

## Chapter Fifteen

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### FROM HOMESPUN TO HIGH TECH

**O**N NOVEMBER 30, 1954, A NORTHEAST AIRLINES PLANE crashed while approaching the airport near Berlin, New Hampshire. It was a DC-3 and it hit the crest of the Mahoosuc Range on Mount Success, just south of the city. Hugh Gregg was the governor, he was energetic, and if there was trouble anywhere in the state, he liked to go there to see if he could help. Now he was standing with a group of men at the airport as they were discussing plans for a rescue, and as they talked he learned that the pilot was Peter Carey, who'd been a classmate at Yale. The topography of the Mahoosucs is complex and although the wreckage had been spotted by a search plane, no one seemed sure exactly where it was on the map or how to get there. More to the immediate point, there was no official state organization to attend to the work of search and rescue.

Paul Doherty was there, too. He was the district game warden with the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game and he was an activist; he was always pushing into distant reaches of his territory and learning the ways of the woods. Paul was standing near a man with a radio who was talking to the search plane and trying to get a ground location for the plane. A friend

of Paul's was there too, a man named Claude who was an old woods boss for the Brown Company, the largest timber operator in the area. Claude said he thought the plane was right near the Labonville cutting, up in Leadmine Brook country. Several others in the group said they didn't agree, but Paul told them that if Claude thought it was near the Labonville job, that's where it was. Not only that, but Paul had already organized a group of woodsmen and the necessary equipment and they were ready to go. So Paul and his crew followed Claude's advice and found the plane right where the old woods boss said it would be.

The whole episode was reviewed at a meeting in Pinkham Notch that evening and Governor Gregg was there. He was impressed by the young game warden's initiative and personally grateful for the result, and when he was back in his office in the capital he signed an executive order that put the field force of the Department of Fish and Game in charge of search and rescue. Then the governor promoted legislation that gave Fish and Game the primary and permanent responsibility for people lost in the woods, for drownings, for ground searches in air crashes, and similar emergencies.

The Forest Service was widely seen as the active agent in the New-Hampshire mountains, but it was dependent on a federal budget that was under increasing pressure from Cold War concerns, and cutbacks in its White Mountain operations started in 1950. Fish and Game was a state organization that raised its own money from fishing and hunting licenses, a source so abundant that it usually ended the fiscal year with a large surplus. Furthermore, this thrifty reward was not turned back into the state's general fund, Fish and Game kept it.

One other force was at work. In those days, almost every one of the officers in both Fish and Game and the Forest Service was a combat veteran of World War II: of six wardens in the North Country, two had been paratroopers, one was a marine in the Pacific campaign, one was an air corps armorer in the Pacific, another was a B-24 bomber pilot, and Paul Doherty was a marine doing underwater demolition in the Pacific.

This combat experience meant that they were accustomed to taking orders and giving orders and when the orders wouldn't suffice they knew how to improvise. That was a major factor in World War II; the organization of both German and Japanese forces was rigidly vertical and the lower ranks

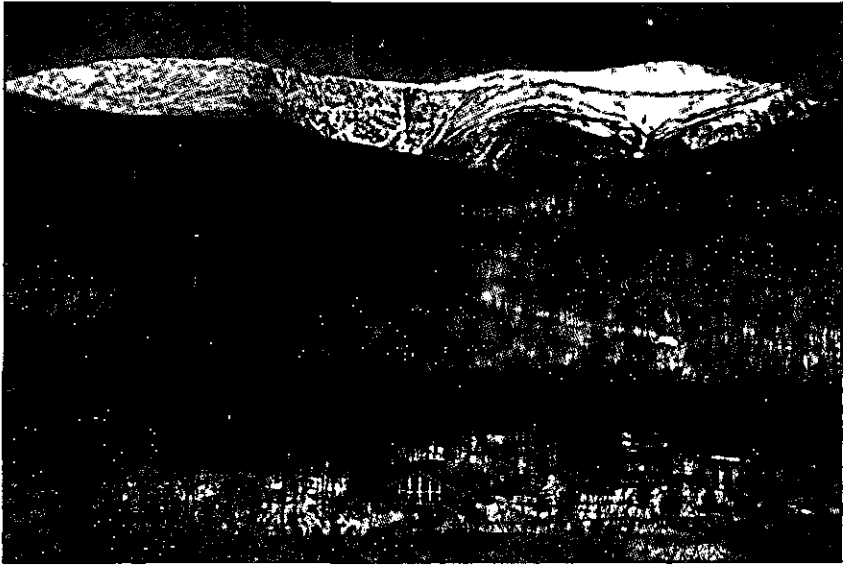
could not make a move without the proper orders. American forces were accustomed to fighting by the book, but when the book ran out they did whatever worked. These habits paid large postwar dividends in the mountains.

