

To Climb “The Wellsvilles”  
(A Romance with the Wellsville Ridge)  
*by Janan Esplin*

Every morning, they greet me, no, never failing.  
The mountain knows how to stand: strong in the land.  
With a broad overcoat dusting of blue, a cold gamma, royally proven—  
a rock of defense, protecting the dale.

Every morning, Olea sings her adieus in whispering mist  
glazing in elegance over the ridge, revealing a face.  
They echo back with a sheepish mountain grin—twinkling in snow-knitted lace.

Every morning, petals in rose, petals in gold, weighting the skies amidst amethyst stones  
chase the dew from its places, then float away to break open the day.

And a rose drop fell  
golden tears to my face  
linking a neighboring provident range—  
cradling my childhood home beneath Little Baldy.

A stirring of cadences leaping across to the west—the dawn—  
lighting down on the peak,  
on The Wellsvilles,  
the top renown mount, once molten-deep then  
prominently rising the steepest, vertical cliff.

The light rushing waves of sweeping descent  
down the rocks, ridges, and maples: a gentleman’s bow,  
formally bidding all, good day.  
And I reminisce.

Part I. Preparing to Endure

The mountain, with clear eyes walking in mine,  
often invited me...with the courage to climb—its Precambrian terrain.

Preparing for the enduring climb  
began with tours, famous mountain trails of Cache Valley.

First, the talus slopes of Spring Hollow with its trailhead roar  
washing down from ivy rain covered flow  
oblivious to its precarious hot switchbacks nestled above in quartz and lime.

But not as thirsty and dry as the opposite sun-sloping side,  
the ever-popular Wind Caves,  
arched over with rain-shadowed scars.  
Scaling the valley views from Crimson Trail,  
the Logan River, with silver-lined bows in tow,  
streaming a ribbon 1,000 feet below.

And feigning a rest on China Rock Wall,  
with a mountain breeze whispering:  
don't get too close to the ledge!

Paltry on the eye and heart, an upland walk easily marked  
with mystical, mirrored ponds of turquoise rare,  
palisading along the timberline of Temple Fork trail,  
refreshingly kept by beavers' moonlit fare.

Further up east rounding Tony Grove Lake,  
swathing through waist-high magenta, violets, and Indian paints,  
up to our knees in fresh wet clover  
travailing the valleys highest peak, Mt. Naomi.  
As though Olympic training: running down one-of-the-best mountain deer trails  
through the cool of the glen  
to the hidden lake of White Pine.

## Part II. Everyone's Some Time Dream

Then there is everyone's, sometimes dream.  
The beautiful. The serene. The Wellsvilles.

Starting with fresh dew in early October,  
an emerald, lush, terrestrial trail,  
the north base shadowing, like a veil.

Then circling behind to the top of the ridge,  
with great surprise in meeting the mount,  
like opening the door of a craft in flight,  
fierce crosswind catching all, taking prisoners.  
If not before fastened, flying mid-air, all was gone,  
over the peak—into Box Elder.

Buttoning up quick and tying everything down,  
heading south on the high ridge to a calmer ground  
the wind took rest, and so did the trek  
taking in more than the view, exclaiming: Oh, say can you see—  
the Great Salt Lake and beyond—all the way to Nevada.

## Part III. The Wellsville Ridge

No word or sound—spellbound in air, expressions piqued softly  
while turning a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree view, every scene prizing—  
seas of azure, pale, and callow tender.

A heart-leaping pulse fell fast while fixed on the mount.  
The ridge waiting, like a prayer—grace in hushed silence.  
Then answering, the great forested pines, with the sun leaning towards evening,  
and into their backs swift meadow currents urging their voices,  
the shadowed suits began bowing and waving—a Grande mountainous choir.  
Their song welcoming, moving along  
like water crashing  
upon great falls,  
echoing over the hills like a vast ocean conch,  
sending shivering thoughts racing: there is something special here.

Walking the ridge of the world is like nothing imagined,  
setting sail like a kite—just starting to fly,  
the wind lifting high, piercing clouds of sublime stopping time,  
and liberty—bound like horse and rider, hooves chasing on wings,  
then escaping, soon freeing all senses and mind.

Despising to stir—newfound hope won  
the ascending steps to lean on The Cone.  
It was an inclining bluff,  
the air crispy thin crackling the lungs,  
and stopping to catch something to breathe,  
for the air was as if—it just was not there,  
and all that could happen was a practical crawl,  
hands and feet scrawling like in a slow dream,  
battling to inch up, otherwise, a particular small hill.

An old, crystallized summit of proud rutted angles then fell to the trail.  
And grasping to begin the highest point of the range, peak Box Elder,  
its weathering face a crag of loose shale, narrowing the path to one pace  
with a wickedly steep, switchback quarry leading up to its brow,  
in excellent fine— reaching the rocks' highest clime.

On top, valor treated respite  
and respiring to a peculiar site—  
a lone protruding tree  
perhaps struck by lightning,  
like Seadrift wood,  
with only its trunk and two limbs sticking out  
of the 9,372 feet above sea-level air.  
Then turning about startled  
a hawk warned with a screech,  
guarding with pride the mountainous climb,  
circling The Wellsvilles then, swiftly leaving.

And with more than a dream—  
a keepsake song steeling,  
all went soaring,  
soaring towards home.

***Janan Esplin*** attended USU, where she first received an associate degree in Business Administration. Thirty-five years later, she returned, and amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, Janan graduated in English with her Bachelor's in 2020. She received the Pinnacle Honor Society award for her achievement as a non-traditional student. During her studies, Janan found new joys, such as propagating plants, nature writing, landscape gardening, Aggie Factory chocolate, Shakespeare, non-fiction, and slam poetry. She loves traveling and spending time and with her husband, family, and seven grandchildren!