

Excerpts from Chapters 1 and 2 of *Sanctuary of the Morning Light*

Ned Kinloch:

It all started a few years ago. I was climbing in Crackenback Canyon when I came off a wet slab and banged up my right knee. Nothing serious, but I was out of action for a few weeks. I was busy at work at that time, so it didn't matter too much at first, but summer was just about over, and finally, I just had to get out and test it. So I went out and did an easy scramble on one of the local mountains.

I remember the day—one of those great days we get in the early fall. Cool air, blue skies, and you get a couple of hours before the clouds build up over the mountains. I started early, and on the way up, I cut off the regular trail and scrambled up an easy rock face directly to the summit. When I got to the top, the knee felt pretty good. I wasn't in great shape after the weeks of inactivity, and I was happy just to sit there and look out at the view.

For once, I wasn't planning future climbs, or even thinking ahead to possible ski trips or anything like that. It just felt good to relax and take it easy. Somehow, looking out at so many familiar peaks off in the distance, I found myself thinking about how much the mountains were a part of my life.

Climbing . . . skiing . . . kayaking. All the great times I'd had. Not only in those local mountains, but many other places the States and Europe, the Cordillera Blanca and Patagonia. The good friends, the summits we'd stood on. The rivers we'd run. All those times when we were strong and fit and happy, and really alive.

I'm not usually that philosophical. And I didn't get far with those thoughts that day, because two guys arrived on the peak behind me, and the first thing one of them did was to get out a cellphone. And as usual, when people use their cellphones, he talked loud enough for everyone to hear. And as usual, the conversation was pretty inconsequential. "Yeah, dude. We made it!" "Easy!" "Where are you?" "OK. We're on our way." Something like that. They were only on top for a few minutes. I looked down the ridge and saw more people coming up the trail.

So that pretty well put an end to my random thoughts about mountains and life, but as I was leaving the top, I suddenly had a "What if . . .?" thought. What if there was a place in the mountains that I could go to, just to sit quietly and think.

Or contemplate. Maybe even meditate. Just far away enough from a summit or a trail to be undisturbed by other people.

I don't know why, but that thought really appealed to me then. When you're on a climb, you have the satisfaction of reaching the summit, and you never want that feeling to end. But there's usually a good reason why it doesn't last. The weather is changing. It's late and you want to get down before dark. Or you know there are tricky sections on the descent. Especially, when you're tired.

On easy local mountains, people arrive, take photos, talk, eat lunch—all perfectly normal activities. And of course, nowadays, they can't help making cellphone calls. So one way or another, it's not often that you can sit for any length of time on a mountain and relax completely. I was thinking about a quiet place where you wouldn't be disturbed. A place designated in some way for quiet sitting.

Well, that's what I remember about that morning. It was almost as if I was seeing the mountains in a new way. For once, I was just *being* in the mountains, not *doing* anything special. I didn't think any more about that idea until much later, when my knee started acting up—for no apparent reason. For the first time ever, I had a really terrible thought. I wondered if I was getting too old for this sort of thing.

And the idea of a place to sit in the mountains came back to me. I thought about it on and off, and at some point, I mentioned it to a neighbour—not a climber, but a very good friend.

Takao Matsushima:

Ned and I were talking about the pavilions and teahouses that you often see in traditional Japanese gardens, and especially in Chinese landscape paintings. And when Ned told me about his idea for a place to sit in the mountains, that's what I saw right away. A small hut where people could look at the mountains, or the moon, or watch the cherry blossoms. That's what they used to do in Japan and China. I was reminded of the little huts I'd seen in Chinese landscape paintings, where hermits or poets lived. Next to a lake with fishing boats among the reeds, or beside a stream, or a waterfall, in a vast expanse of towering mountains. Dark trees clinging to the cliffs, and above a band of mist, a distant mountain. The huts were usually in wild places away from towns and villages.

I imagined being in a place like that, sitting in the moonlight, with a bottle of wine, like those old Chinese poets—Li Po and Tu Fu were probably the most famous ones—talking and arguing and drinking and laughing, and writing poetry. I've never wanted to go and live like a hermit myself, but I liked the idea

of a place in the mountains you could go to for a few hours. That sounded good to me. Ned said we didn't have to go to the mountains to do that. And when had either of us written any poetry? It wasn't exactly part of his original idea, but he wasn't totally opposed to it.

