

40TH ANNIVERSARY

OF

ADVENTURE

(1975 to 2016)



School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation

SOLARoutdoors.org

SOLAR AT 40

by Peg Campbell, a founding member

In 1974, like many who discover SOLAR, I was looking for a little adventure which I found through a circuitous route. A newspaper article led me to the Washtenaw County MSU Extension Office that was recruiting 4H leaders. (4H was historically an agricultural program with exhibits or competitions at county fairs but they were branching out.) Yes, working with kids could be fun.

Soon I was on their steering committee planning county programs. We adopted the new Challenge Program to train kids in outdoor skills through the MSU Extension service. It still thrives nationwide today as Outdoor Adventure Challenge and similar to 1974, their mission is to *use the biggest classroom available — the outdoors — to lead young people in activities that teach how to communicate with other group members to plan, organize, and conduct their own activities outdoors. Participants learn canoeing, kayaking, backpacking, hiking, outdoor survival and safety skills and more.*

I'd never camped or done anything outdoorsy and felt this new adventures was doable through their 16-week leadership-training course. The first session (rock-climbing) seemed odd that others enrolled in the program were not 4-H leaders like me but had seen Doug Maddox (the Challenge training leader) rappelling off roof of the Wayne post office. When they asked him questions, he invited them the program. After the practical at Grand Ledge, we were amazed and awed with our accomplishment and were eager to learn backpacking and winter survival skills.

Soon after the program started Doug met Bill Halvangis, fresh from Outward Bound, and recruited him as a co-leader. Doug got media exposure for the classes and persuaded Jerry Chipetta from Michigan Outdoors (a local TV program) to do a show on our survival practical which aired that April. That weekend Doug suggested we start a club to continue our adventures since we were completing the program and could assist him and Bill with the upcoming classes. Thus the SOLAR Club was born and we were glued together in our newfound adventure.

Doug and Bill revamped the 16-week training format to classes in four-week modules with us as assistant leaders and built a sizable alumni group. Many late night meetings put the organizational structure in place that remains today. At the same time the 4-H program realized that a lot of people were trained but no one was taking out kids groups so they gave us the boot.

Livonia Parks and Recreation agreed to sponsor us and advertise our classes through their catalog, give us classroom and meeting space and insurance. Monthly club meetings were at Jackson Center and after the meeting we went to the Stables Bar on Five Mile and Middle Belt. That was where the real inspiration for many trips started (after a couple beers). Our link with Livonia Parks and Recreation was discontinued after a few years because of budget cuts.

So in the early 80's Bill Halvangis and Bob Westbrook discovered Aries Colony Hall, where we met until last year when Bob found St. Paul. I am delighted that the club has continued all these years. Like so many others in SOLAR, it changed my life and led me to my husband as well as lasting friendships near and far.



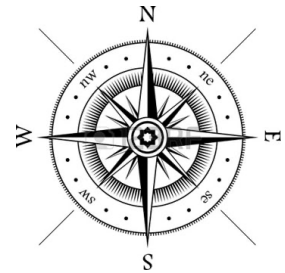
Classes over the years

Forty years ago, the classes that SOLAR members led were vastly different from what they are now. In the early years, classes such as Nature Study, Fishing, Bicycling, High Ropes, Rock Climbing and Sail boarding (or windsurfing).

Some classes that have stood the test of time include Backpacking and Enjoying Michigan Winters, which have been taught pretty much every year since SOLAR began.

Other classes, such as Wilderness First Aid, Survival, Kayaking, and Cross Country Skiing were classes in the 1980s, then discontinued, and then restarted again at a later date.

New classes have been added over the years to accommodate new members and new interests. Some of these classes include Intermediate Backpacking, Search and Rescue, Basic and Advanced Land Navigation, Mountaineering, Women in the Woods, Car Camping, Lightweight Backpacking, Food Dehydrating, and Scuba diving.



Instructors have changed over the years too:

The anchor class, Beginning Backpacking, was taught once a year in the fall by Bob Westbrook from 1979 to 1988. Carol McCririe taught the class with Bob in 1989, and then Carol took over the beginning class in 1990, with assistance from Leslie Cordova beginning in 1993. Carol, along with Leslie and many others, taught the class for 25 years before passing the baton to Krisanne Schmidt. Beginning in 1998, a 2nd Beginning Backpacking class was added in the spring of 1998 and was taught by Michael Banks and later Glenn Schultz.

Cindy Harrison-Felix and Carol McCririe started an Advanced Backpacking class that was taught in 1996 and 1997. Mike Banks took this class a little further and created Advanced Backpacking and Leadership, which began in 1999 and continued for several years. What used to be the class taught by Cindy and Carol was resurrected in 2001 as Backpacking 201 and is now taught almost every other year by Leslie as the Intermediate Backpacking class.

