

August, 1960

Dear Trustee:

Herewith is a letter from your Meany Hut Committee. It is not in the nature of a complaint over the recent vote on the proposed snow cat; we give each trustee credit for intelligently voting his own best judgement. However, the problem of access to the Meany Ski Hut is not solved. This letter is by way of explaining the situation as your Committee sees it now.

A ski hut we liken to a living organism: it has "bones" (hut, ski tow, light plant, etc.), "cells" (these are the people), "circulatory system" (have you ever been there on a busy day?), and a "food supply" (up to now, the train). The supply line brings people, money, supplies, spare parts, cook; serves to remove casualties and people homeward bound.

On the strength of a good strong supply line the Meany Hut has been healthy, strong and growing for the past thirty-two years. (We covered all the statistics in our letter of March 28, 1960.) Cancellation of trains #5 and #6 abruptly severed the supply line. Similar to an animal organism deprived of its food, we see nothing in prospect except starvation; a little life for a season or so, ultimate extinction sure, unless a new supply line is created.

Some have suggested that Meany Hut can survive and prosper on the basis of a supply line of back packers skiing in from the Snoqualmie Highway (three miles, 500-foot rise) plus limited use of trains #1 and #2 (arrive Meany 12:01 a.m., leave Meany 4:30 a.m.). We think this is a hopelessly optimistic view of what amounts to a very meager supply line, indeed. Consider as follows:

1. About 80-85% of Meany customers have been coming by train. Most of these can't, won't, or shouldn't ski the three miles. On this basis our potential patrons will be 15-20% of past seasons.
2. The schedule of trains #1 and #2 is completely inconvenient; at the most we can expect perhaps 10% of last year's customers to use this method.
3. With some few exceptions, all of those who ski the trail are people who originally came to Meany by train, returned many times thereafter, developed a liking for the trail. One by one, in a year or two, by normal attrition, these will drop away, and we see no source of replacements.
4. Committee work on supply and evacuation will be more difficult than before; the number of available workers will be less; we foresee difficulty in finding committee personnel.
5. None of the hut supplies; nor any of its casualties, have ever before been carried in or out on the ski trail.

Starvation of a Lodge organism by an inadequate supply is not a new experience for the Mountaineers. In 1937 Walt Little chairmanned a fact-finding committee, which inquired into the difficulties besetting the original Snoqualmie Lodge, which burned

in 1944. All supplies and customers had to come up a trail a mile long, 750-foot rise. Symptoms of starvation were clear. People were unwilling to serve on committee; so a caretaker had been hired; not enough people came to pay enough fees, so the operation was deeply in the red; not enough workers would show in the summer to cut wood, so a woodcutter was hired. The caretaker was subsequently discontinued, and the Lodge operated on a very limited basis until 1944 when it burned, losing money but not as much. The Meany trail is three miles instead of one. If the old Snoqualmie Lodge starved, so, inevitably, will Meany.

Evacuation of casualties has been discussed at length. We have been startled to find out subsequently that many still do not understand the magnitude of the problem. May we focus for a little longer on the matter.

ITEM--The railroad station at Martin has been discontinued; no railroad personnel are in residence. Telephone communication with the railroad is discontinued; we have failed to get permission to connect a phone to the railroad communication system. The only way to stop the train is with arm or flashlight signals. There is no heated waiting room available. Trains are frequently late.

ITEM--Imagine waiting in the winter morning at 4:30 a.m. with a badly injured patient. Will the train be on time? Will it stop? Can we keep the injured party warm?

ITEM--Not just anybody can be left with a casualty for the purpose of meeting the train at 4:30 a.m. Someone qualified must be there to close down the hut utilities. There must be at least four strong men to carry a stretcher. And, all of these men will have cars out at the highway, to which they must ski after putting the casualty on the train.

ITEM--Evacuation by toboggan takes about eight men per toboggan. Under ordinary conditions such travel is not only backbreaking but averages less than a mile per hour. Will we always have personnel of sufficient strength and numbers? Can we keep the patient warm? Are we negligent if permanent injury develops? Are the Mountaineers liable? Can the Mountaineers be sued?

Your Committee plans to operate the Hut as well as may be possible, on the same plan as was used after termination of railroad trains #5 and #6 last Spring. Food will be sent up on the Friday night train, in charge of at least two people. All others will ski in and out from the Snoqualmie Pass Highway. Casualties will be evacuated by train or toboggan, whichever is least difficult.

