

March 6, 1984

Dear Bill:

yesterday I mailed to you a letter about my conquest of Moscow Mountain in 1930. I later recalled that the ascent in question took place in 1931. This is in the nature of further afterthoughts.

you, of course, have few recollections of Moscow: You left too soon to have formed lasting impressions. I will supply a few of my own. The geography was especially interesting.

Moscow in the 1930s was a small town in the Palouse of about three or four thousand except in U of I term time when it sustained an additional population of about 2500 students. The School of Mines was strong, and so too the Ag School - due to Federal Land Grant funding. The Law School was small - faculty of 4 and about 30 or 40 students. The 2nd and 3rd year courses were combined, with different courses in alternate years in order to keep faculty teaching loads within limits set by the accrediting agencies. We had a strong faculty during all of my time there and each of us covered a lot of courses. We even published a law journal. It took some doing!

Returning to the geography, You might find my prior letter a bit confusing as to Moscow Mountain. It lies northeast by north of Moscow at about a distance of 15 miles. Thus, the shorter trail to the summit winds up its northEAST face from the Potlatch road while its southWEST face sustains the longer trail. Mountain ranges do not observe meridian lines.

The view from the summit of Moscow Mountain can be spectacular. On a clear day you can sweep the southwest horizon and see the Blue Mountains of northeast Oregon 100 miles away. You look south to Lewiston Idaho and Clarkston Washington (romantic names) but you do not see them. They are nestled in the valley of the Clearwater watershed where that system joins the mighty Snake. The Snake came out of Yellowstone, crossed hundreds of miles of south Idaho sagebrush country (irrigating thousands of acres for potatoes, fruit, and hay), headed north through the Seven Devils canyon (or Hells' Canyon) which is 5500 feet deep with the Seven Devils peaks boxing it in, goes on to join the Clearwater at Lewiston-Clarkston, and then ends by joining the Columbia on its way to the Pacific.

But your sweep to the southwest also picks up the Camus Prairie where the Indians came to dig up the camus root for food, and in the foreground you see the rounded hills of the Palouse stretching nearly 40 miles to the top of the Lewiston grade. From that point the old road wound down over 7 or 8 switchbacks to Lewiston which we in Moscow called "the banana belt" because of its situation in moderate temperature at 700 feet elevation. Margaret Schimke reports that a new road now drops down without switchbacks. Had you grown up in Moscow, I'm sure you would have enjoyed the View from the Top.

By the way - Your Mother once climbed Moscow Mountain. She took the short trail from the Old Potlatch road. She found it rough going; she got hot; snagged her best nilons, vowed never to climb another mountain. She still remarks on the survey marker at the top to prove that she made it. In fact she did climb another -higher peak - but on horseback. We were at Ed Hall's resort (Whisky Rock) on Lake Pend Orrielle when Ed supplied the ponies and acted guide up Pa^{ck}saddle for lunch with the Fire Lookout on the summit. I don't know whet^her she snagged her sox, but she surely got a sore rump.

A paragra^{ph} about the geography of the Pa^louse might be in order here. That great land area st^{re}tches for miles westward from the base of the Bitterroot System. It is loess^{soil} -- made by many centuries of prevailling westerlies which picked it up during dry time east of the Cascades over sa^{mi}-desert (now having irrigation from Grand Coulee Dam), and dropp^{ed} it as it blew on eastward toard the Rockies. There was contribution, of course, from volca^{no}s of the Cascades. Witness Mt St. Helen' s recent contribution to Weldon Schimke's ga^rden severa^l hundred^s of miles to the east.

The Palouse is now rich in peas and wheat - farmed to the top of the rounded hills with contoured tilling. When I first saw the place the ha^rvester machinery was horse-drawn (12 or 15 horse) but t^hat soon gave way to tractors.

Would you like to fly me out there for a visit - and see it all?

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