So as the century moved into its second half, the emergency format was perfected in the White Mountains and in many ways the sequence reveals the evolution of mountain sensibilities in New England. In the earliest days, no one venturing onto the heights expected any help; this was the frontier, it was wild country, and if they got into trouble they expected to get out of it by themselves or not at all. As improving highways and railroads brought the mountains closer to the population centers to the south, a sense of collective responsibility grew among the keepers of hotels and boarding-houses and the guides and woodsmen who sustained the new age of tourism. News of trouble would call out any number of willing hands, but they were only organized by word of mouth and equipped with their heavy clothes and what equipment they could find in the barn, and their expertise was limited to the best they could do.

These homespun efforts changed forever when Joe Dodge took over the AMC encampment in Pinkham Notch. This provided a communications center and a cadre of devoted young men working for Joe, and when he passed the word they'd drop their hammers and cookbooks and hit the trail. In winter, the Mount Washington Volunteer Ski Patrol was the first line of response to difficulties in Tuckerman Ravine. The MWVSP was a noble organization in the long tradition of amateur rescue and it stood as a bridge between the old and the new on the Presidential Range, something like the passage from the colonial to the federal in our country's organization.

Tuckerman Ravine, like the rest of the White Mountains, had been in the national forest since the earliest days of organized woodland care, but as the number of hikers and skiers increased, the governmental presence did not. As far as hikers were concerned, the White Mountains were a sort of AMC protectorate and Joe Dodge was the territorial governor. Skiing was taking hold in the ravine by the end of the 1920s, but there was no source of emergency help other than skiers themselves.

The Forest Service shelter was built on the outer floor of the ravine in 1937, but to call it by that name does not carry quite the right force. It was built at flood tide of the architectural period that might be known as Federal Rustic, and that original building compared to a shelter as the Sphinx



Mount Washington looms over AMC's Pinkham Notch Visitor Center and Joe Dodge Lodge.

compares to a sand castle at the beach. Those were the days of President Roosevelt's New Deal, and make-work projects spread across the land; it was a time of starvation glory in the halls of Congress, when the whole point of building something was to use as much material as could be found and put as many men and women to work for as long as possible. Timberline Lodge on Mount Hood, Oregon, was built in the same spirit but not the same shape. Timberline was in the style of a French chateau, but the low outline and broad sloping roof of the new building in Tuckerman Ravine bore a strong resemblance to another refuge springing up in unexpected places, and the shelter in the ravine was known forever after as Howard Johnson's.

It was not manned during the early winter, because the weather was too fierce and the snow in the ravine was too unstable for any human purposes. Skiing in the ravine began to get good when most other ski areas were closing down, the high season began in March and usually ran into mid-June, but skiers don't seem to have been at the center of Forest Service concern when they built their outpost in the ravine. The reason for its construction might be found in nomenclature. The tractor route which led from the highway up to the shelter was known to habitues as the Fire Trail, so historians may

postulate that the name came from a Forest Service desire to have a base of operations at this midway point on Mount Washington, operations which would not have a winter component. Skiers, presumably, could take care of themselves.

As spring skiers reoccupied the ravine after World War II, they'd fill up the spaces in the Hermit Lake shelters at the top of the Fire Trail and then they'd spread out in the woods and pitch their tents, sometimes a hundred or more camps on a favored spring weekend. Joe Dodge came up now and then, and if he thought the campers were too numerous or too careless he'd cut the guy lines on their tents, and that was about as much organization as most people thought the ravine would ever need.

The numbers kept growing, though, and in 1947 Bill Putnam and Henry Paris thought, separately but simultaneously, that skiers in the ravine might need more help than a random distribution of emergency skills might provide. They pitched the idea to Cliff Graham, the National Forest supervisor, and he said they should raise a volunteer army, so the Mount Washington Volunteer Ski Patrol began with a core of men whose dedication and longevity were remarkable.