Still, your Committee cannot help but be dissatisfied with the situation, and would like to see a better solution. Thus, so would a prudent businessman, who had a profitable business from which the customers were suddenly cut off. He would certainly squirm and contrive to find a way to restore the flow of customers to his store. The price of failure to do so is high: (1) Business will operate at a loss. (2) Many members of the club who would like to use the facility now cannot do so. (3) The invested value of labor and materials in the business is not now justified by the

prospective patronage and the total investment is in danger of being lost. (4) Once interrupted, the flow of customers is hard to restore, even though after some interval, new means of access is provided. (5) Services offered will be reduced. No "Nashie" for example.

We have looked into many possibilities of new means of access without finding any that promise success. Some of these are:

- Change of train schedule (N.P.R.R. says, "no.")
- Removal of snow from road by County.
- Diesel car on railroad from Easton.
- Ride helper locomotive from Easton.
- Put flat car behind helper locomotive from Easton.

Over the past thirty-two years the following has gone into the Meany facility:

1. Fifty-four acres donated by Professor Meany.
2. \$16,000 worth of materials, at present replacement value.
3. Thirty-two years hard volunteer work by several "generations" of Mountaineers.

Some, during the recent debate over the snow cat, made the claim that the Meany Committee would not be able to successfully operate second-hand equipment, such as a snow cat. This we consider to be hugely misrepresentative of the true status of things, as follows:

ITEM--In 1939, a Fordson tractor, probably built about 1925, was bought for \$75. For seven years it ran the rope tow; then was used until 1958 for summer work on the property.

ITEM--In 1946, a used 1942 Chevrolet truck motor was substituted to drive the rope tow. It still drives the rope. It's a better motor now than when bought. It runs all the time! It has run for fourteen years!

ITEM--Three different second-hand light plants have been used at Meany for lights since 1939. All of them ran! Meany has never been without lights.

ITEM--The Meany Lane is now lighted at night. Lights at top and bottom are produced by second-hand generators and voltage regulators attached to the rope; those in the center by a gasoline-electric generator known as the "turbo-encabulator." All equipment was bought at junk prices. No failures yet!

ITEM--The safety gate circuit is a complex and intelligent electrical machine to keep skiers out of the upper pulley; far more complex than the wiring in your car. It always works! Mountaineer rules prohibit use of tow if safety gate does not work. No failure yet!

ITEM--In the rope tow are a number of pulleys to support and drive the rope. Come and have a look. This is probably the best-engineered rope tow

in the Northwest. Every item was purchased second hand!

ITEM--At least one hundred different people have operated this equipment over the past twenty-one years. Operating second-hand equipment is what your Meany Committee does best.

The Bombardier Snow Cat we were going to buy is a lot more simple than your car; a lot more simple than the light plant; and a great deal more simple than the ski tow.

Meany has returned to the treasury all the cash which has been spent on it plus \$5,000 in addition. With a new means of access it can continue to produce in this fashion; with access not improved, it cannot. Last season, visitor-days at Meany were:

Overnight	772 x 2 =	1546
Day	128 x 1 =	128
Four Work Parties - estimated		
Saturday	4 x 40 =	160
Sunday	4 x 70 =	280
Total Mountain-Days		<u>2114</u>

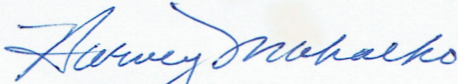
For comparison, we point out the mountain man-days in the July Bulletin as reported by the Outdoor Division:

Climbing	2288
Campcrafters	1735
Trail Trips	1155

Meany's revised budget is now in your hands; based on 250 visitors next season, compared with 936 of last season; this is 27%. This means that in addition to holding the interest of the 15% or so who skied in last season, Meany must develop another 12%, either new trail skiers or train riders willing to accept the inconvenience of trains #1 and #2. Assuming this attendance develops as estimated, the Hut will operate in the "red." Forecasted are failure to earn the "depreciation" of \$800, and in addition a cash loss on operations of \$250, a total book loss of \$1050. We are not too confident that 250 visitors will actually arrive, either. Why is this? Well, insurance costs and the annual "depreciation" are fixed by the size of the facility, and it costs just as much to run the ski tow, light plant, and propane stove for a crew of twenty as it does for a crew of seventy. But, the income has dropped to an estimated 27%.

Meany has been one of the better patronized of all Mountaineer activities; one of the best ski places in the Northwest; and we hate to see it starved out. At the moment we see no solution whereby it can continue to operate on other than a very limited basis. We are hopeful of enlisting your active cooperation in a further search to restore it to its past healthy condition.

MEANY SKI HUT COMMITTEE

  
Harvey Mahalko, Chairman