

21 Aug. 2004, 9:45am, at the Paradise trailhead.

The day before the climb, we all took part in a one-day climbing school to refresh our skills in walking with crampons on snow and ice, and in arresting a fall with an ice axe. Here is the view from the trailhead. The weather was actually relatively nice on this day; there was nothing at all to see from the trailhead when we began our ascent from that same place the following morning.



22 Aug. 2004, 4:39pm, Camp Muir.

We reached Camp Muir a little before 4:30pm, after a 6½-hour slog up the Muir Snowfield in total whiteout conditions. A few minutes after we arrived, the clouds parted briefly, revealing some very promising blue sky above. Here is one of the primitive stone huts in which we slept; this is the hut the guides slept in.



23 Aug. 2004, 1:52am, Camp Muir.

Betsy Edwards, Washington's National Park Foundation's Executive Director, and I, just before setting off from Camp Muir for the summit.





23 Aug. 2004, 9:01am, on the Emmons Glacier.

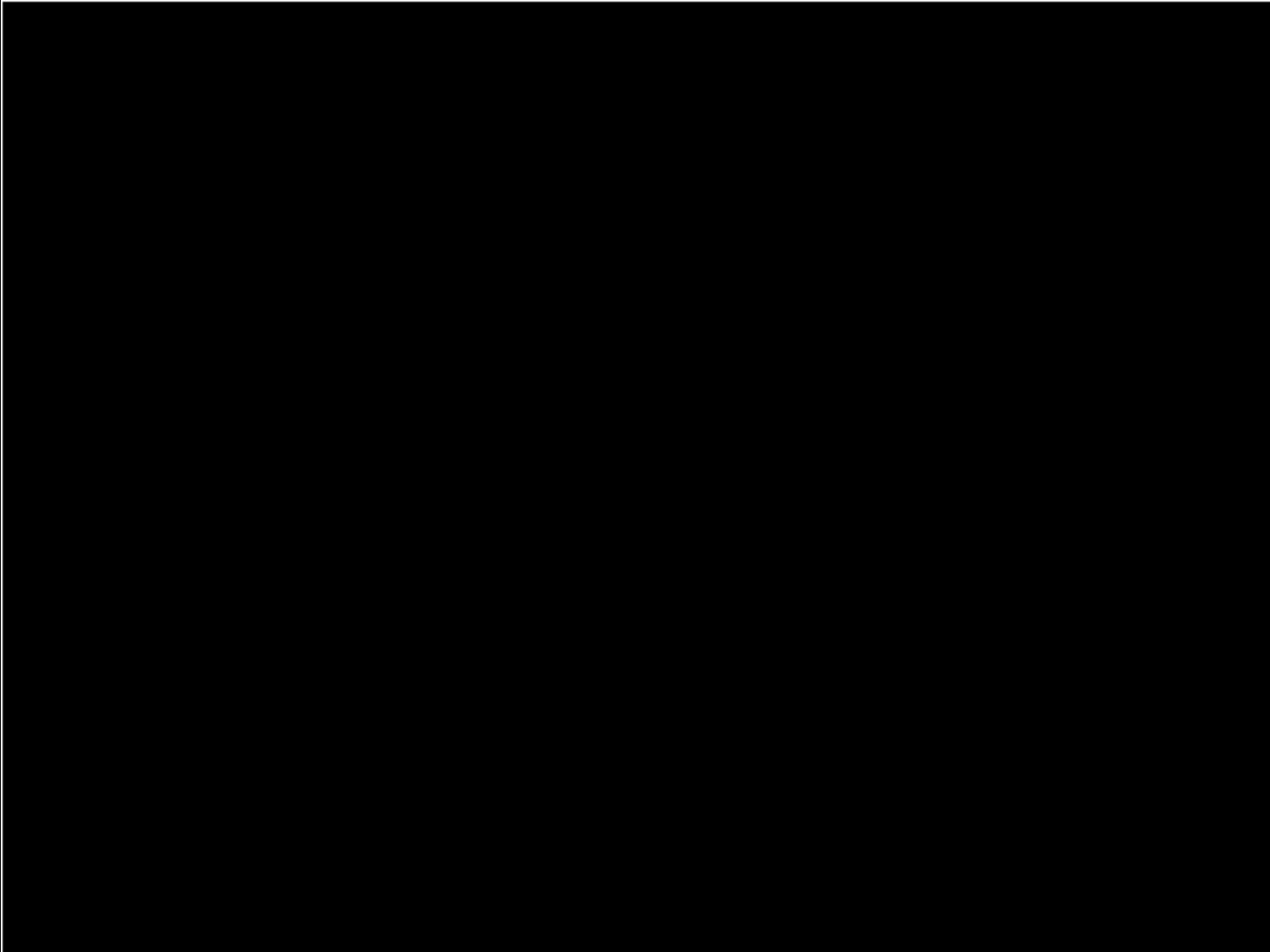
I didn't realize it at the time, but when I took this photo we were within ten minutes of the summit plateau. The terrain here is not very steep, but the thin air at this elevation makes every step a challenge nonetheless.



