

TRAIL BUILDING IN THE HIGH SIERRAS

by

Donald F. Griffin

IN MEMORY OF

DONALD I. DOWNS

Who gave his life to the

JOHN MUIR TRAIL

On September 1, 1930

THIS ACCOUNT WRITTEN SIXTY YEARS LATER

September 1, 1990

REFLECTIONS OF NATURE

Oh! What is so rare as a summer day lying on nature's carpet beneath the boughs of a tall pine tree?

To while away the time pondering the sunbeams shimmering through green branches high above.

To hear the singing of the gentle breezes as they swing the branches to and fro.

As a billowing white cloud floats noiselessly high above, a gentle deer moves as silently below.

Then comes the alpenglow with its iridescent hues.

Afterwards comes the moonlight sifting its silvery shafts of moonbeams through the forest all around.

Soon the moon falls below the horizon and the dark silence brings a deep dream of peace.

With the dawning of a new day I awaken to the music of birds that sets a song in my heart and refreshes my soul.

I have spent time in God's creation, appreciating His awesome greatness and the things He has created.

dfg

TRAIL BUILDING IN THE HIGH SIERRAS

NOTE: The death of Downs was reported in the newspaper as Sep. 1, near midnight. It is likely that the proximity of Sep. 2, resulted in some confusion about the actual date. Officially it was probably Sep. 2.

CREDITS

MAPS: Source: U.S.G.S. topographical map of 1958.

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Many of the photographs were taken with a Kodak Brownie by the author. Except as noted below, other photographers cannot be ascertained.

The photo of the plaque mounted beneath the picture of Downs probably was taken by John Diehl, National Park Service Engineer.

The photo of the plaque attached to the granite rock was furnished courtesy of the National Park Service.

The photo of Bob Rankin arriving by plane most likely was taken by a Fresno Bee photographer. A similar photo was published by the Fresno Morning Republican; however, Dr. Burks did not appear in the photo.

Some of the photos in the author's collection disappeared over the years and the author is indebted to Robert Rankin for the loan of his collection

THE INJURED FOUR

DONALD I. DOWNS from Glendale, California. Died on September 1, 1930 at Baxter's cabin below the Diamond Mesa.

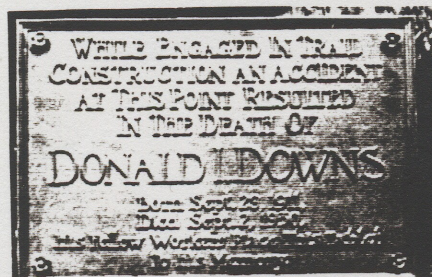
ROBERT RANKIN from Palo Alto, California. Second most injured man. Robert is in good health, suffering no lasting ill effects from his injuries. He resides in Chico, California.

ED JORDAN from Dinuba, California. Third most injured man. ~~His whereabouts are unknown.~~ He resides in Fresno, CA in good health.

*may
be
functional
Dys*

DONALD F. GRIFFIN from Fresno, California. Least injured man of the four. Donald is in good health suffering no lasting ill effects from his injuries. He resides in Ventura, California

As of September 1, 1990



TRAIL BUILDING IN THE HIGH SIERRAS

by

Donald F. Griffin

Spring was nearly over and summer was about to begin. The year was 1930. I had just completed a year and a half of engineering studies at Fresno State College after graduating from Fresno High School in February of 1929. My sister, Eleanor, was graduating from Stanford University. My Mother wanted me to go with her to attend Eleanor's graduation ceremony. Although I would liked to have gone, I had more pressing things on my mind

Eleanor had been an outstanding student. With close to a straight-A average, she had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa. She had majored in English and had already been offered a teaching position in Palo Alto High School. Her professors had been so impressed with her academic achievement, they insisted their high-school-age children take English from Eleanor.

I was at an age where I was feeling the call of the wild--the haunts of my ancestors. My father had been working for a lumber company near General Grant National Park when he and my mother met and were married in Sanger, California. My father's brother, Uncle Jim, had a history of working in the mountains east of Visalia, California. He was part owner of a stage and freight line between Visalia and Giant Forest in Sequoia National Park. After his wife died he worked building trails in the Park.

Uncle Jim had suggested to me that it would be a wonderful experience for me to work on a trail crew for the summer. As I was getting desperate for money, the idea fueled the "call of the wild" in my heart. It certainly looked more interesting to me than some humdrum job in Fresno. I had already experienced some of the more humdrum jobs such as delivering newspapers, being a soda jerk at Deady's Drive-In, also at Albert's Drug Store across from the High School where I was ordered to serve thin shakes and scanty sundaes.

For two consecutive summers I delivered typewriters, holding each typewriter on a stand just behind the seat of my non-coaster bicycle. Although I had a few close calls, I never lost a typewriter. One day when I was pedaling along a busy city street holding a typewriter with one hand behind me and holding onto the handle bar with the other, a car slid alongside of me. Without warning it turned into a diagonal parking space.

I had no choice but to turn with the car and go between it and the adjacent parked car. Somehow I managed to jump the curb and enter a sidewalk almost filled with pedestrians. I managed to weave my way between all of the people and re-enter the street at the next corner. I just kept pedaling nonchalantly along rejoicing in the fact that I had not collided with anyone and that I had not lost my typewriter.

The morning mother left for Palo Alto, I boarded an early Southern Pacific Railroad train from Fresno to Lemon Cove. I had a bed-roll and an old leather suitcase with some sox, a few old shirts, some changes of underwear, a pair of khaki pants, two or three blue bandanas and a pair of new boots, the latter on the advice of Uncle Jim.

At Lemon Cove, I boarded a Packard Twin Six automobile run by the stage line. Lemon Cove is situated at the base of the foothills and after leaving this small community we soon entered the hills. Shortly before noon we arrived at Ash Mountain, administrative headquarters for Sequoia National Park.

Immediately upon my arrival I contacted Mr. John Diehl, Park Service Engineer in charge of engineering construction. Uncle Jim had spoken to Mr. Diehl about me and to my elation he was very receptive to hiring me. As it was lunch time, Mr. Diehl took me to the mess hall where about 20 to 25 men had already gathered. After a hearty lunch, Mr. Diehl drove me to a pack station on the middle fork of the Kaweah River. It was located about two miles above Hospital Rock.

I was introduced to the packer and my baggage was left in his care. Mr. Diehl pointed out the trail I was to take and said, "Good luck." At last I was on my way to becoming a member of the Paradise Trail Construction Crew. After hiking a half mile I wished I had exchanged my oxfords for my boots. I trudged along the

trail picking up more and more dirt in my shoes but I was oblivious to this. The majesty of this wilderness was like a tonic to my soul. After about an hour, I passed Castle Rocks off to my left and soon came upon a group of men working with picks and shovels building the trail ahead of them.

The first person I met was Bob Rankin, a fellow about my age. We were to become life-long friends. Next, I met a salty old mountaineer named Alec Medley, a rather large, well-proportioned but slightly stooped man who was foreman of the trail crew. There were two other fellows about my age, Ed Jordan and Sunshine. Sunshine left in midsummer on a trip to France. Buck (Donald Downs) was to appear a few weeks after I arrived. Other members of the crew were older but friendly and hard working mountain men.

