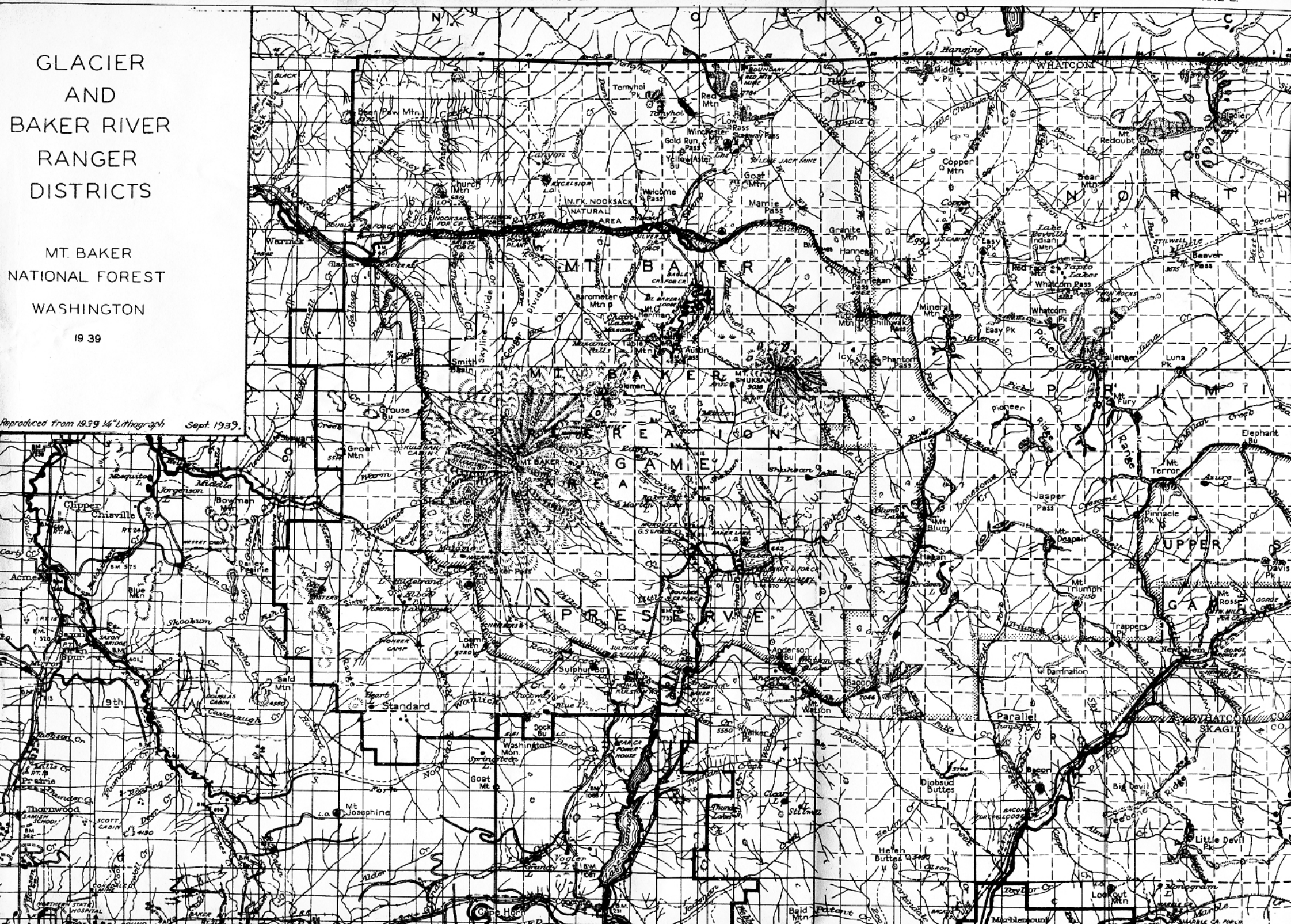
# GLACIER AND BAKER RIVER RANGER DISTRICTS

## MT. BAKER NATIONAL FOREST

### WASHINGTON

1939

Reproduced from 1939 1/4" Lithograph Sept. 1939.