After Ned came back from his first trip to Japan, one of the things we talked about was trying to combine traditional Eastern philosophical values, like those of Zen Buddhism, for example, with modern Western values. How could we adapt them to a modern Western setting? This idea of his for a place to sit in the mountains seemed to me to be a step in that direction. The pace of life we have today—East and West—all the complexity, all the stress. I thought it would be good to have a lot of places like that, to stop and take a few minutes to sit down and relax. They'd be great for stress reduction.

I said if he ever found a good place to put a platform, I was willing to help him set it up—if he'd let me sit there with a bottle of wine and book of poetry to read. But then he mentioned the idea to another friend, and it became something more serious.

Alicia Tyndall:

Japan. That is what Ned and I were talking about—we were on a ski trip on the Moberley Icefield—and in the hut one night, we were talking about Japan. I had made several trips to Japan in the 1990s, and Ned been there more recently. One of things we both loved were the big, old temples among the trees on the hillsides around Kyoto. The massive roofs, the intricate carving, the dark rooms. The verandahs overlooking the raked gravel gardens. The stillness. The serenity. Of course, they were not always that way. During the summer, there were immense crowds of schoolchildren and tourists. However, it was possible to get away from the crowds, and Ned talked about an experience he had at one of the temples—Tenryuji, I think it was.

He had wandered along a path in the temple grounds, away from the crowds, and he discovered a wonderful bamboo forest. There was nobody around. He was alone on the path, listening to the wind in the bamboo, the rustling of leaves, the creaking of the trunks. I have been in bamboo forests and I know how easy it is to be captured by the swaying of the trees. It is almost like being in the middle of a giant orchestra, with the low pulse of basses and violas weaving among the tree trunks and the vibrato of violins cascading through the canopy above. When everything around you is moving in a certain rhythm, you feel even the ground beneath you is moving. Ned lost track of the time until he heard a great, deep bell ring out over the temple grounds. Then a monk came hurrying along the

path and told him the temple was closing for the day and he should leave. I remember Ned saying how much he enjoyed that deep sense of tranquility in the bamboo forest.

That was the night he told me about the idea of a place to sit in the mountains. I thought it was a marvelous idea.

I have spent a lot of time in the mountains. With friends and students, and I have also been alone many times. People were often concerned about me being out in the mountains by myself. I was not worried. I loved it! Studying plants and flowers in alpine meadows, beside streams and lakes, on high ridges. Sometimes, resting, I like to sit on a log or a rock, not thinking about anything special, simply enjoying being there. Without trying, I learn more about nature in many ways. I have sat quietly as insects and small creatures have gone about their lives right in front of me. I have watched deer and elk grazing. I have sat with mountain goats on the rocks just above me. One time, I sat very still, not moving at all, while a big grizzly bear wandered across the hillside no more than one hundred metres in front of me. That was not entirely peaceful! But it was marvellous to see.

It is wonderful to sit absolutely still and immerse oneself in a particular place. It takes time before your mind stops darting from one thing to another. When it does, you become sharply aware of what is around you. It is like a waking dream, where normal reality becomes something more than you can describe in words. Perhaps that sounds strange to people who want to see as much as they can, when they hurry from one beauty spot to the next. It is easier to experience than to explain. You might focus on one thing or another, or not focus on anything special, or everything all together. The important thing is to sit still and let the mind find its way to inner peace. And that is the realm of the spirit.

In that way, I felt I knew what Ned was talking about when he described a place to sit in the mountains. The fierce delight one feels in wild, beautiful places. The calm one can feel in a natural environment, all the more intense when one has time to sit. To contemplate. To meditate.

So in Ned's idea, I thought there were many possibilities to explore the spiritual aspects of nature. To bring spirituality and nature together in a direct way. Spirituality, not religion. That was important. I knew Ned was interested in Zen Buddhism, and as Tak said, he was interested in bringing Eastern and Western philosophies together. I thought a place to sit in the mountains was one way to do that. It was not the Zen or Taoist way of meditating that was important. It was having a place to be quiet and contemplative in the mountains.

In the spring of 2006, Ned found an ideal location for the sitting platform.