Not long after I arrived, Alec blew his whistle indicating it was quitting time. Everyone dropped his tools at the place where he had been working. Without wasting a motion everyone peeled off the trail and tore down the raw mountainside. The slope looked pretty steep to me especially to be conquered while wearing oxfords already partially filled with dirt. Nevertheless down I went under the guiding care of Bob and soon we were at the construction camp site. There were several tents for sleeping purposes and a large tent that served as kitchen and mess hall.

We washed in the cold stream of water (Paradise Creek) running through our camp site and reported for mess. The cook was a jovial fellow. He served up fairly good food and plenty of it. I had to get used to eating steak and potatoes for breakfast and supper and drinking out of pint-size cups but that didn't take long. During supper the packer arrived with my bedroll and suitcase. I took Bob's suggestion and moved my cot to where he, Sunshine and Ed had already established a camp under the stars.

Every night after supper we built our own private campfire where we shared events and hopes for our lives. Sunshine appeared to be the more sophisticated of the four of us. We never learned a great deal about his background but compared to the rest of us he had been around. Ed came from Dinuba, a small San Joaquin Valley town about 20 miles southeast of Fresno. Bob came from Palo Alto and had just graduated from High School.



CASTLE ROCKS



PARADISE TRAIL CREW

I do not remember what the aspirations of Sunshine and Ed were. I do remember altogether too well my reaction to Bob's stated desire to become a minister. "Well," I said, "That's OK to talk about it but who really would want to do it?" Right then is when I earned my moniker of cocky. But then, later we all addressed each other by this endearing name

One day in the not too distant future found me teaching a Sunday School class in Reverend Rankin's church in in El Cerrito, California. At the time, I was living in Berkeley and I had discovered that Bob and his wife, Madge, were living close by. Bob's invitation to Sunday dinner and partaking of Madge's excellent cooking set the stage for me to accept Bob's challenge. He needed help with a group of little rascals that no one had been able to control.

When I reported early the next Sunday to confront my class, I found out -- How true! How true! Inadvertently I got even with them for making my life miserable on Sunday mornings. One Saturday afternoon I took them hiking in the Berkeley Hills. We had come across a pack rat's nest and were examining it when a cold rain suddenly came upon us. Before I knew it one of the boys had set fire to the dry wood composing the nest. We had to stay long enough to make sure the fire was out and then I took the boys home.

The next morning found only one boy in class. "What happened?" I asked. "Every one else has poison oak," he replied. "There must have been plenty of poison oak twigs in the rat's nest," I said. Burning poison oak combined with the rain moisture on one's skin made one very vulnerable to its effects. Some of the boys had serious effects and their parents weren't too happy about it. Both myself and the boy who reported for class had natural immunity to poison oak. It wasn't long after this event when I had to take an extensive business trip and that ended my Sunday School teaching

Early the next morning, after I arrived at Paradise Camp, found us washing our hands and faces in the icy waters of the Creek. When breakfast was over, we all headed up the mountain to continue construction of the trail. Alec provided me with a mattock and shovel and I set to work on the 50-foot section of trail line he had assigned me. A brush crew was continually working ahead of us clearing out the brush and establishing the location for the trail.



BOB RANKIN



ED JORDAN



DON GRIFFIN



This outfit wasn't a bunch of goof-offs. The men worked hard but paced themselves so as not to become exhausted. Alec would come by occasionally and make a suggestion or two about the best way to construct a trail so it would shed rainwater without washing out the trail. He knew the best way to pack dirt and rocks on the downhill or fill side of the trail. Alec was a real mountain man in the true sense of the word. He and his brother had lived, worked and explored the mountains for many years.

We never gave Alec reason to criticize or find fault either with the quality or quantity of our work. One afternoon just at quitting time I had unearthed a rather large rock that had to be removed from the trail site. I heaved and heaved and just as I was about to conquer the boulder, Alec blew his whistle. He was standing not more than 25 feet from me and was looking in my direction. I had the boulder almost out of its original position and upon hearing the whistle I just let loose and the rock rolled back into its bed. Alec evidently thought this was very funny. He laughed and laughed and I was glad to see he had a fine sense of humor.

When the 4th of July rolled around giving us a three-day holiday, Bob and I hiked out to the pack station and along with some of his friends, Red drove us to Visalia. Here, Bob and I boarded a stage to Fresno. By the time we got to my parents' home there was just time enough to get bathed, pack a few clean clothes and catch the Southern Pacific OWL train to Oakland, leaving about midnight.

We arrived in Berkeley around 8:00 o'clock the next morning where I detrained. Bob went on to Oakland where he caught a ferry across San Francisco Bay and then a train to Palo Alto where his folks lived.

I telephoned a friend in Richmond and arranged for a meeting at the North Gate of U. C., Berkeley. We then drove a short distance to where my mother and sister were staying while mother took some summer school courses at the University. It was good to see mother and Eleanor again and congratulate Eleanor on her graduation from Stanford. She already had a job for the next school year teaching English at Palo Alto High.

My friend and I had a good time driving around seeing the sights

and swimming in the Bay. As I recall, I spent Saturday and Sunday in Berkeley and about midnight on Sunday, I boarded the train for the return trip to Fresno. Bob was already on the train and we retired almost immediately as we had to be off the train in Fresno early Monday morning.

My stepfather met the train and took us home with him. He had been kind enough to launder our dirty clothes and he gave us a good breakfast. We managed to get some rest after our rather arduous journey. As it was a holiday, my stepfather drove us to Visalia where we had arranged to meet our trail-crew friends.

It was late afternoon when we left Visalia. There were six of us and Red was the driver. It was altogether too obvious that Red and his friends had been imbibing some of the old moonshine. Red seemed pretty well under the influence. I think we were all somewhat nervous about this, becoming more so as we entered the mountains. Red must have sensed our anxiety without anyone having mentioned it.

Every once in a while Red would say, "If any of you guys want to drive just say so." Well, I offered to take him up on that but he never so much as acknowledged that he had heard me. He just kept repeating, "How am I doing? Am I doing OK.?" One thing we found out about Red. He was a solid driver drunk or sober. He stayed on his side of the road, never crossing over the line or getting too close to the outside, and never going more than 30 miles per hour.

Finally, we arrived at Paradise pack station where Red parked the car and we all got out and started the 5-mile hike to camp. Steady as Red was on the road, he couldn't cross a creek without falling in. There must have been five or six crossings and Red got wet in every one. We reached camp about 9:00 p.m., and were glad to hit the sack. Early next morning we were back to trail building.

Whenever we encountered solid rock that interfered either with the grade or alignment of the trail, it had to be blasted out with dynamite. First, holes had to be drilled in the rock by means of steel rods with bits formed on one end. Usually there was an assortment of rods of various lengths. The length to be chosen depended on how deep a hole had to be drilled. In any event a

short rod was used to start the hole. Starting the hole was accomplished either by single-jacking or by double-jacking. In single-jacking a man held the steel rod with one hand and hit the upper end with a short-handled sledge hammer with the other hand. He would rotate the drill a little after each blow in order to maintain a circular hole and make it easier to withdraw the drill from the hole. In double-jacking one man would hold the drill steel in both hands while a second man hit the upper end of the rod with a heavy long-handled sledge hammer. A skilled man would never miss hitting the steel drill. Occasionally I tried both methods of drilling but this was not my job.