Henry "Swampy" Paris was one of the stalwart leaders and the moniker did not denote vagueness of purpose, he earned it when he went to work for a florist and got his truck stuck in a wet place in the gardens. He was almost never seen on Mount Washington without Clinton Glover at his side, but no one knew Mr. Glover by that name. He was, to one and all, "Kibbe." Nelson Gildersleeve and Sam Goodhue were two more regulars, and most weekends would find eight or ten of the MWVSP on duty.

Sam was an engineering student at the University of New Hampshire and he took the lead in setting up telephones for the ski trail descending from the Gulf of Slides, adjacent to Tuckerman Ravine, for the Sherburne Ski Trail from the ravine down to the highway, and for the Wildcat Trail across the notch. The MWVSP didn't really have a budget, so Joe Dodge scrounged wire from the Army Signal Corps test station above 4-Mile on the Auto Road, but it didn't work very well; rodents found the insulation tasty and there were windfalls on the wire and shrinkage breaks in times of deep cold. Then Bruce Sloat, Joe's hutmaster at Pinkham Notch, bargained for another batch of wire from engineering interests on the summit. It proved to be less nutritional and more durable, and it served for many years.

Kibbe Glover had been a ravine habitue since 1932, a tenure only interrupted by the war, and his stories define the era. He reached the front lines at the beginning of the Pacific campaign and went in with the invasions of Guadalcanal and Bougainville, and he was under enemy fire for thirty-six months; on Guadalcanal his unit was bombed for ninety-six nights in a row and it took them six tries to get all the way through a showing of *It Happened One Night*, the classic comedy with Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert.

It was difficult to get Kibbe's combat presence into focus. He was a small, almost gnome-like fellow of boundless energy and unflinching good cheer, and a typical moment lives in memory. When the war was over, Kibbe and many other veterans of service with the military and with Joe Dodge came back to unwind for a season or two in the mountains. One fellow's mother came up to Pinkham to see her son and one afternoon she was sitting on his bunk and mending his socks, as mothers are wont to do. Suddenly Kibbe tumbled in through the window from the porch roof outside. Surprised to find an unknown middle-aged woman in his bedroom, he reached into his rucksack and gave her an apple.

Kibbe was an avid storyteller, and one evening in his old age he was perched on top of a laundry dryer in the cellar at Pinkham, tapping his thumbs against his finger tips and remembering how service in the MWVSP worked.

There weren't any interstate highways in those days, or even any firm assurance of winter traction. Route 16 was the main line from eastern Massachusetts to Pinkham Notch and, as far as skiers were concerned, the southern anchor was Colby's Restaurant near the railroad station in Rochester, New Hampshire. The Eastern Ski League counted more than twenty-five clubs, and throngs of the faithful would meet at Colby's on their way north. The manager seemed to know where they all lived, and if one group or another didn't show up at their usual time he'd call the state police and tell them that there must be trouble on the road at such and such a place, so get the plows and sand trucks over there.

"We'd collect at Colby's," Kibbe said, "sometimes Friday evening, sometimes Saturday morning, and sometimes after early Mass on Sunday. No matter if it was raining or hot or whatever, we'd get over the top of that big hill in Rochester and see Mount Washington seventy-five miles away and say, 'Oh yeah—a little foggy,' but we'd go.

"We used to drive up in a phaeton, big four-door convertible with no heat, fur coats on and sometimes a red setter for extra warmth. Sometimes there'd be about one-hundred-fifty cars at the bottom of Wakefield Hill waiting for a sand truck and then we'd slide that big car off the road in the pines by Chocorua and somebody'd stop and pull us back onto the road—keep going—keep going. On the way home we'd stop at the Eastern Slope Pharmacy in North Conway for a frappe, get down to UNH and stop for a frosted root beer, stop at Colby's again and write all that stuff in a big book, and, Boom—we'd be in Haverhill."

At the beginning of a new winter, MWVSP regulars would each claim a piece of floor space in the attic of Howard Johnson's, a stoop-way place known among initiates as "Chamonix." They'd keep their gear up there and crawl in to sleep, and during the day they'd do whatever had to be done in the ravine. "You've got to take care of each other," Kibbe said, "you got to take care of each other."

Other sources of help were gathering nearby. The navy and air force and the signal corps were all busy on Mount Washington, and the Army Quartermaster Corps set up camp in the old CCC buildings a mile and a half north of the AMC headquarters in Pinkham Notch. They were developing cold-weather equipment and passers-by on Route 16 could watch in wonder as awkwardly clad fellows made their way across the Glen House meadow to the frozen Peabody River, chopped a big hole in the ice, and jumped in.