R.B. Marshall, Chief Geographer.  
T.G. Gerdine, Geographer in charge.  
Topography by United States and  
Canada Boundary Commission,  
J.E. Blackburn and Robert Muldrow.  
Control by A.H. Sylvester, G.C. Jacobs,  
L.D. Ryus, and H.M. Hadley.  
Surveyed in 1907 and 1909.



Edition of May 1915  
reprinted 1925.  
Polyconic projection. To  
place on North American  
datum move projection lines  
755 feet south and 350 feet east.

Scale 1/250000

APPROXIMATE MEAN  
DECLINATION 1909.

MT. BAKER, WASH.



Contour interval 200 feet.

Datum is mean sea level.

U  
RECREATION  
Activities  
Mountain Climbing

Juneau, Alaska  
April 16, 1940

MEMORANDUM TO ACCOMPANY REPORT ON 1939  
MOUNT BAKER AVALANCHE:

In completing the report on this avalanche it came to my mind that copies might be distributed to the Western Washington College, the Mt. Baker Hiking Club, and perhaps to individuals. This accident, and others that have happened in the past, have started many of us to do some serious thinking about how other accidents might be prevented, or at least reduced in numbers. They have also brought our attention to things which our Forest Service organization might plan in the way of equipment and the training of personnel on heavy recreation districts in the field of rescue work. This is becoming a major activity on some districts. At any rate I felt that some of the suggestions I have in mind have no place in the report of this particular avalanche. This is an administrative problem which we can best discuss through our own channels and I am accordingly submitting them in this memorandum.

In writing up the report itself, I have not attempted to make a narrative of it, though one might think it closely approaches one. I have perhaps gone into more detail than is necessary, and yet it seems to me, in reviewing it, that I might have enlarged on some of it still further.

When I started writing the report I had in mind turning out basically a report, and later on to write up a narrative for wider distribution, perhaps having it in some national magazine. The subject could be made into an interesting article. The value of it could readily be seen for the stand which the Forest Service takes regarding mountain climbing could be brought to light. I have gone no farther with the article than to interest a member of the editorial staff of one of the leading Juneau papers. It is my belief now that the value of an article I have in mind would be greater if it were written by an outsider. It is quite possible that this writer will go ahead with this article, but I have told him that it would have to be reviewed by the Regional Office, Portland, Oregon before it could go to print. I offered him the use of our official photographs of the Mt. Baker Avalanche and have written to the Bellingham Office to secure additional prints.

Wherein can the number of mountain climbing accidents be reduced? I don't mean just fatal accidents - I mean all types of accidents wherein rescue parties are called upon and all cases of lost climbers or hikers where searching parties are needed. When a searching party is called it goes on its mission expecting most any eventuality and should almost always

be considered as a rescue party.

Four rescue parties were called on the Glacier District alone last summer and a fifth party which was ready to leave was dismissed when the "lost persons" showed up at camp two days overdue.

I doubt very much if the number of climbing and hiking accidents can be greatly reduced. In the National Forests we have few gates restricting traffic or pedestrians. Areas of special fire hazards and reservoir sites sometimes have "Keep Out" signs posted but, by and large, the public wants to, and is allowed to roam within our National Forests at will. And why not. But we should not sit down and let matters rest as they are.

It was once said that we couldn't do very much to reduce the number of forest fires. We would always have lightning fires, wouldn't we? We would always have more people in the forest each year - meaning that there would be more smokers and careless campers and therefore we would have more fires. Public education has done much with our fire situation - and it can do equally as much with our mountain climbing and hiking accidents!

The Forest Service does not compel prospective climbers or hikers to register with the nearest forest ranger and have equipment inspected and ones physique scrutinized to see if one can get to the anticipated destination and back. This is pretty strong regulation and the public doesn't particularly like it. But couldn't we strike a happy medium in our organization and appeal to prospective hikers and climbers to come to our ranger stations to seek information as to climbing or hiking conditions, and above all to let us know where they are going? This seems like making a mountain out of a mole hill, but when one analyses conditions on the Glacier District one realizes it isn't as foolish as it seems. The Zig Zag district and others which have heavy recreation use probably experience the same problems as at Glacier.