Other classes that SOLAR members formed include Lightweight Backpacking taught by Dick Ebenhoe and Dave Sweeton, and Car Camping taught by Mark and Susan Speece.

Rock climbing has been taught since the first days of SOLAR with a variety of instructors. To encourage enrollment in the class, there was always a Free Climb at Grand Ledge where you could try out climbing before signing up for the class. Over the years, this class has been taught by Kim Alger, Al Fylak, Bruce Rogers, Sharon Stanek, Jim Young, Laura Albin, and most recently by Pete Lamb. In 1985 Al Fylak taught an Advanced Rock Climbing class. It has been a few years since this class has been offered; I'm sure it will be back when SOLAR perceives the need/interest.

Enjoying Michigan Winters, or how to backpack on cross country skis or snow shoes and not wipe out, has been taught for as long as this writer has been in the club. Instructors in the past were Kim Alger, Al Smith, Bob Westbrook, Dave Jones, Doug Lanyk, Tom Oloffo, Allen Duncan and most recently, Bruce Coppola.

A Survival class was also taught for many years. Past instructors include Alf Cederquist, who taught the class from the beginning of time until 1990 when Bob Westbrook stepped up in 1998, followed by Doug Lanyk.

For a brief moment in time (1996), SOLAR there was a summer Survival class led by Mike Felix.

One class that has become a mainstay of the SOLAR calendar is Basic Land Navigation which is a variation on the Orienteering Class that was taught at various times during the 1980s. Since 1997, the class has been taught by many individuals – Lester Mok, Karl Overheul, Dave Sweeton, and Brian Andrews to name a few. The class was in such demand that it was taught twice a year until 2012. The most recent years, beginning in 2011, the class has been taught by Jeff McWilliams and Ati Tislerics. The class has been updated to include more practicals for hands-on learning. An Advanced Land Navigation class was added and is taught by Jeff McWilliams. Jeff and Ati have also each taught an Orienteering class in the past few years.

Newer classes started because one person decided to step up and try something new. In recent years, SOLAR members added a Mountaineering class taught by Lou Szakal, a Search and Rescue class taught by Tom Hayes, Wildlife Gardening taught by Laura James and Kayaking classes taught by Matt Dalton. A two-part tree identification class was taught by Mary Costello – the first part in the very early spring, when the trees were just budding, and the other in the summer when the trees had leaves,

In addition to classes, SOLAR members have led many seminars and clinics on many different topics – knots and lashing, waxing, ice climbing, Morel mushrooming, Polar expeditions, leadership, outdoor cooking, skating, photography, and fishing to name a few.

Any recap about classes would have to include a mention of Lester Mok, a.k.a. Yoda, who spent hours trying to come up with new ideas for new classes. Lester was the master mind behind land navigation, basic tracking workshop, wilderness leadership seminar, primitive skills workshop, outdoor and winter safety seminars, plant identification workshop, and Earth living workshop, just to name a few. Some of Lester's work can still be found in materials used by the Basic Land Navigation class and also the Southern Michigan Orienteering Club (SMOC.)

For those of you who have taken classes run through SOLAR, you know that it is not only the lead instructor, but all of the instructors that make the class a success. There are too many to name, but you all know who they are. These classes would not be what they are without the volunteers who generously share their time and knowledge.

Activities over the years

SOLAR members' interests have changed over the years and so have the trips and activities that they lead....

In the old days, SOLAR members participated in an annual free climb and monthly Rattlesnake outings, downhill skiing trips, and annual visits to Point Pelee for bird watching.

Leslie Cordova is the Queen of planning trips, currently with 87 trips to her credit! She has been a member since 1992 and has been planning and organizing trips most of that time. Her first planned event was the Bald Mountain Haunted Halloween weekend followed by trips to North Manitou, South Manitou, Red River Gorge, the Carter Caves Crawlathon, Wyandotte Caves, Marengo Caves, Pictured Rocks, Tobermory, Cuyahoga Valley, John Bryon, Caesar Creek, Grand Island, Wilderness State Park, as well as many more local activities like the Toledo Zoo lights display, Kensington Hayride, Mackinaw and Pelee Island biking, and Chinese New Year dinners.



Jim Gilfix, like Lester Mok with classes, constantly had new ideas for trips, many of them family oriented – Fossil Hunts, Trout Farm, Hocking Hills, Ohio Personal Challenge (ropes), Sanilac Petroglyphs State Park, Kensington Nature hikes, Maybury State Park mountain biking and Living Farm, Chain O'Lakes State Park in Indiana, and many organized ethnic dinners over the years, just to name a few.

