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Second Time's the Charm for Summit

By Cathy Tyson



From left: Alan Cox, Tyler Whiteman, Ed Bachman, Bill Whiteman, Jay Long and Jim Manzi Photo provided

Two years ago, a group of dads and one adult son set out to summit the mighty 14,410 feet of Mt. Rainier in Washington state, but were halted due to bad weather - a huge disappointment to all. This time, the brave hikers had sunshine on their side and made it all the way to the top of the fifth tallest mountain in the contiguous United States. "I've never been happier, it's really a dream come true," says senior member of the party, 69-year-old Lafayette resident Jim Manzi. "Everyone was proud of the accomplishment."

Manzi was one of five gentlemen in their 50s and 60s who got to know each other when their respective kids were members of Lafayette Boy Scout troop 241. Many of the kids have moved on to jobs and families of their own, but the group of dedicated dads continues to trek all over the area and socialize together. One of the former scouts, now 28-year-old Tyler Whiteman came along on the July trip; he achieved the rank of Eagle Scout.

It took three days to get from the base to the summit. The hearty hikers made it up a 5,000 foot elevation gain the first day and slept at rustic Muir Camp. They continued on the next day, bunking at High Camp, and in the wee hours of the third day, rose at midnight, strapped on a head lamp and hit the trail for the final push to the summit, arriving at the dramatic cauldron at 5:30 a. m. to watch the sunrise.

"Then the hard part started," says Manzi explaining the long trip down is done in one shot, descending 9,000 feet to the parking lot. The friends had trained seriously for this expedition but were exhausted.

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