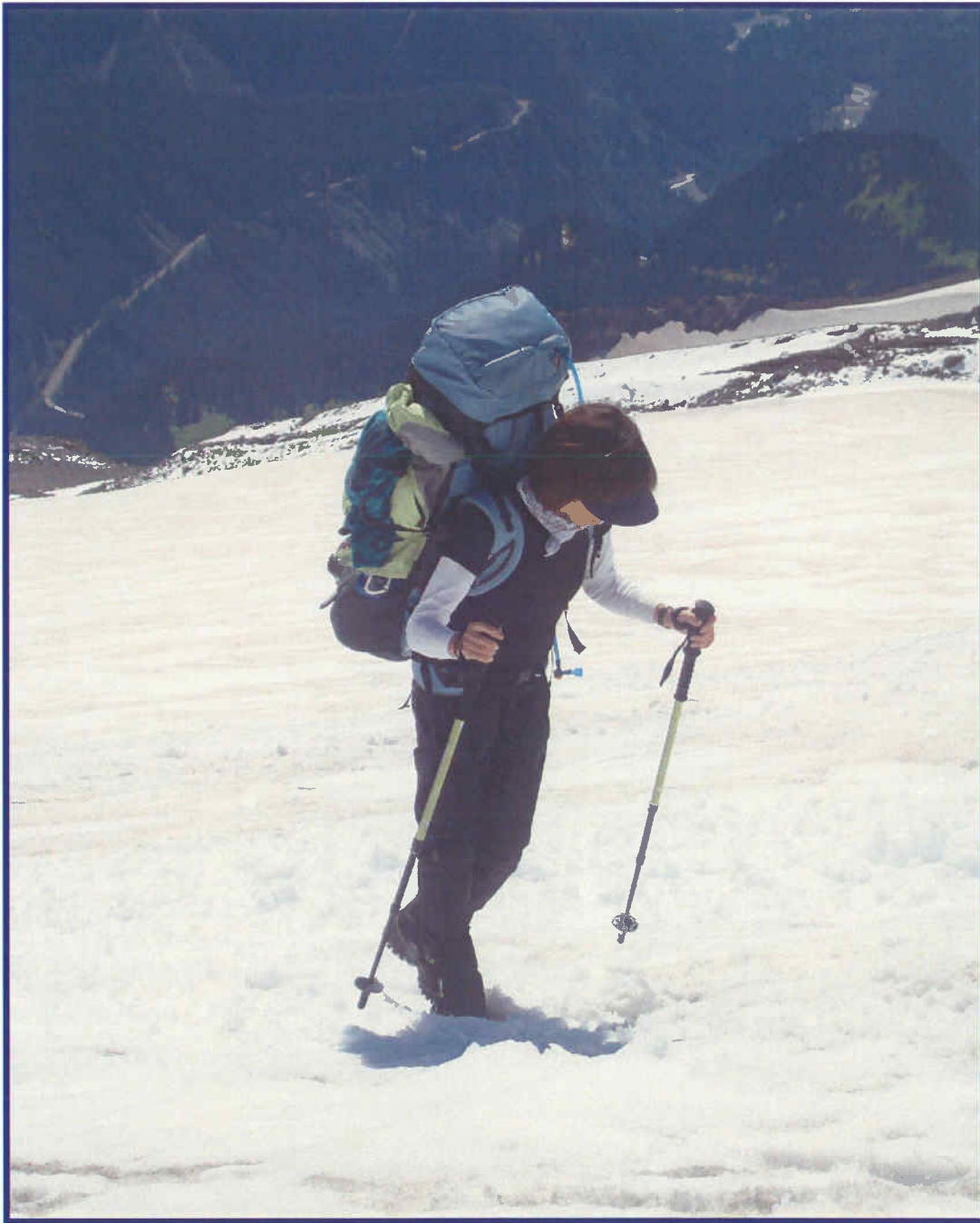


## *Mount Rainier 2*

*The closing chapter*



Although my mind was not so clear, I knew I had made it. After 7 1/2 hours grueling climb, I finally stood on top of Mt. Rainier. It was 7:45am and the bright orange sun was on the edge of the horizon, but I did not exert myself to enjoy the sunrise. The climb was too hard, so hard that I had to contemplate every single step. The air was too thin, so thin that my brain began to fall asleep. But I finally made it. I have fulfilled the promise that I made to Mt. Rainier and myself fourteen months ago.

