



The SOLAR Ray

A Monthly Publication of the School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure, and Recreation (SOLAR)

July 2007

MY ACONCAGUA ADVENTURE, PART 2

by Craig Kosmowski

This article is the second part of a story detailing with two days of my 29-day mountaineering trip to Aconcagua, in Western Argentina. Please refer to last month's article for part one and for background of the story. Also note that there was a typo in last month's article: the mountain is 22,841 feet tall.

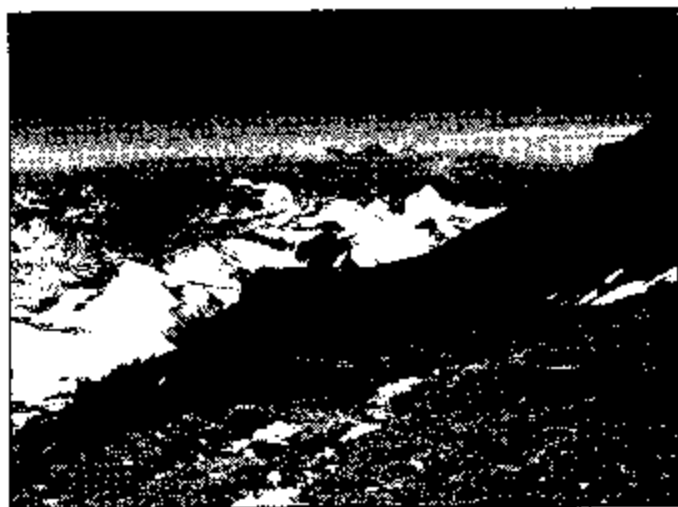
Part Two - "Summit Day"

Day 20, Mon. - 1 Jan 07, High Camp 2 19,170'. Simon and I awoke at 3:00 a.m. to the sound of a fierce and howling wind. Of course we didn't sleep much, as it persisted all through the night. The air temperature in the tent was a palmy minus 3 degrees Fahrenheit. Outside temp was presumably a little colder. The wind gusts at the time I estimated to be around 50 -55 miles per hour. As the day progressed, we would learn the hard way, this was the "calm before the storm."

We had packed everything we needed for our summit bid the day before, and planned to start our climb at about 4:00 a.m. All we needed to do was get dressed, eat a hearty meal, throw on our packs, and climb. The conditions were so bad however, we did not get underway until about 5:00 a.m. Everything you do at altitude takes longer, especially in poor weather. Simple things like lighting a stove, or putting on your boots, is agonizingly slow.

According to the International Society for Mountain Medicine, "High Altitude" is defined at 5000 - 11,500 ft., "Very High Altitude" at 11,500 - 18,000 ft., and "Extreme Altitude" above 18,000 ft. We were starting our day over a thousand feet above the highest designation, and it showed. As a person climbs up through the atmosphere, the air pressure decreases. Although the air still contains 21% oxygen, the higher you go, the lower the number of oxygen molecules you can take into your lungs. There is a reason that there are no permanent human habitations anywhere on earth that are above 17,000 ft. Our bodies are just not designed for this environment. Even the highly adapted Sherpa people of the Tibetan Plateau would not be able to survive long term above this altitude. I have seen the term "Death Zone" variously defined as above 17,000, 21,000, 23,000 or 26,000 ft. The bottom line is, anything above about 17,000 ft., the human body will begin to break

down, and if you stay there long enough, sooner or later you will die. Of course the higher you go, the faster this process occurs.



Note the curvature of the earth at the horizon

We had a brief discussion while in the tent about aborting our planned ascent. The trouble was, we were both "geeked" to have our shot at the summit, and were well prepared, both physically, and mentally. For my part, although I had one less rest day than Simon, I felt stronger and more fit than at any other time on the mountain. This is contrary to how it usually works. In general, the higher you go, the worse you feel. It is one of the fortunate ironies of the trip for me that my body adapted so well to the altitude. I saw many climbers who were stronger, fitter, and more experienced than me get violently ill and have to leave the mountain. Aconcagua "chewed" people up unmercifully.

No one had summited for approximately two weeks until the previous few days which had brought a spectacular break from the bad weather. Before even leaving Los Penitentes, we were meeting climbers coming down with shattered bodies and minds. They looked haggard and exhausted. Groups were reporting losing one or even two tents at the upper camps. Lose a tent up there, and you are really screwed. I saw a woman from the Netherlands who had taken a nasty fall and seriously damaged her face. Much later, while flying home and sitting next to a climber from

Colorado, I was told of a solo climber during this period who apparently got altitude sickness near the summit. He bivouacked for one or two nights with nothing more than a cotton sleeping bag! He was too weak to come down, and the rangers were not sure how long he had been up there, as the fellow could not speak. This climber told me the guy's cheeks were so frostbitten and split, it was as though someone had taken a knife and deeply cut them. I also learned later from members of my team, that a climbing guide who worked with a documentary film maker, and had done four Everest expeditions, had given up and came down without summiting. He stated he had never seen conditions so bad even on Everest. Then of course, there was the Korean climber who went missing while I was up there. I never did learn what became of him.

We decided to give it our best shot despite the awful weather conditions. One thing that gave us some hope was that the wind frequently died down a bit as the day progressed. We were hoping that this day would do the same.