Ned Kinloch:

From the Samilkawen Campground Reb and I hiked up the trail towards the Viewpoint on Mount Matheson. While we were still in the forest, we turned off to the south and angled up through the trees, staying below the crest of the ridge. When we got to the high point of the ridge, we could just see the tip of the peaks in the Trident group above the long ridge coming south off Matheson. The ridge widened out and we continued along until it dropped back into the trees. I came to the edge of a drop-off and looked almost straight down onto a shelf of rock with a tiny pool of water and a couple of dwarf trees on it. It was like finding a miniature Shangri-La.

The shelf wasn't exactly flat, but it was easily big enough for a platform, sheltered from the north by the step in the ridge, and open on the other three sides. I dropped down onto the shelf and looked around. It was terrific. To the west, across the valley, the Matheson ridge, and just above it, the South Trident, bright and clear, with the last snow shining in the sun. I could pick out the last couple of pitches on the southeast ridge. Roger and Larry Johansen had done the first ascent of the face ten years ago. I'd been on it a couple of years later. On the south, you looked out through scattered trees to the foothills and the junction of the Madsen and Hawk Rivers. Farther to the east there were more foothills and trees, but you could still see a tiny patch of open country on the horizon. It was incredible.

I dropped my pack, found a good place near the edge of the shelf, and told Reb I was going to sit for a few minutes. I wanted to see if my ideas about sitting in the mountains were realistic. Whether it really made sense to have a place like this, not just to meditate, but to sit quietly and feel at one with the world around you.

In the end, it was still hard to tell. It took a while to settle down. But it felt good. It felt right. Then I suddenly realized: there was only one thing wrong. We were probably still inside Skyline National Park. We must have been close to the edge, but when I got out the map and checked the contours, I could see that we were just inside the Park boundary. Not by much. But just inside. Damn!

Alicia Tyndall:

And then everything changed.

In the middle of summer, we heard that the Samilkawen Hotel had been sold and the new owners were planning to build a whole new resort complex in its place.

Now. The original hotel was built about sixty or seventy years ago next to Samilkawen Falls, near one of the main entrances to Skyline Park. It was an old building, but not as grand and impressive as some of the other well-known hotels in National Parks. I had not been there for years, and I understand it was not well looked after. I could understand a desire to renovate it, but that was not the plan.

The plan was to destroy the old hotel and build a bigger one, with a swimming pool and ice rink and tennis courts and a golf course. And a big, new resort village around it. In Skyline National Park! With condominiums and big homes around the golf course. And a shopping centre! A shopping arcade with all the fancy big-name stores. They also wanted to expand the Mount Buchan ski area, which is right above the hotel. They were going to build new lifts to the peaks behind Mount Buchan. All of that in a National Park. Terrible! Just terrible! And next to the so-called resort village, but outside Skyline Park, there would be more expensive homes, with their own private road and another new gondola up to Mount Buchan. They even talked about building an airport beside the Skyline Highway.

There was obviously a lot of money involved. And a great deal of political support. Several environmental groups immediately expressed their opposition. They formed an organization—the Protect Our Park Coalition—and began a campaign to protest the extent of the development. The public opposition was so strong that the government announced that public meetings would be held, and an environmental review would be done. It was expected that a final decision would be made some time in the fall.

This was a familiar battle for environmental groups: the struggle against development that goes against the very spirit of natural and wild places. We have had this type of battle before. Many times. I expected another long struggle.

Ned Kinloch:

I wasn't too happy when I heard the news about the Samilkawen resort. As it happens, that was right across the valley from the ridge I'd found for the platform. I could hardly believe it.

And when I heard how the development was supposed to be conserving the heritage of the Samilkawen Hotel—well that was crazy. The main emphasis was

on the benefits to the economy—shopping, fancy restaurants, movies. Shopping—good God! What did that have to do with the heritage of the hotel? It was another example of the trend to more consumption, more luxury, more excess. It's spreading throughout the world. In the developed and developing countries of the world. Every new resort has to be "world class." Every new resort is bigger and fancier and more exotic than the last one. Clothing stores, fancy restaurants, massive homes and condos! Skyline Park was just another selling point. A recognizable brand name to be consumed like everything else.

I don't know. I try to live well, but lightly on the earth. I try not to be too rigid or obsessive about it because I know not everyone wants to live as simply as I do. But with the pressures on the natural environment today, all around us, not to mention the global pressures on resources—energy, food, clean water, clean air—the amount of poverty and hunger and inequality in the world, this use of a protected natural environment for the benefit of a very few, very affluent skiers, golfers and shoppers. This is progress? It was just too much. For me, it was pretty well the last straw.