*By Chi S. Chan  
Augusts 4, 2008*

## **F**ailure of last year climbs

It was fourteen months ago that I bid my farewell to the mountain. That morning on my way back to the Paradise parking lot, I took a last look at the snowcapped summit of Rainier and made a promise to myself that someday, I would return. Today, I stand on the Muir snowfield and face the mountain again. This time, I feel much more confident that I will make it.



*My new hiking partners: Koti & QT*

Looking back a year ago, I realize it was really a foolish and irresponsible attempt to climb Rainier on my part. Not only did I lack of the necessary mountaineering skill, but also I had the audacity of climbing Rainer without going to the training school. It was lucky that I did not summit that night, if I did, I would have end up seriously injured if not death. Today, with my two new climbing partners: Koti and Quang, I feel more at ease. They both are very young and inexperienced, but because of that, they will be more willing to learn, to listen and to accept any help we can get. I look at these two and cannot help but envying them. They have found their passion in such young age and they will have a whole life ahead of them to explore for more adventures.

## **R**ainier Mountaineering Inc (RMI)



*Ed Viesturs, a world class climber*

About ten months ago, three of us decided to sign up with RMI; a reputable commercial guiding company in the Tacoma area. Most of the guides from RMI are experienced climbers; Ed Viesturs, Eric Simonson and Peter Whittaker are just a few whose names appeared in many issues of the "Outside" and "Adventure" magazines. It is, however, not the reason why I chose RMI as our outfitter; it is RMI guiding philosophy that impresses me. I read story about how a team of clients was turned around right before the summit just because one of the clients was a danger to the team. "Safety" is their only concern. I am impressed by that.

## August in Paradise

We arrive at Rainier National Park on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August. All the snow below Pebble Creek is completely melted. August in Paradise area is just beautiful. Wild flowers cover the entire Muir snow field with such an explosive colors; red, yellow, white, green, purple and blue. The scenery is so much different from that of last year. I am glad to come back. Even if I cannot reach the summit again, seeing this is already well worth it.



*We spotted many wild lives along the*

## Our Guide

Next day, we drive up to RMI head quarter, meet our guide Paul Edgren and other teammates. Our teammates consist of old and young, some are in good shape, some are not. Paul “screens” at his clients closely, asks questions about our background and climbing experience. He later checks on our equipments and suggests additional rental to



*Paul is a good looking “dude”*

ensure the safety of our climb. Koti and QT lack most of the climbing gears and they both end up spending a few hundred dollars on the rental. Even I have most of the climbing gears; I still have to rent a hamlet and an avalanche receiver. The avalanche receiver alone weight nearly 3 lbs. It adds additional weight to our already very heavy backpack. Paul goes on about “eating”. He is very serious about how we should eat,

*“You need to eat, eat every time we have a break. You will be burning 20,000 calories up at the mountain, so I want you to keep eating. The higher the calories, the better”*

The most discouraging news from Paul is: no pictures taken unless we are given the permission to do so.

*“This week you are a climber, not a photographer. Up at the slope of Mt. Rainer, I do not want to see you hold a camera in one hand and an ice axe in the other... by doing so, you are not only jeopardizing your own safety but also the safety of your teammates.”*

I knew about this policy by reading stories from the internet. The policy does not bother me so much as it only shows the professionalism of RMI.

## Training School

The following day, Paul and Eric, his assistance take us to a snow fields above the Paradise area for training. Mt. Rainier in August does not guarantee warmer and drier weather. The snow begins to fall when we reach the lower section of the glacier. Paul and Eric waste no time to show us all the techniques about self arrest.



