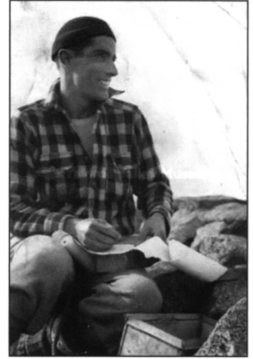


J. ALEX MAXWELL 1910–2007

J. Alex Maxwell, better known as “Lex,” was born in Yakima on July 26, 1910 to Mary Murphy Maxwell and Alexander James Maxwell. His first job after graduating from the local community college was as a bookkeeper in a local bank, followed a few years later by taking the same position at Yakima Federal Savings & Loan in 1936. He retired there in 1972 as the president. He remained on their board until his death in 2007. His only time away from that institution was for three and a half years during World War II, when he served as a captain in the Air Force. He was married to Mary Burns, his wife of 71 years. They had five children, and many of his trips were with his family, whether hiking, climbing, or skiing.



Lex Maxwell in the Cascades.

Lex’s impact on mountaineering in the Northwest will be remembered long beyond his lifetime. He is best known locally for the authorship of his local hiking classic *Hither, Thither and Yon*. He was also referred to as a “noted mountain chef” with his famous “Glue Stew” before the days of instant freeze-dried foods. The recipe is one of those selected for the book *Gorp, Glop & Glue Stew* (reprinted as *Beyond Gorp*). Lex climbed in Mexico, the Rockies, the Tetons, the St. Elias Range, the Bugaboos, the Olympics, and, of course, throughout the Cascades. Among his first ascents are: Ulrichs Couloir (July 1933) and the West Ridge (August 1935) of Mount Stuart; Northeast Face of Little Tahoma (August 1959) and South Face of Kay’s Spire (September 1956) on Mt. Rainier; the Southeast Face (June 1956) of North Peak in the Stuart Range; and the West Ridge (July 1963) and South Klickitat Glacier Icefall (July 1962) on Mt. Adams.

Lex, the first Washington member of the American Alpine Club outside of the Seattle area (1958), was one of the founders of Central Washington Mountain Rescue in Yakima, in about 1953. In addition to training local climbers in rescue techniques, Lex went across the Cascade Mountains to the monthly board meetings of Seattle Mountain Rescue (MRC in those days) representing the embryo group in Yakima. Then he would come back to Yakima and pass on the information he had picked up. Going to the meetings involved a 300-mile round-trip evening drive over Snoqualmie Pass, famous for its many feet of snow each winter. He was almost always at the fore of mountain rescue missions in the Eastern Cascades.

In his “History of CWMR,” Lex wrote: “Our early needs were many-fold. We had to train our personnel in techniques of evacuation for injured people, in first aid, in teamwork and how to cooperate with the civil authorities as well as other rescue units. We needed money to buy bertragas, litters, ropes, first aid supplies, climbing equipment and radios. We raised the money, we trained our people, and it was long, hard, and sometimes thankless. Yet along the way, a call for help would come and as everything cranked into gear, it gave a new stimulus to our efforts.”

Lex was a leader in most of the business and civic organizations in Yakima, both during and after his active business life, but when a call for a rescue came, he would drop whatever he was doing to go out into the field, whatever the weather or the time of day, to help whoever was in trouble.

Lex had a lifelong interest in skiing and won many slalom events as a ski racer. This led to his involvement in developing the American River Ski Bowl between 1936 and 1940. He also helped in the construction of the hut at Camp Schurman at 9,500 feet on Mt. Rainier. He was

an avid skier who had a hand in discovering and developing the White Pass Ski Area and impressed his children by ascending Mt. Rainier with the express purpose of skiing down it. He hiked the mountains with his wife, family and friends until he turned ninety-five, a goal to which we can all aspire.

LYNN BUCHANAN

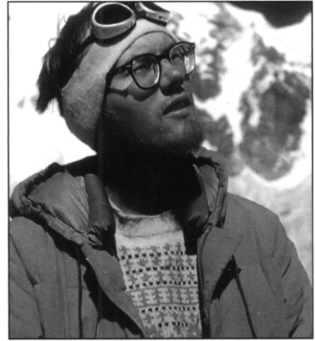
RICHARD E. MCGOWAN 1933–2007

I first became acquainted with Dick McGowan more than 50 years ago when the climbing world in the United States was a small village spread across the country, connected by gossip and rumor and not the Internet. If we didn't know another climber personally, we certainly knew his reputation. I probably met Dick at that time and I certainly knew about him.

Dick started climbing in 1950 and quickly began going on major expeditions to Alaska, making first ascents of King Peak, Mt. Augusta, and Mt. Cook. He also climbed extensively in the Cascades, making many first ascents and new routes. Dick rapidly gained a reputation as an extremely strong mountaineer and probably the leading snow and ice climber in the country. He went to Everest in 1955 on Dyhrenfurth's International Himalayan Expedition where he was the first American to climb the Khumbu Icefall. He must have liked the experience because he did it 24 times on that expedition. When he returned he took over the Mount Rainier Guide Service. During his climbing career he did 11 major expeditions. He also led the first guided climb of Denali, in 1961.

He was running the Guide Service in 1959 when I spent the summer in Seattle. I had returned from Europe with a lag screw that a Swiss friend showed me to illustrate the principle of the ice screw. I had a prototype made, Pete Schoening got some other samples from Europe, and we went to Rainier to use one of Dick's climbing classes for our test. We had perfect conditions, a warm day. When we pulled directly on the ice pitons they all shot out with a big slurp. Then we put in the ice screws. We pulled. They held. We put the entire class on the rope and they still held. Dick had not seen ice screws before, and I will never forget the look on his face, as he said, "This is going to revolutionize ice climbing." Not only was he right, but later that summer he led the revolution by using them to make the difficult ascent of the entire Nisqually Icefall.

I really got to know Dick on Masherbrum (25,660 feet) in the Karakoram. George Bell and I wanted the finest climbers on rock and ice in the country. Dick was one of them. Moreover, George had been with him on Everest in 1955 and knew his capabilities. The climb took a tremendous team effort by everyone. We were lucky to get up and to have survived. Although he did not reach the summit, Dick was a major factor in our success. From the very beginning we used Dick's unique talents to push forward. We found 16 Balti men willing to carry loads to Camp I through the Serac Glacier. As a former middle school geography teacher, and with his Rainier guiding experience, Dick was the perfect man to handle the Baltis in this exercise in mass mountaineering. They were so effective that in a week almost everything had been moved to Camp I and we practically abandoned Base Camp for the rest of the expedition.



Dick McGowan on Everest in 1955.
International Himalayan Expedition