



CELEBRATE

WALTER B. LITTLE

April 29, 1909 to Feb. 28, 2002



Dancing at Meany Lodge in
1950

Let us Celebrate Walter
His life and his stories
Old times together
With Walt and our friends
For it may be awhile
Before we meet again.**



Walter Little as seen in the "Meany Ski Hut Celebrates 50 Years",
written by Idona L. Kellogg, *The Mountaineer*, 1978. Photo by O.

Philip Dic
Hope to see you again AT Meany Lodge
Sept. 20-21 (Sat. & Sun.) 2003 20



Walter B. Little
Walter be fine
Walter is skiing
Up in the alpine.



A decade ago
I asked Walt, "where do we go when we die?"
He replied with that twinkle in his blue eye,
"the human body is far too complicated to
have been engineered by another human."

He told me once when his body wore out
He would join other spirits and ski on South.
So if you're up at Meany
and powder blows in your eye
Don't be surprised if Walt just skied on by.



"HOW DID YOU GET YOUR
FACE TO DO THAT?!" HE
SURE KNEW HOW TO PLAY.



Meany Birthday Party





Passages

Walter Little, skier, engineer Walter B. Little was born in Tacoma on April 29, 1909 and died in Seattle on Feb. 28 at the age of 92. Walt was educated at Stanford University and graduated in 1932 with a BS in civil engineering. He served as an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and entered the service in 1942 as a first lieutenant, leaving the Army in 1946 as a major.

Walt joined the Mountaineers in 1937. His first documented trip to Meany Lodge was during the New Years week of 1936-37. He quickly realized that this was a place where he could be involved with a group of people who shared the same passion — skiing. His talents as an engineer would eventually prove to be of great value to the lodge and other Mountaineers lodges.

Many of the improvements at Meany have had Walt's hands on them. Pictures show him and many others hand clearing 'the lane' so that skiing would be better the next year. He designed and helped to build the first rope tow system for the lodge which made skiing so much less work and a lot more enjoyable. This rope tow system would be the model for the original rope tows at Crystal Mountain. He was also the construction foreman for the 1938 addition to the front of the main lodge.

While spending time at Meany, Walt was also active in other skiing adventures, both in and outside the club. He spent several winters skiing at Mt. Rainier where one could use the cabins at Paradise — providing that one could find them. A skier would ski up to Paradise from

Longmire and then try to find a cabin. First, the skier would try to locate the bamboo pole left in the snow the previous week. Then the skier dug down to the trap door and climbed into the cabin — sometimes as deep as 30 feet. The skier reversed the process by adding more ladder, then the trap door and then the bamboo pole so that it could be found the next weekend. The big event then was the Silver Skis Cup Race from Paradise to Longmire.

Walt chaired the planning committee to build the Stevens Lodge in 1939. During the actual building of Stevens in 1947 he was the temporary cabin chair. He continued to be active at Meany during this time and he organized the last "Patrol Race" in 1941. This race of three-person teams was from Snoqualmie Lodge to Meany Lodge. The winning team was determined by the time of its slowest team member and the entire team had to finish within five minutes of each other.

In 1941, Walt, as chairman of the ski committee, was the architect of the club's first ski mountaineering course and essentially wrote the course handbook himself. The course included overnight camping on snow, roped skiing practice, and extended tours involving snow camping and glacier skiing. One-hundred students registered that first year and in spite of the war, which began about midway through the course, 31 people took the final exam and eight fulfilled the stiff requirements for graduation. Walt was one of them. That may have been the first ski mountaineering course in North America and it was almost certainly the first to teach glacier skiing.

Walt's 1941 *Mountaineer Annual* article, "Mountaineering on Skis," is considered a classic, describing Northwest ski mountaineering history and offering the rationale for the new course. Walt helped move ski mountaineering in the Northwest from a sport of mostly self-taught individuals to one with a systematic foundation.

Most downhill skiers have never heard of Walt, but they owe a lot to his efforts. Beginning in the mid-1950's, Walt was one of a small group of skiers who investigated the feasibility of the Crystal Mountain Ski area. Walt did the snow surveys on skis into the ski area basin several times a winter, for many years in a row. He was the lead engineer developing the chairlifts that opened in autumn of 1962. Walt's reputation as a consultant in the ski industry grew and he was asked by Wenatchee skiers to consult on the proposed Mission Ridge ski area in the early 1960's. Around this time he also consulted on a ski area proposed for the Seven Lakes Basin in the Olympics. In the 1970's he was also involved with the area in California that became known as Alpine Meadows.

Walt was more a teacher than a pioneer, but during the war, he made the earliest recorded ski trip into the Enchantment Lakes. His 1943 *Mountaineer Annual* article, "Snow and Skis in the Stuart Range," included the first published photo of Prusik Peak. This picture inspired rock climbers like Fred Beckey to explore the Cashmere Crags and the Enchantments after the war. In 1947, with Charles Cehrs and other Mountaineers, Walt made the first recorded ski ascent of Whitehorse Mountain.

After retiring from federal service, Walt worked for the John Graham

Architectural Engineering firm. His most noteworthy projects included his work on the Green River's Mud Mountain Dam and the design and feasibility work on the Space Needle for the 1962 World's Fair. Walt also taught engineering at the University of Washington. He took great pride in the fact that he was given those students who were struggling in their engineering courses and that most of them were able to graduate under his tutelage.