*Training school and snow in August*

First, we practice sliding down the hill many different ways: head first on stomach, head first on your back, feet first on stomach, and feet first on your back, and at the same time yelling “falling”, turning over so you are facing the snow, digging the ice axe into the snow, and finally kicking your feet in. The purpose of this is if your teammate on your rope team falls into a crevasse, you can stop him/her. It is fun time; the guides are very friendly and helpful. With all the lessons given, I seem to have problem remembering the “rest step” and “pressure breathing”. Using the rest step is using the least amount of energy and muscle strain to achieve a single, elevated step. Maybe I am trying too hard, I just could not do it right. I hope with more practice, the technique will come naturally as I climb.

The weather turns to worse, sleet and wet snow is coming down ceaselessly. By noon, we are all soaking wet and chill to the bones. Paul decides to cut the whole day training section to half. He sends us home early so we can dry out all our equipments. We are scheduled to meet early next morning and start our 1<sup>st</sup> day climb to Muir base camp.

Back to our cabin, Koti, QT and I are still very excited about all the lessons we learned today. We dry our equipments by the fire place, pack sandwiches, breakfasts and dinners for the three days upcoming climb. This is the first adventure for Koti and QT, neither one of them is fully aware of hardship and danger of this forthcoming climb. They are joking and cooking in the kitchen with no sign of worry. They cook me a big pasta dinner which turns out to be delicious, nutritious and filling. We go to bed with a full stomach.



*Our teammates, old and young*

## Climb to Camp Muir

We rise very early next morning; cram every climbing gears on the RMI checklist to our packs, which includes 3 pairs of gloves, 2 headlamps with extra batteries, food for three days, two quarts of water, sleeping bag, down and Gore-Tex shell jackets and pants, plastic boots and ice axe, avalanche receiver, helmet, crampon, snow goggles, harness and camera,

all together weights definitely more from 40 pounds.

From Paradise (5,500 ft) to Camp Muir (10,100 ft), average 4-6 hours climb depends on how fit you are. Last year, George and I took nearly 7 hours to reach the camp, not a very good timing. The shuttle bus drops us off by Paradise Inn. The sun just breaks through the clouds. The weather is perfect, blue sky, no wind; temperature is at a lower 60s. I look up to the mountain and pray the weather will hold for another two more days.

Paul gives us a short briefing about the Day 1 hiking plan. There will be three rest stops along the way. Each break will last no more than 15 minutes. "If you can not catch up, step aside and let your teammate pass you." Paul's command sounds so insensitive, which remains me a famous quote from Peter Whittaker, another world class climber:

**"On the upper mountain, if you are not an asset to your rope team, if you become a liability, we will have to leave you."**



*Koti and I taking a break at Pebble Creek*

Following the Skyline Trail to Pan Point, continue to Pebble Creek at 7,200 ft, we take our first break. Paul urges us to eat, and drink. With Mt Rainier looms behind me, the nightmare of last year climbs returns. I immediately block my mind and concentrate on the view below us. The weather today can not be more ideal. The sky is clear with no trace of clouds. The slope right above Paradise parking lot covers with bright green summer color, a big contrast with the dazzling white of the glacier just a few hundred feet above. Koti, QT and I both feel great. Shortly after the break, the eldest member of the team decides to call a quit. Eric, the assistant guide, takes him down to the parking lot.



*QT is slowing down*

The team moves on the long slog up asphalt path and onto the Muir snowfield. About ten minutes before reaching Anvil Rock, QT begins to show sign of trouble. He is over-heated, drops of sweat falling down from his forehead. With a trembling voice, QT asks Paul to stop. Paul either did not hear him or just ignored him, he keeps the group moving. QT is falling behind alone. I look back at him and then look up to the team, have no choice but leaving him behind. Five minutes later, I have a cramp on my right foot. I feel the calf muscle is tightened and it begins to hurt. I stop; rest and hope the pain will go away. The team is moving away further and further, and I decide to wait for QT. Minutes later, QT with Eric next to him is approaching me. Amazing, Eric already catches us with us; he is such a strong climber.

