

THE SOLAR RAY



M a r c h 2 0 0 0



WHEW! What
a view!!!

MARCH PROGRAM: Rock Climbing

Rock climbing season is nearly here. To "peak" people's interest, Solar member Al Fylak is presenting a slide show on rock climbing he's done all over the country. He will start with some old slides of Solar climbing at Grand Ledge and Rattlesnake.

He plans on covering places like Joshua Tree, Yosemite, Mt. Whitney, the Tetons, and maybe even some ice climbing from Colorado. His theme is that there are different types of climbing and lots of places to climb in the US, especially if you can travel west of the Mississippi. If you like what you see at this program, sign up for the Rock Climbing Class offered in April.

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Speaking of Rockclimbing...

ROCKCLIMBING INSTRUCTOR'S MEETING

This is a pre-class meeting for anyone who is interested in helping out with this year's climbing class. We also welcome anyone with new ideas or suggestions for the class or anyone who would just like to talk about rock climbing. Please join us! We're getting together on Monday, March 13 at 6:30 pm at Bob Westbrook's house. For information, please call Laura Albin at 517-381-8975 or albinlau@msu.edu or call Bob at 734-513-8454 or bobw@bigcat.net.

Historian's Digs

By John Fedyk



Welcome to my new column: *Historian's Digs*. Now, I think that I should explain: Historian is a position on the Steering Committee that exists to highlight the activities that have occurred during SOLAR's venerable 20 years of existence. What do I know already? Not too much, although I hope to be educated by digging through old Rays, talking to the founders and, of course, asking our kind readers for your reminiscences of memorable past SOLAR activities. These I will present monthly in this column through the generosity provided by the talented and lovely Editor of this newsletter. So without further ado my column begins with this introduction and ends this month with my email address: jfedyk@hotmail.com. Please send me or present to me in person your stories, photos, scraps, trivia, jokes, dramatic tales and the price of skis 20 years ago. (Editor's note: Please support this endeavour. This is a column A LONG TIME in the making!)

Sometime in June

ACA Coastal Kayaking Instructors will conduct the American Canoe Association's Fundamentals of Coastal Kayaking course. This 16 hour course will begin at 8:00am on a Saturday, and conclude on a Sunday.

The course, which is designed for enthusiastic beginners and intermediate paddlers, will cover basic strokes, rescues, first aid equipment, navigation, marine hazards, landing in surf, weather, emergency signaling, kayaking equipment including, trip leadership skills, clothing, packing a kayak and, *time permitting*, the Eskimo Roll.



If the weather is good, all or part of the class will be conducted on Lake Erie at Sterling State Park in Monroe or Lake Michigan at Muskegon State Park. If we get a strong wind, the class will be conducted in a protected area, one way or the other... we paddle. This is a camping weekend and a "pot luck" dinner will be held on Saturday night. There will be a small fee for State Park entry and camping. The course is limited to 16 participants and the cost is \$110.00 with own gear, \$150.00 with Black Parrot Paddling Gear. If you have your own gear, you will need a sea kayak (no river kayaks). Kayaks must be over 14' or more with adequate flotation, and you must have a spray skirt, life jacket, paddle, pump and paddle float. A wet suit and nose plugs are highly recommended. If you don't have a wet suit you can rent one from Ron for \$25. People renting boats and gear from Ron will have priority for wet suit rentals. Sign up will be at the March meeting. **Full payment is required to hold a spot.** Ron will be doing a Kayaking Program at the June meeting. *Call Sharon Broderick to register at (248) 960-2095*

2 KAYAKS FOR SALE:

1. Plastic, Sea Loin, Blue, \$500.00 spray skirt and paddle.
2. Plastic, Skerrav, Red, \$900.00. Kayak only.
3. *Call Sharon Broderick (248) 960-2095*

T H E S O L A R R A Y

SPRING BACKPACKING CLASS

NOTE: I am only writing an article because of the deep respect and admiration that I have for the 'SOLAR Ray' editor. The fact that Amy Fedyk is threatening my life and keeps reminding me that my children can be found by bad people has no bearing on this tortuous task I now undertake.