I went back to the ridge a couple of times on my own. At first, I just sat there and brooded. I was mad about the whole development business; how government officials ignored the anger and frustration of people who loved the Park. But when I stopped brooding, and just sat there, and became aware of the sounds and smells, the wind and sun and clouds, I couldn't stay mad. I felt there was something there that I had to absorb. Something that was part of our human response to the natural environment.

And that's when I had a kind of "Eureka!" moment. I mean, the original idea, it just came to me out of nowhere. But in this case, I was searching for something—a good reason to go ahead with the platform on the ridge. And I found it: a brand new vision of the platform. Or rather, a new rationale for it. A better and stronger one.

At least, that's how I saw it. I had no idea whether it would work or not. I thought it could turn out to be a totally futile gesture, but it was worth a try. Originally the platform hadn't been much more than a personal whim. All of a sudden, I saw an argument for putting it on the ridge, *in* the National Park. I had a rationale that might just work.

At the simplest level, it would be a brand new concept for a National Park: a place specifically designated for people to sit and quietly enjoy being in the Park, in stillness and silence, away from the noise and activity of the city and everyday life.

That was an entirely appropriate activity to have in the Park. Instead of the commercial development that the government was encouraging, instead of the rumble of tour buses and RVs and SUVs, there would be a small area of silence. It wouldn't harm the environment. It wouldn't interrupt anyone else's enjoyment of the Park or interfere with other activities in the Park. No one's job or livelihood would be affected. It wouldn't need much maintenance, or "development" except for a short trail to it. No road access, no parking lot, no concession stand, no litter. It would cost next to nothing.

At another level, it might help to spark new ideas and understanding of our place in the natural environment. It could help people to make new connections to the natural environment—not through tourism or recreation, but related to protection of natural values. All the things in the Parks mandate. A new connection to Skyline Park. Most people can't, and don't want to, spend weeks in the wilderness, and relatively few visitors to the Park spend more than a few hours in it, seeing all the sights, before moving on. But some of them might be very happy to spend a short time just sitting and reflecting on the natural world around them. They could make their own connection to Skyline Park. They'd get to know the Park in a different way.

Finally—and this was the key—I saw the platform as a symbolic protest against the type and scale of development that the Samilkawen resort represented. It was just about the smallest, simplest, man-made object you could put in a National Park. Well, a signpost or a notice board might be smaller. But the important thing was: it was an example of what could, and should be happening in National Parks. It would be a small, simple, practical, symbol of concern for the natural environment. In that sense, it was as small as a single human being and as large as the entire Park.

It would be an experiment. I had no idea how, or if, it would work. We had to oppose the resort development in whatever ways we could, and the platform could be another, new element in that battle. It wasn't meant to replace the hard slog of meetings and speeches and the struggle to make against the power of money and politics. And "progress." Yeah!

I got excited all over again. Of course, I had second thoughts later on. I was afraid the rationale sounded pretentious, and the platform idea, whichever way you looked at it, it was a pretty small concept. But I called Alicia and Tak and told them I'd found a place for the sitting platform. I asked them to come to the ridge with me, to be there when I explained my reasons for putting the platform there.

Takao Matsushima:

It made sense. We'd been talking endlessly about how best to stop the Samilkawen hotel expansion, but it was a hard struggle. There was an awful lot of support for the resort: politicians, celebrities, a lot of advertising. We didn't know what to expect. But here was something we could do. Ned didn't have to convince us that sitting and meditating was an appropriate thing to do in the Park; we all knew it was. With the uncertainty about stopping the Samilkawen resort, we could see how doing something positive on our own was a different way of protesting against the government policy. We all agreed it was a whole new way of looking at the issue.

Something else happened when we were there. We started to see possibilities we'd never considered before. I thought putting a little wooden platform on the ridge was too small a gesture. I could see Ned's point about keeping it small, but I thought we could make the point better with something a bit bigger. I was thinking again of those old Chinese poets and hermits. I suggested we build a small pavilion. It would keep the platform dry, so it could be used more easily in bad weather. More importantly, it wouldn't take up more space, but it would have more "presence" than just a platform.

Alicia took that thought even farther. She suggested we create a sanctuary—something like an ecological reserve. Instead of being set apart for scientific study, it would be a small space set aside for spiritual exploration. It would be a refuge for people who wanted to escape temporarily from the cares of the world. It would be a sanctuary against developments like the Samilkawen resort in National Parks. She really liked the symbolic protest angle.