When the powder man had packed the drill holes with sticks of dynamite at one general location, he would light the fuses of one hole after another. The fuse would be relatively long for the first hole and successively shorter for each additional hole. Before starting to light the fuses, the powder man would give fair warning by shouting "Fire in the hole!" several times. The trail workers would take cover behind large trees or rocks. When every shot had gone off, the powder man would shout, "All clear," and we would go back to work.

One day there was a significant difference in the voice of the powder man - he just yelled "Fire." Everyone instantly knew the brush had caught fire either by a burning match tossed carelessly or by sparks from a lighted fuse. Fortunately the powder man had been able to cut all lighted fuses so there would be no danger from an explosion. The trail workers were on the spot almost at once armed with shovels and two or three water tanks fitted with hand pumps and nozzles. The fire was quickly extinguished and a serious conflagration avoided. There were no other incidents of this kind.

By the time August was nearly over we had built quite a few miles of trail and were ascending into the high timber country. About this time Mr. Diehl visited our camp and asked if Bob, Ed, Buck and I would like to go into the high country above timberline and work on the John Muir Trail. We were thrilled with this idea. Mr. Diehl asked me if I knew how to cook. Without batting an eyelash I said, "Yes." I was afraid if I said no, he might get someone who could cook to take my place. Well I had watched my mother cook and I did not feel it was beyond my ability.

Earl Sutherland was to be our foreman and George Carey was to be in charge of blasting operations. Sunshine had already left camp to take a trip to France so he would not be with us.

The weekend before leaving for the high country, Bob and I hiked out to the road and thumbed our way to Fresno. I had to get a cook book and discuss my culinary capability with my mother. Mother and Eleanor had returned from summer school. It was good to see them again and relate our mountain adventures and share our joy at the prospects of a pack trip to the eastern rim of the Sierras. We returned to camp with our clothes freshly laundered and remembering the good food mother had prepared as well as the comforts of sleeping in a nice soft clean bed.

A few days later the six of us hiked out to the pack station. The packer had preceded us with our personal gear. We were raring to go and felt we were well equipped for whatever faced us in this high adventure. We had long since acquired clothing more suitable to the job at hand. Levi Strauss copper riveted blue jeans with jacket to match, a blue workshirt, heavy sox and good boots constituted our armor. Earl and George wore hats but us younger fellows wouldn't be caught dead with a hat. Acquiring a tan was the name of the game with us. We were in top physical condition and feared nothing.

We loaded our gear on a pick-up truck and headed for Ash Mountain where we had a good lunch in the Government mess hall. After lunch we helped load all of our necessary equipment and food onto a larger truck. We weren't exactly going primitive. There was a gasolene-burning cook stove and another stove for heating. There was a sheet metal oven that could sit on top of the cook stove. A large pressure cooker and the usual kitchen and eating utensils were included. We had a portable table and benches that could seat six people at a time. We had two tents, one for cooking and dining and one for sleeping. In addition there were gasolene lanterns and sturdy steel cots with mattresses for sleeping. There weren't going to be any of our cherished camp fires because there was nothing to burn above timberline.

As soon as the truck was loaded, we all climbed in and started the trip to Mineral King. The first part of our journey took us a few miles down the the Kaweah River to where we turned east off the



ARRIVAL AT MINERAL KING



ON THE TRAIL TO FORESTER PASS

General's Highway and started up the road to Mineral King. Unlike the General's Highway, the Mineral King Road was of about a 1910 vintage or earlier. It didn't seem as if there was a 50-foot section of straight road in its entirety. It curved in and out, in and out for 35 miles or so. At Atwell Mill we passed a saw mill in operation and observed many cabins where the workers and their families lived. We were at an elevation of about 6600 feet.

We soon passed Silver City and soon thereafter arrived at Mineral King Ranger Station, elevation about 7400 feet. The area had a mystique about it as if the "souls" of the many trees that had been cut from all around were lamenting their fate. Also it was much colder than Paradise camp.

We unloaded our gear, retrieved our personal belongings and set up our cots inside the Ranger cabin. Early next morning we broke the ice in the nearby stream in order to wash our hands and faces. This icy water took all the sleep out of our eyes. After a hasty breakfast, we packed our gear and took it to the nearby corral where the packers were already loading the pack animals. One of the packers pointed to a group of horses already saddled and bridled and said we could have our pick.

As we raced over to pick out our mounts, Buck allowed us to how he was going to get the best horse. Buck picked a big white horse that proved to be a lazy nag. Buck could hardly persuade the horse to move. We had a chuckle about Buck's predicament. We mounted our steeds and soon the lead man said, "Let's go," and we moved out after him. The packers took charge of a string of fully loaded mules. They brought up the rear so we didn't have to eat trail dust.

It was a cold, crisp, clear and beautiful morning. We were in "seventh heaven." In the year 1930, taking such a pack trip in the High Sierras and being paid to do it was just about the ultimate in human experience. We had gazed longingly at the Great Western Divide from Moro Rock during an occasional weekend when we could get to Giant Forest. Now we were climbing steadily above Mineral King toward the high country. It was altogether a very heady experience. The crisp, thin, clear and pure mountain air lifted our very souls within us.

The trip from Mineral King to our campsite below Forester Pass



took three days through wild and beautiful mountains. We were up through passes and down into valleys and up again. The second night we camped beside the Kern River. Early the following morning we continued up the Kern River trail to its junction with Tyndall Creek trail. On the latter trail we climbed rapidly and by noon we were near timberline. Here the trail was not well marked. It was barely discernible. I rode off the trail 50-feet or so and guided my horse between two lonely trees that were barely far enough apart to permit my passage. I hadn't noticed that one of the mules had followed my horse until I heard a commotion. I looked back and there was the mule with his pack stuck between the two trees. He was making a great racket bellowing. He kept lunging and finally came free.

As we approached our campsite, we were heading up through a massive boulder field and passing a beautiful lake. Just as we arrived at our chosen-on-the-spot campsite, the mule carrying the warming oven decided he had enough. He just laid down and rolled over his pack. We had a time straightening out the sheet metal to make the oven useable.

The mules were unloaded and two tents were set up facing one another. We soon had everything stowed in some order and the packers lost no time in getting underway for their return trip. We were left alone in this wilderness of rock and a few lakes. As it was getting dark, we lit two of our Coleman lanterns, one for the sleeping quarters and one for the kitchen and dining room. I proceeded to prepare a supper of ham, canned vegetables, biscuits and coffee. We used water from the nearest lake for drinking and cooking. There were several 5-gallon cans of gasoline and what appeared to be an ample supply of food to last until the next pack train arrived.

We turned in early as we were tired from all the time in the saddle. Next morning early I prepared a breakfast of bacon and eggs, biscuits, jam and coffee. No one had complained about the food. After breakfast I stayed to clean up while the rest of the crew left to make the initial start of constructing a trail up through the talus slope and over Forester Pass.

Construction was begun at an elevation close to 13,000 feet. As soon as I could, I joined the crew. With picks, shovels, crow bars, and sledge hammers we started moving rocks into position and

shape a trail at least four to five feet wide. This trail was meant to last through the ages. It was to be part of the John Muir Trail.

I had eaten Muir peaches on Grandmother's farm and I had attended John Muir Grammar School; however little did any of us know about John Muir. I was to learn about Muir later and only then did I appreciate the man for whom this trail was to be named.

We worked, stripped to the waist. The days were balmy and warm with cold nights. Bob, Buck, Ed and I each acquired an enviable tan. Bob was only 17 at the time. In addition to his tan, he had grown a heavy set of black whiskers and indeed he resembled a true mountain man. My short blonde whiskers were barely noticeable by comparison..

