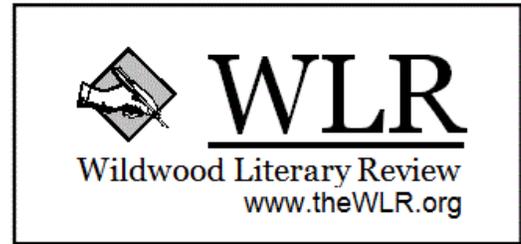




Memoir



Bob Hall

One More Hill to Climb

May 2017

I had accomplished my mission. John was on his way to the hospital, but there was no joy. There was still real doubt about his chances. Would he survive that long, rough ride in the “crummy”?

Worry and fatigue were my main feelings as I returned to my seat by the fire. I was joined by two of John's friends. They knew I had put in a hard day and thoughtfully asked, “Can we get you something to eat?”

I hadn't eaten since noon, and with the offer I was instantly very hungry. “You bet,” I said. “I'll take anything you can spare.”

Almost immediately, a cup of coffee and a large bowl of hearty, camp stew appeared. My new friend explained that he was the camp cook.

“We don't usually eat this late,” he explained, “but with half the camp still up waiting for John, I made an extra batch and kept it on the fire.”

“It was wonderful!” There were large hearty chunks of spuds, onion, carrots and meat. There was a rich sauce with more than a hint of garlic. The extra hours on the fire had worked magic. I've never tasted better.

There was also a bit of amusement in the meal. Growing up we were beef eaters. “We don't have to eat sheep and goats. We can afford real meat,” my father would say.

However, this was a sheep camp, and this almost certainly was lamb stew, and I repeat-”it was wonderful!”

As I finished my meal, there was talk of bedding down for the night. I was offered the full comfort of the camp: “tent space, blankets, whatever you need,” they said.

I thanked them for the offer but explained that there was something else I must do. I must climb the mountain one more time. My wife would be very worried and upset, not

knowing what had happened to me. Also, at daylight there would likely be a search party. I needed to get up the mountain to the lookout and report.

Then followed a big round of thank yous and goodbyes.

“Thanks for getting John out of a bad spot.”

I thanked them for the hospitality with extra compliments to the cook. Hearty handshakes all around, and back into the darkness I went.

I started with confidence. This trail was my backyard. I had been up and down it a number of times. I had even “worked” the trail clearing brush and rocks.

Reality soon set in. My backyard was very dark and rough, and it was four miles long. At one point, I picked up a small pole to use like a blind man might use a cane. Using my pole, I probed my way through the darkness. Finally, I came out of the darkness of the timber onto Coffee Pot Ridge. I looked up toward the lookout and saw a beautiful sight.

The lookout was aglow with lantern light. I stopped and stared, and I was touched. There was someone at the top of the mountain who loved me. She was doing her very best to guide me home.

The light was too small and far to be of practical value but it sure got me moving. I made the final mile in quick time. Lantern light and the first streaks of sunrise brightened the final yards. Soon I was at the top of the mountain and in a long, emotional embrace with my wife.

Bob Hall is a 22-year resident of Lake Wildwood. He retired to LWW after a 30-year career as a firefighting specialist with the U.S. Forest Service. He worked in his native Idaho, Utah, and California. Bob is an active member of the Wildwood community and the Writers’ Workshop. You can send comments to Bob at: wildwoodwritersgroup@gmail.com



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