DEFINITIONS: **backpacking** (bak'pak'ing') *n.* To be hiking with a backpack.

SOLAR backpacking (so'lar' bak'pak'ing') *n.* A philosophy of effortless wilderness travel, done with style and minimal impact. *adj.* A term used to describe a natural state of continuous euphoria.

The **SOLAR Backpacking Course** is the foundation of much of the *SOLAR Experience*. Many of today's long time SOLARites became members expressly to take this class. This class is the prerequisite for such courses as Wilderness Canoeing, Enjoying Michigan Winters (winter camping), Wilderness Survival, Advanced Backpacking & Leadership, *and* for Solar backpacking trips. This is also where many lifetime friendships begin. Last, but not least, this is where people learn to backpack.

In the SOLAR Backpacking Course, you will learn the fundamentals of such topics as **trip planning**, footwear, **sleeping systems**, **layering**, equipment selection and maintenance, **shelters**, sanitation, hygiene, **water treatment**, cooking and stove safety, **knots**, an introduction to map and compass work, **and much more**. All this will be taught in harmony with the minimalist *soft paths* philosophy that SOLAR adheres to in all it's courses and activities. This course also emphasizes one other principle: **FUN!**

This year's spring course will go 5 consecutive Thursdays from 6PM to 9PM. The dates are March 23rd and 30th, and April 6th, 13th and 20th. These classes are taught at the REI store in Northville, MI at 17559 Haggerty Road (248) 347-2100.

There will be 2 weekend practicals. The first will be Saturday and Sunday, April 15th and 16th, in the Waterloo-Pinkney State Recreation Area. The second practical will be Friday, Saturday & Sunday, April 28th, 29th, and 30th, in the Hoist Lakes area. I will be answering questions, taking payments and making arrangements at the March SOLAR meeting on March 6. The cost for all this is a still (after all these years) a very reasonable \$75.00. This will include the text, all paperwork, 15 hours of classroom instruction, use of SOLAR equipment, and the use and abuse of your SOLAR instructors. The only major equipment you must purchase is a pair of hiking boots. (If you don't already own a pair, please wait until after the first class.) You will be provided a text and syllabus upon payment, at the March meeting. We're looking forward to having you join us at this spring's course--**Mike Banks & your SOLAR instructors**

OUR PHOTOGRAPHER LAUREATE



The happy guy to the left is Tom Oloffo, who won the January photo contest for Overall Photo and took first and second for Scenery and People. Great job, Tom! And look how photogenic he is! Sean Lennon took first for the Non-Solar and Plants category, and Jim Gilfix took first for Humor and Animals. Each of the winners received a Solar t-shirt, and Tom also received a framed certificate in recognition of his outstanding photography. Thanks to everyone who entered and plan your compositions for next year's contest!

T H E S O L A R R A Y

POINT PELEE DAYHIKE FOR THE BIRDS

May 13, 2000

This is a traditional trip for SOLAR to see the bird migrations at Point Pelee, Ontario. Group camping within the park is no longer available for adult groups so we are planning a day trip instead. One of the highlights of our trip to Pelee last year was seeing the vibrant Indigo Bunting. My goal this year is to spot the brilliant Scarlet Tanager. If you've been to Point Pelee during the migration, you know that the trees are filled with flashing feathered fruit and the air is alive with birdsong. If you've never been, you need to come and see the friendly flocks of both birds and people. Birders are wonderful people to be around; they have infectious enthusiasm and are very informative about bird behavior and nature in general. You will learn things on this trip that will make you much more aware when hiking in the woods or along a shore.