Maureen and Dave DeFrance, before relocating out of state, held an annual canoe outing at their cabin in northern Michigan for 16 consecutive years. Another event hosted by the DeFrances was an annual Hoedown. The hoedown has been the largest one-night organized activity run through the club to date.

Another unique trip opportunity was led by Matt Dalton to Pigeon River State Forest for an Elk Antler Hunt.

Karen Bates discovered dog sledding in the 1990s and led many trips from 1993 to 2007. These trips varied from a weekend to an extended week long trip, all at Chocpaw Expeditions out of Algonquin Provincial Park.

Another more recent addition to the long line of great trips that SOLAR members lead is the annual Adirondacks trip, originally planned by Donald Wold in 2005, more recently led by Janet Schester, and then Bruce Coppola.

SOLAR is always looking for new activities and ideas that interest members. All it takes is one member to say, heh let's do this.

Steering Committee

SOLAR's success over the years is due in no small part to the people that volunteer their time to help run the club. In addition to the many class instructors and trip leaders that give freely (translated, they work for free) of their time, the Steering Committee (SC) is the group that gives direction and governs the club. SOLAR has had pretty much the same officers and Committee Chairs since its beginnings – President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Activities, Bylaws, Education, Membership, Public Relations and the SOLAR Ray Editor (formerly known as the Communications Chair.) When SOLAR began to accumulate a sizeable gear closet, the Equipment Chair position was created. In the past, membership meeting programs were handled by the President but that role became the Program Chair position and was added to the Steering Committee in 1985. The position of Historian was added to the steering committee in 1989. With the advent of the internet, SOLAR added Webmaster to the steering committee.

Our past presidents (from the beginning):

| | | | |
|------------|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| 1975-76 | Ken Demski | 1994-95 | Cindy Harrison-Felix |
| 1976-78 | Lillian Vires | 1995-96 | Steve Gardner |
| 1978-80 | Tim Nowicki | 1996-98 | Michael Banks |
| 1980-81 | Jeff Smith | 1998-2000 | Doug Lanyk |
| 1981-12/82 | Peg Alford (Campbell) | 2000-02 | Leslie Cordova |
| 1/83-6/84 | Bill Halvangis | 2002-04 | Tom Oloffo |
| 1984-86 | Bob Westbrook | 2004-06 | Tom Hayes |
| 1986-87 | Maureen Peters (DeFrance) | 2006-08 | Lou Szakal |
| 1987-88 | Larry Martin | 2008-10 | Cindy Taylor |
| 1988-90 | Debby Campbell | 2010-11 | Allen Duncan |
| 1990-92 | Joan Hettinger (Ryan) | 2011-13 | Chuck Smith |
| 1992-93 | Al Fylak | 2013-14 | Jennifer McWilliams |
| 1993-94 | Joan Govan (Westbrook) | 2014-16 | Jennifer Tislerics |

In addition to all of the presidents listed, many others have contributed to SOLAR's governing body – too many to list them all. Many people have been on the Steering Committee, took a break and then came back again. The bottom line is that once you get in, you never get out. If you care about the things that SOLAR does, you get involved and one way to do that is to run for a position on the Steering Committee.

Meeting your match

While SOLAR has never held itself out to be nor does it advertise to be a singles group, it often happens that two star-crossed outdoor lovers meet through SOLAR and they fall in love.

Over the years, SOLAR has seen a lot of members unite in marriage, including:

John and Amy (Barber) Fedyk
Ron and Peg (Alford) Campbell
Gene and Leslie (Cohen) Cordova
Mike and Cindy (Harrison) Felix
Jess and Jan (Piet) Harding
Bob and Joan (Govan) Westbrook
Gary and Marie (Carriere) Crimaldi
Al and Ellen (Kufchock) Fylak
Steve and Marie (Crow) Gardner
Mark and Kathy (Rymal) Cantrell
Jim and Allison (Huntoon) Martell
Dave and Maureen (Peters) DeFrance
Ken and Lisa (Hoover) McQuade
Jeff and Betsy (Broesamie) Telford
Alex and Clare Vanderhaar
Lou and Pam (Riehl) Szakal
Rob and Judy (Spitzer) Mair
Mike Mannebach and Karen Sinclair-Smith
Marco (deceased) and Linda (Horner) Scarpetta
Bill and Marie Stockdale
Tom and Nancy Reichard
Dave and Jill (Craig) McIntyre
Andy and June (Legarski) McColm
Eric and Mimi (Gendreau) Noyes
Huw and Pam (Clayton) Evans
Don and Pam (Bauerle) Harnack
Tom and Hope (Straub) Ponsart
David Foerster and Laura Albin
Pete and Sharon (Smelter) Lamb (wedding officiated by our own Debbie Z)
Mike and Mary (Dean) Pniewski (wedding officiated by our own Lou Szakal)
Bob Conrad and Linda Hill
John and Suzanne (Shafer) Srodawa

One of the more romantic stories is when Jim Martell asked Allison Huntoon to marry him at the August Rattlesnake weekend. He hid champagne at Nelson's Look Out, and asked Allison to go for a walk, where he proposed to a backdrop of fireworks.

