

# Hiker Staggers Out of Wilds After 72 Hours of Wandering

Bruised and Hungry,  
Survival Termed  
'Amazing'

By Lucille Cohen

Exhausted and bruised, Ernest C. Hastreiter stumbled onto the porch of a summer home 20 miles east of North Bend yesterday morning, ending a search that began Sunday when the youth vanished on Granite Mountain.

Three days and three nights of wandering—alone, lost, clad only in his shorts and without food—had left their mark on Hastreiter, 24, a Seattle College student. His feet were swollen and bruised, his body was bruised and he was suffering from hunger.

But both Dr. Robert J. Tipler, North Bend physician, and Dr. Otto Trott of the national ski patrol, who examined him, were amazed at how well Hastreiter had stood the ordeal.

## CONFUSED MEMORY

For Hastreiter the days and nights of wandering merged into a confused memory of eating "a couple of berries," drinking "lots of water," sleeping some at nights, walking tremendous distances without arriving anywhere and being terribly afraid a time or two that he wouldn't come out alive.

At the home of H. A. Hansmeier, assistant district forest ranger, at the North Bend ranger station where he was taken after making his way down the mountain, Hastreiter tried to reconstruct his experiences.

He couldn't remember how he had become separated from the



**ADVENTURE ENDED**—Safe in bed at King County Hospital, Ernest C. Hastreiter, Seattle College student who survived trial on mountain, is visited by Father Harold Small, head of the college.

—(Post-Intelligencer Photo.)

party of Seattle College students with whom he set out on a hike to Pratt Lake Sunday morning.

"It's a mystery to me," he said with a grin. "There were a lot of us together to begin with. I don't know where I lost them."

He had a "vague" memory of arriving at the look-out station on the mountain's summit about 1:30 p.m. Sunday clad only in his shorts. It was this appearance, reported by the look-out to the ranger station at North Bend, that set off the search for Hastreiter.

#### SHED CLOTHES FOR BALANCE

After that, he thought, he "must have lost the trail again."

He remembered taking off all his clothing except his shorts.

"I took off my shoes because they wouldn't hold in the snow," he recalled. "It would have been different if I'd had hiking shoes but I thought I was just going to a picnic. I felt like I had more balance, I felt safer without my clothes."

It was bitterly cold on the snow capped mountain Hastreiter, a veteran of combat in France and Germany, remembered.

"I shook quite a bit," he said, "especially at night when I lay down. And things would stick to my back. I brushed off mosquitoes for two or three hours one evening. You get used to all that after a while."

"I kept drinking every time I saw a stream. A couple of times I ate berries."

He remembered the country he passed through as "all rocks and brush and sometimes rocks and water."

"A couple of times I thought I was going to die out there," he said quietly.

More real to Hastreiter than the cold, the hunger and the fright was the cold milk, the warm tea and the comfortable bed Mrs. Hansmeier gave him.

"This is swell," he said smiling at the forest ranger's wife.

When Hastreiter knocked on the door of the B. K. Muechler summer home at 11:10 a. m., the Muechler's son, John, recognized him as the lost hiker for whom searching parties were combing Granite Mountain.

Young Muechler took Hastreiter to the Camp Denny lodge where a group of vacationing Girl Scouts bathed the student's bruised feet and fed him.

Stanley Weiss, ranger at the Snoqualmie Pass guard station, gave some of his clothes to Hastreiter

and took him to the Hansmeier home. After resting there, the exhausted student was taken to King County Hospital by Dr. Trott.

#### SURVIVAL 'AMAZING'

The doctor, an experienced mountaineer, termed it "amazing" that Hastreiter had been able to survive three days and nights on the mountain without his clothes.

When Hastreiter came out of the wilds, two searching parties were still out hunting him—one made up of 10 fire suppression men, led by Joel Gibson, and one of 12 Seattle College students, led by Father Frank Logan of the school's faculty. Also still on the trail was a bloodhound, belonging to Fred Wagener of Issaquah.