QT is totally dehydrated. He is a little disoriented and keeps asking me for water. He almost finishes his bottle. Eric goes off the snowfield and refills QT's water bottle with some snow, hoping it will melt enough to last until we reach Camp Muir. I explain Eric about my pain, and he urges me to eat some salty snacks. I quickly eat some peanuts and the pain gradually goes away. We finally join up with Koti and the team on top of the Anvil rock.

## Our Sleeping Quarter

After another short break, we head back out to the snow field. This final snow slope which leads to Camp Muir at 10,040 feet is steep and long with a few small walls. Suffering under the heavy burden of our packs, 5 ½ hours later, we arrive at Camp Muir.



*Sitting on the edge of Cowlitz Glacier is out tent*

Camp Muir looks the same. The public shelter where George, Mr. Chen and I slept in still looks as small and cold as I remember. What appears to be different from last year is the crowd. A small encampment of tents, nearly 20 of them, are set up in the gully just below the public shelter, looking like the base camp for expedition. Up at the ridge, a little hill leads to three tents. They look so small sitting on the slope of Cowlitz Glacier. Paul points to the last one and inform three of us that it will be our home for the next three day.

We are quite please with the sleeping arrangement. RMI has its own private bunkhouse at the base camp, which is no more than just a small wooden box. With 35 people cramming inside, moving around, talking, farting, snoring, groaning, laughing, well you get the idea, no one will have any good rest or sleep. Although our tent looks so cold and isolated up at that hill, it does provide us with privacy and quiet time. Three of us carry our loads and head to the tent. We find inside the tent is actually quite roomy. We have no problem moving around and can sleep side by side comfortably. However, we do have to leave our backpacks outside the tent.



*If you look carefully, you can see Koti inside the picture as well*

Koti's migraine headache troubles her a bit but after a doze of medication, she is back to be the cheerful and capable girl again. Eric brings us some hot water and

we cook a simple noodle dinner and rest for the night. Koti and QT are still very excited about the upcoming climb. They talk endlessly and with their voice gradually fading away, I fall into a deep sleep. I wake up midnight by the noise outside the RMI

bunkhouse. Climbers are busy getting ready for the summit climb. It is a perfect night for the climb. Somehow, I wish we could do the summit push that night. An hour later, the night becomes very quiet again and I fall back to sleep until dawn.

## More Training – Climbing School

We still have another training section this morning. After gathering outside the guide house, we head off to a snow field just right below Camp Muir. Paul introduces us to another climbing guide, Gablier. Gablier is not too tall but lean and strong. He comes from Argentina; summated Mt. Aconcagua, the highest mountain in North America (22,841 feet) 17 times. Gablier is a very capable mountaineer. He looks at Koti, QT and I; gives us a nod and a warm smile. I like him already.



*Gablier, another world class climber, is our personal guide*

With his Argentinean assent, Gablier shows us step by step how to walk up and down on an icy slope. We spend the morning practicing more self-arrest, belaying and walking



as a rope team, dealing with switchbacks. We also learn how to coil the ropes when climbing on the rocky slope, to position the ice axe properly when climbing direction alters and most important, how to react when avalanche occurs. Gablier are watching Koti, QT and I very closely. I know the guides from RMI usually use the training section to observe and assess their clients. By the end of the training, they already have some ideas which client will not make

it to the top.

## Change of Weather

After lunch, the team is occupied by making preparation to the summit. Eric melts more snow for us. Paul advises us to have an early dinner and lie down for bed around 5:00pm. He will wake us up around midnight. As three of us resting inside our tent, the wind begins to pick up. The sun is now covered by cirrus clouds. The weather takes a 180 degree turn. With the flyer of our tent flapping noisily, I have a sick feeling in my stomach. I still have a chill when remembering how the wind blew me off the track last year at the Cathedral Gap.