Another story originated in the Beginning Backpacking class assigned student teams based on geographic location. Suzanne Shafer lived in Lincoln Park and John Srodawa lived in Macomb. Carol and Leslie had absolutely no idea where Macomb was and put them on the same team. The rest is history.

Then comes the baby carriage

In addition to marriages, SOLAR has many new members born into the club because both of their parents are members:

Roger and Laura James – sons Roger and Andrew

Janice and Jess Harding – daughter Kendra

Gary and Marie Crimaldi – son Carl and daughter

John and Amy Fedyk – daughter Eliza and sons Anthony and Theo

Jim and Allison Martell – son

Marco and Linda Scarpetta – daughter Julia

Al and Ellen Fylak – son Andrew

Ken and Lisa McQuade – son Gregory

Pam and Huw Evans – daughter Maila

John and Suzanne Srodawa – daughter Claire

The SOLAR Ray and the Web

Along with everything else “SOLAR,” our newsletter has evolved over the years. I remember the early days when the SOLAR Ray was handwritten and copies were mimeographed for distribution at the general meeting. Soon SOLAR began producing the Ray, having it commercially printed, brought to the Steering Committee meeting to be stamped and then mailed – hopefully to reach members before the general meeting. Next we gave members the option of receiving the Ray electronically or via the US mail. As of 2014 the only option is to download your copy from the website. Technology has come a long way, and so have we! Pretty much anything you need to know is available on the Website, the SOLAR Yahoo group, and Meetup.

Achievements in the outdoors

SOLAR has sparked many people into doing things that they'd never dreamed of doing. While they were not necessarily trips run through SOLAR, members have traveled all over the world – like Mt. Everest, K2, and Mt. Rainier to name a few.

Cathy Susan, a member in the 1980s, was ranked 3rd in the world as a female cross country skier. She also won the 1986 VASA race.

Chris Weingartz was the overall winner of the Silver Creek Challenge 19 km race in 1988.

Hal Joerin was awarded the Silver Beaver in 1989 for his dedication in working with youth in the outdoors.

Cathy Dolland hiked to base camp at K2 in 1993.

Dave and Maureen DeFrance, with Jim and Allison Martell, summited Killamanjaro in 1994.

By the end of the 1994 summer climbing season, DeForest Eveland had reached the “Six Majors” (six highest volcanic mountains,), the “Ten-Niners” (ten highest non-volcanic peaks over 9000 feet), and the “Classic Eight” (eight “best” climbs in the Cascades.)

Harry and Mary Price were also awarded the Silver Beaver in 1996 for their leadership in scouting.

Pete Lamb, Julie Penrod, Kathryn Krueger, Clayton Lucy, and Chris ? hiked to base camp at Everest in 2001.

Leslie Cordova and Marie Edwards summited Killamanjaro in 2001.

Michael Banks won the Michigan Recreation and Park Association's 2006 Community Service Award.

A group of SOLARites formed the SOLAR Stair Stars in the early 2000s and climbed the 70+ flights of stairs at the Renaissance Center in Detroit to support the American Lung Association. They are traditionally both the largest team and the top fundraisers of the event.

Currently (2016), several SOLAR members are participating in the North Country Trail 100 Mile Challenge, celebrating the 100th anniversary of our National Parks.

Tribute

Alf Cederquist (1931-2005) joined SOLAR in the 1970s, where he participated in rock climbing, canoeing, skiing, and biking, as well as teaching the Survival class. He also enjoyed hiking and mountaineering both in the United States and Europe, as well as sailing.

Marilyn Larkin (1961-1988) joined SOLAR in 1987 and took the backpacking class, as well as windsurfing, morel mushrooming, and cross-country skiing. She was an avid bicyclist and lost her life while bike riding in Canada's Pinery Provincial Park with SOLAR friends.

Harsha Vardhan (1953-1988) was very involved in SOLAR activities. Coming to the US from India, he participated in the backpacking class (he took the class at the same time as Marilyn), rockclimbing, cross country and downhill skiing, as well as bicycling and lost his life in the same accident as Marilyn at the Pinery.