In addition to Walt's activities in The Mountaineers he was very active in the sailing communities — one had to find something to do when there was no skiing available. Walt was a lifetime member of the Seattle Yacht Club. It was with the SYC that he became involved with yacht racing. He never owned a boat of his own but was a good sailor and he crewed on numerous winning boats throughout the years — "Lady Van," "Maruffa" and "Meridian" in addition to others.

It was in sailing and racing that Walt earned the title of "Mr. PHRF-NW." In 1966, he perceived that the rating system for handicapping racing boats was not meeting the needs of the Northwest sailors. After consulting with others, he brought what was to become the Pacific Handicap Rating Fleet system to the Northwest. He along with friends at the SYC put the system

into place and Walt became the chief handicapper. The system grew as more skippers and yacht clubs accepted the system and by 1986, when he stepped down as chief handicapper, there were over 2,000 boats sailing with PHRF-NW ratings.

Rating systems used in the United States have fallen by the wayside, but "Walt's Baby" continues to be used to this day. He developed the documentation known today as the Handicapper's Manual, including Table III. In addition to PHRF-NW, Walt's contributions to sailing include writing most of what is now known as the "PIYA Category Requirements."

In time, Walt became less active in sailing and devoted more of his life to skiing. He became the historian for Meany Lodge as he documented all the work parties and significant events. During the last 20 years of his life he made many trips to Europe and to areas in the United States with the Ancient Skiers and other groups.

He would disappear for weeks on end and you would know where he was by the postcards he sent home. Walt, as a skier, had the distinction of being the oldest season-pass holder at both Crystal Mountain and at Whistler, B.C. Both passes were issued for free — at Crystal because he was a founding member and at Whistler because of his age and the fact that he had skied there every year that it was open, starting in the 1965.

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Walt was directly involved with the proposed chairlift project for the lodge. He had reviewed the proposed installation and had given it a thumbs up. The Meany Committee would like to honor Walt's long time commitment to the lodge and to Northwest skiing in general by building a chairlift and naming it after Walt.

Donations (not tax deductible) to this chairlift project may be made in the form of pledges to be collected later or sent directly to The Mountaineers, 300 Third Ave. W., Seattle WA 98119. If you choose to donate now, please indicate that the money is to be placed in the Meany Lodge Property Development Fund. Pledges should be mailed to Dave Claar at 5100 N.E. 54th, Seattle, WA 98105. They also may be e-mailed to MrBunz11@aol.com. All pledges will be collected over a three-year period and will be kept confidential.

A celebration to honor Walt's long-term commitment to Northwest skiing and sailing will be held at The Mountaineers headquarters in Seattle on Sunday, May 19 at 4 p.m. All are welcome. Refreshments will be served. Bring your stories and any pictures you have of Walt to share with others.

Contributors to this article include Dave Claar, Lowell Skoog, Meany Lodge Committee members and the Seattle Yacht Club.



Ski pioneer: Walt Little

Walter B. Little

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Walt joined the Mountaineers in 1937. His first documented trip to Meany Lodge was during the New Years week of 1936-37. He quickly realized that this was a place where he could be involved with a group of people who shared the same passion – skiing. His talents as an engineer would prove to be of great value to this lodge and to other lodges in the future.

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During all the time that Walt spent at Meany he was also active in other skiing adventures both in and outside the club. He spent several winters skiing at Mt Rainier where you could use the cabins at Paradise – that is assuming you could find them. Each weekend you skied up to Paradise from Longmire and then tried to find your cabin. You first tried to locate the bamboo pole you left in the snow the previous week and then you dug down to the trap door and then climbed down to your cabin –sometimes as deep as thirty feet. You reversed the process by adding more ladders, then the trap door and then the bamboo pole so you could find it next weekend. The big event then was the Silver Skis Cup race from Paradise to Longmire.

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STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION - BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON

1502

493

Record No.

File No.

Registered No.

486
8th Ward

PLACE OF BIRTH
 County of Pierce
 City of Tacoma
 or
 Town of _____

WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

(No. 3620 N. 24thFULL NAME OF CHILD Walter Burgess Little

If child is not yet named, make supplemental report, as directed

Sex of Child Male Twin, Triplet, or other, Only { and Number in order of birth

Legitimate? Yes

Date of Birth April 27 (Month) 1909 (Year)

Full Name Willard George Little
 Residence 3620 N. 24th St - Tacoma
 Color White Age at last Birthday 39 (Years)

MOTHER
 Full Maiden Name Edith Lena Burgess (Little)
 Residence 3620 N. 24th St - Tacoma
 Color White Age at last Birthday 31 (Years)

Birthplace (State or Country) Minnesota
 Occupation Merchant

Birthplace (State or Country) Ohio
 Occupation Home-keeper

Number of child of this mother FirstNumber of children, this mother, now living One

CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR MIDWIFE

I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, and that it occurred on

April 27 1909, at 2 P.M.(Signature) Jacobson

(Physician or Midwife)

* When there was no attending physician or midwife, then the father, householder, etc., should make this return.

Given name added from a supplemental report

Address

Filed

May 7, 1909 Bertha D. Goodrich

Registrar

Registrar

340

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE COPY
 (PHOTOGRAPHIC) OF THE RECORD ON FILE WITH THE WASHINGTON
 STATE BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS, OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON.



Fred W. Goodrich

FRED W. GOODRICH

State Registrar of Vital Statistics

By:

Connie E. Romeo