As we began our trek through the blackness of the star-



The Polish Glacier from High Camp 2

filled night, only our headlamps provided a means to see where we were going. The moon had long since set. I had only traveled a couple hundred meters when I pulled up and told Simon I was overheating. I had to take my down jacket off. He said no problem, he would go ahead and find the route across the Polish Glacier, at the base of which High Camp 2 is situated.

The Polish Glacier is stunning and steep. It pitches up to 70 degrees in areas, and on its east side falls off a near vertical cliff for 3600 feet. On its south side, the overhanging glacier drops off an incredible 9000 near-vertical feet! It is one of the most impressive faces in all of mountaineering. Almost no one climbs the south side as it is extraordinarily dangerous. One route is called "La Ruleta Rusa," (Russian Roulette), and is not even considered to be the most dangerous route up that side. This highly technical face is not for the faint of heart.

There are two routes up the Polish Glacier to the summit. Simon, who had come to Aconcagua to climb solo, was originally going to attempt the "Polish Direct." This would have been a risky technical climb. After examining conditions, and talking to others, he chose to climb the "Falso de Los Polacos," which was my intended route. Even during the good weather spell, no one was summiting via the glacier routes.

After shedding my extremely warm outer layer, I made my way up to catch Simon. We crossed the lower portion of the glacier, and quickly became aware that this was not the route across. In daylight the route finding would have been a piece of cake. Barring whiteout conditions, you could see for miles. In the blackness of the night however, we were starting a long day off route. We choose to split up and search to get ourselves back on track. Simon took the "high road," and I took the "low road." We knew approximately where we were, but the going was slower and harder because we were not on the well traveled route. I'm not sure how long it took, perhaps an hour or so, but finally Simon found the route above us. Although only separated by a hundred meters or so, we could not hear each other over the screaming wind. With headlamp signals he communicated the good news to me, and I climbed up to join him.

Traveling on route was easier, but that is not to say it was easy. The wind was relentless, and forced us to work much harder than we wanted. That is why I overheated so quickly earlier. Despite the bitter cold and wind chill, the amount of exertion we had to do just to make slow forward progress was extraordinary. Our route traversed around the north side of the mountain, and then cut south after joining up with the "Normal Route," whereupon a final turn east takes you to the summit. This route travels about five miles from High Camp 2 to the summit, which doesn't sound like much, but at that altitude, in those conditions, and considering the roughly 3700 feet of vertical climbing necessary, it was a long slog. Each and every step we took, got us closer to the top, but in turn drained more energy from our limited stores.

At daybreak, we stopped to take photos of the stunning sunrise and to have a hot drink. We had made slow progress to this point, and still had a very long way to go. It was here I suggested to Simon that he go ahead, as he was the stronger climber. I was afraid I would slow him down, and did not want to inhibit his chances for the summit. With some misgivings he agreed, and we set off again at two slightly different paces, he slowly stretching out ahead. After climbing for awhile, he crested a ridge, and went out of sight.

At that point we both might as well have been on the moon. It was one of the many surreal moments of the trip for me. The total sense of aloneness was extremely powerful. He and I were the only people confident (or stupid?) enough to be climbing that day. (I did later meet another party who had set out that morning on the other side of the mountain,

but quickly turned around.) There was not another human being to be seen anywhere. We were completely isolated and alone. Should either one of us get into trouble, we'd be on our own. There were no rangers up here, or indeed, at any of the high camps. Even if there were some way to contact one, the helicopters could not fly that high. There were only about six to eight other tents at High Camp 2, consisting of just a few parties, and no one there, or from any of the other camps on the mountain so far as we knew were climbing. It was solitude raised to a power of ten. I have since childhood been an introverted and self-reliant sort. I didn't mind the solitude, and in fact, I rather enjoyed it. It was unlike anything I've ever experienced. There was a sort of crystalline purity about it, a sense of calm and peace even in the driving wind. I stopped periodically to admire the view, and was humbled by the grandness of it all. Even though the summit lay a considerable distance above, I was now far higher than anything else around me. My eyes scanned the surrounding mountains to the horizon, and my brain locked the images away. I can see them today almost as clearly as if I was there, and I'll carry these spectacular scenes with me until I die. I soaked it in, I breathed it in, and I reveled in an experience so few are privileged to see. I thought about the insignificance of me, the little speck of dust that I was, on the shoulders of this massive giant. Though my body was in pain, my mind was in bliss.

As I climbed, I tried to stay focused on the task at hand, but found my mind drifting from time to time. I thought of how unlikely it was that I was even standing at that spot,



Myself, John, Marie, and Kieran at High Camp 1

at that altitude, at that point in time. I had been gravely ill down in Mendoza, and by the time we arrived in Los Penitentes to begin the three day trek into base camp, I could barely walk across the hotel room. I could write another story about the events that got me to that point on the mountain, but suffice it to say that through an unfortunate series of events, I had lost my entire climbing party by the time I made my first carry to High Camp 1. All my friends from SOLAR were off the mountain. If it were not for the generosity and kindness of strangers I wouldn't be there.