Ronda Shapiro (1954-2008) joined SOLAR in 1996 with a healthy appetite for the outdoors no matter the season. Cross country skiing, canoeing/kayaking, rock climbing, backpacking (fending off bugs!) and dogsledding (with dramatic rescues!) were some of her favorite pastimes with many of her SOLAR pals. Ronda's positive attitude and beautiful personality are greatly missed.

Norwood Catron (1972-2008) wasn't a SOLAR member for very long, but his passing touched many of us. Norwood was a gentle, kind man who enjoyed the outdoors.

Michael Malon (1959-2012) was a member of SOLAR for 18 years. With his background as a physician, he frequently assisted with the Wilderness First Aid class and taught CPR. He also participated in backpacking, skiing, mountain biking, kayaking and canoeing, rock climbing, rafting, and caving.

Marco Scarpetta (? -2014) joined SOLAR around 1988, was an avid cyclist and enjoyed cross country skiing, and hiking. He met his wife Linda Harner in SOLAR and they enjoyed traveling and doing outdoor activities wherever they went.

Lois Matthews (1942-2014) and her husband Bill joined SOLAR in 2010. She and Bill took the beginning backpacking and the Basic Land Navigation classes in 2011. Lois really enjoyed cross-country skiing, canoeing, and day hiking with SOLAR friends on the weekends. She especially loved the curling event because she was always fascinated with the sport. The last backpacking adventure Lois and Bill shared was with her sister in Yosemite National Park, just a three day event in the Cathedral Mountains out of Tuolumne Meadows. Six months later she was diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer.

Thomas Dunn (1950-2015) joined SOLAR in 1992, participating in many classes and activities, and helped to teach backpacking and wilderness canoeing classes. As a teacher, he spent his summers traveling on his motorcycle all over the country and loved car camping. His final legacy was to send his friends Christmas cards in December 2015, although he'd passed the previous January.

Remember When ...

Dues were just \$10? The year was 1985.

Larry Martin thought it would be a great idea to pack Baked Alaska (Cherries Jubilee) on dry ice and bring it into Algonquin for a special dessert around the campfire.

You hiked 15 miles up into the Canadian Rockies and thought that the Bear Pole you could see in the distance a mile away was the best thing you'd ever seen in your life.

Someone's brother hiked three miles from the Chapel Falls trailhead to Chapel Beach campground with nothing in his backpack but beer.

The Boy Scouts you met in Red River Gorge taught you how to amuse yourself with bamboo in a campfire. Keep your thermarest repair skills up to date, Kevin!

A certain instructor, on his way to Pigeon River with two students, was having a beer and making conversation with the driver and other passenger. He asked what their professions were and the driver very calmly stated that he was a Michigan State Trooper...

The Taj Mahal was the place for cards at many Pictured Rocks and other trips.

A beginning backpacking class student tried to lower a cooking pot into Lake Superior and actually believed that Superior would give it back.

The first Advanced Backpacking class in 1996 traveled to the Green Mountains and hiked the Long Trail to its terminus at the Canadian border. The class renamed the trail the "Wrong trail."

Coming off of a trail in Jasper Provincial Park, a woman warned some SOLAR hikers that up ahead on a bridge was a baby cougar. Turns out it was a house cat...

Some SOLAR hikers in the White Mountains witnessed a backpacker, assisted by her boyfriend, giving herself dialysis in a shelter miles from the nearest road.

A ranger at Pictured Rocks swooped in to ticket some hikers for having a fire in a restricted area, only to find that they were cooking jiffy pop on a backpack stove and having a flashlight fire.

Several SOLARites traveled to Chocpaw to adopt retiring sled dogs. Karen Bates adopted Mandy, Chris Lezovich adopted Lingo, and Barbara Erickson adopted Dave and Sprite.

Bill Halvangis tried every year to come up with a creative recipe at Rattlesnake to win the August cookoff, and even tried to bribe the judges.

You thought you were going to the annual DeFrance canoe outing for a nice relaxing weekend, and you ended up helping to replace the cabin roof.

Laura Albin got her car stuck in the mud at a shakedown trip for the Advanced Backpacking class, hitched a ride with Denny and Mike F. in the bed of a pickup truck, and then couldn't tell the tow truck driver where she left the car.

Dave Bombard won the Rattlesnake hill climb every year, making contestants breathe a sigh of relief when he stopped competing.

Cindy Taylor, on her 1st real backpacking trip after the beginning class, woke up her tent mates in the wee hours to rattle her bear bells, because she heard "*something*."

Every steering committee meeting was at Bob Westbrook's apartment in Southfield.