Other activities may include kayaking along the shore of Lake Erie or biking through the park. You can even brave the spring temperature of Lake Erie itself! Near to Point Pelee are other interesting attractions including Colasanti's Tropical Gardens, the Pelee Island Winery, and learning about the unusual vegetation on the Point. John will lead a walk to find (and hear!) some birds, and we may hook up with a naturalist. We plan on getting to the park very early (sunrise). We can arrange to meet latecomers later in the a.m. Bring a sack lunch or purchase a lunch at the café in the park. The only cost is the park entrance fee. For more info, see us at the March meeting or contact John or Amy Fedyk at 248-435-2450 or e-mail amykay86@hotmail.com or jfedyk@hotmail.com.

BRAGGING RIGHTS

By Ronda Shapiro

Like a proud mother, I want to brag about my Solar friends and how they took care of me in an emergency situation. As many of you heard, I broke my leg while dogsledding in Algonquin in January. Accidents happen, and are especially likely due to our adventurous activities. I am not the first person in Solar to break something. In fact, broken legs are a relatively common occurrence in our organization. I am told that I am the newest member to the exclusive S.B.L.C. (The Solar Broken Leg Club).

We were far from civilization or any hospital. The only way out was by dogsled. The temperature was around 30 below. If it was left up to our guide of the expedition to bandage me up and make decisions, I'd probably still be lying on that trail. Our guide, Ben, was the world's sweetest guy and a great dogsledder. He did do a great job getting me out of the park safely (by dogsled). However, Ben was very inexperienced as a guide, and that is when my Solar friends jumped in. Margaret and Tom splinted my leg using a Thermoarest pad and helped make some quick decisions. I even got compliments in the emergency room at the hospital on what a great job they did stabilizing my leg. Mo and Dave had sledged ahead to alert the rest of the group about the injury. Once they returned, Mo and Chris Lezovich joined Ben and me back to the beginning of the trail and accompanied me to the hospital (Chris did not have a choice -- he's my boyfriend).

Since Mo is so experienced on crutches she showed me the ins and outs of "crutchin' thru life"-- like how to pee. Mo, I am deeply grateful. I strongly recommend Wilderness First Aid to everyone in Solar. We owe it to each other to have the knowledge to take care of one another in these situations. I shall be forever grateful to all my Solar friends for looking after me in many ways. Not only did you take care of me on the trail, but I have received many cards, phone calls, lunches and dinners that you brought in, and offers to go grocery shopping for me. I know that in the future, I shall be more empathic, compassionate, and knowledgeable when the next emergency occurs. . . Margaret Martin, Tom Dunn, Mo & Dave DeFrance. my endless thanks for your efficiency and expertise.

THE SOLAR TRIP WHEN HELL FROZE OVER

By Tom Dunn

Remember the "A" in SOLAR stands for adventure!!

This trip was my third dogsledding trip through Chopaw outfitters. 12 Solarites arrived at the motel Friday night full of anticipation for an exciting winter adventure. But I arrived late that night and found my bed in the motel parking lot with a complimentary candy on the pillow.

We gathered early on Saturday morning for breakfast. The thermometer at the motel glared -27° F. We reassembled at the dog farm, greeted by the boisterous welcomes of approximately 250 dogs. The sleds and dogs were loaded onto the outfitter's bus for the drive into Algonquin Park. Several miscommunication issues between the outfitter and his guides resulted in part of our group being separated. Without maps to direct us to the trailhead the remaining three vehicles sped off trying to catch-up with the head of the column. Icy roads and deep snow caused two vehicles to run off the road. The first van to get stuck in the ditch was abandoned after we removed their gear and doubled up in another vehicle. Shortly after that the second vehicle slipped off the icy road. It took the work of 8 of us to retrieve this car from the ditch. We finally arrived at the trailhead several hours late. Instead of being on the trail by 9:00 am, we departed closer to noon.

