

World Events Lead to Wallah Hut Walk-In

By Harvey Manning

Wendell Tangborn is the great-great grandson of Lars Bjornsson, born in Rok, Ostergotland in 1784 and “volunteered” for the army by the Swedish nobleman on whose land he was a serf. In January, 1812 he was conscripted with most of the Swedish Army into Napoleon’s Grand Army, bound for Moscow. As the city was burning and Napoleon was in his coach headed home, Lars, left to guard the retreat, didn’t. Nine years later, having evaded vengeful peasants and murderous Cossacks and working in the iron mines in Kiruna, he made it back to Rok and his wife, Maja Eriksdotter and their son, Carl Erik Larson Runn (Wendell’s great grandfather). Lars is buried in Rok but some of his descendents moved to the United States. Wendell, born in 1927 in Iowa, grew up on a farm in Northern Minnesota, graduated with a degree in Geological Engineering from the University of Minnesota. In 1960, he became a hydrologist/glaciologist with the U.S. Geological Survey. This brought him, in August 1961, to the Glacier Wallah Hut above the snout of South Cascade Glacier in the North Cascades of Washington State.

Harvey Manning was born in 1925, in Seattle. His mother, Katie Hawthorn, was the daughter of a Pennsylvania farm boy. One day a rider galloped by shouting “they’ve shot Lincoln”. He ran in the house and hid under the bed, knowing that they would be coming after him next. They didn’t, so he homesteaded in North Dakota, married a schoolmarm from the Hudson River, and after two decades of hail, drought and prairie fires, “and then Jim Hill”, put his large family on Jim Hill’s rails to Seattle where he became a distinguished conductor of the Ballard streetcar line.

The family summered at a rented cabin on Bainbridge Island. At a neighborly beach fire there, Katie met a petty officer from the USS New Mexico. He had graduated from high school in Lowell, Massachusetts at the age of 15, and at age 17 had run away to join the Navy, which his father and the Lowell police agreed was an excellent career move. On his father’s side he came from Colonials who similarly had been advised by Boston Puritans to leave for the wide-open old Northwest. They fought with Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, and for the King in the 1776 Rebellion. In the 1890s he came down from New Brunswick, where he had been a meat cutter, and at the Yellow Meeting House met Louise Simpson, down from Nova Scotia to be a serving girl. Among her ancestors was a Scottish lad who had taken the King’s sovereign and beat the drums while his Redcoat comrades burned the White House in 1814.

On Labor Day, September 1, 1961, Harvey was blasted out of White Rocks Lakes, knocked at the door of the Glacier Wallah Hut, and was graciously invited in by Wendell, who hosted the refugees for three days, until it stopped snowing.