Once we started talking about these possibilities, everyone came up with ideas. From a simple platform we went to a temple complex in no time at all! Ned thought the entrance to the sanctuary could be like a torii—the type of gateway they have at Shinto shrines in Japan. A torii marks the entrance to a sacred area, and also indicates an entry into the spiritual world. Ned didn't believe in kami, the spirits of nature, as they are known in Japan—at least, I don't think he did—but having a torii gate to the sanctuary would be an excellent way to emphasize the spiritual focus of this particular place. This was another example of Ned trying to bring Eastern and Western ideas together. Not just copying from the East, but adapting Eastern ideas and philosophies to a Western setting.

The more we talked, the more enthusiastic we got. Another idea was Rebecca's suggestion that we use old climbing ropes to mark the boundary of the sanctuary. We didn't want to close the area off, but the ropes would be very appropriate as a symbolic fence. The scale of the project got bigger, but Ned

insisted on keeping things fairly simple. That was fine. All the elements came together nicely. The most important thing was the excitement and eagerness we felt about the whole idea.

Ned Kinloch:

I thought it was great that everyone had ideas, and was so enthusiastic. I still thought the most important thing was to keep it simple, at an appropriate scale, or size, and make sure we had the least possible impact on the natural environment. And for everything that followed from that day on, in fact, those were our benchmarks: simplicity, stillness, and silence.

I knew that some people would say we were setting a bad example. What if everyone just went in and did what they wanted? It's a fair question. I couldn't disagree with the argument entirely, because I didn't want to encourage random actions in the Park either. And I didn't want to ask anybody to do something illegal or that they thought would be damaging to the Park. I'd been thinking about that for a long time.

But then, on the ridge that day, I thought: Wait a minute! What if ten groups like ours actually built platforms in quiet, out of the way places in National Parks? In the way I wanted to do it. No damage, no impact. They would be wonderful places for people to have a longer, quieter, and possibly deeper, experience of the natural environment. That's especially important for people who are not hikers, or climbers, etc. A sanctuary would be a new way to make a connection with the natural environment, a way that is relevant to each individual.

Of course, if people wanted to build bigger structures—churches or cathedrals in the wilderness—that sort of thing, with new roads and parking lots, then I was totally against it. I was against anything that interfered with other ways of enjoying parks. I was certainly against anything that was part of a commercial or for-profit set-up. I had this sudden vision of a resort advertising its “meditation platform” just a short distance from the swimming pool and the hot tub.

Still, if at some time in the future there were ten or a hundred sanctuaries, the total impact would be way less than one mine, one logging lease, or one commercial resort development! People everywhere would have another way to become more aware of the natural world, and if lots of people went to sanctuaries, there'd be more environmental awareness, more support for protecting natural places.

I got really wound up, and thought of Ed Abbey's Monkey Wrench Gang. We had to be Defenders of the Environment. Explorers of the Spirit. Warriors of

Enlightenment! In this case, we weren't destroying anything. We were doing something absolutely benign. We were providing an example. A service even. The sanctuary would be a small gift to the Park. Something to inspire people. That's what we could do. That's why we had to do this ourselves. We had to go for it. We couldn't wait for anyone else to do something dramatic or different. The main thing was to keep the overall impact as small as possible, and I thought we could do that. The "tread lightly, do no damage" principle.

At the same time, once we'd done it, we had to be prepared to let it go. It was an experiment. As a connection with the natural environment. As a new type of spiritual place. And as a symbolic form of protest against development. We had to be prepared to lose it all. It was a gamble I was willing to take.

Rebecca Watson:

We spent some time discussing how we might use the sanctuary. And how other people might use it, too. We generally agreed that we'd have to explain the purpose of the sanctuary and hope that everyone would understand and act accordingly. When we talked about who would use it and how would they know about it and how would they get there, all of those questions brought us to the matter of Skyline National Park.

None of us doubted the environmental concerns and skills of the Park staff, but this wasn't something we could propose to the Park through the regular channels. The Park administration has had to deal with reduced budgets and staffing cuts, and they're still handling thousands of tourists. Their focus was on cutting costs and increasing revenue from Park users. Proposing the sanctuary as an alternative to the Samilkawen resort wouldn't get a moment's consideration. In any case, this was meant to be a protest action, something we had to do ourselves.