Perhaps most important for the future, they had Weasels. We have always lived in cold places and we've always tried to find a way to travel over snow that is less punishing than foot and boot. Military forces needed more than that, and in the early 1940s the army developed their doughty little tracked vehicle. When World War II ended, several surplus Weasels were used by the Mount Washington summit interests, Joe Dodge had one, and the quartermasters at their camp in Pinkham Notch had a small fleet of them.

Other dawns were breaking, too. Gentlefolk of the down-country precincts had generally considered winter in the mountains to be a desperate time best left to fur-bearing trappers and hibernating bears. But the spur of wartime necessity drove a postwar surplus bonanza of warm clothing and improved camping equipment not known by earlier generations; for instance, sleeping bags were rarely seen before the war. This led Americans to the

snowbound mountains as never before, and this migration was especially strong among veterans taking some time to unwind and among forward-looking enthusiasts in college outing clubs. Most recently, the urge to the difficult mountains had been reinforced by a series of widely publicized mountaineering triumphs. In 1953 an American expedition almost reached the summit of K<sub>2</sub>, the world's second-highest mountain, the British made the first ascent of Mount Everest the same year, and in 1954 an Italian expedition conquered K<sub>2</sub>.

I have personal markers on this epochal passage. When I was a teenager my mother made me a heavy shirt from an old woolen blanket. I thought it was splendid and that, with Levis and long underwear, seemed enough armor for any imaginable winter activities. By 1951 I was on the AMC's winter crew in Tuckerman Ravine and I'd added an army-surplus windbreaker, army-surplus mukluks, and a new sense of possibility—all the winter-proofing I'd ever need.

In the fall of 1952 I went west to seek my fortune. Gabardine ski pants replaced Levis, the army windbreaker gave way to a single-layer nylon parka, and I wound up with a dream job on the ski patrol at Sun Valley, Idaho. That winter also brought the first quilted parkas I'd ever seen; the ski school instructors at Sun Valley had them, and in my second year at the Valley I had one, too. Wearing it brought one of the most startling experiences of my outdoor life: after just a few minutes outside in the cold Idaho air I began to feel feverish and thought I must be coming down with something.

I wasn't coming down with something, I was *warm*! It had never occurred to me that such a thing was possible.

All of these streams converged at the end of 1954, when Philip and Polly Longnecker and Jacques Parysko left Cambridge, Massachusetts, for a winter weekend on Mount Washington.

**PHILIP LONGNECKER AND JACQUES PARYSKO**  
**JANUARY 1954**

Saturday night dinner was a major event in Pinkham Notch. Fred Armstrong was the cook and he'd learned his trade in the old-time lumber camps, where



just one of a woodsman's meals might fuel an ordinary citizen for a week. Saturday was roast beef night in Pinkham, and George Hamilton usually found himself in the area at just that time.

George spent his childhood with oceanic enthusiasms around his home in Marblehead, Massachusetts, and he started hiking on the high ranges of New Hampshire when he was in summer camp before the war. He was mustered out of the air corps in 1946 and, remembering the mountains, he went to work for Joe Dodge. George though he'd like to do as many things as possible in his life, so he joined the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game in 1950 and was assigned to the White Mountain region. On the evening of January 30, George was doing his best to finish Fred Armstrong's roast beef dinner and three young women were sitting near him at the table, they seemed to be college students from Boston.

One was a notably lively person and she was telling her companions about how she and her brother and a friend climbed up to Tuckerman Ravine on Friday and made camp and spent the night there. She said it seemed like a bad idea, she'd been frightened so her brother came down with her this morning and then he went back up. He and the other fellow were going to spend the weekend up there, it seemed as if they were trying to prove something.

George listened to all this and it alarmed him. A west wind had been blowing all day on Mount Washington and it was rising sharply as evening came on. It had been snowing steadily all week and it snowed all this day and the temperature was moving down through the single digits. Anyone who was familiar with Mount Washington knew that this combination maximized the snow-fence effect in the east-facing ravine and there'd be a great deal of new snow hanging on the headwall. George was in his Fish and Game uniform and he leaned toward the young woman and said, "Let me be sure I understand this—they're up in the ravine in a little igloo or hole and they're going to sleep there?" She said, "It's something like that."