Reviewing the rescuing activities on my district last season I would like to briefly summarize the cases I had.

Case #1. Monday, July 3. 8:00 a.m. I received word via telephone from Mt. Baker Lodge that a climbing party of four men had had an accident on Mt. Shuksan the previous night. One fellow was unable to walk - the rest slightly bruised. Two fellows reached the Lodge at 8:00 a.m. and immediately reported their mishap - the other two staying on the slopes of Shuksan at timber line.

This party had made a successful climb of Shuksan on Sunday, July 3, and planned to return to their car that night. They were Portland men, members of the Mazama, Wy-East, and Trail Clubs. They had notified no one locally where they were going, which way they were going or any other information about their plans. I organized a rescue party of 12 men and rushed to the Lodge. The two fellows that came to report were cold and jittery from staying out all night in a snow and wind storm at timberline. They couldn't get a fire started so just shivered all night long. We continued in the same rain and snow storm and reached the other two and brought Bill Wood over the six tough miles from part way up Mt. Shuksan to Austin Pass G. S. on a toboggan, carrying it part way and sliding it the rest. Bill had a broken pelvis.



This accident could definitely have been prevented. In the first place I am surprised that experienced men as these were would attempt to climb such a difficult mountain during the storm we had that whole weekend. But they had come all the way from Portland, just to climb Mt. Shuksan and didn't want to give up the trip. What would have happened if the party in falling (they were roped together, one man falling and pulling the rest with him) had been hurt more seriously and none of them could have reached help? We can all think of how serious this might have been. Even if they all had been injured so none could reach help - think how much it would have helped us and them too if they had told us beforehand where they were going, and which route they planned to take.

Case #2. This was the Mount Baker Avalanche case, already mentioned. I knew of this party and of its intended plans before it left. The party started the climb under almost perfect conditions except for the recent snowfall. It was late in leaving Kulshan Cabin, for it was just completing the climb at 1:30 p.m. when normally the party should have been well down off the mountain that late in the day. These faults are minor ones.

Case #3. On Saturday, July 29, a woman was lost at the Douglas Fir Campground. A CCC crew went to search for her but she strayed out onto a road later in the day and was picked up.

These "lost person" cases are prevalent and can hardly be guarded against.

Case #4. About 10:00 p.m. Monday, September 4 (Labor Day), I received a call from Rec. Guard Ray Hornbeck, stationed at Austin Pass, stating that two experienced climbers were a day overdue in returning to the Lodge from a climb of Mt. Shuksan. (Another surprise party for this was our first knowledge that a party was even attempting the climb - and here again the weather was stormy). The party, I found out later, had left the Lodge Sunday morning attempting to make the climb and return that night. They didn't. When they weren't back by the second night the Lodge people informed Ray Hornbeck. He was told that this party was attempting the West face (overhanging glacier) as they thought this was the toughest test. It was. Rain and fog made visibility poor and they had to sleep out on a ledge the first night, at the edge of the glacier. The second day they reached the summit but due to the storm they had to go slowly along the south route and night fell before they could reach the trail.

I would not start a searching party out at night on a mountain climbing search such as this, so waited until morning before starting especially to allow the two climbers time to reach their car should they have been forced to camp the second night. My guess proved right for they did return about 8:00 a.m. the next morning.

Think how serious this case might have been. These climbers were from Seattle and had informed no one except a woman guide at the Lodge as to their plans.

Case #5. On October 22, I received a frantic call from a mother of two young men who had failed to return from a hunting trip. I investigated the case and found that the boys had left in their car a few minutes before I arrived.

Analysing these five cases then, three of them were purely mountain climbing cases, two of which might have been prevented had the parties sought advice and heeded it afterwards. Both of these parties attempted climbs during exceedingly poor weather. Both of these trips might have had much worse results and in either case, had the Forest Officer been informed of their whereabouts much speedier rescue work would have been evident.

An education program which will inform the experienced as well as the inexperienced climbers of the value of reporting in and out of a mountain area is certainly the cheapest form of insurance possible and I am sure that if it is followed through it would probably save a few lives - certainly unnecessary suffering.

