

THE ST. BERNARDS OF NORTH AMERICA

By STEWART H. HOLBROOK



The "Crag Rats" rescuing a victim from a deep crevasse on Mount Rainier, in Washington.

THE brooding peaks of the Cascade mountains are white. Snow sifts through the firs and hemlocks, and a wind that started 'way north of Queen Charlotte Sound sends

the brittle snow flying in clouds. Tomorrow, perhaps, the wind will become a hurricane and winter will have come to the high places in the Pacific Northwest. There will surely be a call for the Crag Rats.

The monks who have kept the hospice on the Saint Bernard Pass in the Swiss Alps for more than eight centuries have won en-

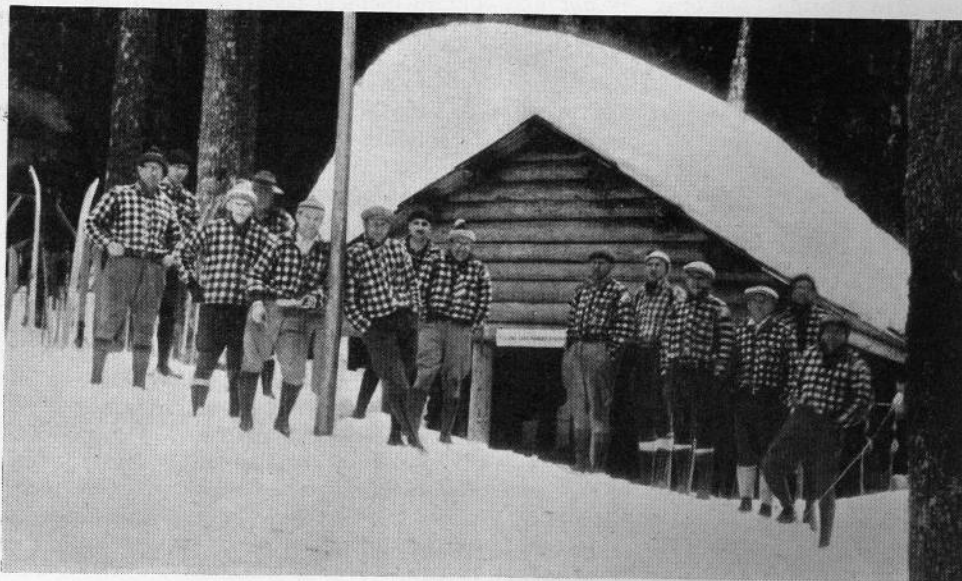
during fame for the work they have done, but not many people outside the Northwest have as yet heard of the Crag Rats of Hood River, Oregon. They come pretty nearly being the St. Bernards of North America.

The Crag Rats are the only group in this country whose avocation is the rescue of persons lost in the mountains. The Pacific Northwest is their field and in their short life they have achieved some dangerous and occasionally spectacular rescues on the high peaks of Oregon and Washington. Leaving their usual prosaic occupations at a moment's notice, without pay of any kind, they have trod through blizzards, walked glaciers, and have been lowered by ropes into great crevasses.

They were organized only in 1926. In five years they have averaged six notable rescues a year, and they have probably made a hundred others that are known only to the folks who live around the base of Mount Hood.

The idea of a rescue group was conceived by A. L. Anderson, a young lumberman of Hood River, some twelve years

ago. He mulled over in his mind the fact that scarcely a month passed when there was not some frantic call—that someone else was lost on Mount Hood, Mount St. Helens, Mount Rainier, or one of the other snow-capped peaks on the Northwest. And there was no one, except for the few forest rangers, to call on for aid. Newspapers



A group of the Crag Rats—the Pacific Northwest is their field and they are ready at a moment's notice to go to the rescue of people lost in the high mountains.



How the world looks to the Crag Rats when an emergency call has come and they have reached a high peak in their search for someone lost. The white flow is not a glacier, but a cloud.

made front-page stories about the persons who were lost, and unorganized groups would turn out to search; but that was all.

So, Anderson persistently talked his idea to friends and acquaintances at Hood River. One by one he met other experienced mountain climbers who liked the idea. Thus the Crag Rats were born—a handful of men who had scaled peaks both in America and in Europe.

To be a Crag Rat one must have climbs to the tops of Mounts Hood and Adams to one's credit; must be fit physically; must be at home on snow-shoes and skis; must know how to use the ice ax; and, most important of all, to be on call at all times to start for the moraines, the neves, glaciers and the deep crevasses of the peaks.

Applications for membership in the Rats have been many. Anderson estimates them at 200; but all applications are ignored. You can't get in that way. New members are invited to join. Today they number twenty-seven, and they are about as tough and rugged a crew of men as you will find.

The membership is cosmopolitan, sev-

eral nations being represented. Among them are fruit growers, bankers, a photographer, an electrician, a doctor, a druggist, a service-station man, and Anderson, the lumberman, who started everything.

One of the notable achievements of the Rats was a week they spent looking for young Calvin White who was lost on Mount Hood. They found him and brought him out.

Another time they spent six days and nights in terrific weather on the same peak searching for Jackie Strong, a youngster who survived the blizzard but was near death when they found him.

They packed their tackle at a moment's notice and went to Mount Rainier, 150 miles away in northern Washington, to search for a climber lost there. They found him. Another time they made a spectacular rescue of nine climbers who had fallen into a deep crevasse, and recovered one who had died.

Other groups may talk business and listen to inspirational speakers; still other groups may meet and pass resolutions. The Rats meet only to save lives. They are the St. Bernards of North America.



This is where the Crag Rats made camp to eat and rest a moment while they were searching for young Calvin White on Mount Hood.

American **FORESTS**

