

CODE—

By BARRY MURRAY

75th Pearl Harbor

Memorial
Edition

Yellow Chrysanthemum
A Historical Novel

**THE LAST UNSOLVED
MYSTERY OF
WORLD WAR II**



Sample
Chapter

Please Note —

Copyright © Barry Murray 1987 / 2000 / 2012 notice and now as a revised 2017 filing of **CODE—Yellow Chrysanthemum**, based upon three previous updated “all rights reserved” printing of Code: Yellow Chrysanthemum that had disappeared into free e-books libraries that only cost the reader a monthly membership fee. This happenstance was difficult to trace in that only the author’s name remained, when somehow the publisher had changed?

Also the second electronic conversion, of ‘CODE:’ when it was filed as a E-Pub format conversion for a ISBN number, led to the theft of the so called “Digital Rights Management Schemes” as defined by Wikipedia. This came about by Congress amending title 17, United States Code, in 1998 to implement the World Intellectual Property Organization Copyright Treaty — something pushed past uncomprehending independent authors in favor of protecting much larger “electronic communication media”, as film and music corporations.

BannerBooks.com has always acted as a writer / independent publishers clearing house offering readers a landing review page, where visitors to “CODE:” are counted to the point of a linked choice of on-line retail outlets. Strangely the monthly log stats for a review page view / to royalty check payment, has gone from a ratio of 10 to 7, to in the past few years from ten to absolute zero.

Measuring this marketing result to a 10 to 9 for a more expensive *Placer Mining Handbook*, only sold direct, has brought about numerous changes for independent authors and small publishing houses by www.BannerBooks.com (established 1/1/01) reinventing itself as a CO-OP where “indies” share promotion and legal costs.

CODE — Yellow Chrysanthemum

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*A historical novel concerning one of the last
unsolved mysteries of World War II*

By Barry Murray

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Chapter 1— *Mount Cascade Pack Station, 1970*

Yellow. That was the color that attracted Jed's attention. Later, when it was all over, he remembered this and wondered if yellow had been an intuitive premonition. Some people have an inclination toward being blue or experiencing black feelings. Jed Smith's mood was yellow the morning he started his string of ten packhorses up the trail, bound for the base camp of a U.S. Air Force survival school.

How could that be? Yellow is such an ambiguous color, signifying both sweet butter, and bitter lemons. But, for beer? Worse yet, beer for a military survival camp? Beer to accompany the meager fare of a scavenger's stew? Made as much sense as the yellow of sunshine; or yellow for a pallid, shallow, world.

Having survived being sent to Nam by student deferments, and drawing a lucky number in the draft, Jed also wondered, in this first summer of a new decade, if the 70's would somehow carry a stigma of yellow for him. He did not approve of the involvement in what Eisenhower had warned, "the folly of a land war in Asia," but Jed had also avoided the demonstrations on campus as somehow not being "The American Way."

Jed wanted to believe that his country which had prevailed over the axis of evil in WWII, was still doing the righteous thing. On the other hand, after Kent State, he knew something was terribly wrong. Sitting on a split-rail fence, avoiding the issue, made him feel less of a man.

Whatever, this was Jed's disposition as he threw a canvas manty cover over the panniers and sawbuck of the next to last pack animal in his string — Big Enough.

As usual, "Biggie" tried to scratch his long nose on Jed's belt buckle as he tucked and twisted 45 feet of 5/8th-inch manila rope into a tidy

hitch that held the packs securely to the horse. A diamond hitch; an art form from the past. Most books describing this historical oddity suggest that it took two men five minutes to throw a diamond. Jed could tie this elaborate knot in less than 60 seconds.

Jed had fitted nine other horses with their own individual packsaddles. Made an adjustment of a breast collar here, a britchin strap there. And, he had hung 75-pound pack boxes on both sides of the sawbucks, alone.

Jed knew Old ‘smiley’ Smith would have been “right proud” of his “little professor” boy-child. But, then, this, too, was just another side of Jed’s mood. He was alone.