During our frequent short rests necessitated by the thin air at our high elevation, we gazed out over the expanse of the Diamond Mesa and the high mountain ranges beyond. There was a lovely lake on the west side of the Mesa. Altogether it was the most magnificent place I had ever encountered.

Shortly before noon of the first workday I returned to the "cook shack" to prepare lunch--more ham, more canned vegetables and fried potatoes and biscuits with jam and hot coffee. All the meals were pretty much the same because that was all we had. Fresh meat was out of the question as were fresh vegetables. The salt in the ham and the bacon was a stimulus for us to keep our water balance in tune. One can become dehydrated easily at this altitude. One day I pondered on how to vary the food. I decided to throw a whole ham in the pressure cooker instead of frying it. The ham came out tasting like candy and the entire ham was gone in one meal.

The first Sunday came and Ed and I decided to hike down to Tyndall Creek and try our luck at fishing. Both of us were novices. We fished downstream and caught nothing. By accident my line fell into the water upstream as I was casting. Immediately I caught a rainbow trout. After that we fished upstream and caught about two dozen fish. We had finally realized the fish were feeding upstream and waiting for some choice morsel like a fly to come floating toward them.

We returned to camp, cleaned the fish, and for supper that night we had a real treat of fresh trout rolled in egg batter and cracker crumbs and fried to perfection. I think each man could have eaten a dozen fish apiece.

Next morning it was back to work with the sense that we were trail builders in the wilderness with an important mission. We were making good time with our trail building.

George Carey, our powder man, had been blasting big rocks out of the right-of-way ahead of us every day and we were quite used to this. We had learned well with the Paradise Trail Crew. Whenever George would holler "Fire in the hole!" we would all take cover from flying rocks. This particular day apparently was just like any other day. It was close to lunch time and I should have headed for the "cook shack." Just then George hollered, "Fire in the hole," and I scurried for cover.

Had I stayed where I first took cover I would have been untouched. But the rest of the guys kept calling to me and saying, "Hey cocky, come on over here with us." Well, why not, I thought. I looked up to where they were taking cover. Ed and Buck were lying side by side under the projection of a very large boulder. Bob was under the projection of an equally large boulder just below Buck and Ed. Quickly I joined Bob who was already snuggled up against where the boulder began to project over the talus. In a minute or so, we heard the shot go off and then an ominous rumbling. It didn't concern me too much because our rock cover was massive, about 40 tons or so.

As the rumble grew louder and closer, I realized the sound was being transmitted through the solid bed rock underlying the talus. Suddenly, I felt as if someone had hit my back with a giant sledge hammer. Our huge boulder and the immediately surrounding mass of talus was sliding downhill and us with it. I think the downward movement amounted to about 5 feet along the slope. Later, George told us his blast had loosened a keystone that permitted a huge boulder to roll down and crash into our cover.

Suddenly I remembered there were to be two shots and at once I struggled to free myself of the talus I was embedded in.. Too late, the second shot went off--- some rumbling but it quickly died out. Somehow I managed to struggle out of the debris and onto a part



BUCK DOWNS AND EARL SUTHERLAND
WORKING ON FORESTER PASS TRAIL



LOCATION OF ACCIDENT. THESE LARGE BOULDERS
MOVED THE INJURED ABOUT FIVE FEET DOWN THE TALUS

of the finished trail. I sat down exhausted. I could hear Bob moaning and I started to go to him but my vitality was so sapped I couldn't manage it. I could see Bob plain enough and it didn't look as if he would be any worse off by remaining where he was. And yet, as I looked at Bob now lying there peacefully, I wondered how badly he was hurt and I wished I could do something for him. I didn't know then that a year or so later, Bob was to save my life.

It happened this way. We were flagging a new trail from the Watchtower above Lodge Pole to Heather Lake. This trail was to replace a very steep trail over a hill and down to the lake. Bob was tying flags along the trail route and with the use of a clinometer I was directing him to the right elevation. We had barely started our location work when we found ourselves moving along a 4-inch wide ledge that had resulted from a horizontal offset fracture of a massive solid rock formation. To our left was an almost sheer drop of about 500 feet into upper Tokopah Valley. To our right was solid rock slanting upward about 25 degrees from the vertical.

Soon we came to a rather large vertical fracture about three feet wide. Bob stepped across without stopping to think about the situation. When I carefully moved forward to this fracture, I could not bring myself to take the slight hop needed for me to get across. I could not move back with safety and I could not turn around. In a short time my knees seemed to become weak and my legs began to tremble. I contemplated my death on the rocks below as did John Muir when he was stuck climbing the wall of a cirque. Unlike Muir, I could not calm my nerves and bring into focus anyway of getting out of this predicament.

I can now understand why a person might jump off into space in a situation like this. It seemed as if the only relief would be to just let oneself go. At this moment Bob called to me from above. He was coming down this open fracture as far as he dared and was extending a branch of a tree toward me. At once I regained my senses. I grasped the branch and with Bob firmly set, I pulled myself to safety. Emotionally exhausted, I sat for a while and gathered my wits about me. After bypassing the rock formation, we continued locating the trail to Heather Lake.

Meanwhile, I didn't know what was going on with Ed and Buck. George and Earl came immediately to help them and I could hear them talking. I suppose Ed and Buck could have cried out for help; however, I don't remember hearing them. Buck had his left arm pinned against one rock by the jagged corner of another rock and it could not be loosened. Finally, in desperation, George picked up a sledge hammer and broke off the point of rock thus freeing Buck's arm. As Earl and George carried Buck the 600 feet

or so to our sleeping quarters, I could see a hole through the fleshy part of Buck's arm just above the elbow.

Ed was able to walk under his own power and he came down to where I was sitting. I would say Ed suffered a blow on the back similar to the one I received. Also his left hand had a laceration that did not appear to be critical. It developed later that a rib had punctured one lung and that led to pneumonia.

We sat and talked until Earl and George came back to see about Bob. They extricated him from the rubble and although he didn't indicate he was in too much pain, he could not manage to get on his feet. George and Earl carried Bob to our sleeping quarters. After a few minutes, Ed and I decided we would try to walk to camp. Painfully we made our way to the tent and climbed onto our cots.

By now Bob seemed to be resting comfortably. Buck was feeling his pain and lamenting the injury to his arm which looked pretty bad. Buck seemed to know that he was going to lose his arm and this apparent knowledge distressed him a great deal. It made him so restless that he would get up and walk around the tent. We finally persuaded Buck to lay down and rest and hope for the best.

Earl brought a basin of water and bathed Buck's injured arm. Another basin was brought to me and I bathed Ed's lacerated hand. This was repeated two or three times daily..

I could hear Earl and George discussing what they were going to do to get help. The pack train with additional supplies wasn't scheduled to arrive for a few more days and we had about run out of food.

When it became apparent to us that George was leaving to get help, someone asked him if he would play some music on his guitar before he left. George got his guitar and sat on the edge of Buck's bed and sang a few sad songs such as the Cowboy's Lament. Just as he was leaving we each shouted to him, "Let my Mom know I am OK."

Earl was in partial shock over the accident. As foreman, he felt the responsibility was his. Nevertheless, he tried his best to take

care of us. He brought us short rations of food and drink as well as providing warm water for bathing Buck's arm and Ed's hand.