Our Forest Service organization is weak in mountain climbing experience. We spend much time and money teaching our forest guards and ourselves in fire fighting technique and yet - on the Glacier District, for the past several years, nearly as much time has been spent rescuing persons as has been spent suppressing fires. Think of it! I don't know the statistics of each but I'm sure that if a study were made of this the results would prove appalling. Why not spend some time at the start of each season on training in mountain climbing technique? We pride ourselves as being Foresters and yet there's hardly one of us that knows how to climb over glaciers. Also why not give annual instruction in First Aid? I certainly do not mean this as a regional policy, but this kind of instruction is sorely needed on the Glacier and other equally important recreation districts.

The Forest Service is very poorly equipped when it comes to mountain climbing rescue equipment. We need Forester tents, primus stoves, sun goggles, first aid equipment suitable for mountain climbing work and other such items. Before I left the Glacier District I started to gather together some of these articles. I planned to have our CCC mechanic make some ice axes, crampons and alpen stocks before I left. A central cache is needed at Glacier.

Furthermore I think we should sponsor volunteer mountain climbing rescue squads. These could be organized in the larger cities and could be used to supplement our own crews. More important, they would be on hand for year long duty.

I know these suggestions will sound foolish to forests like the Fremont, Colville and other eastside forests. But for forests like the Mt. Hood, Mt. Baker and the Snoqualmie, where considerable mountain climbing is done, our efforts along these lines will undoubtedly be rewarded in the ratio of the time and thought we put into it. We are endangering the lives of our own men when we send them, inexperienced as they now are, out on rescue trips calling for men who can face mountain climbing hazards.

Returning to the subject of the Mt. Baker Avalanche, my experience in this rescue work leads me to recommend that hereafter we should not hire men especially for rescue activities. Using our short-term men is all right, but to go out and hire trail laborers for instance, does not meet with my favor. We had to do this last summer but the men we hired

for this work as a whole did not prove very satisfactory. I am emphatic in saying that I'd a hundred times rather have a crew of CCC enrollees such as the ones we had at Glacier. After the hired crew had worked one day on the mountain one man quit outright. After the second day, I asked for volunteers to go up to the saddle camp for about a week, telling them that otherwise they would only have one more day's work. Only one man volunteered? Contrast this with the response I received from the CCC boys. Every enrollee at Kulshan Cabin begged to be allowed to go to the Saddle camp.

I dislike the practice of permitting relatives of victims of a mountain climbing accident to participate in the searching work. Quite often they can't be kept away. One parent, Mr. Weitman, was very critical of our efforts and caused us some trouble after the searching party left the mountain. I can sympathize with him in the loss of his daughter but he is the driving type that loses his head when he gets in a tough spot. He couldn't understand why we didn't take tractors up the mountain to move the snow faster. He wanted to know why we didn't use magnifying glasses to melt the snow faster - said digging was too slow. I can mention other ideas which are equally as impractical. Late in the fall he attempted to climb up the mountain with two of his sons, without proper equipment, without guides (both Chet Ullin and Hop Fisher refused to take him up) and when the weather was exceedingly poor. I warned him one night of the dangers of going up and he told me he wouldn't go. The next thing I knew he had started out the following morning and had tried to scale the icy slopes of Coleman Glacier. He only reached a few feet up it and fell down. The result was that he then realized it was too dangerous to go farther so he returned - and tried to slip through Glacier without being seen, for he didn't want anyone to know that he had gone up when he had been advised not to. We have not heard the last of Mr. Weitman yet, for this coming summer he will again be trying to go up the mountain.

The episode of the faked pictures leads to an important point which should be investigated. If, as Mr. Perryman says, we can obtain copies of all motion and still pictures that the picture companies took of the rescue activities we should try to do so. At least this whole thing should be investigated for I think some good pictures of this, and undoubtedly other rescue activities can be obtained. I was led to believe that such pictures can most readily be secured through a request from our Washington Office direct to the New York offices of these motion picture companies, immediately after the pictures have been taken and before they have been put through the composition rooms. I was also led to believe that copies could be secured free of charge as they are to be used for educational purposes. I do not know if any of this is true for this was information I secured from only one photographer. We should find out about this through our Washington Office and be clear on these points before another occasion arises where photographers will be taking pictures of some of our activities.

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