The crudely lettered sign, painted upon a hand whipsawed board, hanging on the side of the old log barn that proclaimed Amos ‘smiley’ Smith & Son, Cascade Mountain Pack Train Station, to others, would have been considered a rustic piece of folk art. To Jed, the weathered patina yellow — that damn color, once again— was a reminder that his father had passed.

Old Smiley, who had walked with a limp from a famous encounter with a mad mule, but who covered up his infirmity with a hop as he walked that told the world, “Hey, it’s great to be alive!”

Old Smiley, who had named his only son after Jedidiah Strong Smith, the legendary fur trapper who, with a string of pack horses, had been the first white man to cross the Basin and Range country of what is now Nevada and Utah. The first to climb California’s Sierra. The first to discover Oregon’s hidden, but tallest, and most beautiful snow-capped peak —Mount Cascade.

All that was left of this mountain tradition of freedom was the legacy of his name, Jedidiah. At the start of the 60’s, Mt. Hood, to the north, and Crater Lake, to the south along the Cascade Mountain Cordillera, were developed into a large ski resort, and national park, complete with crowds, lodges, and paved roads. Jed’s dad had been thankful that logging, gas stations, and condominiums, hadn’t

reached Mt. Cascade. It was just as wild as when Grandpappy Smith had settled the homestead among old growth Douglas Fir.

But, this in itself had brought about an end. Since the roadless backcountry of Mt. Cascade was so pristine, so wild, in 1964 the U.S. Forest Service declared the surrounding high alpine meadows, lakes, and streams, as a Wilderness Area — where mankind was to be just a visitor. The idea was noble!

Yet Smith & Son lost the contract to supply remote forest fire lookout stations when observers from airplanes took over the task of spotting a cloud of smoke before it became a holocaust. Gone, too, was the challenge of breaking down gasoline driven prospector's mining equipment so that the awkward shapes could fit on a packhorse. And the bread-and-butter job of hauling stock salt to cattle grazing upon high alpine summer pasture.

Old Amos had spent the past few years hiring on as a guide for hunters who seemed more interested in killing a "fifth," than the ritual of the stalk. Summers found him babysitting groups of over-enthusiastic nature lovers, who picked wildflowers to "preserve them."

All of this was 'progress,' of course, and halfway understood. What wasn't were the masses of backpackers who overran the mountain in search of wilderness solitude, and then complained whenever the Smiths came along leading a party of paying tourists ("doing it the easy way, on horseback!") up the mountain to share in the beauty of a high-country camp. It didn't matter that Jed's grandfather had built the trails these "pilgrims" were hiking upon.

It didn't matter that these "flatlanders," as his dad described city dwellers, only lived for sunshine weekends, and retreated at the first sign of rain. Collectively, it was "their" land; they had the voice of a demanding public watching the effect of each new regulation — as registering each horse allowed to graze upon free meadow grass; on limiting the number of paying visitors — destroy a pioneer's way of

life, and livelihood, and his father.

Sure, the government allowed Smith & Son to keep the homestead, and a limited packing business, but as with most “do-good” programs the bureaucrat who had thought up this “creative answer,” had no understanding of what it meant to be a free, mountain born, man.

Father and son both gave up. Jed left for college. Paid his own way through, working summers on a US Forest Service “hotshot” fire crew. It was tough.

The first two years at the Washington State Cow College stuck in the middle of endless rolling wheat fields, he slept in a canopy on the back of an old Ford pick-up, showering whenever possible in the gym. Jed had intended to become a Doctor of Veterinary Science.

What happened instead was that he finally graduated with a Ph.D. and became a Professor of Anthropology. That choice came about once Jed realized that there were people, who studied other people, as for example his father, and tried to understand their outside frontier way of life.

It had been a girl who had first sparked this interest. The story of choosing a career by following a good looking pair of legs into a classroom is an old one. Jed’s was a slight bit different. He married the girl.