Joe Dodge was sitting at the end of the table near the kitchen; he always sat there when he was having a meal with the guests. When dinner was over George told him about the ravine campers and said that he didn't like the sound of it. Joe didn't either, and he said, "Well, Jesus, at this time of night there's not a hell of a lot we can do about it." George was living down the road in Jackson and he told Joe that he wouldn't be doing anything tomorrow that

he couldn't postpone, so if there was a search he'd be available, give him a call. Joe said he'd have to find out more about this and he'd let him know.

The summit observatory recorded  $-5^{\circ}$  at midnight and the temperature sank all through Sunday morning. That afternoon Wallace Barnes came into Pinkham with an unsettling story: he'd been climbing the Sherburne Trail on skis and he found a figure of some kind half buried in the drifting snow up near Windy Corner. He poked at it with his ski pole and saw that it was only partly clothed and stony hard. It seemed like the kind of mannequin you'd see in a store window, and he couldn't imagine how it had gotten there.

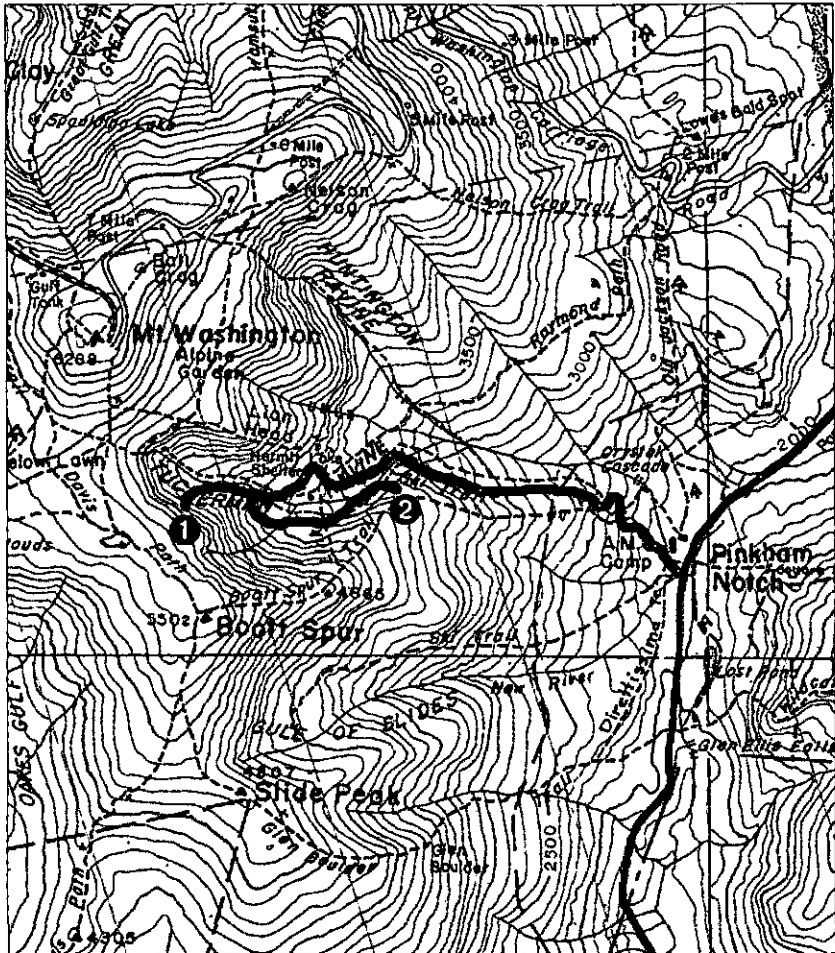
The Sherburne ski trail runs from the ravine down to the AMC camp, and Windy Corner is about a mile and a half from the bowl. A party was sent up to investigate and they found that the "mannequin" was the body of a young man who looked as if he'd just gotten out of bed: he was wearing a light shirt and pants and nothing else. His ankles were heavily scratched and there were footprints leading back up the trail toward the ravine.

The track staggered and wandered, suggesting that the man who made them was *in extremis*. The search party followed the trace up to the foot of the Little Headwall, where it disappeared in the snow, then they brought the frozen body down to Pinkham and the arrival caused a stir. The young woman George had talked to was named Polly Longnecker and when she saw the body she screamed; it was her brother's friend.

Philip Longnecker and Jacques Parysko were in the Harvard graduate school, but they were not members of the mountaineering club. Phil had gone to Colorado College and he'd done some climbing and camping in the mountains out there, but Jacques had no climbing experience at all.