Simon at sunrise - summit day

Marie from Quebec was the first to help me out. She was one of the few solo climbers I met during the trip, and upon learning of my predicament at base camp, she offered to share her tiny tent. I thought about it for a while and accepted upon the condition that if for any reason things did not work out, she would let me know. I did not want to be an imposition, and at any rate I figured even if I got a little farther up the mountain that would be a bonus. I had originally planned to stay behind at base camp after losing my friends, and do day hikes and climb where I could from there.

Marie had been to South America twice before to compete in adventure races. She was petite, fit, and a strong climber. She spoke excellent English with a charming French accent. She was delightful to be around. We moved to High Camp 1 with John and Kieran from New Zealand. We camped beside each other, and seeing the little tent that would house Marie and I, they offered to share their space if things got too cramped. Cramped it was. Despite sleeping head-to-toe to maximize space in the rectangular footprint of the tent, we both had a sleepless night. Both my head and my feet pushed against the sides of the tent. Claustrophobics would not have enjoyed it.

The next morning it was agreed that I should move in with John and Kieran. They had a three-person tent with plenty of room for gear and bodies. These guys were great. John had summited some ten years previously, and brought his best friend Kieran to climb the mountain. Strong, experienced climbers, they spent a good bit of time in the Alps on their island. They had a wonderful sense of humor, and we all got along famously. John gave me my favorite memento of the whole trip - a New Zealand five-dollar bill. It was beautiful with lots of color, had a transparent section, and was made of plastic, not paper. It had an image of a penguin on one side, and on the other, one of my mountaineering heroes, Sir Edmund Hillary.

While making our first carry to High Camp 2, Kieran became very sick. The altitude had hit him hard. John, who had been struggling the previous couple of days with the

altitude himself, got Kieran back down to High Camp 1. Once again, I thought my climb was over. While at High Camp 2, Mariano, a guide for one of the groups, informed me there was a French climber who had just arrived back at High Camp 1, and that perhaps he would have room for me. I stashed my load and descended to High Camp 1 to introduce myself to Simon. In the meanwhile, Kieran had made great progress towards recovery at the lower altitude. (High Camp 1 sits at about 16,700 feet.) Nonetheless, he and John had decided to climb down the next day back to base camp, and then out. I would miss them both. Marie was to move up the mountain solo again.

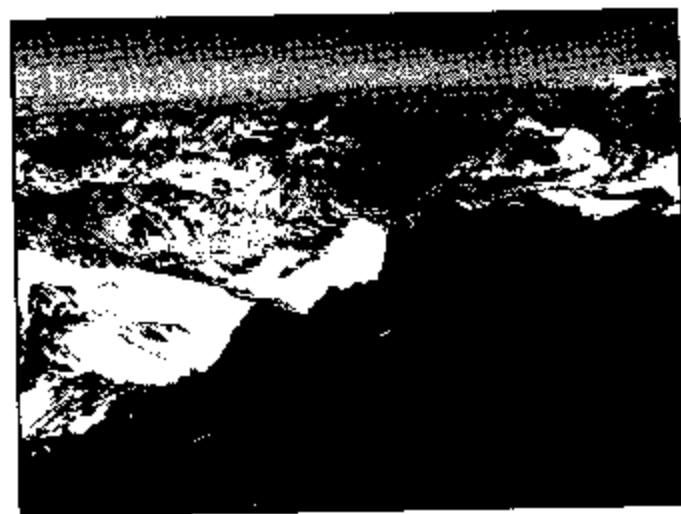
After I found Simon's camp, we introduced ourselves. He was from Paris, about ten years younger than me, and spoke admirable English. He had a quiet confidence about him, and I liked him immediately. This first impression of mine was well deserved, as I would later learn he was a very experienced climber, and quite an adventurer. He had once taken a year's sabbatical from his job, and traveled much of southern and central Asia, and had also solo bicycled across Africa. He had climbed Cho Oyu, in Tibet, the sixth highest mountain in the world, but did not summit. There, he had met another of my climbing heroes, Ed Viesturs, the only American, and just the sixth person in history to summit all 14 of the world's highest mountains without supplemental oxygen. We chatted for about twenty minutes, I explained my predicament, and he agreed to take me on. He had plenty of fuel for two, had a tent that could easily accommodate us both, and since I was now the mountain's resident vagabond, was willing to adjust entirely to his climbing schedule.

I am greatly indebted to all four of these people. Without their kindness, I would never have gotten as high as I did. They were under no obligation to help me, and yet they unselfishly did so. They were true friends on the mountain, and remain so. We still keep in touch with email, and I look forward someday to visiting them in their countries, as well as welcoming them to my home in the U.S.

As I continued upward, the previously hoped for change in wind speed did occur. There was only one problem: it had increased. The exposure along some of the areas on the mountain was enormous. Steep drops of loose scree several thousand feet down were common. Under better circumstances this would not be a problem if you were careful and watched your footing. In the high wind however, it at times was alarming. There were numerous occasions where the wind would suddenly gust and nearly knock me off my feet. I had to really hang on and fight it with my legs and trekking poles spread out in as wide a base as possible. Several times during the climb I was literally spun around by the force of the wind. It was a true battle and was thoroughly exhausting. There were repeated instances during the long day that I could not take a single step forward. This is no exaggeration! Even with all my collective strength from every part of my body, I was frozen in space. In fact, it took every drop of energy I had just to keep from being blow over backward. To do this, I

had to lean forward at about a 45-degree angle and hang on tight, while the wind literally supported most of my weight. Sometimes I'd be stopped like this for more than a minute before the wind would relent and I could take a single step or two forward. Then the next ferocious gust would occur, and the process started all over. The sound was deafening. Hour after hour went by like this, and taxed me as heavily mentally as it did physically. Needless to say, my progress was excruciatingly slow. Though the route passed through steep terrain, because this was a traverse to get to the other side of the mountain, elevation gain was minimal. It was taking me about an hour to travel a hundred meters, with only marginal ascent. Prospects for the summit were beginning to look dim.