He didn’t stand a chance. Here was a kid that had been raised without television, electric lights, and telephones. He had always been a bit unsure of how his values fit those of accepted society.

And, having attended a one-room school where the effort involved in assembling classmates from scattered ski resorts and ranches curtailed any extracurricular social events — Jed had a distorted view of the opposite sex.

This was not male chauvinism. An early encounter with a rancher’s daughter who could out-rope the best cowhand in the county had shown him that gals could compete in anything they chose. Jed’s downfall, if you want to call it that, was old-fashioned

respect — strengthened by losing a mother, at age ten— for all women.

There was just no way, no how, Jed could handle tears.

He had tried to explain to his best college friend through his own tears at the noisy local student pub, Horsefeathers, after Irene filed her papers.

“I guess, from the way I talk —all cattywaumpus— that this statement might be an accurate representation; you bet. But, this trait is not a conscious one. It is more a reaction to a culture shock. Most of the time I ‘can walk with kings —Kipling— but not lose the common touch.’ The one place I haven’t been able to cross over between cultures is understanding women.”

Jed actually had married the pouty-lipped sorority queen out of duty to womankind. As he told it, “Of course I felt since we were sleeping together, I had to marry her.”

In spite of Jed’s attitude of doing the “right thing,” inside of two years she had become obsessed with a warped perception of his “cruel and unusual” treatment of her needs. “How could I ignore her demand for a new clothes dryer, and selfishly purchase school books instead?”

“People accuse me of changing hats, from a Stetson Five X Beaver felt with a Cascade crush, to an academic tweed trilby, whenever it is to my advantage. Hats, hell yes I change hats, but I have never pretended to be anything I wasn’t. A professor’s salary isn’t the top of the list as professions go; yet I felt we were doing pretty good.”

“Somehow, though, I was guilty, guilty, guilty. Irene’s last words to me were something to the effect that I was a total failure. It took me a long time after the divorce was final to realize that she had used that statement as a defense against being labeled an adulteress.”

“Dumb, huh? I had been away. I came home from taking my class on a field trip, and found our apartment stripped bare; my hats, and clothes, a sad little pile, in the middle of an empty room. When

I finally tracked her down by following a trail as erratic as that of a hobbled horse — she was living with a back-to-the- earth type; go figure that if you can — she reacted to my simple ‘why’ by attacking.”

At that time, Jed blamed himself for all the sorrow caused. He didn’t contest the divorce. Gave up his position, without notice, and retreated to what Jed felt was his “place in life.” A simple log cabin sitting alone at the edge of wilderness.

Jed’s dad passed away shortly after hearing the news that he probably would never be able to give his grandchildren their first riding lesson. This seemed to be the thing that forever wiped that famous namesake smile from his face. Of course, Jed felt guilty about that. Left alone, in his sorrow, and guilt, the problem became a day-to-day nothingness. While involved in grad studies in Scotland, he had started research on the ancient Picts — the original ‘bluebloods’. But now the book he dreamt of one-day publishing was just a lonely echo in his mind.

The only time Jed felt alive was when he saddled up Pokey, who, in typical Western understatement was the fastest in his string, and they would climb high above the sea of dark timber to the cresting white-capped mountain.

This particular morning started out with a heavy yellow fog and light drizzle. But, by the time Jed had tied the last lead rope to the tail of horse number nine, and hung a bell about Charlie Horse’s neck, bringing up the caboose, the sun broke through — in that curious alpenglow morning yellow light almost a mist— bringing a promise of a clear blue sky.

He made a snap decision to shuck his long yellow raincoat. Some call the tent-like garment that covers a rider from throat to toe, a saddle slicker. Jed liked the old-time working cowhand’s term for his raincoat— a fish.

The story on that dates from when Texas cattle trail driver fashions were being developed for function. A high-heeled boot to

keep the foot from sliding through a stirrup. A sturdy felt hat for protection from extreme weather— the best available rain garment seemed to be a Sou'wester rain gear, for Nor'Easterers, made in Gloucester, Massachusetts, for dory fishermen.