This impulse put them in abundant company, it was flood tide of unrestricted camping and on a good weekend of spring skiing in the ravine there'd be throngs staying in the two lean-tos near Hermit Lake and in campsites in the woods around Howard Johnson's. It was a frozen Elysium, tintured with the fragrant smoke of evening campfires and the tang of balsam boughs fresh-cut to make mattresses for the night. The weekend Philip, Jacques and Polly climbed to the ravine was not a time for rusticated idylls. January brings such extraordinarily harsh weather on Mount Washington that few people venture into the ravine for any purposes at all.

Phil's group did not stop in the woods where everyone would be camping three months later; they kept going up into the bowl of the ravine. Every



1. Philip Longnecker died in dugout near base of Tuckerman Headwall
2. Jacques Parysko died near Windy Corner on Sherburne Ski Trail

canon of physics, mountain wisdom, and common sense would argue ~~against~~ this plan, and signs at the base of the trail ~~warned~~ hikers of avalanche danger in Tuckerman Ravine. There were more signs up near Howard Johnson's and at least one person and maybe two advised Phil not to camp up there and not to try to climb on the headwall because of the unstable snow, but no one knew their plans in any detail and no one knew where they made their camp.

As it happened, they could hardly have chosen a worse place for it. They made their way over the floor of the ravine to the beginning of the headwall, where they dug a hole and built a sort of roof out of crusted snow and ice. They were in the left center of the headwall, below the section that skiers call the Chute; and there was deep snow everywhere. In this situation, avalanches are not just probable, or even likely, they are inevitable.

Sunday afternoon was partly gone when Jacques' body was identified. The early season, bitter conditions and high avalanche danger in the ravine meant that no skiers were up there, but the men of the Mount Washington Volunteer Ski Patrol were keeping watch at Howard Johnson's. As soon as Jacques Parysko's body was identified down at Pinkham, Joe Dodge said, "I'll call the goddamn fish cop."

Fishing was Joe's one great release from his 24-hour days in service of the mountains, and he regarded it as an art form of such noble lineage and exquisitely difficult practice that it should not be encumbered by very much in the way of statutory restraint. This meant that Paul Doherty was Joe's natural enemy on warm-weather waters, but in every other respect he held the game warden in the very highest regard and they worked shoulder-to-shoulder on more rescues than either of them could count.

Soon Joe and Paul and some other experienced men started up the Fire Trail to look for Phil Longnecker. They joined the MWVSP men at Howard Johnson's and headed up into the bowl of the ravine.

The conditions were brutal, the high winds and the snowstorm were still on the mountain and new snow was accumulating rapidly. The afternoon is still vivid in Paul's memory: "It was so frigging cold and windy and snow blowing up there that you couldn't do a goddamn thing." They did find a bundle of the slender green sticks used for slope marking. This was a lead, and they probed on that site but found nothing except four feet of new snow. Even this hard work was not enough to keep the men warm; the temperature

was down to  $-10^{\circ}$  and the wind was up to 60 mph and they realized that the cold was biting too deep. Joe said they'd better get out while they still could, so as the early darkness of January came on they called off the search and went back down to Pinkham.

That evening Joe Dodge called Mack Beal, who first worked for him before the war and was very familiar with the mountain and AMC practices. Now Mack was living ten miles down the road in Jackson and he, too, had joined Fish and Game and was serving as a communications officer. Mack called a cadre of rescue workers and Joe called Major Peterson, commander of the quartermaster camp in the notch.

On Monday morning the snow had stopped and a crew was assembled: Joe and a team of AMC hutmen working at Pinkham were reinforced by Mack Beal, George Hamilton, Paul Doherty, Major Peterson, and seven quartermaster troopers. This kind of interdepartmental effort was new in itself, and it was accompanied by another new arrival. These woods had known the rhythmic crunch of snowshoes for many years, but now they resounded with the roar and clank of two army Weasels and a third that Joe Dodge had. Joe was not a primitivist, he'd be the first one to recognize any advance in equipment and this was the first mechanized search party. Polly Longnecker rode up with Major Peterson so she could help find the dugout.

Snow travel in Weasels was not all the army hoped it would be. Besides the problems of lateral traction, they tended to chew into snowdrifts rather than climb over them, so the combined forces on the Fire Trail had to do considerable digging to clear the way. When the group reached Howard Johnson's they parked the Weasels and put on snowshoes and skis to climb the Little Headwall to the bowl of the ravine. Progress slowed here. So much snow had drifted onto the slope that snowshoes wouldn't hold and the men's progress was often more like upward floundering than a steady ascent.