We talked about letting the other protest groups know what we were planning. We might get practical and moral support from them. But Ned felt that would lead to more debate, and if they agreed with the idea and got involved, it would be impossible to do it quietly. It could easily seem like an "occupation" of the Park, and that would be just another familiar protest tactic. He felt the element of surprise was important.

Alicia Tyndall:

I think Ned might have been a little *too* keen on the idea of guerrilla action—we saw that later on again—but he certainly got us fired up. Warriors of Enlightenment. I liked that! Ned made an important point about the spirit we needed. One ancient quality of warriors was discipline. In our case, that was still very important, but it had to be manifested as restraint. Ned was totally opposed to heroic posturing and empty rhetoric. He did not want any aggression against opponents, or damage to people or property. The key was to stand up and make our voices heard without shouting. Creating the sanctuary was the first action. Later, we could put our bodies on the line when and if it was necessary. He described the sanctuary as a venture into new territory, and the important thing was to set an example that other people *could* follow. I was totally in agreement with that.

When we travel in wild places, we feel our strengths and our weaknesses. We engage our bodies and minds fully. We may experience hardship, hunger, thirst, cold, and heat, weariness, fear, and sometimes pain. We also find beauty and pleasure. Wonder, astonishment, exhilaration and peace and contentment.

The two extremes are connected. You do not have to enjoy hardship and suffering, but when they are over, that is when the enjoyment of beauty and wonder is all the more intense. Just working hard, with your body and your mind, sharpens your awareness of the joy you find in the natural world.

Of course, getting to the Sanctuary is not a wilderness experience. But the location on the ridge was just far enough away from the road and civilization to require some effort to reach it. On one side, you have the wild mountains. On the other, civilization is at your back.

And in sacred places, like a sanctuary, we find refuge, peace, safety, serenity. We obtain access to inner thoughts and feelings, and often, to a higher power. That is what inspired me to suggest creating a sanctuary on the ridge. It seemed like the perfect place for it.

And Tak made another marvellous suggestion. Soon after we arrived at the ridge, he commented on the sunlight coming through the trees, and how it lit up the peaks across the valley. Then, as we were about to leave, after all our excited discussion of new ideas, he looked around and said very quietly, “The Sanctuary of the Morning Light. How does that sound?” And we knew immediately, how right that was. It captured the—how shall I say?—the promise of the early morning sunlight. The promise of something new, something fresh! We agreed it was a marvellous name. That was what we were going to create.

In the meantime, we were just four people. A meteorologist, a schoolteacher, a grad student, and a retired doctor. We were environmentalists and hikers and climbers and skiers. To have the impact we wanted, and to be successful at all, we had to build the pavilion and set up the sanctuary without being discovered. And that's what we all agreed to do. We could hardly wait to go down and get started.

The group built a small pavilion in town, then broke it down into manageable loads to be carried up to the ridge without being discovered.

Rebecca Watson:

We didn't make a very good start on our first trial run. Ned and Alicia and myself. Tak had something else on that day. It was the middle of the week and we arrived at the Campground parking lot early—before breakfast—and when we parked near the trailhead, we saw people on the trail already! Most of them going up, and a few coming down. We discovered staff from the Samilkawen Hotel and from the Park Headquarters used the Viewpoint Trail for an early morning workout run. So our hopes for getting up the trail before anyone else was on it were totally ruined. Early morning was the busy time!

We had small loads that could fit in our packs—shakes for the roof mainly—and it felt like we waited for hours in the parking lot before we thought it was safe to leave. Even then, when we only about halfway up the trail, two runners came down the trail and passed us. They just said "Hi." They didn't seem to notice our packs. Ned and I had our big packs—not day packs—and they're a lot bigger than what you'd expect for someone going for a day hike. I guess the runners thought we were doing our own sort of workout. One way of getting in shape for a big climb is to start carrying heavy loads on local hikes.

When we got close to the turnoff spot to the ridge, we stopped to make sure no one was coming up or down the trail and then we hurried into the trees. There were some low bushes and we had to go about fifty yards before we were out of sight around the hillside. From there it was easy going to the ridge. We stashed everything under a big tarp just beyond the shelf. Then we went down again, and we made two more trips that day. So after a nervous start, we got a lot of small stuff up to the ridge without any trouble. That was a relief!