Because Ed and I were in such splendid physical condition, we were able to get out of bed and go outside the tent to relieve ourselves. Somehow Earl managed to take care of Bob and Buck, Three days of semi-misery had passed and I was on one of my relief journeys just outside the tent -- to go further was just too much -- when Ranger Clark appeared on horseback out of nowhere.

I was stunned. Was this an apparition? I hadn't heard a thing until all of a sudden there he was. It was then that I earned my PhD in cockiness. I just stared at him, daring him to be real. Suddenly I blurted out, "It's about time you got here." I could sense a withering look developing in his eyes, but he said nothing. The following summer we talked about that incident when we were in Giant Forest. He said he had felt like paddling me. He had ridden for about 24 hours straight to get to us and was dog-tired.

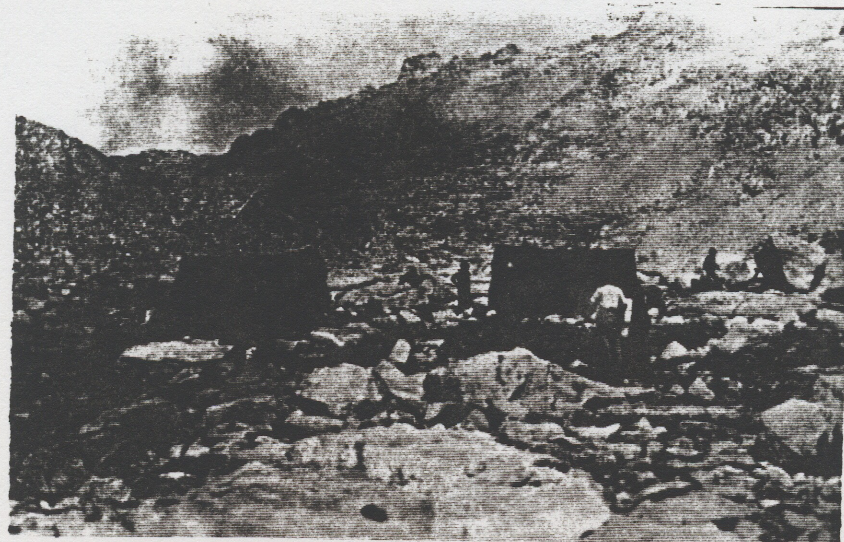
It was mid-afternoon and about an hour after Ranger Clark arrived when my Uncle Jim walked in. I couldn't believe my eyes. He told me he had been working with a trail crew in the Kern River canyon and had learned about our accident from George as he passed by on his way to a telephone. Uncle Jim had taken off immediately to help us out in any way he could, It was a comfort to have him there. He was knowledgeable about the mountains, he had a cool head, and he knew something about medicine.

Along toward evening, a pack train brought in Dr. Fraser from Woodlake with his nurse. After examining Buck, he decided he would have to amputate Buck's arm that evening. Bob, Ed and I were moved into the mess tent and the sleeping tent was converted into a hospital. Gasolene lanterns were lit and Buck's cot was arranged so his head was outside of the tent where it was safe for the nurse to administer either chloroform or ether.

Dr. Fraser conducted the amputation. Uncle Jim assisted by tying off blood vessels as the Dr. Carefully exposed them. Uncle Jim's experience in veterinary practice on the farm was a real help. Finally the operation was completed and Uncle Jim came to my cot and awakened me. He asked if I could get the gasolene heater going as no one else seemed to know how. The Dr. feared the



View from our trail looking toward
Kern River drainage.



Mount Whitney Trail Crew to our rescue.

intense high mountain cold might trigger off pneumonia in Buck.

I struggled out of a warm bed. All I had on was a sweatshirt. I couldn't find my clothes in the dark so I went barefooted and half-naked into the hospital tent. I figured the nurse was asleep and couldn't see me in the dark. I quickly got the heater going and hustled back to bed. Uncle Jim climbed in beside me as there was no other cot for him. It was not the most comfortable night and we awakened as soon as daylight appeared. Shortly thereafter, a group of trail workers from the Mount Whitney trail crew under the leadership of Norman Clyde, a famous author-mountaineer, made their appearance.

Plans were quickly made to transport Bob down to Independence in Owens Valley. His cot was used as a stretcher. The Mount Whitney trail crew picked up Bob in his cot and headed down toward Shepherd Pass, with Norman Clyde shouting directions. Nearly an hour later Uncle Jim told me he was going to take me out on Ranger Clark's horse. I was in pretty good condition by then and looked forward to the ride.

Ranger Clark's horse was a good riding horse and was outfitted with a comfortable saddle. Uncle Jim held the reins and walked in front. We soon came to where Norman Clyde and his crew were waiting with Bob for reports of advance scouts as to the best way to proceed through the boulder field. It seemed odd to me that a man of Clyde's apparent talents wouldn't be able to find his way without wasting time on advance scouting parties.

I spoke to Bob as we passed by. I don't remember having an opportunity to say goodbye either to Buck or to Ed. Below the Diamond Mesa we made a wide half circle and headed over Shepherd Pass. About a mile or so below the pass we came upon a small stream crossing the trail. There was a heap of jackets and lunches obviously stashed there by the Mount Whitney trail crew. Uncle Jim thought we could do the trail crew a favor by loading all the jackets and lunches on the horse with me and taking them further down the trail.

About a mile or so later we found another small stream crossing the trail. It was lunch time and having no lunches of our own, we helped ourselves to a sandwich apiece and sat by the stream eating while we rested. There was no doubt in our minds that the

trail crew would not be more than two hours behind us. After lunch we resumed our journey and without incident arrived at the corral at the end of the trail.

During our approach I could see a dozen or so people standing as if waiting for someone. Uncle Jim informed me they were probably waiting to see the injured parties of our trail crew being brought out. All of a sudden I felt a great sense of embarrassment to think these people were going to be disappointed upon the arrival of a man who to all appearances was unharmed.

I considered the idea of deliberately falling off my horse in order to feign more serious injury. I really didn't like the idea too well so I dismissed the thought. I think I did some acting as I dismounted and displayed an air of total exhaustion which wasn't far from the truth.

I never found out how these people got word that anyone was being brought out unless Norman Clyde had let the word drop as he and his crew came through Independence. His crew probably had dropped down to Whitney Portal and then on to Independence where they spent some time before ascending to our camp.

Uncle Jim made Ranger Clark's horse comfortable in the corral and then we were taken to a hotel in Independence where I was given a room. I ordered some dinner brought to my room and after I ate it, I took a hot tub bath and glorified in the relaxation and enjoyment it provided. Afterwards I climbed into bed and immediately dropped off to sleep. It was perhaps 9:30 p.m. by then.

About 8:00 o'clock the next morning I awakened quite refreshed. After inquiring about Bob and learning he had not arrived, I ordered some breakfast. Uncle Jim came in to see how I was and I told him I was fine.. He said he had received word that an airplane was coming to take Bob and me to a hospital, presumably in Woodlake.

Bob was brought into my room about 9:00 o'clock and placed on the adjacent bed. While waiting for his breakfast, I could see that Bob was exhausted and nerve-racked. He told me the crew had almost dropped him off into the canyon on several occasions where the trail was narrow and the mountainside very steep. He

said the worst thing was the constant hitting of the steel legs of the cot against rocks -- the resulting shocks were most unnerving.

