**To Climb Mt. Wellsville**

**(A Romance with the Wellsville Ridge and Other Popular Cache Valley Trails)**

Every morning, they greet me. They never fail.

The mountain knows how to stand strong in the land.

With an overcoat dusting of blue, a cold gamma, royally true—

a rock of defense protecting the Dale.

Every morning, Olea sings her adieus

in whispering mists while glazing over the ridge, revealing a face.

The ridge echoes back with a sheepish mountain grin—twinkling a smile in snow-knitted lace.

Every morning, petals of rose, petals of gold, and clouds weighting the skies in amethyst stone,

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 a childhood home beneath Little Baldy.

 A stirring of cadences, leaping across to the west—the dawn—

lighting down on the peak,

on the Wellsville's,

a top renowned mount, molten-deep,

prominently rising to 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 often invited me—with the courage to climb

its Precambrian terrain.

Preparing for the enduring climb

began with tours: a few popular mountain trails of the Cache Valley.

First, the talus slopes of Spring Hollow and its trailhead roar,

washing down from ivy rain-covered flow,

oblivious to its precarious, hot switchbacks nestled above in quartz and limestone.

But not as thirsty and dry as the opposite sun-sloping side,

the ever-popular Wind Caves

arched over with rain-shadowed scars.

Scaling valley views from Crimson Trail,

the Logan River and silver-lined rainbows in tow,

streaming a ribbon 1,000 feet below!

And feigning a rest on China Rock Wall,

discovering a mountain breeze whispering:

*Do not 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 the 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 valley's highest peak, Mt. Naomi.

And pivoting, an Olympic training course: running down 'one of the best' mountain deer trails

through the cool of the glen

to the quiet, hidden lake of White Pine.

**Part II. Everyone's Sometime Dream**

Then, there is everyone's, sometimes dream:

The beautiful, the serene, the Wellsville's.

Starting with fresh dew in early October,

an emerald-lush terrestrial trail,

the north base, shadowing like a veil.

And 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 crosswinds caught us cold, taking us—prisoners!

If not before fastened, flying mid-air, all was gone

over the peak—into Box Elder.

Buttoning up quickly and tying everything down,

heading south on the high ridge to calmer ground,

 the wind took a rest, and so did the trek,

taking in more than the view, '*Oh, say, can you see,*'

the Great Salt Lake and beyond—a top flight 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 silent—waiting, like a prayer—grace in hushed silence.

Then answering, the great forested pines, with the sun leaning towards evening

and into their backs with swift meadow currents urging their voices,

the shadowed suits began bowing and waving in a grand mountainous choir!

Their welcoming song,

 a melody moving along

like water crashing

over great falls,

echoing over the hills like a vast ocean conch,

 sending shivering thoughts: '*This is a sacred place!'*

Walking the ridge of the world is like nothing imagined—

setting sail like a kite—just starting to fly,

the wind lifting high, piercing sublime, time-stopping clouds,

and liberty—bound like horse and rider, hooves chasing on wings, escaping on air,

soon freeing all senses and mind.

Returning to resolve: Despising to stir—newfound hope then 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 an otherwise rather small hill.

An old, crystallized summit of proud rutted angles 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, and narrowing the path to one pace

with a wickedly steep, switchback quarry leading up to its brow,

 in excellent fine—reaching the mountains' highest clime!

 On top, valor, treated respite

and respiring to a peculiar site:

a lone protruding tree,

perhaps struck by lightning

 into Seadrift Wood, an excellent perch,

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 Wellsville's, then swiftly leaving.

And with more than a dream—

 a keepsake song steeling in hearts,

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 midst 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!