It was not until about a month after returning home I was able to more accurately judge the wind speed with which I had subjected myself to. I was watching a documentary about hurricane Katrina that showed people trying to walk in 90-100 mile per hour winds. This, I thought, was what it was like on the mountain. Although there was no criving rainstorm, the temperature was wicked cold. In fact, after doing some research on the Internet looking for what the wind chill would have been up there, I was surprised to discover it was off the chart! None of the websites I visited had wind chill charts that went that low! Extrapolating from what I could find, my best guess is somewhere in the 50-60 below zero Fahrenheit range. One interesting thing I did learn was that at high wind speeds, wind chill only goes down a little bit for increases in speed at a given temperature. I guess at a certain point, the wind



The view from 21,000 feet

can only suck so much heat away from your body. It was small consolation. I had seen winds of ninety miles per hour looking out the window from the safety of a building, but had never been exposed to anything like that directly. I have to believe based on what I learned after returning, that I was out in sub-zero temperatures with minimum 90 mile per hour winds, and possibly much higher.

So on and on I climbed, through the maelstrom. Slower than a snail it seemed. Time ceased to exist. I measured the passing moments by how far I got towards this rock, or

that rock. All the while I grew weaker. It was as though the wind was a vacuum, sucking the life force out of my body. One concept of time I did keep in mind however was my turn-around time. This is a planned time mountaineers use to judge when to stop and turn back for camp on summit day. It is there as a safety measure to allow you adequate time to return to the relative safety of your tent before night falls, or conditions change, such as the heat of the sun warming rock and ice late in the day which has the potential to cause rockfall or avalanche. It is one of the most abused precautions in mountaineering, and many fatalities have occurred by not heeding it's warning. On a climb, the summit is only the halfway point, you still have to get down.

It is called "summit fever." That insatiable desire to reach the top of a mountain at all costs. Often, climbers get into trouble when reaching their turn-around time, but being near the summit, they decide to carry on upward. Perhaps the most famous example of this occurred in 1996 on Mt. Everest. Eight climbers perished on the south side and several more on the north, in a single day, partly from not turning around when they should have.

At an elevation of 21,410 feet, I was within 45 minutes of my self-imposed turn-around time. My body was growing weary, and I was near the base of the infamous "Canaleta," a long, steep, scree-filled chute that gets you to the final summit ridge. It's the "Heartbreak Hill" of Aconcagua. Like much of the mountain, you take one step forward, and slide a half a step backward on the loose rock. I stopped and contemplated my options. I could carry on, and fight not only the wind, but also the Canaleta, and get a few hundred feet higher, but what was the point? It was obvious, I would not be summiting today. Ironically, I later learned this was the same spot where Mario had stopped and turned around the day before. Though I am confident I could have made it to the top, it would have been well past my turn-around time and would have meant an exhaustive descent in darkness for much of the way back to camp. I might be dumb, but I'm not stupid. The summit to me, was not worth it. It will be there, should I decide to return. Besides, I had made a promise to loved ones back home not to do anything unusually risky.

I sat down and rested, knowing my climb was over. The wind was beginning to calm down, (if you could call it that), and there was also a calm within me. I at no point regretted my decision. I felt then, and still do, it was the right thing to do. It would have been easy to feel disappointed, but that was not the case. I truly had no expectations of actually getting to the top even with my original climbing team. Best estimates to successful summits on the mountain are about one person in four. Most of those climb the "Normal Route," which is by far the "easiest" up the mountain. In fact, 80% of all climbers on Aconcagua use that route. I went there to give it my best, and that is what I did. I had climbed about a mile and a half vertically higher than I had ever been before, and much of this climbing was done solo, from base camp all the way to where I now sat. I

had made great new friends, and seen and experienced things most people can only imagine. I had memories of adventure and camaraderie I would carry with me through the rest of my life. I met and interacted with people from over twenty different countries. I aspire to seek out the



Glasses off for self-portrait

beauty in life, and I found much on that mountain. For me, my adventure was a success. As Ed Viesturs has said, "Summiting is optional, returning is mandatory."

I sat for perhaps 30 minutes and soaked it all in. Then, it was time for me to leave that surreal place, void of life, and return to the world of the real, the world of the living. I had a long climb down, and it would be many hours before I could cozily retreat to the comfort of my sleeping bag. I was very tired, but knew I had enough "in the gas tank" to get me back down. The thought of a hot meal and shelter from the wind was no small motivation.