Because the working man of the day, cowboy, or seaman, was illiterate, the trademark on the label, a picture of a fish, provided a handy explanation description. Even after the manufacturer began to cater to a new found Western market by building in loops to fit over a rider's boots, with slits front and rear to accommodate setting a saddle, with an extra bit of material to cover a bed roll, the trademark, and the name, remained the same.

Besides traditionally being bright yellow, a fish is awkward to remove or put on, when in the saddle. It is even harder to roll and tie behind the cantle when one is handling a string of packhorses. Jed would have to avoid drops of moisture dripping from low hanging branches along the Image Lake Trail, but once across Avalanche Pass, above timberline, the sun, reflecting upon a slow melting snow pack would heat up the day. Handling eleven horses, he didn't want any trouble with a fish flapping.

Most people don't realize what 'fraidycats' the equine beasties can be. One theory has it that a horse's eye magnifies. Enormous objects, as log trucks passing by, don't seem to frighten a horse. It is the carelessly discarded candy wrapper, tumbling along in the wind that makes a spooky horse want to run first, think later. Running is the equine's natural protection.

Man seems to be able to control these 1,100-pound bundles of free-floating anxiety by offering protection, and reassurance. People afraid of a horse's size and power, transmit their fear to their mount, and the horse runs away. Little kids, with no idea of the consequences, can climb all over the nastiest bronc —perhaps because the equine views a child on his back a big, powerful being; or perhaps because no fear is transmitted. Or maybe both.

Whatever, leading a string of pack horses, head to tail, head to tail, requires reassuring words —when it is possible to let go of holding your breath. Generally, a packer is only asked to handle a string of five by himself. But Jed had very qualified help.

There were worries about his strings leader. Admiral Beans was a good commander. He knew exactly how and where to place a hoof when crossing a talus slope of rock balanced upon rocks; he could gauge within a fraction of an inch the clearance needed to stop, swing, and set the example how to shuffle on past the limbs of a fallen tree half blocking the trail.

The problem horses this morning —numbers two, and three, in the string— were dingy mares. Crazy Daisy, and Babs (short for Bad Ass Bernice), who ordinarily were only used for saddle mounts. Contrary to all written opinion in the horse press, a good pack animal is harder to find than any cutting horse, or roper, or bulldogger.

Jed was handling ten, by himself, out of economic necessity. He had bid the contract to pack supplies to the survival camp, low, to compete with helicopter service. In a designated Wilderness Area, where supposedly no motorized equipment is allowed, the government can break its own stringent regulations whenever it feels the expedient necessity.

So, swinging into the saddle, dallying the lead rope of the string a couple of times around the horn before tucking the end beneath a leg, Jed started the horses in a slow walk, single file, in a circle. The reason for not tying the rope hard and fast was to keep from being yanked off his saddle if one horses following got caught up on a tree branch or bolder.

Sometimes, pack horse number six will try to pass by number two, and wrap-up number three into one hell of a mess. After the lead animal, each following horse's halter rope is attached to the packsaddle ahead in a breakaway hitch. The trick of tying the rope to a proceeding tail works when there isn't any saddle, but overdoing

that same can lead to a bunch of broom tail broncs.

In the old days, packers herded horses along, hoping they wouldn't get spooked and run off scattering a load across the mountainside. Now, since anybody happening to be in the way could get run over, U.S. Forest Service regulations prohibit this practice.

Jed's first problem was to lead the way out of the coral without Babs getting herself caught up on the log post of the gate. When tail-end Charlie's bell was ringing in a rhythmic toiling, after Crazy Daisy had given up trying to kick her gelding boyfriend No-Name, Jed, as if choreographing a chorus line of 44 iron-shod hooves, uncoiled the 100 foot long line of independent, jug-headed broncs, and sang out with a whistle, "Let us move it out, ladies and gents."