23 Aug. 2004, 9:29am, near the summit.

Here I am signing the log book near the summit. It was buried under a foot of snow, but Dave Hahn, our RMI guide, was able to dig it out with his ice axe. (Luckily, he knew just where to look, having climbed the mountain over 250 times himself.)

He accidentally took this shot of me as a video, but it's fun to watch this way too.



23 Aug. 2004, 9:30am, near the summit.

I also accidentally took a video, this time of Dave describing the crater. Once I realized that I was recording him, I let it run; it's actually pretty interesting to hear what he has to say. You can also see some of the steam rising from the vents as he speaks.



23 Aug. 2004, 9:43am, Columbia Crest.

Here I am at the 14,411' summit, also known as Columbia Crest.

What was it like up there? A lot like being on a plane — only much windier, and colder!

That's Mt. Adams in the distance, a 12,276' foot volcano that I had climbed three weeks earlier for training.



23 Aug. 2004, 9:45am, Columbia Crest.

Here is a view of the crater from the true summit. (I used some new panoramic stitching software from Microsoft Research to stitch this photo together at high resolution from a number of stills.) You can just barely see two groups of climbers in the crater below: my team, in the center of the crater; and “Team C” (another group of Microsoft climbers) at the far rim, from where we ascended. Mt. Adams is visible in the distance.





23 Aug. 2004, 9:46am, Columbia Crest.

Another view of Mt. Adams, looking out along the rim of the volcano from the summit.

Mt. Rainier is still an active volcano, with the most recently documented eruption a small one during the early 1800s. The last major eruption occurred 2500 years ago.



23 Aug. 2004, 9:47am, Columbia Crest.

One last view of “Team C” near the rim of the crater. I took this shot just before heading back down to rejoin my own team, many of whom were waiting in the center of the crater, having climbed high enough for one day.



23 Aug. 2004, 11:00am, on the Emmons Glacier.

Here is one of the narrow snow bridges (between the red and yellow climbers) that we traversed on our way down. On either side of the bridge is a gaping crevasse, too deep to see the bottom of. The way down was much scarier than the way up because you could actually see what the dangers were.





23 Aug. 2004, 12:19pm, on Disappointment  
Cleaver.

As afternoon approached, clouds started to  
develop above us and build downwards, even  
as the undercast below began to rise. We were  
about to be sandwiched in by clouds.

At the time I took this photo, we were forced  
to pause above the “Vertical Bowling Alley”  
for some climbers below (in case we sent any  
rocks down as we crossed above). This gave  
me a perfect opportunity to snap this shot of  
Little Tahoma, directly across the glacier  
from us, just before it was fully enveloped by  
clouds.





23 Aug. 2004, 12:31pm, on Disappointment Cleaver.

This photo is taken on the lower part of Disappointment Cleaver, looking across the Ingraham Glacier toward Cathedral Rocks. In the early part of summer, the Ingraham Glacier is the route of choice over the Cleaver, but this late in the year it is criss-crossed by far too many treacherous crevasses, as you can see.



23 Aug. 2004, 12:55pm, about to traverse the Ingraham Ice Fall.

The final danger on the descent was traversing beneath the Ingraham Ice Fall, the hunks of ice stacked up above the string of climbers that you can just make out ahead. In a freak accident in 1981, apartment-sized blocks broke loose, instantly crushing 11 climbers exactly where these climbers are now. I took a deep breath and passed beneath as quietly as I could.



23 Aug. 2004, 1:36pm, Cathedral Rocks.

By the time we reached Cathedral Rocks, we were all but socked in. This photo of the fog blowing through a gap in the rocks is the last picture I had room for on my flash memory card. As it turns out, it was also the last time you could see more than about ten feet in front of you, so it all worked out just fine.