I purposely climbed down slowly, looking back often and half expecting to see Simon coming over the last ridge. It never happened. When I got to about 1000 feet above camp, I started to become worried. Surely, he should have turned around, and even if he made the summit, be well on his way back down. The hour grew late, and I knew he was completely on his own. Even if he was in grave trouble, there was no way I could physically climb up to assist him. The day had been one of the hardest of my life, we had been out there more than 15 hours, and I still had a good hour or so just to get down to High Camp 2. Upon arrival, there would be no one there to help either, as the day was getting too late. All search and rescue efforts would have to be postponed until morning. I knew if he wasn't down by dark, he would be in serious danger. I tried not to worry, but it was hard not to. Simon was an experienced mountaineer, and despite his slight build, was an extremely strong climber. He is in fact, the strongest person I've ever climbed or hiked with. His ability to recover from both illness and fatigue was phenomenal.

When I did get to camp, I quickly hydrated and dropped my pack. I went searching through camp to see if anyone had a radio. There were only a few tents, so it didn't take long.

One of the groups up there was being led by two guides I had met back in base camp. They were from the U.S., and did indeed have radios. I explained the situation, and as I expected, there wasn't much they, or anyone else could do. They suggested calling the rangers at base camp and letting them know there was a potential situation brewing up there, but knew as well as I did, the rangers would just want another call in the morning to see if there was still a missing climber. After returning to my tent to get Simon's last name from the email address he had previously given me, one of the guides walked over. He pointed out a figure just coming over the ridge about two kilometers away. I saw the tiny dot, and knew immediately it was Simon. I breathed a huge sigh of relief and returned the radio. It would still be a while before he got down, but I immediately set about getting some hot food and drink going for Simon.

Faster than I anticipated, Simon stumbled into camp. He was flat out exhausted, barely had a voice with which to speak, but had a big smile from ear to ear that immediately told me he had summited! He made his way to the tent, got in, and literally collapsed. As best he could in his exhaustion and with almost no voice, he began to tell me of his solo adventure. He said that mid-way through the Canaleta, the wind died down to almost nothing! It was as if the upper reaches of the mountain were in the eye of a hurricane. Without the wind, the climbing got easier, and when he made the summit, it was downright comfortable. He wound up staying about an hour and a half. This is why he was so late in coming back down. He just stayed up there and played! I could have wrung his neck for causing me to worry like I did, but at the same time I was filled with joy for him and admired his accomplishment. Simon is not a world-class climber yet, but in a few years, he may well be. It was an extraordinary feat to reach the summit that day under those conditions and return to tell about it. He showed me photos from his digital camera of the summit cross and views all around. He was overflowing with excitement, and I was excited to share in the elation with him. Imagine, being the only person on the highest point in the Western Hemisphere, on the first day of the New Year, for over an hour, in beautiful weather, after fighting for many hours through horrific conditions. How do you top that? I was very happy for my new friend, and proud of what he had achieved.

We talked of the horrendous winds on the way up, and how they literally stopped us in our tracks. We talked of the one thin spire of rock along the route where we could hide and find shelter from the wind, if only for a few precious minutes. We talked of the sheer joy and exhilaration of mountaineering.

For both of us, the excitement faded quickly. After eating a good meal, and drinking copious amounts of liquid, we both succumbed to our exhaustion. The next day, we were to begin the journey down the mountain and back to civilization. We first would have to climb about 1500 feet, then descend the nearly 6000 feet to arrive at Plaza de Mulás, the base camp on the other side of the mountain.

All this in one day, and this time, since we were leaving, with full packs and gear. Everything we had carried up the mountain in two carries, had to be brought down with one. It was to be another grueling day. For tonight though, sleep was a welcome destination.

Three days before I departed on my adventure I sat down with a pen and paper and in about twenty minutes, wrote down the following words at the front of my journal. Their meaning would carry me up Aconcagua, and safely back down. They served me well, and will, with one or two exceptions, serve me again on my next climb. They guided me, and kept me grounded, even while walking in "thin air."

Things To Do Every Day

Take care of my body:

- Stretch.
- Drink at least 6 liters of water per day.
- Above base camp, force myself to eat even if I am not hungry.

Take care of my mind:

- Send good thoughts to Allyson when I can not call.
- Keep her pictures with me always.
- Think of my family and friends.
- Write.
- Spend some time alone.
- Study Castellano (Argentinean Spanish.)
- Study the mountain.
- Study the southern constellations.

Take care of my team:

- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Keep an eye out for signs of AMS, HAPE, and HACE. (Acute Mountain Sickness, High Altitude Pulmonary Edema, High Altitude Cerebral Edema.)
- Look out for everyone's safety and health.
- See what needs to be done, and do it.

Other:

- Stay strong in body and in mind.
- Show no fear, feel no fear, but use sound judgement.
- Squeeze the marrow from every step of the journey.
- Stay focused.
- Maintain an indomitable spirit.
- Respect the mountain and the Earth Mother, and ask that she show me the way.

I did, and she did.

So many of you have eagerly asked about the trip and it has been difficult for me to give good answers. The month long journey was filled with many wondrous experiences, and frankly, I don't know where to begin, or what to talk about. Hopefully, these two articles have given you some small sense of what it was like. If you would like to learn more, I hope to have photos and videos organized and uploaded sometime soon. You can shoot me an email or just let me know next time you see me, and I'll send you a link.