Also, Bob informed me the trail crew was mad as h..l because the lunches had been moved. It became obvious to me that the crew had moved exceedingly slow with Bob's litter. Uncle Jim had overestimated their ability. He hadn't realized the crew had hiked all night to get to our camp and everyone was dog tired before setting out on the trip to Independence with Bob.

Somewhere in between our camp and trail's end, a second crew heading up toward our camp met Norman Clyde's crew and took over the job of looking after Bob. Bob told me it was getting light by then. The second crew took one look at Bob and his heavy growth of black whiskers and someone exclaimed, "Wow! he looks like Jesus Christ." I don't know if this amused Bob at the time but we have had a few good laughs about this since then.

The new crew recognized the difficulty with the legs on Bob's litter. They simply folded the legs up out of the way and got rid of a mutual problem to Bob and the crew.

Soon after Bob arrived I was called to the telephone. It was a reporter for the San Francisco Call Bulletin. I answered his questions about the accident. His article in the paper next day reported that Buck's arm had been cut off with a butcher knife. Of course this was not true. Dr. Fraser had a fully equipped medical bag for any emergency and this included a bone saw.

I had just returned to my room when someone came to the door and asked if I would speak to Buck's mother, Mrs. Downs. Knowing something about Buck's condition, my courage quailed at the thought of telling her about her son. In addition to the amputation we suspected internal injuries. In my heart I felt little hope for Buck. But I had to see this lady and give her some hope -- after all miracles do happen.

I didn't think our bedroom would be the right setting for our meeting. I met her in the hotel lobby. I looked at this tall strikingly handsome and attractive, very lovely woman, a well-composed strong minded person. I knew then she could handle the situation but I was not so sure I could. I could see some small

resemblance to Buck, a big handsome blonde. I introduced myself and did the best I could to assure Mrs. Downs that I believed her son would be alright. I didn't mention the amputation. She was to go up to our camp that day to be with her son. She thanked me for talking with her and as I walked back to my room a feeling of sadness prevailed over me.

I rejoined Bob and told him about my conversation with Buck's mother. Both of us felt sad at the thought of Buck and Ed being left behind and not being able to enjoy the luxuries we were being afforded. After a knock on our door someone entered and told us the plane was here and would depart shortly

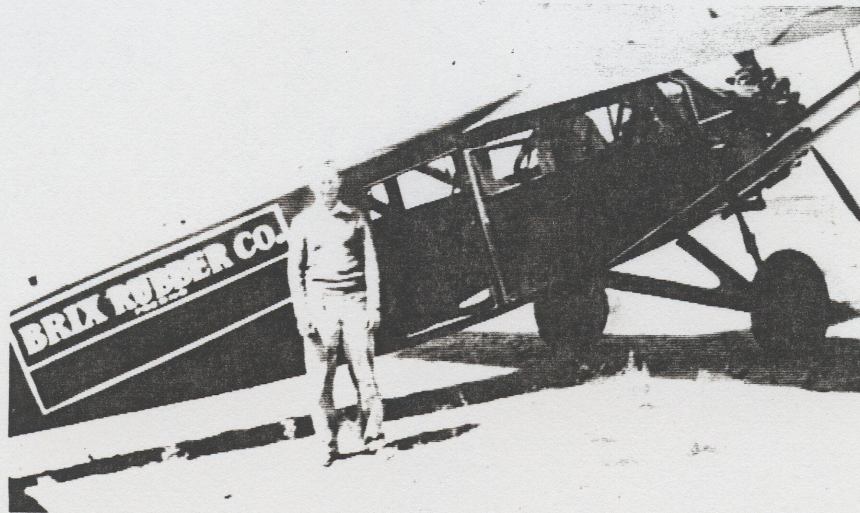
A stretcher was brought in so Bob could be transported. I walked out to the front of the hotel following the stretcher bearers. Bob was loaded onto the bed of a delivery truck and as soon as I climbed in we were driven to the local airport. Here we met the pilot, Jack de Young. A reporter from the Fresno Bee and a nurse had come along with the plane. The plane was a high wing monoplane that I recognized from my many excursions to Chandler Field in Fresno.

At one time I had dreams of becoming an aeronautical engineer. Every time I could save up enough money I would pedal my bike to the airport with camera in hand. I got pretty good at taking aerial photos with a hand-held camera. There was always a pilot willing to give someone a plane ride for \$2.00.

Bob was loaded onto an air mattress on the floor of the plane's cabin. There were no seats in the cabin so the three of us either sat on the floor or supported ourselves on our knees so we could see out the windows. Seat belts? Whoever heard of them?

Just before taking off the pilot informed us the runway was short for his plane and that there was a four-foot barbed wire fence at the end. There was the possibility we might not make it. We didn't complain, we just wanted out of there and on the way. We didn't miss that fence by more than a few inches. The airport was located at an elevation of about 4,000 feet and this fact hadn't helped.

After becoming airborne, the pilot flew along over Owens River Valley ascending to the crest of the Sierras lying to the west. We passed close to Mount Whitney and the view was terrific. Bob



DON GRIFFIN ABOUT TO BOARD THE HOSPITAL PLANE AT INDEPENDENCE ENROUTE TO FRESNO.



BOB RANKIN BEING CARRIED OFF THE PLANE AT FRESNO. THE MAN IN THE CENTER OF THE PICTURE WITH HAT AND GLASSES IS DR, BURKS.

wanted to see the view but there was no way we could safely support him. We didn't know the extent of his injuries. When we came to Walker Pass, the pilot flew over this relatively low pass and we were in the San Joaquin Valley a few miles northeast of Bakersfield.

At Independence, I had asked the pilot where he was going to take us. He replied, "I have strict orders from Dr. Burks to take you to Fresno." At this, I surmised my mother had spoken to Dr. Burks as soon as she had learned of our mishap. Now Dr. Burks was a man to be reckoned with. What he needed or wanted he got. And he had assured my mother that if at all possible we would be brought to Fresno.

Dr. Burks was a man who understood the mountains. Sometime in the "twenties" he was called by an Indian Chief to come to Cedar Grove in the Kings River Canyon to treat his son who lay dying. This was to be a long hard journey by motor car to General Grant National Park and then by horseback down into Cedar Grove. With only his medical satchel and a guide, Dr. Burks rode the long trail to the bedside of the Chief's son. Under Dr. Burks' expert care the Chief's son recovered.

To show their appreciation the Chief and his wife made an annual pilgrimage to Dr. Burks' office in the T. W. Patterson Building in Fresno. I happened to be in Dr. Burks' office during one of these visits. Both the Chief and his wife were in splendid indian clothing befitting a chief. I did not know what this was all about until a few years later when I read an account of the events in the Fresno Morning Republican.

Dr. Burks had a partner named Bennet. Both Dr's. each owned a big Cadillac sedan. Every work day, both sedans were parked at the curb in front of the Patterson Building. A fully uniformed chauffeur stood in waiting by each car. Those were the days when doctors made house calls. When a call came in it was usually urgent so it was not unusual for one of the Dr's. to leave his office with a waiting room full of people. The call would usually take forty-five minutes to an hour.

Dr. Burks was our family Dr. and when I was very sick he came to see me. I was overjoyed to know that Bob and I would be in the hands of Dr. Burks.

