

They were just in time for 2nd volcanic eruption

By MARGARET MILLER

Like that conqueror of Everest, Mike Patten wanted to see newly activated Mount St. Helens in Washington "because it's there."

It certainly is, and never was there a more cooperative volcano. Mike and his son, Steve, drove west to see Mount St. Helens and on the day they got there she spewed heavenward the second of her 1980 eruptions. There were three blasts reported by the media and as many as eight counted by residents of the area.

The father and son recorded on movie and still film the kind of sight only a few in their lifetime see.

"It was really a show," understated Patten. "Imagine," said his wife, Lee, who stayed home and watched the show on television, "planning all summer for a trip like that and then having the volcano erupt right on the day you get there!"

PATTEN, a Ford Motor Co. engineer, said he had some time off coming and decided to use it to see Mount St. Helens.

"I probably will never again get the chance to

see an active volcano," he said. "I asked Steve if he wanted to drive out with me and he didn't need a lot of persuading."

The duo started west on July 18. "We tent-camped all the way," Patten said. "I'm not a camper, but Steve wanted to do it that way, so we did."

They made a quick visit to relatives in Iowa and did some sightseeing.

"We went to the Black Hills and Mt. Rushmore and Yellowstone and the Tetons and covered an awful lot of highway in between," Patten said.

ON JULY 22, they reached their destination, catching sight of Mount St. Helens early in the afternoon. They checked for the best viewing spot with guards at the road block that has been set up as a safety measure.

"It was a rather hazy day," Patten said. "The people around there said the day before had been better. We took a series of pictures — you can see the mountain in them, but not too distinctly."

"We climbed a hill, really a mountain," Steve said, "and that gave us a better view for taking pictures. There was volcanic ash all over the hill. Really, there was volcanic ash on everything."

After the first view, the Pattens decided they would do well to go around to the north side of the mountain where they could get closer. Asking directions, they made their way to the Toutle River and looked over an area where mud slides had caused destruction.

"And then we looked up toward the volcano, and there it was, going off again," said Patten. "We moved fast."

"WE DECIDED we had better get back a bit, so we went over to Silver Lake and bought some hamburgers," Patten went on.

"After we got back into the car, I took a look over my shoulder and the second series of eruptions for that day was starting."

"Steve jumped out of the car and started taking pictures as fast as he could. I grabbed the movie camera and started shooting."

The volcano erupted all day, finally subsiding by sunset, they said.

Back in Livonia, Mrs. Patten was glued to the television screen and wondering about the men. "I knew they were arriving there that day, and I wished I knew where they were."

They telephoned to assure her they were fine and spectators to a mighty show.

THE TRAVELERS decided to head north the next day to see the effects of St. Helens's several eruptions.

"All the way along Route 12 north to Spokane we saw a layer of volcanic ash," said Patten. "The landscape looked as though there had been a light snow."

"Crews were still shoveling and cleaning up."

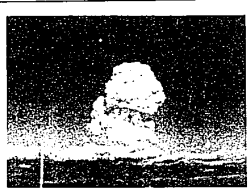
"They also saw countless 'dust devil' clouds of ash that whirl up when a breath of breeze catches them. They also brought home several jars of ash."

"One of the jars has ash so light it just whirls up in the air when you take the cover off," said Steve.

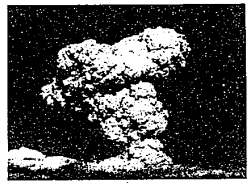
From Spokane, the pair headed east, traveling farther north and taking the opportunity to stop at an Indian reservation.

"And we got home July 27, the day of the earthquake," said Patten.

That phenomenon of nature eluded them, though. "We were in the car and didn't notice," they said.



Mount St. Helens started erupting for the second time July 22 and Steve Patten shot furiously with his camera.



Patten caught the ash as it began to climb . . .



. . . and eventually form a huge mushroom shape.

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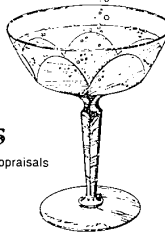
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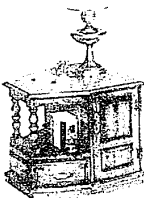
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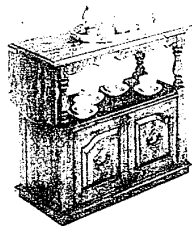
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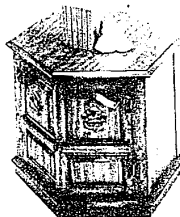
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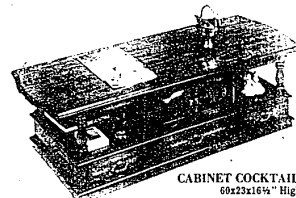
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