SOLAR HIKE SCHEDULE

by Matt Dalton



Hike with the SOLAR! Lead a Solar hike or post your own hike for SOLAR! It's all about getting out, exercising and enjoying the Great Outdoors. Everyone is welcome: members, non-members & children. Hikes start at 9:30 AM. Hike Coordinator: Matt Dalton, 248-360-0031, mdalton@ameritech.net

Post a message on the SOLAR Yahoo site after you decide to join one of the hikes: discuss car pooling/ride sharing, obtain a list of other hikers, and obtain additional details or directions for the hike. Make plans for an after hike restaurant stop.

July 1, 2007, Sunday 9:30 AM- Solar, Maybury State Park, Northville, MI

Meet at 8 Mile Rd entrance and parking lot by concessions area. We hike for about 2 hours and cover about 5 miles with stops for rest and water. Brunch afterward for most of the hikers. (25-35 friendly hikers).

July 7, 2007 Saturday - 9:30 AM, Solar Club Proud Lake State Rec. Area. Meet at parking lot next to the Wixom Rd. ranger station. After the hike, go paddling, rent a canoe or kayak from Heavner's or go have lunch in Milford.

June 15, 2007, Sunday - 9:30 AM, Solar Club, Maybury State Park, Northville, MI. Meet at 8 Mile Rd entrance and parking lot by concessions area. We hike for about 2 hours and cover about 5 miles with stops for rest and water. Brunch afterward for most of the hikers. (25-35 friendly hikers).

July 21, 2007, Saturday - 9:30 AM, Pontiac Lake State Park, M-39 and Williams Lake Road. Meet at the north end of the beach parking lot where the mountain bikers meet. Hike, Bike, Swim, and Go out for lunch afterwards.

July 29, 2007, Sunday - 9:30 AM, Kensington Metro Park, Milford, MI. Meet at the Nature Center. Hike, bike, roller blade, swim and go out for dinner later.

August 5, 2007, Sunday 9:30 AM- Solar, Maybury State Park, Northville, MI

Meet at 8 Mile Rd entrance and parking lot by concessions area. We hike for about 2 hours and cover about 5 miles with stops for rest and water. Brunch afterward for most of the hikers. (25-35 friendly hikers).

SOLAR BOOK CLUB

by Vida Ruggiero

I don't know about you, but I have really been enjoying Winnie Chrzanowski's book reviews in the Ray. I started thinking it might be fun to start a SOLAR book club where interested members would read books about the outdoors and have fun discussing them. I proposed the idea to Winnie at a social function recently and she is willing to help with my idea!

If you are interested in participating, please send me an email (rageti@hotmail.com) with any book recommendations. Ideally, it should be a book no one has read so we can all have a fresh perspective (Walk in the Woods IS great, but most of us already read it).

We are planning to meet before a SOLAR meeting for a quick bite to eat somewhere in Southfield and discuss the book.

Backpacker.com gives a book recommendation every month.

The last one was a collection of short stories called, "A Leaky Tent is a Piece of Paradise." I will compile a list of suggestions for a vote and the book club will be on its way to reality!



SOLAR PROGRAM SCHEDULE

by Allen Duncan

JULY: ANNUAL SOLAR GEAR SWAP & SUMMER BARBECUE

****PLEASE NOTE: THE JULY MEETING WILL BE ON MONDAY, JULY 9****

- Do you have outdoor gear you no longer use?
- Have you acquired several of the same items over the years?
- Would you like to clean out your closets and help other Solarites acquire needed gear?

Well here is your chance! Bring your unwanted outdoor gear to the July meeting (to sell or barter).

And there's even more fun! Also featuring the SOLAR summer barbecue...a great opportunity to socialize!

- SOLAR provides the main course and beverages.
- Please bring a side dish to pass...dessert, salads, etc.
- We could also use barbecue grills...please help by bringing one!

Any questions, please contact Allen Duncan at programs@solar-outdoors.org.



*SOLAR takes no responsibility for warranty, guarantee, quality or price of purchased outdoor gear.

AUGUST: SOLAR 2007/2008 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Sarah Kirkish, SOLAR Education Chair

Sarah will lead a discussion of SOLAR Education Policies and Guidelines and she will also (with the help of the lead instructors) provide an inside look at some of SOLAR's most popular courses, including:

Beginning Backpacking with lead instructor, Carol McCririe

Dates: 8/15, 8/22, 9/6, 9/13, 9/20, 9/22-9/23, 9/27, 10/5-7

All new SOLAR members are encouraged to take the Beginning Backpacking class whether you are a novice or an expert, it's an experience that is pure SOLAR! Please note that the Beginning Backpacking class is a prerequisite for many other SOLAR classes.

Fall Land Navigation with lead instructor, Karl Overheul

Dates: 9/26, 9/29-9/30

A thorough and key course for those of you who have any interest in bushwhacking, orienteering or more importantly staying found.

Search & Rescue with lead instructor, Tom Hayes

Dates: 10/3, 10/10, 10/17, 10/19-10/21

This course will help you gain confidence in the woods and is strongly encouraged for those who want to enjoy longer hiking trips.

Enjoying Michigan Winters with lead instructor, Tom Oloffo

Dates: TBA

How else can you get away from almost everyone while camping including the bugs? Take this class to find out!