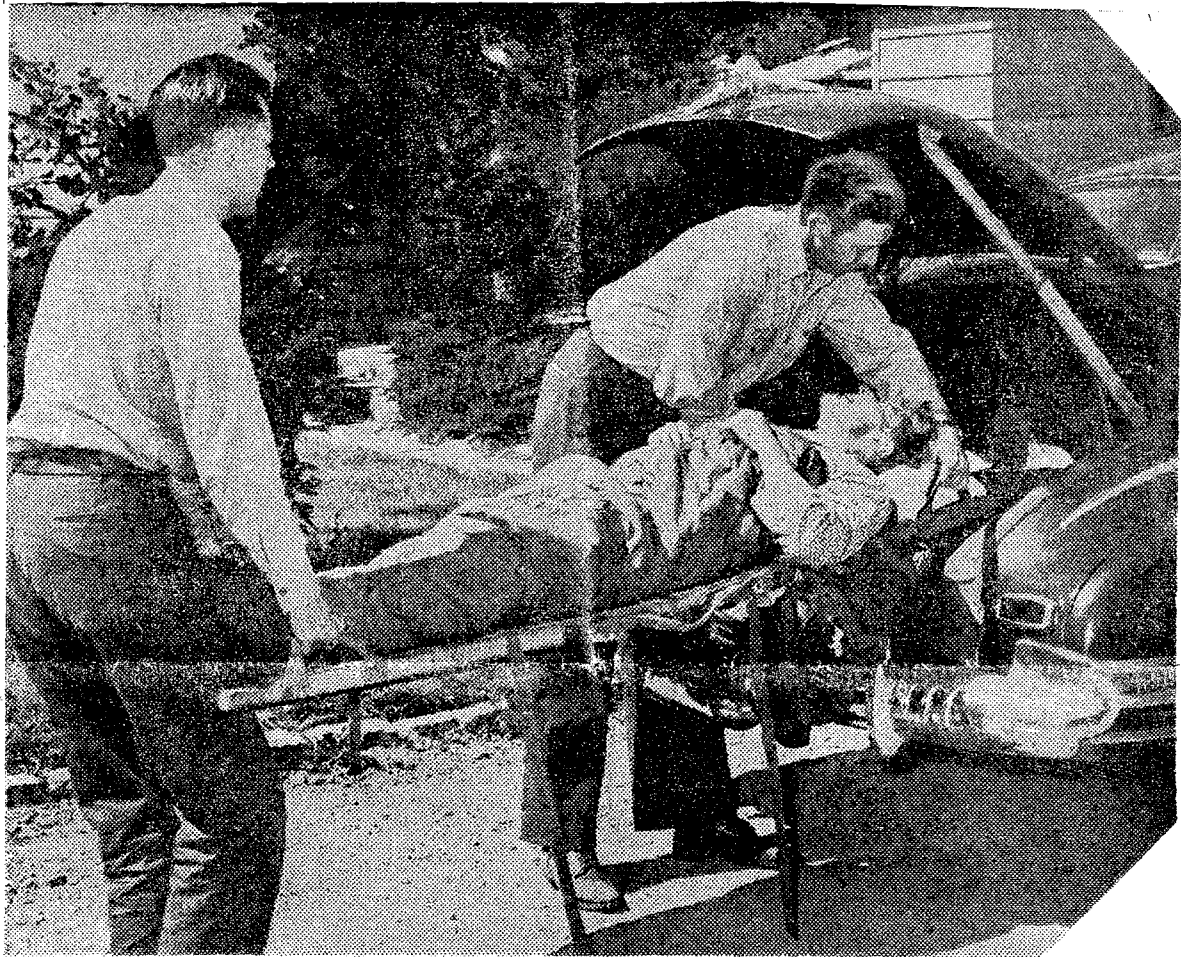
On notification from Hansmeier, who coordinated the search, that the youth had been found, the look-out at the summit fired a pistol three times. That was the prearranged signal to notify searchers their hunt was over.

A party of 10 navy men from Sand Point Naval Air Station, who were scheduled to join the search at 1 p. m., were told they would no longer be needed.

As Hansmeier reconstructed Hastreiter's wanderings from the youth's story, he traveled down the east face of the mountain, the area in which the search was concentrated. Most of the time the student was climbing over the rocks of the mountain's high reaches or crashing through the brush of its lower stretches, hitting trails only occasionally, Hansmeier believed.

Hastreiter had an explanation for his feat of finding his own way out, despite admittedly never knowing where he was going.

"I took a trail, for once," he said wryly.



**HOSPITAL BOUND**—Ernest Hastreiter, Seattle College student missing on Granite Mountain from Sunday to yesterday morning, is put into Dr. Otto Trott's car at the North Bend ranger station for the trip

to King County Hospital. Handling the stretcher are Stanley Weiss of the forest service (right) and H. A. Hansmeier, assistant district forest ranger, who coordinated the search for the young student.