I actually manage to catch a few hours sleep. By 11:00pm, we are awake. The wind sounds nasty outside our tent. Three of us shuffle around, numbly in the cold and dark of the night. Eric delivers another pot of hot water for our “breakfast”. We gulp down our coffee, oatmeal and granola bars, visit the toilet, dress and put on our plastic boots, crampons, helmets, and harnesses. Finally we tie the nearly 3 lbs avalanche beacons to our chests. Midnight, Paul comes to our group tents; go over some final points about safety, give us words of encouragement, and also inform us that another teammate decide to quit. Once Paul makes the final announcement of “Rock and Roll”, seven of us gather

at the gully of the ridge with our headlights shining in the darkness. Gablier will be roped up with three of us. He comes over and checks carefully our crampons and harnesses. He tightens my harness and crampon and advises us to be slightly underdressed. The temperature will be too warm when the sun comes out.

I take off my freeze and put on a light Gore-Tex jacket instead. Shivering in the wind, I nearly regret what I did. Before I have time to change my mind, it is time to rope up. Gablier puts QT immediately behind him, then it is me and the last person of the rope is Koti. The roping arrangement has its meaning. Usually, the weakest climber is put in the front, and the strongest one tie to the back. By roping QT right in the front, I reckon right away, both Paul and Gablier have concerns about QT's ability to finish the climb. Both QT and Koti did not know that, I keep it quiet not wanting to discourage QT. The gust of wind continues to bother me. Paul looks up to the sky and comforts me with a simple comment: "it is normal at Rainier to have wind blowing 50-60 miles an hour".

### **The Climb to Ingraham Flat**

The route starts as an easy traverse across the Cowlitz glacier with little altitude gain. We are separated by 25 or 30 feet of rope. In the total darkness, all I can hear is the sound of our boots shattering thousands off crystals. Occasionally there are dollops of glow thrown my way by Koti's headlamp. Other than that, all I can see is just an ethereal beam of



*Crossing Cowlitz glacier and approaching the Cathedral Rocks*

light shows the rope moving with QT's steps.

We arrive at the base of Cathedral Gap, Gablier stops and coils up our ropes. Cathedral Rock is very steep and rocky. It is the very same place where gave George, Mr. Chen and I problem last year. Our rope were tangled and caught between rocks. We lost our trail and eventually gave up and turned back. Now, seeing Gablier coiling up the ropes, I realize what we did wrong last year. By coiling up the ropes, the climbing distance between each climber becomes shorter and the chance of the ropes get caught is lessened. Once we hit the Cathedral Rocks, we left snow and hit a mix of dirt, scree, rocks and boulders. I can see a sparkle of fire every time when QT's crampons hit the rock.

We scramble through a very rocky section up to the Ingraham Flat. I am working hard but I still feel pretty good at this point. QT however, begins to slow down. I stop and give him a chance to rest but Gablier has no mercy. He pulls QT forward with the rope. Before I have the chance to step forward, I feel the rope tugged and pulling QT backward. I can hear QT is complaining what we did to him. We finally reach Ingraham Flat at 11,000 feet. Paul and other two rope teams are resting. It is to be our first stop after nearly an hour climb. We drop our packs, put on our down jackets, drink half liter of water and eat. The male climbers go off the trail and do their business in the



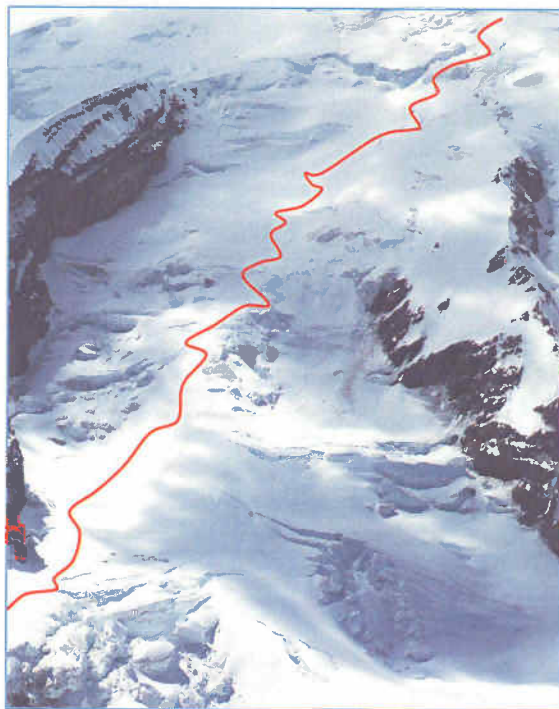
open, Koti and I just do not have the courage yet to “do our business” in the public. I sit quietly and eat my snacks and survey other climbers around me.