Paul Doherty loved backwoods tales and as he struggled up the Little Headwall he thought of the days almost 100 years earlier when gold-rushers climbed up the endless, heartbreaking pass outside Juneau, Alaska, heading for the Klondike. Those men wore whatever they found in their closets at home or in the outfitters' stores in Juneau. Now some of the men around Paul were wearing outfits better suited to skiing, Joe Dodge had a cold-weather navy jacket and Alaskan mukluks on his feet, the soldiers had the cold-weather gear they'd been developing at the quartermasters' base, and George

Hamilton had an arctic outfit developed for the navy. Mack Beal's turnout was particularly notable. He was in the Pacific submarine fleet during the war and when hostilities were over he mustered out and joined a weather bureau mission to Thule, Greenland, where he'd acquired a pair of Eskimo boots made in the traditional way with chewed leather and finished with beautiful sewing and insulation made of arctic grass. Mack's father was a textile broker with special interests in long-staple fibers, so Mack gave him a very fine parka made of Egyptian cotton that was virtually windproof. Mack eventually got it back and he paired it with his Eskimo boots for this day's work.

Paul Doherty was well equipped, too. The quartermaster men had an advanced base in the old Halfway House, four miles up the auto road, and they accumulated a considerable store of experimental clothing there. Paul understood the hardships that army rations can inflict, so he'd bring venison steaks up to the men and in return they'd provide him with the best in new cold-weather gear, sort of an inter-service relief program.

Monday was still bitterly cold, but the clouds had lifted to the upper reaches of Mount Washington and the ravine was clear. The combined forces totaled twenty-five and when they reached the ravine they saw that the whole headwall had avalanched. There was a deep fracture line about two-thirds of the way up the headwall and Joe knew that more snow could break loose at any moment, so the first thing he did was station a man farther out on the floor of the ravine to watch for more slides. The search party realized that the new slide reduced their chances of success and new snow was still drifting in, so any kind of low shelter would be buried under a smooth surface that gave no hint of what was underneath.

Polly Longnecker had never been in the ravine before this week and she'd only seen it through a disorienting blur of blowing snow when she was up there with her brother and Jacques. George Hamilton felt a sort of brotherly sympathy for her; she seemed like a genteel young woman and totally out of her element in the winter mountains, and now her brother was probably dead. She was obviously apprehensive, but George thought she seemed reassured by having Joe Dodge and his AMC crew and the game wardens and the army on her side—this was the varsity team. Polly tried to get a sense of where they'd made the dugout and pointed the search party to that spot. It was on the first rise of the headwall, the kind of place that would suggest itself to novice winter campers who wanted a snow shelter without all the



In January of 1954, Philip and Polly Longnecker and Jacques Parysko climbed up to Tuckerman Ravine and fashioned a dugout at the base of the headwall. Polly returned to the valley, while Philip and Jacques stayed in the ravine. Here Polly watches from the foreground while the recovery team digs trenches in the avalanche debris while searching for the body of her brother Philip.

work of building an igloo; here, they could dig into the slope and geometry would do part of the work for them.

The men of the rescue party started at the left side of the likely area and dug four long trenches, each about four feet deep. This effort did not uncover the shelter or any camping debris, so they probed the spaces in between with aluminum rods. This is subtle work; the probers have to interpret the feel of the push to know if resistance means a change in snow texture or a scrub spruce or a rock or campsite debris or a body. This is the first part of the ravine to lose the afternoon sun, and as the shadow slid down the headwall to cover them a cutting wind sprang up. Soon after 1:00 P.M. they struck the wrecked campsite. In that same hour Durban Longnecker, Phil's father, reached Pinkham after flying from Toledo, Ohio. Major Peterson had driven a fourth Weasel up to Howard Johnson's and Polly rode back down the mountain to join her father.

Up in the ravine, the men found an orange, then an ice axe and then a pair of crampons, then boots, a small gas stove, a hunting knife, a pair of pants and some food—all scattered through the packed snow like the relics of some lost civilization. Finally they came to the body of Philip Longnecker, and at 1:30 P.M. word was radioed down from the ravine and Durban Longnecker learned that his son was dead. The roof of the dugout had collapsed and Jacques Parysko's empty sleeping bag was next to Phil, and his boots and his socks and his mittens and his warm pants and his jacket were next to his sleeping bag.

