

Spectacle Lake -- July 25-29, 2004

A few years ago Roger joined a couple of old college buddies (Brian and Ken) to hike a segment of the Pacific Crest Trail. That junket has evolved into an annual event with last year's trek occurring in the Olympics. I joined them on that one for a cross country trip from Royal Basin down to the Dosewallups River by way of Deception Basin. The three of them were interested in another trip to the Olympics this year and again invited me to join them. While I wanted to go, I managed to talk them into doing something else. My argument was that Washington is loaded with great mountain country and it is not right that we restrict ourselves to the Olympics.

While I was interested in seeing the North Cascades, this seemed like a very long drive. Further, both Ken and Brian had time conflicts. So, something a bit closer seemed more reasonable. Years ago I used to do some hiking in the area that is now called the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. This area consists of the mountains between Snoqualmie and Stevens Passes, south to north.

A friend and I had hiked into Pete Lake in June of 1960, at that time a 10 mile walk. I had carried the usual camping gear, a camera, and some fishing tackle. Here's a photo from that trip.



A rock outcrop above Pete Lake, 1960.

In spite of the 40+ year time interval, there were two things that stuck in my mind about the area.

First was the impressive looking mountains north of Pete Lake. The second was another lake on the map with a complicated and interesting shoreline, Spectacle Lake. I had always wanted to go there and this seemed like a reasonable goal for this trip. The plan was for the four of us to drive to the trailhead on Sunday, July 25th, and hike into Pete Lake for a camp there the first night. Ron, who was working would then follow us by a two day lag and eventually meet us at Spectacle.

We drove up on Sunday and did the rather easy hike into Pete. It was good that it was an easy hike without much of a climb, for the weather was quite warm. It was a pleasant camp that evening at the Lake.



Evening view of Pete Lake from our camp.



Pete Lake in the morning calm. The water was disturbed only by fish rising. The distant mountains were our destination.

The hike the next day continued to be enjoyable, although we now started to see some elevation gain. The Pete Lake trail proceeded north until it intercepted the PCT, which has been moved since 1960 to now pass within a half mile of Spectacle Lake. The PCT climbs from the Pete Lake Trail interception. After a stint southward on the PCT, including a reasonable elevation gain, a side trail branches off toward Spectacle Lake. The creek coming out of Spectacle presents a wonderful water fall.



This was one of our first views of Spectacle Lake, lined with "in your face" peaks. We proceeded down to the lake and eventually found a good camp spot on a rock peninsula.



Spectacle Lake with Lemah Mountain as viewed from the shore near our camp.

We got a surprise that night. We had eaten dinner and had crashed early after a fairly heavy and hot day on the trail. (Well, it was a lot of work for this ole timer.) Roger and I were in our bivy sacks and were nearly asleep at about 9 PM when we heard foot steps next to us, followed by comments asking why we were in the rack so early! It was Ron. He had started the day in Washington, DC, but had his flight canceled. He managed to grab a jump seat to Seattle, got home at a reasonable hour, grabbed his camping gear, drove to the trailhead, and had hiked all the way in that afternoon and evening. You can see more details on his web site at <http://ronhayward.net> When there, go to the "mountain treks" section and find Spectacle Lake.

We decided to do a day-hike on Day 3, leaving most of our gear in camp. Several of us had fanny packs along to carry some water, food, and cameras. We continued hiking south on the PCT, climbing another 1000 ft until we reached a wonderful overlook that provided views down onto Spectacle Lake. At one point on the trail we could also see into Glacier Lake, an intriguing off-trail sight above Spectacle.



Looking at the peaks from our 5400 ft high point while hiking above our camp at Spectacle Lake. (l to r: Wes, Roger, Ron)



Looking down on Spectacle Lake from the PCT. It was a hazy day when we did our excursion, obscuring even the close-in peaks.

We dropped down hill from the 5400 ft high point until we reached the upper of the two Park Lakes. This was a traditional Cascade tarn with meadow land surrounding the lake.



Upper Park

Lake.

We got back to Spectacle Lake early enough for Ken to take a swim in the lake. The rest of us found it easier to restrain ourselves.

We arose on Day 4 ready for our hike out. Ron and Rog and I got a photo of the three of us, as "ordered" by Mom at home.



We hiked down the PCT, continuing to the bridge across the river that avoids the ford. We then backtracked to the place where the Pete Lake trail intercepts the river and hiked the two miles down to Pete Lake and our final camp. This was rather relaxed with considerable time devoted to chatting with a local fisherman. The limits are considerably lower than they were when I last fished those lakes in the 1960s. But there are still fish there, as evidenced by two nice ones that this fellow had caught from the small boat he had packed in from the trailhead, 5 miles away.

We got up the next morning with the Day 5 goal of getting out early, for Ken had business back in Portland and wanted to get there before everyone was home, if possible. It was still a long drive for us. It was pleasant to hike out while the morning was still fairly cool. We found a family at the trailhead about to hike into Pete for the day and they offered to take a group photo for us.



Left to

right, it's Roger, Ron, Ken, Brian, and Wes.

We packed up and headed off toward Cle Elum where we found a suitable restaurant that would serve us hamburgers early in the day without throwing us out for smelling too bad. The one we found was fine, a small locally owned place in the finest Dayton Duncan tradition. (See restaurants in his "Out West.") All in all, this was a great hike. It was not as intense as some, with only about 30 miles and 4500 ft. But that's the price of geezerism. But the scenery was every bit as good as I remember it from 44 years ago.

(Half of these photos are from Roger's collection. Many thanks Rog.)