To carry heavier loads, they enlisted the help of four more friends. This made it easier to carry the loads and also make sure the trail was clear.

Ned Kinloch:

The last major test of the system—and ourselves—was getting the posts and beams for the Entry Gate into place. I wanted the entrance to have the significance that a torii has in Japan, but I didn't want it to be a torii as such. Toriis are traditionally made of large round posts, with a curving crosspiece across the top. They're almost always painted red. Nowadays, you seem them made of concrete, and the designs vary a bit. I wanted the idea of a torii, but in a Western form. I thought we could make an entrance with squared off posts, and two crosspieces. Simple, unstained, natural timber. Big—but not so big that we needed an army of men to carry it. Impressive, but not overpowering.

We used a carry system with four people. There were a couple of places along the Viewpoint Trail where it would be a tight fit for two people walking side by side, and there was one corner where the length of the post might be a problem. Off the trail, the weight would be heaviest for the guys on the downhill side as we traversed the side of the ridge, and I figured we'd have to have frequent position changes, and frequent rests.

The final wrinkle was a matter of timing again. It was hard to tell how long we'd take to get up the trail to the turnoff, but I didn't think we had much choice. We had to take the posts up, one at a time, in the dark. The crossbeams we could manage with a two-person carry like those we'd already done.

Roger Maltenby:

We did the carries on a weekend, and the night before, we turned in early so we could get started before dawn the next morning. It was late summer and the campground was full of people talking and singing and laughing until midnight. It was almost impossible to get to sleep because of the noise.

When we got up at two the next morning, we weren't exactly rested. Tak hadn't slept very well, and he didn't know about Alpine starts. When you're climbing on snow or ice, you leave camp or the hut while the air is still cold. Once the sun comes up, the snow and ice get soft, you get rocks falling, and the chance of avalanches increases. It was nothing special for Ned, and Reb, and Alicia and me, but it was something different for Tak and Sandy and Karen and Steve.

In this case, it was simply a matter of getting up the trail before anyone else was up. Karen and Sandy were still sleepy, but I think they found it exciting to be up in the dark, ready to get these loads up the trail.

Ned, Steve, Tak, and I did the carrying and Reb and Karen were on hand to help when needed. We followed Alicia up the Viewpoint Trail, just as we'd done before. We didn't expect to meet anyone at that time of the morning, and we used our headlamps in the trees, and turned them off in the open areas. There was just enough light to see the trail. The hardest part of the whole carry was turning off the Viewpoint Trail into the trees. The terrain wasn't particularly steep, but there were a couple of awkward steps up onto a rocky outcrop and we couldn't make the turn, so we had to go past the turnoff, put the post down, turn around and then get one end up on the rock, slide it forward, and push and pull to get it between two trees. Then we picked it up again and got it over the spur and out of sight.

I was so pleased at how well it went that I suggested we go down and get the second post up before it got light. So we left Alicia on the trail, on her own in the darkness, and ran down to the parking lot.

We got the second post and started back up again. Only this time, the post felt heavier than the first one. It wasn't, but it meant we were slower than before, and we needed more rests. Then Karen saw someone coming up the trail behind us. We didn't have any time to think about what to do. Reb suggested we drop the post below the trail and leave it there while we all hid in the trees, so we did that. We dropped the post on the trail and we rolled it over the edge. It made an awful racket when it hit some rocks and small trees. Karen found some debris to throw over it – that made it look as if it had been there for a while, and we scrambled into the trees and bushes. I suppose the post might have looked as if it was put there to replace the logs that were buttressing the trail, but I wasn't too sure about that. Ned didn't think it wouldn't even be noticed.

And he was right. Two guys came striding up the trail, obviously out for an early morning workout, in running gear, not hiking boots. They were so intent on moving fast, they didn't notice a thing. They went right on by without slowing down for a moment.

Takao Matsushima:

That was OK, but getting the post up to the trail again? That was another circus! The slope was fairly steep and loose, and we got one end of the post onto the trail, but we had the devil of a job to get the other end up. We slipped and slid and scabbled on the loose dirt and I could feel the strain on my back. At one point I just about had a hernia! But in the end, we got ourselves up on the trail and used our slings to haul it up. That was exhausting!

It was a cloudy morning, but by that time it was quite light and we could expect more people to come up the trail. We were just over half way to the turnoff. So Reb stopped at an open spot where she could see back down the trail for a bit. It was her job to delay anyone else coming up. I don't know what she was going to do. Pretend to have lost a contact lens and get them to help look for it? Sprain an ankle? Luckily, she didn't have to do anything.