A collision last year between a dog team and a snowmobile forced the outfitter to shift his trails into Algonquin where snowmobiles are prohibited. Driving on this new trail was much tougher than previous trips. The trail was full of large boulders that tipped sleds over on a regular basis. There were a number of substantial hills where we had to help the dogs by pushing the sleds. Going down these hills, all you could do was to put all your weight on the brakes and hold on for dear life. Some of our lighter weight musher teams lacked sufficient "heef," making their brakes useless. There were a number of sled crashes including the two guides. Approximately halfway to camp, Ronda caught her leg on a tree, breaking her ankle. We worked together splinting her leg and bundling her up for

the return trip. Mo and Dave DeFrance went ahead to notify the lead guide about her injury. Everyone seemed to be worn out by the bitter cold and lack of food and fluids.

The group lunch was on the lead guide's sled and most of the drinking water was frozen! When the DeFrances returned, they brought badly needed food. We ate sandwiches that were frozen solid, but we were glad to have them. We treated Mo for badly frozen feet. Ronda, a guide, Chris and Mo were sent out ahead of the group. Shortly after, the rest of the party reassembled, and our group decided to cancel the trip and return to the outfitters. We still had approximately four hours to get to camp and the lack of daylight would have been a major safety issue. It would have been suicidal to mush those hills in the dark. We rearranged the sleds, broke up several teams to more evenly distribute the weight and headed out. The one remaining guide took the head of the column while I went to help the new Solar member, Susan, on the last sled. Susan was bundled up on the sled shivering and with frozen feet. At this point she had no boots on so she couldn't drive the sled nor walk to generate some body heat. On a downhill canine roller coaster ride I lost the sled on the ice. Susan and I both went flying. She landed on her back and hip; I landed on her knee. There were two sleds together at this point. We placed Susan on the faster sled with Michelle and sent them back. Luckily the group was soon able to put the challenge of the hills behind us while it was still light.

We rearranged mushers again to lighten the load on one overloaded sled where the dog team was exhausted. The sweep sled consisted of a team of strong dogs, Judy, David and me. We took turns driving and walking. It was just too cold to ride on the sled. The temperature declined with the setting sun. The last sled got to the trailhead at approximately 8:30 pm. It was a brutal trip. But there is a peaceful and redeeming end: that night I saw a spectacular display of the Northern Lights.

MOHICAN RIVER WEEKEND

Hiking / Waterfalls / Canoeing / Kayaking / Hot Tubs

Come join us May 5-7, 2000 for a fun-filled weekend of canoeing/kayaking and hiking along the Mohican River in Loudonville, Ohio (4 hours from Detroit). On Saturday we will canoe or kayak for 4.5 hours down the Mohican River. Sunday will include hiking some of the 12 miles of trail in the nearby Mohican State Park. The striking Clearfork Gorge with its towering hemlocks and virgin stands of white pines are part of the reason the National Park Service has dedicated this area as a Registered National Natural Landmark. Along the trail there are two waterfalls and a scenic wooden bridge. After hiking, if the weather is nice, we can picnic and/or have a potluck in the park before departing for home. Note: we will switch the canoeing/kayaking to Sunday if the weather does not cooperate. We will be staying in cabins at the Mohican Canoe Livery and Fun Center. These are not exactly your rustic cabins as they have real beds and showers, even hot tubs on the back decks that overlook a man-made lake. Cost of the trip is \$68 for 2 nights' lodging, \$16 for canoeing (per person) or \$18 kayaking. I have 24 spots available, and as always, first pay, first go. The cabin portion of this trip must be paid in full by the April meeting (The last day I can cancel cabins with no penalty). Last year we had a blast—if you're interested, **call Leslie Cordova (248) 547-5626**.

JUST BRIEFLY...

WYANDOTTE CAVING—

Only 2 spots left

Leslie Cordova, caver extraordinaire, is leading this trip to Corydon, Indiana the weekend of March 31-April 2, 2000. The drive to Corydon is about 6-7 hours. Lodging is at the Hampton Inn. The cost for this trip is only \$60, which includes 2 nights lodging, 2 free breakfasts, 1 day of caving and lots of fun. Remember, you must be a dues-paid member to go on this trip, so please renew your membership. **This is a kid-friendly trip for age 12 and older.** Interested? **Call Leslie Cordova (248) 547-5626.**

Cross Country Skiing

SOLAR is taking on the Loppet again this year. It may not be too late to sign up for this unique cross-country experience for the weekend of March 17-19, 2000. Travel up to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, stay in cabins, take the train to the 27K trailhead, ski along beautiful and challenging terrain and eat a lot when you get all done! **Contact trip**

leader Mary Dunn for information at 248-585-9954.