It was close to noon when we arrived at Chandler field with a perfect touchdown by the pilot. As our plane rolled to a stop I could see quite a few people assembled to witness our arrival and there were two ambulances standing by. I got off the plane first

to make room for a stretcher crew to transport Bob. Immediately I saw mother, Eleanor and my stepfather, Chester Turner. I noticed our next door neighbors Dr. and Mrs. Dahlgren were there too.

Bob more than made up for my sense of embarrassment the preceeding evening. As he was carried off the plane in the stretcher he made quite a sight, this young handsome boy with his massive growth of dark beard and his skin tanned to perfection by the high Sierra sun. I think the crowd cheered. Bob's dad and younger brother were there to greet him. They had come down from Palo Alto and had been staying in my parents' home.

After greetings, we were hustled into the waiting ambulances and taken to Burnett Sanitarium on Fresno Avenue, where we were put in separate rooms. As I entered my room a young nurse was waiting. Dr. Burks spoke firmly to her, "Get that man's clothes off and get him into bed."

I could see the nurse cringe at the sight of my dirt-laden boots and my equally dirty clothes. When Dr. Burks spoke the nurses jumped. Well I wasn't helpless and much to the relief of the nurse I performed the task myself.

The luxury of clean sheets, clean pillow cases and a bath in bed was ineffable. The day was Saturday, August 30, 1930. The accident had happened five days previously on Monday, August 25. In my present comfortable but sterile environment, it seemed as if I had awakened from a bad dream.

In the Sanitarium we were interviewed by reporters from the two Fresno newspapers. Needless to say the newspapers reported events not only with embellishments but also with inaccuracies.

In the year 1930, knowledge of the eastern Sierras was not too well known by the people on the west side of the Sierras. Had George Carey known how close we were to Independence, we could have had medical help within twenty four hours. Even if he had known, he might have thought of Independence as a wilderness area devoid of any competent medical help.

Instead of going to Independence, George had gone all the way down Tyndal Creek trail to the Kern River trail. On his way down

the Kern River, he came across Uncle Jim's trail crew. He continued on until he found a telephone where he called Park Service Headquarters, Ash Mountain. He probably telephoned from Crabtree Meadows, where he met Ranger Clark.

Upon hearing the news Ranger Clark took off at once on his horse to give aid to us at our camp in any way he could. On the way he passed Uncle Jim who was on foot. In the meantime Park Service personnel at Ash Mountain were mobilizing help from Dr. Fraser and nurse Florence Moore, both of Woodlake.

In retrospect it is remarkable how quickly help arrived after the word was passed. As I recall it took George some 16 to 18 hours to get to a telephone. The pack train that brought Dr. Fraser and Nurse Moore originated in Mineral King. The pack train could have been assembled in short order after a telephone call. I presume Dr. Fraser could have been either at Woodlake or at Giant Forest where he acted as Park Dr. during the tourist season. In any event it took several hours for the Dr. and Nurse to get to Mineral King. It would have been extraordinary for the pack train to reach our camp within forty eight hours of George's telephone call.

The fact that Ranger Clark, Uncle Jim, and then Dr. Fraser and party all arrived within a few hours of each other was truly remarkable. Three full days had passed between the time of the accident and the arrival of help, time enough for gangrene to have set in on Buck's arm.

My injuries were diagnosed as a severely bruised back and two or three minor superficial cuts on my face. Bob was diagnosed as having a broken scapula on the left shoulder, a cracked pelvic bone and several rock burns on the surface of his body where the skin was literally ground off, and of course severe body bruises. After diagnosing Bob, Dr. Burks observed that if Bob could be brought out on a litter, Buck and Ed also could have been brought out.

When Uncle Jim returned to our camp the day after he brought me down to Independence, he found the camp had been moved down toward the Kern River and located at Baxter's cabin (probably known today as Tyndall Creek Ranger Station) in order to have plenty of firewood.

It was September 3, 1930 and the Fresno Morning Republican reported that Buck had died September 1, near midnight. Apparently the principal cause of Buck's death was gangrene which had set in again after the arm was amputated. According to the newspapers, Buck's collar bone had been broken and he had severe body bruises. I had thought Buck might have had some internal injuries but to my knowledge this was never verified.

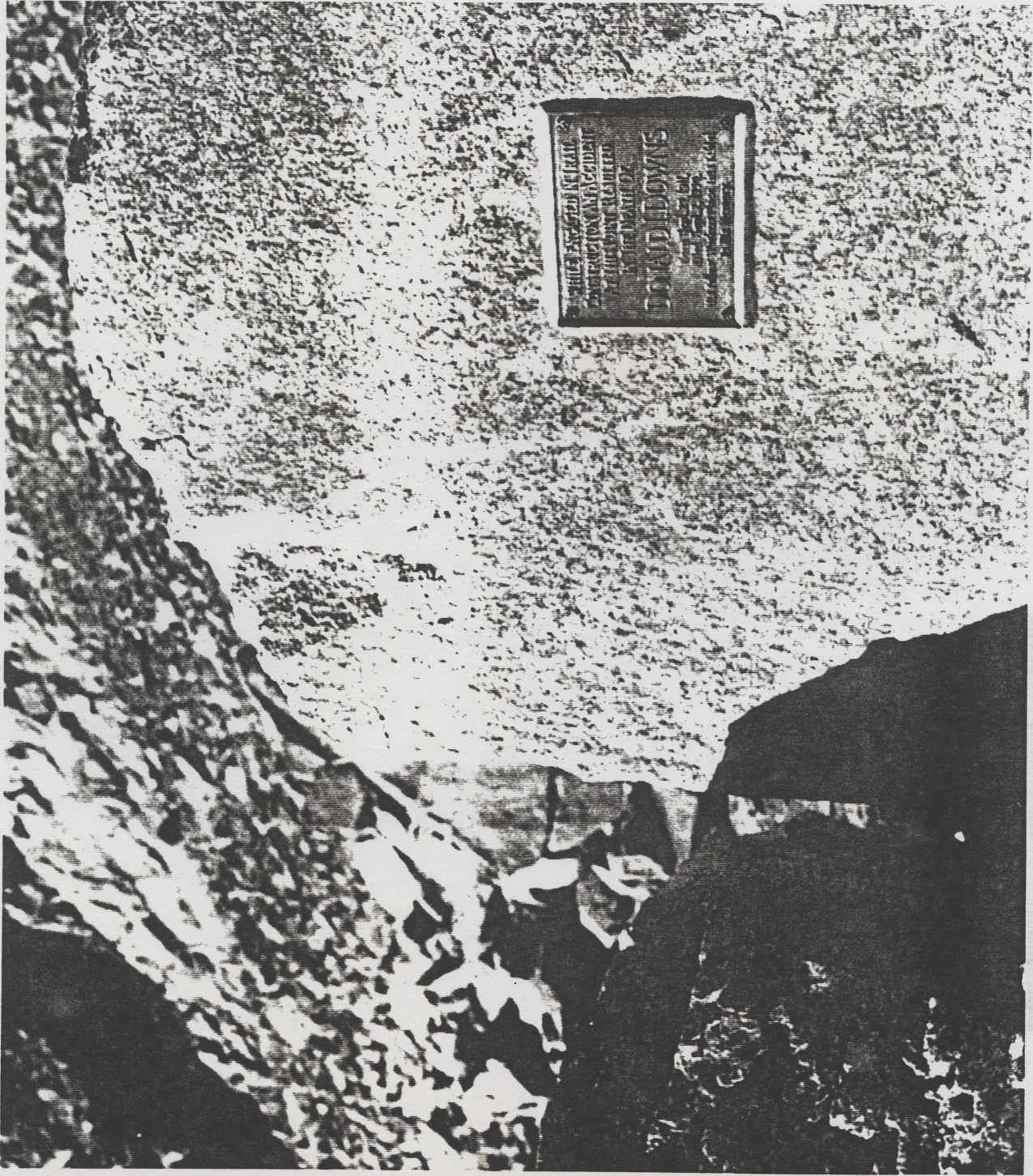
The papers also reported that Ed had suffered a crushed chest but this was not true. Apparently a broken rib punctured his lung and he did develop pneumonia while at Baxter's cabin. He must have been pretty sick and therefore too weak to walk or ride a horse. He was packed out on a litter.

