***Reaching the Top***

*By Casey McDonald*

Word Bank:

aberration predisposed balmy synopsis itinerary

cajoled dearth precursor edify fabricate

It was the warm and \_\_\_\_**\_\_\_**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ part of July in the great Northwest when I had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ my wife to join me for a steep and challenging 6-mile hike up Table Rock in Oregon. As a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to our journey that day, we had completed a 3-mile warm-up hike just the weekend before in the Columbia River Gorge.

Our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that day included several stops along the way, but the goal was to reach the top—a 360 degree view of northern Oregon and southern Washington State. I was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to taking this route because of a popular hiking book that suggested it was one of the best views in the region. It tried to build up, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , for the interested reader the best approach to mounting this climb, as well as the duration and difficulty of the task.

The forest soon opened up to expose a large-boulder rockslide that had happened no doubt years, if not centuries, before. The trail was an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ through the jagged field of dark, black rubble that lie ahead of us, so we had to deviate from the normal course, and climb carefully over each obstacle.

As we summited the top of the vast foothill we had been ascending for hours, there was no scarcity, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , of larger mountains surrounding us, each one standing 11,000 feet tall and more. After glancing down at the trail and distant valley far below, and briefly recalling a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the path we had just taken hours before, we both began the slow-paced dissent back down to our waiting car. The entire adventure seemed to enlighten, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , just why we had moved out west in the first place: for love of the great and vast outdoors.