### **P**ainful Decision at Disappointment Cleaver

The rest area is full of climbers and other RMI guides. I am surprised to see how many RMI guides are actually waiting here to check on us. Paul comes over and asks how we are doing. Without warning, a water bottle flies past me, rolling down to the icy slope like a ballet. QT calls out and asks me to go after the bottle. Gablier stops me right away. He runs after it and catches it before it tumbles further down to the slope. Paul is a little agitated and lectures QT that it is better to lose a water bottle than to lose your teammate’s life. I think at that point, QT hits bottom. He quietly tells Koti and me that he wants to turn back. Losing my patience with him, I tell him “Take one step at a time!”

Before we start back the climb, another teammate calls a quit. One of the RMI guides will take him down to Camp Muir. Now I understand why so many RMI guides are stationing at each break stop. They know well at each break stop, there will be clients wanting to turn back.

The next section of the climb is the most dangerous. We have to walk across the Ingraham glacier, including large crevasses. But the most dangerous part is traversing underneath the Ingraham Ice Fall. We are told to be quiet and move as quickly as possible. Once across, we begin another steep climb through the rocky Disappointment Cleaver at 12,400 feet. I look up to the slope; a nearly 75 degree hill lay



*Disappointment Cleaver Route*

ahead of us. The most amazing scene is seeing dozens of headlamps moving zip zap upward to the mountain. There are at least fifty climbers pushing to the summit tonight.

It is still pitch dark, as the moon is very feeble tonight. “Wait up, just a little bit slower”



QT is getting tired and requests that Gablier slows the pace. I also begin to feel nauseous. It is the wind that troubles me the most. It is my mistake that I did not bring a bigger scarf to cover my face. Cold air blows straight into my nose and my nose just will not stop running. Between blowing my nose and hitting by the wind at the same time, I am beginning to feel weak. Once we reach the 2<sup>nd</sup> rest stop, I drop my backpack and keep blowing my nose. Shivering the whole time while I am eating my snacks, I hear QT makes his final decision: “I am done guys”. Koti and I are quiet and do not try to change

his mind. “If you are a liability to the team, we will leave you.” Remembering Peter Whittaker’s famous quote, I respect his decision. QT is young; the mountain will still be here for him to climb for many years to come.

QT tells Paul his decision, and a young lady from RMI comes over and has a brief talk with Paul. She will be taking QT down to the base camp. Our group starts as nine people, and now only five remains. Paul warns us, once we leave Disappointment Cleaver; they will be no turning back. We have to make a final commitment at this point. I know Koti is a strong climber; she will make it to the top. As for me, it is a commitment I made to myself a year ago, no matter how much pain I am going to suffer, there will be no turning back for me as well.

## Wind, Wind and the Unbearable Wind

The next climb becomes increasing difficult to me. The section is long, steep and the pace is relentless. The Eastern horizon is beginning to show some brightness, it lightens the path we walk on. I am not sure it is good thing. I can now see clearly, on my right side, it is a snow wall, on the other, a small ridge falling away in a steep slope. A wrong footing will mean “falling”. Climbing in the trough is difficult; even though I am wearing crampons, sometimes I still slip backwards, require



extra energy to catch myself from falling. Covering my ear with a wool hat and a helmet, I can still hear the furious sound of the wind keep blowing and blowing. We continue to experience strong winds and cold temperature. “I do not hear your breathing, Chi” Gablier is shouting at me. I look up and at once, lose my balance. The wind just blows me off trail. I feel my rope tugged and Gablier is tightening the rope to keep me from falling.