After counting cadence for Admiral Beans, who amazingly enough seemed to understand, or at least expected the little military ritual of, "Hup, twoed, tree, har," when they were on the march. Jed told Beans they weren't stopping for "nuthing" until reaching the survival camp, fifteen miles, and five hours, away.

Jed often talked to his horses. Each one had an individual personality and responded, to a tone of voice. The Admiral's grunts (which sounded as if he was counting "hup, hup," to himself) and a wiggle of his ears were his way of answering.

'Course, Jed didn't mention this to people. It is hard for some to understand. Especially those classed as single, searching females. Lean, height and weight proportionate, with Native American cheekbones, even bashful Jed had to admit to getting sidelong looks from some of the more feminine weekend customers.

He explained this away by saying that when out roughing it, "even bacon and beans can taste like a gourmet meal." He wasn't in the practice of encouraging attention from vacationing secretaries or airline stewardesses, for what they seem to expect from their guide, in a role he was wont to play.

Jed also admitted to dressing trail driver style when arising out

of a warm 'sougan' bedroll to present a top-down picture, starting with his hat. Followed by one of his favorite garments. A leather shirt he had sewed himself following design detail as shown in a Charles Russell painting of Lewis and Clark on the Lower Columbia. Followed by naturally well-worn jeans that hadn't ended up, yet, in a quilt.

Jed purposely did not wear fancy pretend trophy buckles — as nobody cast ones for under-recognized horse packers anyhow— or riding boots of exotic leather, that were not White's lace-up packer boot quality. This as a personal statement against what film star John Wayne called 'Pilgrims,' corrupting cowboy gear for "B" movie and TV personalities.

All this lent itself to an impression of a chiseled feature, 6' 4", trim, taciturn, somewhere in his early-thirties, rugged Scots-Irish-Swiss-American-Mountainman. With a tan and his dark hair, he could pass as an Indian, which of course he also was for being an Algonquian-Bowling descendant of a "playful Pocahontas."

All of this was good for a tourist based business. What was bad for business, Jed had discovered, was to destroy this image by quoting oblique references to Shaw, Herodotus, and Kafka. Occasionally, Jed admitted to his past, teaching at college level, and spent an evening around the campfire discussing anything from the Roman Civil War to the Federal Reserve theories of the money supply.

With single girls, this just wasn't acceptable. It made them mad when he destroyed a fantasy. It was better that he sing a popular song from the glory days of the U.S. Cavalry referring to General George Crook's long expedition against the Chiricahua Apache that has a tag line: "If I had my druther's/ I'd druther be a packer." And then kiss his horse.

Jed didn't mind playing the lone-mysterious-man-on-horseback-role to create a proper atmosphere for vacationing clients. But, he did not want a girl to be attracted to him for the wrong reasons.

From bitter experience, he didn't ever want to leave himself open, ever again, to being attacked by tears of accusation that he was pretending to be something he was not.

As he stated to Cascade friends, "I am — or was a professor—but, damn it, I also am a mountain born packer. And, I am not the one with the problem accepting that one can be the other, and vice-versa. I also feel that my 'presenting an image,' is done with the best intentions. That of making my clients feel they are living a part of history."

Unfortunately, those that live roles tend to over do it. Jed had caught himself, many times, putting aside a skillful approach of a female client with a trite answer, and then turning to one of his equine egotists' heels and murmuring gentle words while stroking the horse's "love bump" between the ears, thus adding insult to injury. Sometimes, he had to admit, this was an act of revenge. Getting even with old "what's her name," just because she, too, was a woman.

Whether Jed acted rude out of fear of female tears or being made a fool once again, he guessed that he had earned the freedom to be lonely. He had tried to change. But, not long ago a particularly appealing young thing trapped him behind a hot frying pan while he was browning a freshly caught mountain trout. Somehow the usual mountain man stories about bears had lead to Jed, without thinking of the consequences, in lecturing on one of his own personal views that the only reason mankind had survived the era of pre-civilization was on account of a repugnant scent that kept carnivorous beasts of prey away. Unfortunately, this statement was made on the fifth day of an escorted trek, roughing it cold streams without warm daily baths and this sweet young thing had taken the comment personally.

