



(Photo by Birdy Finch, Illinois Valley News)

Bud and Waunetta Winters during his party to celebrate his 100 birthday Saturday April 12.

Winding Trails: by Al Hobart

Thursday, April 16, 1964 – Illinois Valley News –

Bell Echo – El Capitan

Above Bell Echo, on the side of El Capitan, is a large crevice in the mountainside that I don't like any more – even if I did find the little carnivorous butterwort growing there. I don't like it now because, after beckoning to me so friendly, it gave me the darnedest scare of my mountain-prowling experience.

A hundred feet or more up, just at the head of this big crevice, is an enticing-looking bench, and the more I looked at it and the vegetation growing up there, the more it made my botanical mouth water. This big friendly-looking gash in the mountain (I have since named it the Lorelei Crevice) looked like the easiest and quickest way up. The lower end is a steep, rocky slope, but the higher up you go the more perpendicular the crevice becomes. The result of a slip would be the same as if it were a vertical wall – the victim would just as surely tumble to the very bottom.

What makes the climb particu-

larly risky is the fact that a trickle of water all down the crevice makes it dangerously slick in places, especially if you're wearing rubber-soled shoes, as I was. I wasn't carrying a rope; didn't suppose I needed anything but my claws, and as much luck as a fellow has a right to expect.

Up about 75 feet the going got steeper and handholds scarcer. A few feet above my head was a narrow shelf upon which a friendly-looking runt of a shrub had found a toehold in a small crevice in the rock. I thought if I could manage to get hold of that bush I could pull myself up onto the shelf and rest a bit before going up the rest of the way. From there on up to the big ledge (and a good route back down) looked easy from where I was.

Bracing my knees against the sides of the crevice, I reached up and found a shallow fingerhold a few inches below the rim of the shelf. Pulling myself up as far as I could I made a quick grab for the shrub and was soon resting in the little niche. Then I looked up and discovered it was impossible to go on. There were no little jutting rocks or cracks for handholds; the rock was not only smooth, but wet and slippery, and to try to go down the way I

came up would have been almost surely disastrous. Not even a contortionist could have reached below the rim of that shelf, found the shallow fingerholds and safely lowered himself.

Those were the loneliest few minutes I've ever known, in that rocky niche on the side of El Capitan, utterly unable to go either up or down, and 75 feet or more above the jagged boulders below. For the first time in my life I thought I could smell the smoke and feel the heat at the end of the line.

If I couldn't go up or down, the only alternative was to look for a way out the side, and the prospect was so bleak that for the first sickening moments I didn't even consider it. The only possibility that I could find was a narrow ledge that led out onto one shoulder of the crevice a short distance. As far as I could see beyond that it was a sheer drop-off.

But in desperation we grab at any straw that presents itself. I carefully worked my way the short distance around the shoulder, and when I found that instead of dead-ending, the little ledge led to safety, the relief was so great I almost choked up.

Healthy U News:

by Lindsey Gillette

Little Lessons

I just wanted to forget it ever happened.

Years ago, walking down the sidewalks of San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf, a popular tourist destination filled with souvenir shops, the best sourdough bread on earth, and extraordinary street performers, I was taught a lesson. At the Wharf, there is always a hustle and bustle of people speaking different languages, asking you for directions or to take a photo of them in front of landmarks. I had been living in the city for a few years, and was "too cool" for all of the touristy activities.

Hurriedly, I was just trying to make it from point A to point B. Earphones in and music blasting, I wove in and out of the crowds, eyes on my phone, texting something about "tourist season," when I was made a fool.

"The Bushman," Gregory Jacobs, spent the last 30 years at the Wharf leaning up against a trashcan under a constructed shield made from leafy branches. When the perfect, oblivious candidate approached him, he would shake the branches and let out a loud "GRRrrrrr" that would startle pants off of his victim and bring joy and laughter to those who saw it coming.

Of course, I never saw it coming. He got me so good that I jumped and screamed, and I am not the screaming type. As soon as I realized what had happened, I looked around me. Everyone was laughing at my expense. Someone even gave Bushman a high-five. I was embarrassed and frankly, pissed off. I angrily told the story to my roommates and they laughed. Every now and then, they would joke about it.

I held that grudge for years until, I read an article that Bushman had passed away and suddenly, my story changed. Looking back on my brief interaction with Bushman, I am so grateful. He dedicated his life to teach basic lessons that transcend culture, language, or class to thousands of people. With humor, he taught people to "be present-there are amazing things happening all around you." Though Bushman was harmless, he suggested, "In a brief second, your life can change." What if you entered into a dangerous situation pre-occupied by your phone? The toughest lesson for me, "laugh at yourself and learn from your mistakes." And now that he is gone, perhaps his lasting legacy, "Enjoy the things that you see today because they may not be here tomorrow."

Since my relocation to the Illinois Valley, I have had some time to slow down and reflect on my values. No longer is it important to be "cool" or attached to the in-crowd. I focus my everyday activities to making the world a better place and being more present and compassionate. I have to admit, it's working. I'm happier and healthier.

Though I didn't receive Bushman's lesson until much later, this random stranger helped form my life. "Keep your eyes open. You can learn the most helpful lessons from the most unsuspecting people."

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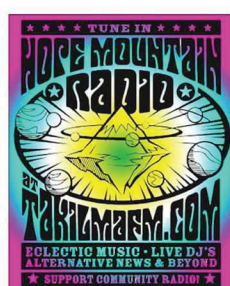


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