Please note: All programs take place at Colony Hall immediately following the SOLAR business meeting.

THE RECUMBENT VOYAGER

by Winnie Chrzanowski



Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why
By Laurence Gonzales
W. W. Norton & Company, 301 pages
\$25.95

What makes people decide to risk life and limb by climbing mountains, attempting an extended thru-hike, or any activity that takes them out of their comfort zones? Why is it that some people survive accidents or disasters and others—sometimes more fit—don't?

Deep Survival attempts to answer those questions by using amazing survival stories, narratives about how accidents happen, and psychological and neurological explanations of what goes on in the brain when a person is faced with distressful situations. Gonzales examines the case studies and enlightens the reader as to the psyche of a true survivor. The stories, along with his analysis of the internal battles that go on between fear and hope, reason and emotion, and despair and correction action, are good lessons in what not to do. If I took anything away from this book, it was not to be complacent in any given situation—wilderness, business, personal. It's the complacent, smug person who thinks he/she knows the terrain, the situation, and how he or she will react is the person who will get into disastrous situations. Gonzales states that if you aren't afraid or at least a little bit anxious about paddling a river you know, crossing a street you've crossed a million times before, you're asking for trouble. As he points out, the trail you walked on a week ago is not the same trail you're walking on today. Nothing stays the same. He continually stresses that we must all be here now.

Although the chapters on behavioral psychology and neurology were a bit tedious and may not be to everyone's liking, the information added to my understanding of the following chapters. I found some of his scientific descriptions of how the brain does the job of unconscious learning, how the hippocampus tells us where we are and where we're going, and how the amygdala triggers action a bit difficult to understand; however, it was definitely interesting reading—even though I had to go over it a few times to get it "mapped" into my hippocampus.

Gonzales has been around; he's a pilot, a climber, a survival school graduate, an award winning journalist whose work has appeared in National Geographic Adventure, Harper's, Men's Health, and the book attests to the fact that he's learned a lot about accidents, survivors, and himself. He doesn't come off as smug or complacent. He understands the spirituality of the journeys people go through to turn disaster into success.

Deep Survival is a must read for anyone who likes adventure—or who just wants to stay around a lot longer and have more adventures. It made me stop and think about situations I might not have considered. It made me write a note to my kids who are going on their honeymoon in Hawaii to not just jump into the ocean or take a walk on a trail without scoping out the lay of the land first.

Gonzales provides an appendix that lists the rules of adventure. These rules can apply to everyday life and are well worth noting. The selected bibliography offers an amazing array of reading material on the subjects discussed throughout the book. The list could keep us in reviews for quite some time. Some of the survival stories will haunt you.

Deep Survival is not a how-to manual but rather a good look at how resilience, coolness, and an abiding belief in taking responsibility for oneself can make all the difference between disaster and success. Although you may have to bushwhack through some heavy brush on your way through this book, when you get clear, the view is superb.



2007 MICHIGAN M.S. 150

by Craig Kcsmcwski

Come one, come all! Join us for an outstanding bicycle tour and raise money to fight Multiple Sclerosis at the same time. This year's event is July 14th and 15th, and will cover 75 miles of lovely road riding each day. Don't worry! If you can ride 50 miles, you can do this ride. Overnight stay is at Michigan State University, and all food, lodging, and full support is included in your registration fee. An optional mountain bike route is also available. As a veteran rider, I can vouch that it is a fun time with great people for a great cause.

Those not interested in riding may wish to volunteer. There is no registration fee for this, and food and lodging at MSU is included. Also, those wishing to test their mettle and their bike seats, may wish to ride the optional 25 mile "century loop" which is available both days.

For more info or to register or volunteer, check out:
http://bikemig.nationalmssociety.org/site/PageServer?pagename=BIKE_MIG_homepage

Or you may contact me at: woodwonders@att.net.

Hope to see you there!



CANOE OUTING

by Tom Oloffo

Join myself and about 30 to 40 other Solarites for a fun filled weekend of canoeing & camping north of Grayling. Highlights include: rustic, scenic campsites right on the river, one of the largest SOLAR bashes of the year, not a serious wilderness experience, just tons of fun splashing and an all around good time!

We will do a 4 hour paddle down the crystal clear Manistee River on Saturday; we'll have the canoes all day so you can take your time. On Sunday, sleep in, swim, or visit like Hartwick Pines, it's their Blacksmith/Woodcarver days (lots of crafts) less than 10 miles from campsite.

The cost of this trip is 30.00 per person which includes two nights camping and half of a canoe. It's up to you to find a partner or figure it out when we get there. If you already have a partner, please let me know so I can keep track of who's with whom. **YOU MUST BE A SOLAR MEMBER TO ATTEND!** I cannot reserve canoes until I get payment, please make checks out to SOLAR.

For more information, call me at 313.461.4933 or by email at mcmountainman@yahoo.com.