Now, we traverse westward on the Emmons Glacier, the largest glacier in the lower 48 states. At this point, we are switching back and forth on the very steep upper slopes. Here the snow lies at an angle of up to 40 degrees. However, it feels like near vertical to



me. I do not feel well, actually pretty crappy. Most of the time, the rope in front of me is being pulled taut as I fight to go a little bit slower. Gablier has no mercy, he keeps yielding at me, “Breath, Chi, breath!”, “Your ice axe, no, hold it on your right hand, now left hand” , “come on Chi, keep moving. “Shut up! Gablier, can’t you see I am suffering”, quietly, I retort his insensitive comments out of desperation. (Sorry, Gablier)

## Crevasse Crossing

Finally, Gablier stops. There is permanent rope being positioned along a very narrow ditch in front of us. The upper section of the ditch is a bottomless drop-off, and the other side, an un-scalable cliff. It is to be the biggest crevasse opening we encounter so far. "Anchor!" Gablier lets Koti and I know that he is stopping here. I look over and see a ladder laying across the crevasse opening, the similar one that I saw many times from the Everest Expedition on TV. My spirit lightens up at once. I have been dying to have this crossing experience. It is perhaps the only chance I will ever have in my life to do it! I forget my exhaustion for a moment and watch Gablier maneuvers his crossing. Gablier puts himself on belay first, locks himself to the permanent rope with the carabiner on the rope. "Climbing!" another mountain dialect we learned from training school. He repels himself and crosses the bridge slowly, unlocks the carabiner from the permanent rope, relocks it again to a rope on the other side, look at me and signal me to do the same. "Anchor", I hammer my ice ax firmly at the snow, (do not know where I get the energy), lock my rope to the carabiner on the permanent rope FIRST, unlock my carabiner from the rope with Gablier SECOND (very important in this order). "Climbing!" pick up my ice axe, cross the ladder gingerly, do not dare to look down, seconds later, I am on the other side. Again, lock myself back to the rope with Gablier, unlock myself with the permanent rope, and signal Gablier I am free. The procedures we practiced many times in the training school. "Good!" Gablier praises me for the first time.



Now two pairs of eyes looking at Koti, and she repeats what I did with no apparent problem until when she has to unlock the carabiner from the permanent rope. The



carabiner on the rope is an auto locking devise. To unlock the carabiner, you need to first turn the node slightly, hold it firm, then push it down to fully unlock it. This devise is not the same one we used in the training school. I knew about this new devise from my previous climb, but it is the first time Koti comes across with this new locking system. She is having problem to unlock the carabiner. Gablier is losing his patience again. "Come on, Koti". I feel bad for Koti but cannot do

anything to help her. Koti tries very hard to understand the locking system. Finally, she gets it and crosses the ladder towards us, what a relief from all of us.

In retrospect, Koti and I both wish we had a camera to capture those moment (but we are not allowed to take picture at this dangerous position). I am sure those moments will stay with us for a long time.

## **F**inal Push – Summit of Mt. Rainier

The wind is now blasting more than 60 miles an hour and knocks me off trail a few times. We slowly work our way up the final slope of Rainier. I know the summit is not far, seeing the crater rim at the first time, but it takes another hour to finally reach it.



*“One minute! Chi, one more minute!”*

Gablier, with his heavy Argentina accent, is yielding at me, pulling the rope harder and harder. I do not look up to Gablier, just raise my hand and give him a signal that I need a minute to catch my breath. Gabi has no mercy and he grabs the rope even tighter and literally drags me up to the last 50 feet slope of Mt. Rainier.



*Chi, at Colombia Crest, top of Mt. Rainier*

7:45am, we summit Mt. Rainier. As soon as I stand on a flat snowfield of Colombia Crust, Paul, our head guide comes and congratulates me. Gablier gives me a gentle pad on the back and tell me to drop my backpack. Between the morning fog and the gusting wind, I saw Koti, my climbing teammate approaching the crater rim a few seconds later. We both are wearing snow goggle and helmet. Our faces are entirely covered but we still recognized each other. We embrace each other and drop to the floor immediately.