So, now he was alone. Just Jed and his horses. And, watching the last of the clouds collide with the mountains only to be ripped apart by pinnacles of ice, and listening to the solid crunch of hooves in old

snow as the string detoured a washed out bridge crossing the creek flowing out of Avalanche Glacier, he began to come alive.

He even had the feeling that this way of life was best. With that thought, he had a surge of excitement that made him shout out to a hawk soaring along a beam of breaking light, as his dad had been fond of exclaiming, “Hey, damn, it’s good to be alive!”

In keeping with the ambiguity of a yellow mood, the now unfettered sun was warm, dazzling. Here and there, obsidian, or volcanic glass, sparkled as if black diamonds. Passing under an overhanging cornice, he raised himself in the stirrups to peer upwards into a massive fissure in the glacier’s icefall.

The interior of a glacier is another world. ‘Chill Blue’ is about the only way one can describe the compressed ice color. When the light reaching deep into a frozen crevasse canyon is just right, this blue radiates, almost as if a frozen fire. A sight well worth bending backward to witness.

This morning, doing just that, Jed almost fell off his horse. Laughing. His eye had also caught a splash of yellow. He couldn’t stop the string then and there to take another look and expect the Admiral to keep Daisy and Babs from causing a ruckus. He debated whether his curiosity was worth the effort to find enough trees to un-tail and tie each of the pack horses and to un-strap the shovel that Forest Service regulations required of all pack trains as a fire tool.

“Probably was just the remains of a box of crackers carelessly discarded by a climbing party, or a bit of plastic that blew away from a backpacker’s camp,” Jed suggested to Admiral Beans.

“Then, how, pray tell,” Jed’s equine companion seemed to answer by a roll of an eyeball, “the color appears to be on the inside of the ice? Do I have to remind you of the years it would take for that to happen? No sir, that is no recent scrap of material.”

Jed explained it would take a good fifteen minutes to dig

footholds to climb the glacier's face, and was answered with a grunt of disapproval. Damn, that horse was always right. He wondered later if the Admiral had been putting him on, just to sneak in a breather. Jed also was to wonder what path his life would have followed if he hadn't left the trail on this little detour.

The yellow that had caught Jed's eye was a scrap of fabric. Painted canvas. The remains of an airplane wing? Apparently, the endless movement of the glacier had done a thorough job of chewing up a crashed plane. He searched about and found another piece of material that still carried part of a registration number. And, by odds that must be almost impossible to calculate, this movable remnant, once the ice imprisoning the find was chipped away, seemed to be wrapped around another object.

As Jed warmed the "package" in his hands, it came apart, and something fell on his foot. This too was yellow. A brilliant golden yellow, for it was gold. A bar of gold, stamped with a chrysanthemum.

A yellow chrysanthemum.

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Barry Murray is difficult to define. As a writer, in book reviews, he has been called a cross between Louis L’Amour and Tom Clancy. With a diagnosed “incomplete education” Asperger’s syndrome creative mind he understands the value of fellow focused “little professor” stylistic authors with a high IQ —as Hemingway, Steinbeck, Mark Twain, that only wrote about what they had lived.

Murray’s self-proclaimed role of a “Horseback Historian,” — earned by pioneering the Mexico to Canada 2,500 mile Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, by packhorse— has something to do the truth behind a scrap of plane fabric from a glacier. This family adventure is chronicled in a Shadowcatcher “mini-coffee table” [*Search for a Shadow of the Past*](#) came right out of Murray’s freelance magazine photographer/writer articles in LIFE and Holiday.

Another real life adventure was making a travel film, *Klondike: Trail of ‘98*, by paddling the Yukon River in a folding kayak. Followed by a soon to be released memoirs of [*The Prospector*](#), who lived with the Chocó Indians in Panama. Both of which validate the advice of writing about something you may know something about.

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