The final paragraph of the newspaper article of September 3, is quoted as follows:

"The doctors, nurses, airmen, park employees, Sam Clark, A. W. Robinson, owner of the pack train -- all of these have written a new chapter in mountain rescue history. With these words did Horace M. Albright, director of national parks, yesterday pay tribute to the men."

Needless to say it was a sad day for Bob and me to receive the news of Buck's death. It must have been nearly the end of September when my sister, Eleanor, received a letter from Uncle Jim written at Bank's Construction Camp, Upper Kern Canyon, Tuesday, September 16, 1930. He wrote:

Dear Eleanor: Your letter came in by pack train yesterday only fifteen days after you wrote it, which all things being considered is not so bad...When I left Donald (G) Sunday morning August 31, at Independence, I hurried back to the stricken camp which had been moved down to Baxter's cabin. I got there at 4:30 p.m., having walked and led Clark's horse (which was pretty well fanned out) more than half the way. I stayed there and did what I could until poor Donald Downs was carried out on a mule, and Ed Jordan on a litter. And if I may have my way, I will not go through such another deal. It was indeed depressing to witness the silent but deep grief of the poor widow. She has but one other child, a seventeen year old daughter. May the Almighty God be merciful



This plaque was mounted on one of the boulders involved in the accident below Forester Pass.

toward her I stayed in the camp four days after Jordan was taken out, washing, cleaning, disinfecting, burying, and burning until I considered it in a sanitary condition. George Carey stayed and helped, Sutherland having gone out with Dr. Fraser for treatment of a lame back."

I was discharged from the hospital after three or four days. I reported to Dr. Burks office for daily massages of my back which had continued to ache.

Bob was discharged after six weeks and his dad came from Palo Alto to take him home.

I had registered to continue my studies at Fresno State College. I saw Ed Jordan there occasionally but we never talked much about the accident.

This is written in memory of Donald I. Downs who gave his life to the John Muir Trail. The manuscript was completed September 2, 1990 sixty years after the event. The events seem crystal clear as if they had happened yesterday.

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Excerpts of Interest From
FRESNO NEWSPAPERS

MORNING REPUBLICAN. Aug. 31, 1930

The two boys (Donald and Robert) were brought to Fresno in a transport airplane of the Western Airways, piloted by Jack De Young of Fresno...The trip to Independence required three and one-half hours, the plane climbing to nearly 14,000 feet to skim over the crest of the Sierra above the slope of Mt. Whitney. The return trip was made with a long swing southward to Bakersfield and up the Valley to Fresno, requiring two hours and 40 minutes.

AFTERNOON BEE. Aug. 31, 1930...

Flying on an errand of mercy that would expose us to death on the jagged peaks of the high Sierra--that is what they told the party of which I was a member before it left Fresno yesterday in an airplane for Independence, Inyo County....

We left Fresno at 6 A. M. The party included Miss Florence Mohr, a nurse; Fred Mercer, who directed us through the mountains; Jack De Young, the Western Coast Airways pilot, and myself (E. L. Hegg, Fresno Bee Cameraman).

We flew to Visalia, where we stopped to pick up some medical supplies, and then started for the mountains. Jack decided that it was best to take a southerly course because he did not want to waste time spiraling around gaining altitude enough to clear the high peaks.

He struck off through the lower range southeast from Porterville at an elevation of about 12,000 feet. For the next forty miles we were directly over treacherous and jagged peaks that would have made a forced landing a complete washout.

It was very cold, but the plane roared along without complaint. The air conditions were good.

The change in air pressure was brought to our attention in a striking manner. A partially inflated air mattress had been placed on the floor of the cabin before we left. When we got to about 10,000 feet the air in it expanded until it was almost as hard as a rubber tire.

Up to 8,000 feet we were enveloped in a thick soupy haze, above which the mountain peaks would occasionally loom. We soon gained enough altitude to clear them. Mercer pointed out Mt. Whitney and we were surprised to note that it appeared lower than peaks that were closer to us. We expected it to tower above the entire range.

Mercer told us it was about ten miles away; while some of the lesser peaks shot up at our left about six miles away. However, they appeared to be much closer than they really were. All of them looked like we were close enough to them.

At the right we soon saw great lava beds surrounding hollow, volcanic peaks. They looked like someone had spilled a great pot of black paint over the scene. They appeared to be two feet deep, but Mercer told us they often ended abruptly in a sheer drop of from two to four hundred feet.

Beyond the lava beds we saw the Owens Lake bed. The lake was a small green spot in the distance. We could see the white alkali and salt that marked its former shores.

We saw Lone Pine, at the foot of the range on the eastern side from the valley. Independence is about sixteen miles on an air line from there.

In a few minutes we reached Independence, which is in a broad flat valley with tiny dots stretching out from the town. These we found later, were sage brush and puncture weed.

After circling over the town three times, we located the airport-- what there is of it. De Young saw that none of the short runway could be wasted and he made what is known as a "hot landing." We stopped with very little of the runway left. It was 9:40 o'clock.

We found that little preparation had been made to take care of things, but the sheriff finally located a stretcher for us. We went to the hotel, where Rankin was, and loaded him on a delivery truck. It took him out to the airport and we helped Griffin in and took off. It was 11:40 o'clock then.

Rankin kicked all the way back because he was unable to sit up and see the rugged mountain scenery.

...(In spite of this) Rankin managed to keep in good spirits all the way back and both he and Griffin were glad that they were getting back to civilization after spending weeks in the hills. It was the longest plane trip either of them ever had, but they stood it well,

We didn't hit any bumps until we got near Fresno. We dropped down from about 8,000 feet at Fowler and the heat near the earth rose up to meet us. It made the going tough.

MORNING REPUBLICAN. SEPTEMBER 3, 1930...

Fighting far into the night to save the lives of two boys injured in a landslide in the wildest of the Sierra, the Dr. and two nurses and the anxious mother had to admit defeat when death stepped in at midnight, Monday night, and took the life of Donald Downs of Glendale.

Word of the death of Downs...was brought by runner. This intrepid runner, George Carry, left the lonely mountain improvised hospital at midnight, Monday night, traveled...through the blackness of the night over Shepherd's pass, elevation 12,560 feet...(the description is accurate to here but what followed is incorrect except as follows)...He arrived at Independence at 12:55 o'clock yesterday afternoon. A report of his 28-mile run in 12 hours, two miles longer than the famous marathon run was given to The Republican at 2:30 yesterday afternoon by Sam Clark, Sequoia park ranger at Independence, who is directing all relief operations