Lifetime memberships were introduced in 1989 for \$65.

A beginning backpacking student hiked at Pictured Rocks from Little Beaver Lake to Chapel Beach and wanted to know who had the sleeping bag she was supposed to borrow.

You didn't know what a "Tech weenie" was until you met Larry Martin.

A certain backpacking instructor, taught us all the rules, and then took beginners to Pictured Rocks and hung his food on a tree. In the middle of the night, there was a huge commotion and looking out of the tent, there was the biggest raccoon, eating the bottom out of this instructor's food bag.

For SOLAR's 20th anniversary, we took on the challenge of traversing the entire section of the North Country Trail that runs through Michigan beginning June 1, 1996 and completing by Trails Day in 1997. We're still not done....

While driving through Point Pelee Park, Cindy Harrison slammed on the brakes and exclaimed "look, an indigo bunting." Oops, it was a piece of blue ribbon tied to a tree branch....

Don't just do it, Over do it!

Don (no last names, please) was canoeing and asked a person standing on the bank a question. There was no answer. He repeated his question, with a bit of anger. Still no answer. His canoe partner broke out in hysterics when she realized who he was talking to --- a statue on the shore. He got new glasses shortly after.

For the benefit of Laura Albin, "Don't Go There."

A SOLAR camper retrieved a lip gloss that had fallen into an outhouse hole. Later his girlfriend (now wife) asked to borrow the lip balm. He handed it over without explanation. Fellow SOLARites watched in silent horror as she unsuspectingly used the lip balm.

In October 2011, several SOLAR members took a backpacking trip to the Otter Creek Wilderness hoping for a great color trip and woke Saturday morning to over 6 inches of snow.

The Sunday night of a 4-day Wabos Loppet weekend when a half dozen SOLARites skied out to the middle of Lake Superior's Batchwana Bay and watched a lunar eclipse over the cliffs to the east, a meteorite shower overhead and the Hale Bopp comet at the same time!

The Intermediate Backpacking class went to Red River Gorge for Halloween and Karen Haroutunian brought a witch's hat and treats for the students.

You forgot to tuck your pant legs in your socks in the Amazon and an ant crawled up your pant leg. It answered the question of boxers or briefs.

You realized that at -50F a toilet seat will crack in half if you sit on it.

A certain backpack instructor was sure he could set up a tent quickly in the rain without assistance. Ten minutes later, looking at the soggy mess, asked "Can I share your tent?"

14 SOLARites (and 2 groupies) playing Apples to Apples on an empty campsite at Stormhaven backcountry campground on the Bruce Peninsula. Other campers came over to see what all the laughter was about.

Best answer ever on Mike Banks' backpacking class final exam:

Q: Mike Banks is a great _____.

A: Alternative protein source

Learning the hard way that bears in/near Yosemite really do know how to open an Ursack.

Soaking in natural hot springs along the John Muir Trail during a 2-week backpacking trip.

The first and (to date) only tie in the SOLAR elections, followed by a new vote.

The ridiculous amount of Oreo cookies eaten during Enjoying Michigan Winters practicals.

Waking up inside a quiet, peaceful, warm quinzhee to discover it was 0 degrees outside with a 25mph wind and -25 degree windchill.

Glenn Schultz made peach cobbler at the campfire in a dutch oven for the EMW students and instructors.

Hiking or biking up any long, steep hill you'd hear a yell of excitement from Ati Tislerics, "MORE UP!"

More memories and thoughts from SOLAR members:

My most memorable time was when I was on the Long Trail in Vermont when we stayed at a shelter called Shooting Star Shelter and watched hundreds of shooting stars that very night. - Dave Foerster

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Favorite rafting memory - Doing Linda Hill's Cheat River trip, and doing the Yough first. Having Dave, Steve Frank, and myself in a boat with a less-than-perfect guide. Having the guide say "whatever you do, don't fall in at this rapid, Charlie's Decision", and within 30 seconds having Dave knock me and him in the rapid.... After bobbing like "turds in a toilet bowl" and getting to the surface, the guide rescued Dave, as Dave used my head as a step into the boat and getting his shorts caught on the raft. While Dave was laying shorts-less in the bottom of the boat the guide went to rescue me, panicked, dropped me back in the water and told me to swim... It was the first class V I've ever swam, and swam, and swam from beginning to end. When I finally reached the shore with a lot of yelling and screaming to swim - I could not wait to get off the river. Did take a few more swims that trip, and drank 3 PBR's on the bus ride back... Needless to say I did not raft on Saturday but look back and laugh a lot!!! - Laura Albin