Four feet of densely-packed snow rested on top of the camp. The men dug straight down through this burden to clear the campsite, and as they worked they noticed that the snow face they cut did not show the mixing pattern that would be expected in the remains of an avalanche. It was evenly stratified all the way down to the broken snow of the camp preparations. The first and most obvious assumption was that the dugout had been swamped by an avalanche of new snow hanging on the slopes above them, but the stratification was typical of an undisturbed snowfall and suggested that this had not happened.

Thirty feet farther down the slope, the rescue party found more of the marker sticks the MWVSP men had seen the previous afternoon; in fact, they were probably from the same bundle. It was important to learn the cause of the young men's death, so the rescuers dug sample holes near the sticks. They cut down through almost six feet of new snow before they hit the old crust and the upper levels were stratified but the lower part, more than half of the total, was not. This bottom layer also held irregular pieces of ice and frozen snow, and these could have been torn loose from some place higher up the slope or they could have been part of the roof the campers built over their dugout.

The men of the rescue party studied the contradictory clues and worked out a sequence of events that made sense. Joe Dodge thought that a rather small slide of new snow had come down during the night and swept past the camp but not directly over it. There was enough mass in the slide to knock loose the roof of the dugout, but it was at the edge of the slide and the volume of snow wasn't a large enough to bury the camp. Then a larger slide came down later and buried the site.



Published accounts of the accident reported that there was a heavy block of ice on Phil's head and he died from the impact. Those who were most closely involved in freeing his body do not remember any block of ice or any sign of trauma on his head. On the contrary, they were struck by how peaceful and composed he looked, as if he was in an undisturbed sleep.

This suggested a different cause of death. The snow on the headwall was very cold and powdery. When a slide of this type comes down there's a pressure blowout on the sides, and if the slide brushed the camp as Joe supposed, a dense mist of snow would fill the dugout and Phil would breathe it in, but he would not breathe it out. One of the officers involved in the rescue remembers that the coroner found water in Phil's lungs; from a medical point of view, he drowned.

Opinion was divided on what happened to Jacques. Some thought he'd gotten up to answer a call of nature just before the slide and he was out of the way when it hit. Then, terrified beyond reason, he ran for help without pulling on any clothes or looking to see what had happened to Phil. There was a problem here. He might answer the call without getting into his heavy clothes, but he'd probably pull on his boots. This suggested a different scenario. According to this theory, Jacques woke up in the midst of the slide and his only thought was to get away as fast as he could, so he jumped out of his sleeping bag and ran away downslope in a panic.

In either case, dawn was far enough along so he could see and he ran out across the floor of the ravine and on down over the Little Headwall and down the Sherburne Trail to Windy Corner before he collapsed. This desperate flight took him past three emergency telephones that connected to the AMC base camp, and he died within shouting distance of ten more people staying in the Harvard Cabin just off the Sherburne Trail.

Jacques had seen all these sources of help during the previous days, but they did not register with him in that awful dawn. The rescuers also realized that if the two campers had made the extra effort of digging a cave into the slope instead of covering over a hole with loose debris, they would have been protected by a roof of smooth compacted snow, and the small slide would have passed them without any damage. There was another alternative: they could have listened to the advice of the people they met and heeded the signs warning them not to go into the ravine.

The afternoon was almost gone when the men finished their work at the campsite, so they lashed Phil's body to a toboggan and headed for the Little Headwall. They could sit on their snowshoes and slide down the headwall much faster than they'd climbed up that morning, but the slope was too steep to manage the toboggan very well, so they wrapped a rope around an ice axe driven into the snow and snubbed their burden down to easier terrain.

The Weasels were loaded with the searchers and their sad discovery, and the machines made heavy work of it on the way down to the highway. True to their reputation, one of them slid over the edge of the trail on a sharp turn and seemed certain to capsize, but the army driver kept the momentum going and the Weasel scabbled back onto the trail. Another quartermaster Weasel went over the edge, too, and it hit a tree and caught one of the soldier's boots. The man pulled his foot free, but the Weasel proved to be more intractable and it had to be retrieved the next day.

Phil owned a jeep and he'd driven his sister Polly and his friend Jacques up to Pinkham to start their days on Mount Washington. Before Durban and Polly Longnecker left for Toledo they gave the jeep to Joe Dodge and it served many useful years at Pinkham.