That second post did feel heavier. I guess I was getting tired by then. Again, I was so happy when we reached the turnoff without any more adventures, got the post off the trail, and could finally rest. Ned and Roger might have been used to their "Alpine starts," but I wasn't. I'm a day hiker.

Karen Stenson:

The last things to go up were the side panels and we took them up one evening. That was the best time of all for me. By the time we started to come down, it was dark. But it was great because the clouds had gone and the moon was out. Just a sliver! Because it was really dark in the trees, Ned suggested we walk down the ridge where it was more open. We went slowly at first. We didn't want anyone to sprain an ankle or anything. Before we got to the main trail, we stopped and looked up at the mountains and the stars. I'd never been out in the mountains at night like that. I lay down on the rock and looked up at all those stars. I'd never seen so many! Nobody said anything. It was so magical. I could have spent all night there.

Tak said we should put a small platform right on top of the ridge. It would be just the place to sit on a summer night and gaze at the stars. Everyone agreed. It's hard to describe how good it was, walking down in the moonlight that night. I was amazed I could see so well once my eyes got used to it.

And we were all so happy. We had everything up on the ridge, and as far as we could tell, no one had seen us. Our sanctuary was still a secret. We were so relieved. I mean, there was still a lot of work. We had to put the pavilion together again, and make the entrance and lay out the ropes, and all that. But the hardest part had been done. It was a great feeling!

On the long weekend in September, they successfully re-assembled the pavilion on the ridge.

Alicia Tyndall:

And then, Monday morning—oh! that Monday morning I will never forget!

We decided to stay one more night in the campground, go up to the Sanctuary and sit for fifteen minutes right at sunrise, and then we would have to hurry back down to the cars and into the city in time for work. When the alarms went off in the dark, I looked out of the tent and I could see stars. Ned had forecast better weather for the start of the week—he is a meteorologist, you know—and he was right! I tease him about the weather on our ski trips. He is not always right. That day he was.

When we got to the Sanctuary, the sky was light, but the sun was still below the horizon. We opened the pavilion and this time, we did something different. The platform was not made for eight people to sit at the same time, but we found we could all fit on the platform, with two of us sitting on each side, shoulder to shoulder. Everyone touching each other. Not the usual way to meditate at all, and it took a while for everyone to settle down. We folded up extra clothes and arranged our packs so we could sit on them like cushions—again, not the usual arrangement—but it worked well enough.

Sitting in the pavilion that first morning, I was in heaven. We had added something immensely small to the Skyline Park. There would be more environmental battles—over Samilkawen for a start—and others after that. But I did not want to think about that then. I remembered the first times my father had taken me into the mountains when I was a small child in Chile. All the years since then, nearly every year I have been in the mountains—in Chile, in Europe, in Canada and the United States.

I thought of all the hours spent in meetings and public meetings and protests. So many environmental issues to be dealt with. And political ones, too. But in the last few years, I am feeling the weight of time. I am slowing down. I am tired of bureaucracies and politicians, and I think, at the Sanctuary that morning, I arrived at Ned's attitude, to understand his reasons for doing this, simply to do it, and not wait for mediocre minds to put this aside, or stand in its way, without really trying to understand it.

And when we had settled down, as we sat there squeezed in together, shoulder to shoulder, something special happened. Something almost magical.

Our breathing slowed down, and then we were breathing together, in rhythm very slowly. . . . It felt as if we were all one body, one organism. . . . I relaxed completely and let myself be part of that organism. . . .

The sun came up and the light filled the sky. I could feel the warmth coming from other bodies. I felt that I was part of a flower that was opening as the sun got brighter.

I have never felt anything like that. It was one of the most intense experiences of my life.

Once again Tak did something marvellous. We agreed to sit until the sun was above the horizon, and Tak was sitting facing east, so he would give us a signal when to finish the sitting. So we were sitting there, absolutely still, with no sense of time, and all of a sudden there was the beautiful chime of a bell. It was perfect. Simply a small bell that Tak had put in his pack. He rang it eight times, and when he got up off the platform, he turned to the rest of us, raised his arms out wide as if to embrace all of us and all we could see, and said, "Welcome to the Sanctuary of the Morning Light!" It was like a benediction.

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