

Limestone Lakes Utaniki*



Saturday August 1/87

You talk to yourself leaving from Cranbrook this morning, you notice that, that you talk to yourself more than to others. You meet the others at the Skookumchuk Cafe and then drive the long drive up the gravel valleys, people eyes ahead faces set on the next step which is supposed to be a chopper ride up to 8,000 ft. in the Rockies east of Invermere. Today you wrap the car in chickenwire and then mesmerize, alone, lean on a log long hours but no chopper, unwrap the car and spend the night there, strewn w/ cloud (you hope stars).

When you opened this journal you found the pages from last summer's hiking camp (Anemone Pass in the northern Selkirks) and this poem in response to Pat Lifely's tragic fall.

A Garnet for Pat Lifely

*Here's a small encrusted stone for your cairn,
home for you.*

*this wine-red nipple of the January mind
your death fell from
every day we face them
those rock bluffs across the valley, a pine.*

*the sky who passes over this dish each night
oh wonder of rock and water and earth*

what alchemical lake we and this are

*Here it is then
a periodic counting
not-forgotten alpine meadow winter sod
under all this weight of place:*

*there's the wind too
the flowers we've named, snow
patches, ledges, creeks, lakes, marmots, eagles, clouds*

*and on to the face we glass each day
that bluff between our eyes
lake and the waterfall*

*of a life
could reveal themselves just as simple unique
gouge in rock*

Pat Lifely

*have you become our pet cow-bird
hop for mosquitoes at meal time?*

*is that you, then, already disappeared further south
w/ the cariboo?*

Today you
words. As

Years ago
gray wha.
at the hea

just anoth

Late after.
pickup a t

or a wet C

Finally, in
Switzerlar

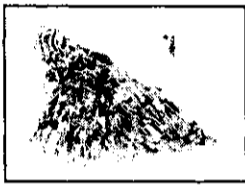
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names of t
But you fig
rel" up Ko
up Anemo
the little is

Like right
for specific

How easil
I could ge

*This garnet, what a little thing to move here for you,
simply because your death moves me.*

*But birds have that quick and darting look - they know
winter's coming,
that
they don't decide.*



Sunday

Today you still wait for the first sign of the chopper. It's stormy and raining a bit. All day you sit in the car and work the words. As you walk along the gravel road alone you can taste the old work, summer cruising.

*Years ago nothing in the sky
gray whales of cumulus floated slow all day
at the head of the valley*

*just another gravel road
w/ clear-cut rubble down to the river*

*Late afternoon over the washboard
pickup a trail of dust*

*or a wet October Sunday
-all the gravel roads so quiet
and alone*

Finally, in the late afternoon, the cloud ceiling lifts a bit and the chopper comes in with a coy and fickle pilot from Switzerland and the flat arctic. But he gets us in by supper time. Tents set up and start to feel it.



Monday

You walked across an incredible grey and red limestone highway today. She can't understand why you don't get into the names of the flowers, like "something poisonous something" (Elegant Poisonous Camus) or Fringe Grass of Parnassus. But you figure out that naming is more than only counting, that it works for you as a very particular image, like that "sor-rel" up Kokanee, or yr always looking for saxifrage in your eye that one lonely flower she called you back to photograph up Anemone Pass last summer. Yet there is that surface of experience, say, walking, eg. that table of limestone today with the little islands of schist sticking up just so. But you can't look at, let alone count, everything.

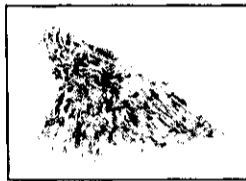
Like right now someone says "got the maps" and you think of the maps in your pack and how you really never use them for specific locations, just an overview (imaginary mostly).

*How easily lost
I could get*

Hiking Camp

At the end of today, back in camp you play around with a watercolour card for Liz. It's titled:

*The goat
She thought
She saw*



Tuesday

You've spent the day chasing after but never finding the people you started hiking with. Everywhere you look - no trace. Now you've sort of given up, had a bath in the lakes, and write about it, eg. this poem:

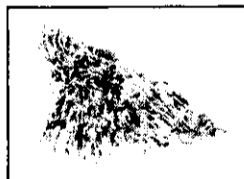
*Not lost
Heart beats
Alone
All day
Long
Day all
Alone
Beats heart
Lost not.*



Wednesday

As you write this your hands are cold because a wet front moved through last night. So this morning the clouds are hanging around. You stay in camp for a few hours and do some pin-hole camera work before you head up the mountain. An easy day to Waterfall Lake - some more pinhole- and then to Limestone Lakes where you photo and paint for an hour. This is what you get:

*A picture of shooting-star that saxifrage
Easy day connections in my body when it touches those magic hills and mountains colours those grays those pigments
glinted off the front of the eyes cerulean blue sky (no black or white) but Winsor green dark burnt umber raw sienna cad-
mium yellow watered yellow ochre for the lakes the limestone hills and paper for the sky left over.*



Thursday

Today Pauline and you off alone to Sylvan Pass roundabout but you get too high on the ridge above the pass so the day is really a trial until you realize on the way home you are a discoverer those ramps of rock and grass down to and up from the wee lakes and that sidehilling across to the ridge above the Pass then meet Phillippe who had waded up the White River to the ridge before Longview Peak. Sheer description of the day then from such a height you see five foreign backpackers cutting across the gray and red amphitheatre so you make plans for home and the return route along the arcades is what, nice, pleasant, finally down to the lake to swim and bathe and mistakenly find your way out of it again but don't forget the sinkhole you sat by on the way through the maze.

*A natura
hosts ro
but the e*

*Trust the
and we v
than all c*

*Alone to
sky today*

*Then you
top you l
down an
But, thar*

*So fear c
and becc*

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a red-alg

or razor

or this bl

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held ther

alone

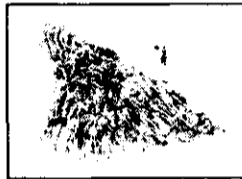
alive.

-Fre

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*A natural limestone amphitheatre
hosts rock events
but the elk find human trails around everything.*

*Trust those trails
and we won't get anymore lost
than all of us already are.*



Friday

Alone today trying to get some height above the West Lakes. Yr up on a ridge above the milky glacial lake, perfect blue sky today.

Then you climb higher to the next ridge and think you see an easy way up, and then even the next one looks ok. Near the top you have some difficulty in a chimney and you remember that time long ago in the Lardeau when you couldn't go down and you couldn't go back up. So the summit is mostly a worry about getting down - too much adrenalin to eat lunch. But, thankfully, a different chute opens up to you on the way down and delivers.

*So fear alone pummels itself inward to itself
and becomes a fossil of another life*

a piece of elk shit that lives siliconed rock hard under geomorphic seabeds

a limestone sinkhole in the dark caverns of our falling stomachs

an unnameable saxifrage that cracks and breaks the rock face

the little avalanche of boulders that crackle out onto sheets of muddy ice and snow

the rotten Rockies rock that crumbles in the middle of a footstep or handhold

a red-algaed snow-patch too steep and icy to use

or razor edge of ice and the hidden gap under the feet

or this black schist or flint in the gray limestone

that's where that fear is

held there for you

alone

alive.

-Fred Wah

*A Utaniki is a "poetic diary." It is a Japanese term and probably the best-known Utaniki to western readers is Basho's *Journey to the North Provinces*.