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Bonne Michalak and Maureen DeFrance met for the "first" time while at Caesar's State Park 3 years ago. As they were talking and getting to know one another, it came to light that they BOTH grew up in Royal Oak. As more discussion came about, it became clear they were no strangers. A squeal of delight ensued when they discovered they were childhood playmates that had both married and changed names. They hadn't seen one another in over 40 years! - Maureen DeFrance

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Hmmm! White Water Rafting in the Grand Canyon, backpacking with a 17 pound tent, raccoon raids on the Pine River, downhill skiing at Blue Mountain in a blizzard, Vasa cross country ski race; it hurt but I made it; moonlight canoeing, rock climbing class, Rattlesnake SOLAR potluck and bike riding up a hill, the Pinery, horseback riding at the Double JJ ranch, cave crawling in Olive Hill, Kentucky, Hocking Hills, ethnic dinners, Enjoying Michigan Winters in a quinzee that we could see through, backpacking with Leslie on Isle Royale, a ski trip to Austria where I messed up my knee, a trip on the Inca trail, and the Amazon. – Jeff Zabel

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SOLAR holds so many memories for me since I joined the club in 1983 that it hard to pick just one. Maybe it is all the Pictured Rocks backpack trips over the years, beginning with my time in the beginning class and continuing over my 25 year tenure as the lead instructor for the class. Or maybe it was the trip to the Canadian Rockies with SOLAR friends for 17 days of backpacking. Or it could be the Thanksgiving trip into the Grand Canyon, hiking out to Plateau Point with 2 stoves, dried turkey, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, gravy, and cranberry sauce, probably the best Thanksgiving dinner of my life – thank you Karen, Leslie, Sam, Dave and Moe. Most important, I think it is all of the friends that I have met in my years with SOLAR that have become my lifelong friends. I cherish every moment I have been fortunate to enjoy with SOLAR and know that I will for a long time to come. – Carol McCrie

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My SOLAR memory is not quite a memory, more like a reflection: I consider SOLAR to be a very special club and I know that is true for many, many others. I would call it life changing for many of us because we have found lifetime friends and relationships in SOLAR. Even many members who we no longer see continue to be in relationships with people they would not likely have met if there were no SOLAR club.

Almost all the friends I have today are ones that I first met because of SOLAR and most, if not all, of the most enjoyable things I do are because of the classes and trips I've taken with other SOLAR members. I can't imagine my life without these people and experiences!

I hope people realize the life-changing potential of SOLAR and keep it going for many more years. – Cindy Taylor

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SOLAR taught me how to enjoy the outdoors – every season. From my very first class through all the others that followed, I've been impressed by how willing SOLAR members are to share their knowledge and experience (and there's a lot of both). I've learned things that I never knew I ever needed to know. Who knew you can camp in the snow (and like it) or what a quinzhee is, or that there is more than one north? Who knew about bear bags or that you can make dinner in plastic bag, or that ounces are so important? Who knew that having a daily change of underwear really isn't as important as your mother told you? But as important as all of that is, the most important thing SOLAR has taught me is how easy it is to make new friends. – Karen Haroutunian

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We were asked for specific stories, memories or achievements to share but when thinking about it I realized that somewhere in most of my favorite SOLAR memories there was something that made me a bit uncomfortable....

In many situations, I have gone beyond my comfort zone, going out with folks I don't know, sleeping with them in close quarters, seeing and traveling where I never saw myself going, sleeping in the cold, hiking in the hot, hiding from the sun in the desert under a rock ledge, paddling further, bending my body into cramped caves and walking longer than ever anticipated....

I find linked with all these uncomfortable bits and challenges that I have an equal or greater pleasure eating and sharing with more gusto with more good folks than I could have imagined. I have shared movies, music, art, travel, food, sports and culture. Yes, I call the festival of fools a cultural event as do I the midnight opening of the DIA. Enjoying them with the same enjoyment I get as talking your ears off about plants, life, little building etc. and sharing a cold beverage with trail fermented friends at the end of a long, long trail day.

My memories flow over more than a ten year period and those memories enrich my life, on the wall of my house, pictures from SOLAR trips. Bringing all fractions of my life, work, neighborhood, play, church and entertainment together, I find when there are good people whom I met at SOLAR involved, the stories are a bit more lively and the activity a bit more Active. I want you to know that the community I have with you has been a great blessing, sometimes a bit uncomfortable but always interesting.

Thanks for being here, carry on.....Mike Hobig

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Learning how to winter camp the hard way -

My second event with SOLAR was winter camping or Enjoying MI Winters

After a long day of digging tunnels and kitchens in snow banks by the lake, making igloos and quinzhees at Wilderness State Park, I went to bed with damp, sweaty clothes. I froze all night long and a week later came down with Mono. – Dave DeFrance

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When I joined SOLAR, I was so excited to discover so many new interests. I wanted to join as I had heard you could learn rock-climbing. Rock-climbing was just the beginning of a litany of experiences. I met my husband, Dave through SOLAR...what better way to find a fellow lover of the outdoors!

