

Meet the woman who hiked the FKT on the PCT

Mountain lions, rattlesnakes and bears, oh my! Washington resident Heather “Anish” Anderson faced those challenges, and much more, when she hiked the 2,600-mile-long Pacific Crest Trail in 2013 and snagged the record for completing the entire length of the PCT in the fastest known time (FKT) ever.

She did it by adhering to a brutal regimen that required her to hike more than 40 miles a day, every day, for two months — or, to be precise, 60 days, 17 hours and 12 minutes.

And mind you, that’s not traipsing along a gently winding, daisy-lined path. The PCT definitely has its charms, but Anderson also contended with harsh weather, poisonous plants and wild animals, an occasional raging river, and sometimes treacherous terrain.

Now you can read about her extreme quest in

THIS WEEK'S BOOK

Thirst

By Heather Anderson

Mountaineers Books

208 pp

\$17.95

a new memoir published by Mountaineers Books. “Thirst” is aptly titled, for not only does Anderson have an unquenchable desire for long-distance hiking, she also miscalculates her water needs, especially at the beginning of her hike, as she traverses the drought-bedeveled deserts and mountain canyons of southern California.

Anderson was already an experienced long distance hiker — she had through-hiked the PCT before, as well as the Appalachian and the Continental Divide Trails. But for this ultra-en-

deavor, it takes her a while to get mind and body into sync.

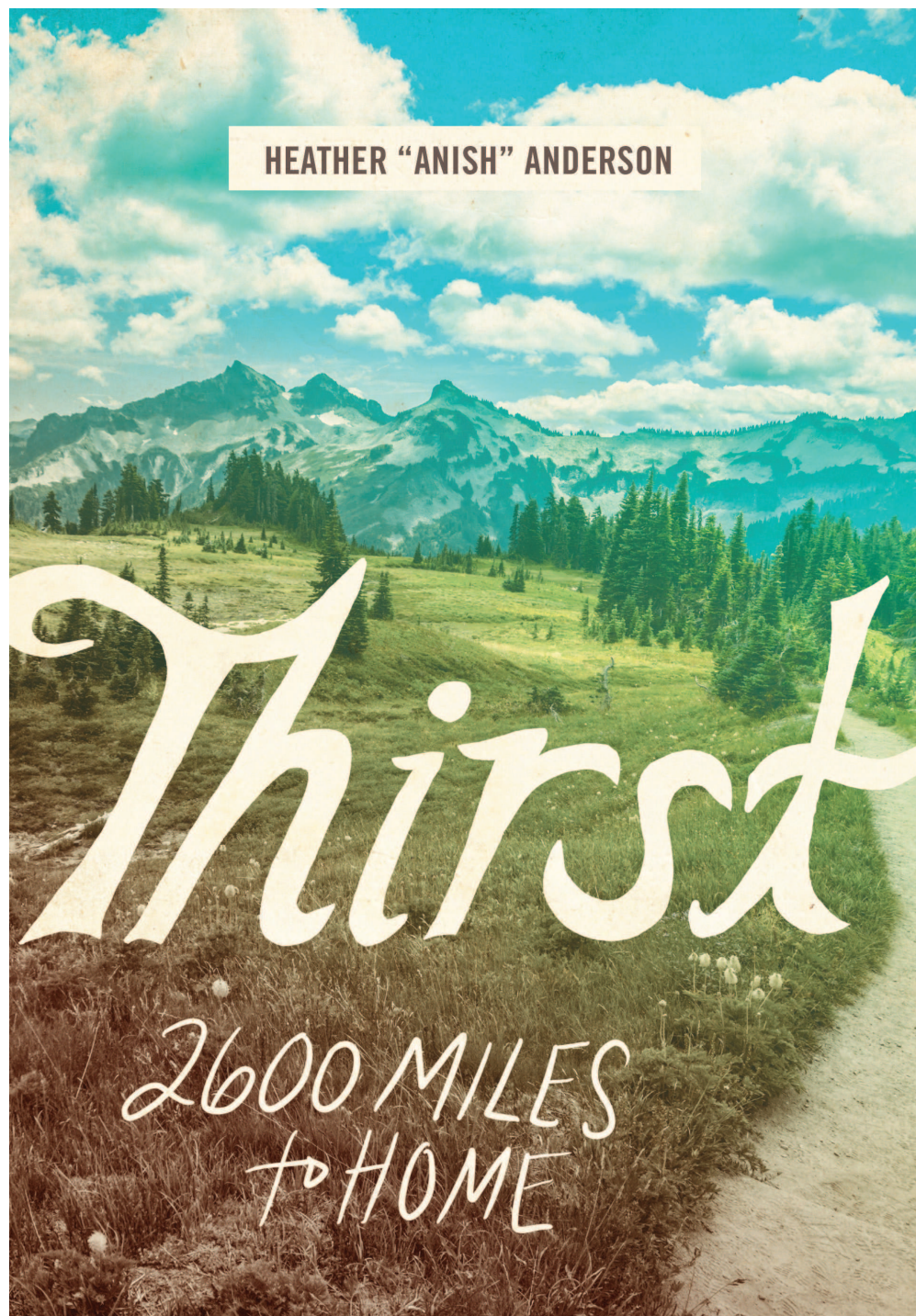
By the second day, she is hiking thirsty, having drunk up her water supply, and finding creek beds already parched in early June. This hadn’t been her experience on her previous hike along the PCT. In the early days of this hike, she is loath to carry too much weight while hiking in the punishing desert, so she skimps on refilling her water supply when she has a chance.

But dehydration quickly wreaks havoc with her body, which she already is pushing to the max, so she learns to adjust her expectations for water. It isn’t until a few weeks later that she realizes she also needs to do a better job of fueling her body with calories if she expects to cover 40 miles daily over rough trail conditions.

Anderson makes a journal entry for every day she is on the trail, so the reader is aware of the ups and downs she experiences, both in elevation and in mood.

By Day 33, a little more than halfway through the hike, she writes this: “My body, amazingly, seemed to have surpassed athleticism and become a machine ... But there was a deeper meaning behind this sleep, eat, walk mechanism. It meant that it was no longer my body that was most likely to fail — only my mind could stop me now.”

But the games that her mind plays continue to plague her. Even once she has passed the 2,000-mile mark of this 2,650-mile journey, she still experiences episodes where her confidence breaks down.



HEATHER “ANISH” ANDERSON

Mountaineers Books

The cover of ‘Thirst’ by Heather ‘Anish’ Anderson.

Eventually, the quest helps Anderson grapple with her self-doubt and live her unconventional life with more courage. “Thirst” is

introspection wrapped in an audacious tale of adventure. The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly col-

umn focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.com.

Crossword Answers

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