### Tom Wayman

# Alps Alturas: Sixty

On a scree slope in the Goat Range my boots spool a trail rock by rock into the first decade of my life I dread the finish of. At the start I climbed through dense conifers and brush gradually thinning to subalpine meadows, August-scattered with Indian paintbrush, aster, even late-flowering lupine amid islands of diminutive spires of fir and Engelmann spruce, the open places among the ridges traversed by small creeks and by stone beds of runoff watercourses, dry at this season. I and my companions descended, crossed, switchbacked up from these angled fields with eyes constantly scrutinizing the hillsides, our party shouting and talking so as not to startle the unseen powers, our blown whistles occasionally answered by a pika's squeak, a marmot's echo.

#### The day

plodded up through cols

and along ridges, until I cleared the treeline, my pack heavier with each rise, worked around a massive boulder and out onto scree.

Far down the rockslide

beneath my legs, a miniature canyon

proffers spoon tarns, sustained from the threads of waterfalls on the face of Mount Inverness opposite my perch. To the northern, eastern, southern distances, range beyond range retreats into lightening tones of blue.

But my route leads a different way: my body sturdy with a long summer's tasks and pleasures hoists my feet and swings them. No place to turn on this track that bears me stone by stone toward a snow-locked lake, around whose shore nothing is made by hands.



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# Richard Meissenheimer (1947-2006)

They lowered him into Valley earth One August afternoon. After thirty-two years Amid these streams, the rocky soil, the houses under the peaks, His hands and wit

Will remain forever. A careful mechanic, He knew how to assess fuel systems, when to coax A reluctant alternator, when to hammer loose A brake drum, when to rebuild, to weld,

To abandon. He never ceased to learn more As the specs continually changed. *I wish I'd been a doctor,* He said. *Then I only would have to be familiar* 

With two models. He studied people closely as their cars, A connoisseur of absurdities in either case But never entirely dismissing hope

Concerning his neighbors. He sparked the unionization Of a muffler shop where he worked in town Though they laid him off for the deed. He helped organize Volunteer fire departments

Along the Valley highway, served nine years as local chief Then was pushed out by a district official Who was a friend of neither justice nor safety. The hands that kept us moving, the willingness to serve That protected our homes, the droll words That kept us laughing and focused Continue to float over the acreage by the river beach: The dawn mist

That flows above the water late August to May Transforming, as the day ages, Into a cloud that ascends the Valley walls To snag in the treetops while below,

Vehicles he will never repair Steer along the back road Through all the seasons He won't encounter now, like the faces unknown to him

Who will gather at potlucks To dissect the latest area land use plan And assemble at the fire hall Tuesday nights To run the pumper up and down the lanes

—His enduring presence A benediction Hovering in the Valley air.