While in SOLAR, Dave and I had 3 dogs over the years. They went just about everywhere with us, and they also became part of the solar pack. Nibber and Corky were two of the original "SOLAR Dogs", and had many evenings around the campfire after a full day of hiking. Backpacking, and even rock-climbing. The adventures they had! When our third dog, Lucky, came along, she fit right in. As the years went by, fellow Solarites would ask if we would adopt them...like our dogs...after all, our dogs went on so many wonderful trips. But most importantly, I think of SOLAR as family. These people are here for you through thick and thin, they've got your back. We have moved 2000 miles away, yet my SOLAR family is ready to include me in their next adventure...they're just a phone call away.
– Moe DeFrance

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One of my all time favorite memories backpacking EVER was when just Ronda and I went to North Manitou for a long weekend trip, and the wonderful sunsets and laughable amounts of bugs we endured together that weekend... (along with Trilliums, loons and swans on North Manitou!!!) – Julia (Gordon) Applegate

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I have many fond memories of adventures with my SOLAR friends, far too many to name them all. Laughter, new sites, new experiences, lots of classes, and going on adventures I'd never dreamed of. I thought "backpacking" was something people did to get around Europe – I had no idea where this new hobby would lead me! What a great addition to my life this club has been. It has been my honor to serve in several leadership positions and to help teach some classes, giving back to the club that has given me so much.

One memory that stands out as particularly unique in my 11+ years as a SOLARite was an early summer backpacking trip to Rocky Mountain National Park with Linda Ringlein. After dinner we walked over to a nearby lake, no other humans within sight or sound. It was

very peaceful. And then we heard something coming toward the water, on the other side of the small lake. A moose appeared! After taking a good long drink from the lake, he slowly walked toward our camp, eating his way through the brush. We walked parallel to him on our side of the lake, slowly and quietly. Reaching the end of the lake, he took his time dining and drinking along a small stream near our campsite. All told, we spent about an hour watching that moose do his thing, taking photos, and enjoying a magical brush with nature. This was the best “critter sighting” on a trip, EVER! -- Jennifer Tislerics

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The John Muir Trail (2006) – the Purist – Pete Lamb, the Chaser – Maureen DeFrance, Rawhide – Karen Kish, and the Trail Boss – Dave DeFrance.

The John Muir Trail passes through what many backpackers say is the **finest mountain scenery in the United States**. This is a land of 13,000-foot and 14,000-foot peaks, of lakes in the thousands, and of canyons and granite cliffs. It's also a land blessed with the mildest, sunniest climate of any major mountain range in the world. The JMT runs through 3 National Parks: Yosemite, Kings Canyon, Sequoia and Inyo National Forests, and the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness. The John Muir Trail runs 211 miles from Yosemite Valley to Mt Whitney, the highest point in the lower 48. After "completing" the trail you still have to hike another 11 miles and 6000 ft. down to Whitney Portal, the southern trail head. Add the side trips to rainbow falls, Vermillion and Muir Ranch for a total of **230 miles**

We loved this trip so much that we went back with a group of 17 Solarites to do it again in 2008.

Acknowledgements

Information contained in this book was compiled through information from SOLAR Rays dating back to about 1983, right after Carol McCririe joined SOLAR. In addition, many individuals sent in stories and memories of their time in SOLAR, and helped fill in the gaps for things I couldn't remember even after 34 years of being a SOLAR member.

My apologies to anyone who got missed with regard to instructors, marriages, or children, or to anyone who verbally told me a story and I didn't get it exactly right.

My thanks to Peg Campbell, one of the founding members, for her contribution of the SOLAR story for this book.

I found the following in the May 1990 SOLAR Ray and thought that it conveys the sentiments of many of the SOLAR people I have met in my 30+ years in the club.

FROM A HAPPY CAMPER

Submitted by an anonymous member

Because of S.O.L.A.R., I now know:

*The wind on Mt. Washington,
The waves crashing against the cliffs of Pictured Rocks,
The rain showers of Killarney Provincial Park,
The "one way" portage,
The "trail head packing" technique,
How to "survive",
How to tell time "S.O.L.A.R. style",
The excuses for not finding the morels,
The many little tricks that make the outdoors fun,
The feeling of isolation at Sand Lake,
The thrill of viewing a winter full moon in the outdoors.*

Thanks from a happy camper.