WHITEWATER RAFTING IN WEST VIRGINIA

Jim Gilfix is running two whitewater rafting trips in West Virginia on the Upper and Lower New Rivers on Memorial Day weekend. One trip is for ages 14-adult and involves some intense rapids; the other trip is class 1-2 rapids and perfect for the kids. The cost is \$135 for the first trip and \$125 for the second (kids are \$70). Group camping is available for \$30/adult and \$15/child for three nights. There is still time to sign up! **Contact trip leader Jim Gilfix at 734-513 9460 or see him at the meeting.**

Rock Climbing

Saturday, March 25, 2000

Jeff Enterkin has organized a climb at the Planet Rock climbing gym in Pontiac. The cost is \$33 and includes a day pass, shoe and harness rental, basic instruction from the staff, and food and drinks. This is a non-SOLAR activity; however, you must be over age 16 to participate. This is good opportunity to try rock climbing—if you want further instruction, you can sign up for the SOLAR Rock Climbing class in the spring! **Contact Jeff Enterkin at 248-399-0696 or e-mail him at jente69690@aol.com.**

SHOES for SALE!

Montrail - Moraine AT, Women's size 7
Like New - Only Worn Once,
Fit Too Small Asking \$120 OBO,
Call Laura at 517-381-8976 or e-mail: albialau@pilot.msu.edu.

T H E S O L A R R A Y

ENJOYING MICHIGAN WINTERS CLASS REVIEW

By Glenn Pace

A good group of SOLAR members recently took up Doug Lanyk's challenge to "come play in the snow" and completed SOLAR's "Enjoying Michigan Winters (without leaving the state!)" course. As a native of the deep South who hates feeling cold, I was admittedly apprehensive about Doug (famous for relishing cold weather) and his idea of winter fun. However, the class was a ton of fun and gave me new abilities and confidence in venturing out in winter to shake off "cabin fever," that dreaded winter disease.

The first classroom session began back in December, when we learned some of the virtues of winter outdoor activities—no bugs, fewer crowds and the silent beauty of a forest blanketed in snowfall. We learned about appropriate gear, how to stay warm, and the importance of being in good physical condition. We learned that strange things happen when the temperature dips. For instance, your trusty lighter may refuse to light, unless it is kept in a warm pocket.

Safety remained a central theme throughout the classes, whether the topic was food (eat hearty!), drink lots of water (don't let your bottle freeze), wintertime first aid and trip planning. Avoid danger by always having a buddy and keeping an eye on him or her because the effects of cold can creep up on you.

Between January classes, a number of students headed to Dave Foerster's house for a sled-building party. The objective was to convert a plastic children's toboggan and a pair of poles into a sled for towing gear when cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. For many of us, it was an irresistible excuse to head to the hardware store. The poles attach to a waist belt and act as rigid traces, which are important for keeping your sled from running over you. No two sleds were exactly alike, but we were all proud of our creativity.

Finally, on a crisp Saturday morning, it was time to practice our skills on an overnight outing at Waterloo Recreation Area. The 2-3 inches of snow on the ground gave the forest a wintertime glow. But it was too sparse to make skiing or snowshoeing practical so we hiked the 4 1/2 mile trek to our campground. When we arrived at our campsite, "shelter materials were provided" as promised. We used our group dynamics training and constructed a group shelter. To find out what we made, you'll have to take the class *as I've been sworn to secrecy*. After enjoying a hot meal (or two) that evening and swapping stories around the campfire, we all slept soundly, despite an overnight temperature around 20° F.