I wear every piece of my clothing and I am still shivering uncontrollably. Gablier let me use his gloves to keep warm. I hear Paul urge us to eat and drink quickly. All too soon, we have to begin our descent since the storm is approaching. I want to lie down and sleep for I am completely exhausted! I

still have some energy to hike back down, but I worry about how I am going to carry my 40lb backpack and climb back down to Paradise.

## **I** “moon” the mountain

The trip down is much harder than I have expected. Although the level of exertion required to hike down is much less than that to climb up, the main problem is balance. Each step is a little crouch into the snow while driving your ice axe into the snow at your side to help you stabilize your step. It makes it a bit more tiring than simply walking down a flight of stairs.

When we hit Disappointment Cleaver again, I realized how steep the climb was. The view from the top coming down is amazing. Looking down the 40 degree we just

climbed, I can see the vast landscape of glacially carved valleys surrounding Mt. Rainier. Thousands feet below, Camp Muir appears to be just a small dot on the snow. QT must be resting inside the tent, I envy him.

I have been following Paul's advice to drink every time we break. Due to lack of privacy up at Rainier, Koti and I did not take any bathroom stop the whole night. With 2 quarts of water inside my belly, now I am dying to go. We are on the steep section of the Cathedral Drop, every downward step, I feel the urge. Finally, I cannot hold it any longer. I stop Gablier, and tell him my need. Gablier asks whether I can hold for another hour, I say "NO!"

with a begging tone. Gablier shouts to Paul and asks him for a bathroom stop. Paul responds: "Now?

**Right here, Hell NO!"** I beg Gablier again and he reluctantly says ok. "Drop you pants and do it here now". He unhooks my harness; tell other male teammates to turn around. I pull down



my pants and release myself. It takes a whole minute to finish.

*Koti and I took a break on our way down to Camp Muir*

When I am finally done, I realize two rope teams with 5 or 7 men standing right behind me. They stop when I was doing my business. I feel so embarrassed. This perhaps the price each female climber has to pay, when come to mountaineer, there is no privacy up at the mountain.

## The Descent

Koti and I reach Camp Muir by 11:00am. QT comes out to greet us. Once I go into our tent, I feel like this is the end of me. However, the fact is I have only 1 hour to repack my pack with 40lb+ of gears and hike back down to Paradise for another 2-3 hours. Resting with my eyes shut, I have the fear of hiking down. There is really not a drop of energy left in me to move another step. What am I going to do?

The team is waiting for us and I can hear Paul pushing us to move. Climbing up to the ridge and meeting Paul, I tell Paul my concern. He wants to take my pack, but I graciously decline his offer. Part of me really wants Paul to help me, but part of me tells myself, every body is tired, why I should receive the special treatment. I fasten my pack and determine to take one step at a time.

QT and Koti are running down to the mountain, occasionally, they slide down on their butts in the snow to save energy. I watch them as I continue hiking down with great

effort. At Pebble Creek, Paul comes over with Gablier; they take my pack and divide the contents between them. Paul knows, I really need some help. This time, I let him for I have no energy left to protest.

## Epilogue

*There are two kinds of climbers: those who climb because their heart sings when they are in the mountains, and all the rest.*

I know my heart sang and ached as well when I was up at the summit of Rainier. It was a painful and exhausting experience. Although I feel proud to have accomplished this climb, I realize it is not the kind of climb for everyone. Without the excellent physical condition and technical mountaineer skill, one should not even think of doing it. It is not to say that this climb is impossible. Like anything in life, if you want it so badly, with the right attitude, training and discipline, you can do. However, "*if we make it, we make it, if not, so what?*" if you have this kind of attitude, my advice is: do not waste your time and energy, leave the mountain to someone else who can give Mt. Rainier the respect it deserves.

THE END