After a couple more classes on snowshoeing, selecting and setting up camp, constructing a quinzee (snow shelter), using sleds, wintertime route-finding, leadership, winter hazards, and survival techniques, we headed for real snow country—Pigeon River State Forest. We gathered at the trailhead Saturday morning. The temperature and snow conditions were fine for snowshoeing and skiing. We had gone less than a mile when those of us towing sleds encountered a challenge crossing a wetland area bridged by a boardwalk. Most sleds refused to stay on the crown of snow piled on the boardwalk, entertaining those observing us. By helping the person ahead right his sled, we finally made it across the few hundred yard obstacle.

When we got to camp, our task was to construct a quinzee. The first step was to make a huge mound of snow, about six feet high and twelve feet in diameter. After waiting about an hour to let the snow "cook", we began hollowing it out with small shovels, empty sleds, and even a Frisbee or two. Next, we smoothed out the ceiling to avoid moisture drips, and lit a stove inside for a few minutes to glaze the inner surface. Those who sealed the doorway prior to going to bed discovered their quinzies were quite warm, but for those of us who weren't as wise, it was good shelter from wind and snow, but not as warm. Fortunately, putting a hot water bottle inside the foot of our winter-rated sleeping bags kept us comfortable. Before turning in, the clear night sky provided some beautiful stargazing, and Tomiko Takano gave a brief astronomy lesson.

The next morning, we awoke to Doug proclaiming that "it was a little brisk." The thermometer clipped to my partner's pack read between -5 and -10° F. Still, our training and gear kept us warm. However, there were backup vehicles available to warm up anyone who needed it. We had a good gearless trek out of camp and back to the trailhead. Some of us headed over for a much-appreciated meal at the Big Buck Brewery in Gaylord to cap off the class. After having had this experience, I can see why this class has continued to be a SOLAR staple for many years. For those members who haven't taken this class, why not expand your skills to four seasons? Check out this class in December 2000.



T H E S O L A R R A Y

STEERING COMMITTEE

President	Doug Lanyk
Vice-President	Karen Bates
Secretary	Ted Huff
Treasurer	John Moffat
Activities	Leslie Cordova
Membership	Mary Price
Equipment	Rick Merryman
By-laws	Laura Albin
Education	Harry Price
Publication	Amy Fedyk
Historian	John Fedyk
Programs	Julie Penrod
Public Relations	Teri Simonds

AT LARGE

Steve Gardner	Mo DeFrance
Al Fytak	Jean Ryan
Cindy Harrison-Felix	Bill Halvingis
Larry Martin	Peg Campbell
Joan & Bob Westbrook	Mike Banks

About The Ray

The Ray is a monthly publication of the SOLAR club and is provided free of charge to the current dues-paid members. **Deadline for the Ray** is 12 days after the general meeting for the following month's edition. Contributions in the form of upcoming events, comments, trip reports, recipes, photos, and original articles are welcome. Send all contributions to Amy Fedyk, 1614A Fairview, Royal Oak, MI 48073. Phone# 248-435-2453. Send e-mail to amytay86@hotmail.com.

Meeting Location

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at the Colony Hall, located at 21780 Evergreen Rd., between 8 and 9 Mile Roads in Southfield at 7:30 PM. **Visitors can attend meetings for free.**

Membership dues are:

\$30 individual, annually
\$150 individual, lifetime
\$45 family, annually
\$225 family, lifetime

The **SOLAR CLUB** is a non-profit organization of people interested in promoting appreciation of outdoor activities through education and practical experience. The club offers educational programs and various activities which are listed inside. We sponsor trips as well as informal gatherings to provide the exchange of expertise, experiences and information. All of these contribute to fellowship among the membership. SOLAR Club activities will enhance and further the skills and information taught in the basic and more advanced classes through active participation.

For more information about SOLAR:

SOLAR CLUB HOTLINE

24-hour Voice Mail 248/988-6658
or <http://members.tripod.com/~solarclub/>
or call Doug Lanyk @248/634-4551



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