COSTA RICAN ADVENTURE TRIP

by Jim Gessner

Fellow SOLAR Adventurers,

Are you interested in joining me on February 14, 2008 for 16 days in Costa Rica? I'll be utilizing the services, guides, and naturalists provided by G.A.P. Adventures (GAP.ca) a company recognized by:



USA TODAY - The 10 best adventure travel bargains of 2006 and Ten Amazing Adventures Under \$1,000 for 2007

BUDGET TRAVEL - 25 Best Places You've Never Heard Of,

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER - 50 Tours of a Lifetime,

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ADVENTURE - 25 Best New Adventures of 2007

I will be traveling by bus, boat, cart, horse and foot to Arenal volcano, a half dozen national parks/forests/wildlife preserves, (Manuel Antonio, Monteverde, Manzanillo, Tortuguero, Braulio Carrillo, Carara). I will walk along white and black sand beaches, rest in hot springs and be overwhelmed by the virgin forests, countless waterfalls, and deep canyons.

I plan to swim, hike, snorkel, white water raft, salsa, view abundant wildlife, soar through the canopy on a zip line, watch a bullfight at the Fiesta de la Fortuna, and catch a rare glimpse of the Tortuguero nesting grounds of leatherback turtles.

During the trip I will stay for two days at a jungle oasis, Rara Avis, and travel the Sarapiquí River to Nicaragua.

Cost will be around \$1400 which includes local payments, some optional trips and some meals and excludes air (-\$450) I plan to provide more details at July SOLAR meeting-bring your checkbook for a \$300 deposit.

Send an email to me, Jim Gessner at gessnerj@comcast.net if you're interested and would like more details. I have prepared a 10 page document which provides considerable information on itinerary and options.

HIKE AND FLOAT THE MASON TRACT WILDERNESS

by Jim Coe

On Friday night we'll arrive at Canoe Harbor State Forest Campground off M-72, 14 miles east of Grayling. Go 2 miles past Chase Bridge Road (County Road 519), then turn right (south) to the campground. We will be staying in the south group camp site which is a short walk in site.

Saturday morning we will shuttle vehicles and people depending on how many we have to the Chase Bridge parking lot. Then we will head out along the Mason Tract Pathway north to hike for 11.3 miles. This is a fairly long hike and it may be hot, but it does not have a great deal of hill climbing or elevation change. You should be in good shape to make this hike, but the beginning backpacking class is not required since we will be staying at the campground. After the hike we will shuttle vehicles back to camp.

Sunday we will drive back down to Chase Bridge to meet up with the Waters Edge Canoe Livery people. You may rent a canoe for 2 people for \$32.00 or a kayak. You can also bring your own watercraft, please specify when signing up if you will be renting or bringing your own, and they will transport them for free but they will not load them, or you can pay \$10.00 each and sign a waiver and they will do all the lifting and loading for you. This will be approximately a 4 hour paddle. You should have an intermediate skill level in kayaking or share a canoe with someone who does. We'll head home on Sunday afternoon after canoeing.

The Mason Tract is a beautiful area that was deeded to the State to maintain as a wilderness use area. No homes are along the entire stretch of the river and the pathway is a treat if you have never walked it. I think we will all enjoy it.

Why not canoe back to our cars at the Chase Bridge parking lot, you may ask? Well because the river does not flow that direction so unlike the Manistee River trip, we will have to shuttle vehicles this time. The trail is not a loop and neither is the river, LOL.

Contact Jim Coe at jimc36@comcast.net or 810-499-5001 for more information, this trip is not kid-friendly, but it's not a drunkfest either!

Cost: \$13.00 for 2 nights camping plus 1/2 canoe at \$16.00 for a total of 29.00 each.

Dates: 08/10/07 to 08/12/07

Limited to 14 people so please sign up early!

VIPASSANA MEDITATION—AWARENESS AND EQUANIMITY IN THE OUTDOORS

By Allyson Kemp

In the outdoors, we often find ourselves facing and reacting to our fears. Sometimes situations come up unexpectedly and sometimes we join a course or trip for the challenge. Then there is always the challenge of working as a group no matter how compatible you all might be. When out on the trail, have you ever had an emergency come up that you didn't handle well? Have your fellow Solarites annoyed you so much that you spent half a day stewing about it? Do you still think about it? Have you ever felt intimidated to voice your opinion for fear of sounding stupid? Have you been so miserable that your unhappiness affected the group?

Having just finished a 10 day silent Vipassana meditation course, I experienced one of the hardest challenges I have ever faced in my life. Sitting in meditation for over 10 hours a day and in complete silence 24-7 while surrounded by others gave me more to ponder than I ever could have imagined. One of the thoughts that kept coming back to me as I was supposed to be focused on my breath and physical sensations, was this experience was giving me tools to be better prepared for whatever outdoor endeavor is next. Not only that, my experience during the course wasn't so unlike many of the challenges I have faced when climbing, backpacking or cycling.

The Vipassana meditation course taught me how to deal with stress and challenges in a more calm and less reactive manner. I can remember many times when backpacking or mountaineering that I would have liked to have controlled my mind and my emotions just a little bit more, so that when I had to make an important decision I could have done so with more clarity and calmness. My mind raced with all the what ifs and as my thoughts multiplied, my ability to make a good decision deteriorated. There is something remarkable about just observing all the sensations and emotions that come up in the course of a day and knowing that each one will pass and how much clarity that can bring. It turned out that the Vipassana course was not unlike training to get ready for a trip. This time I was training my mind.



INTRO TO KAYAKING

by Eileen Fallon

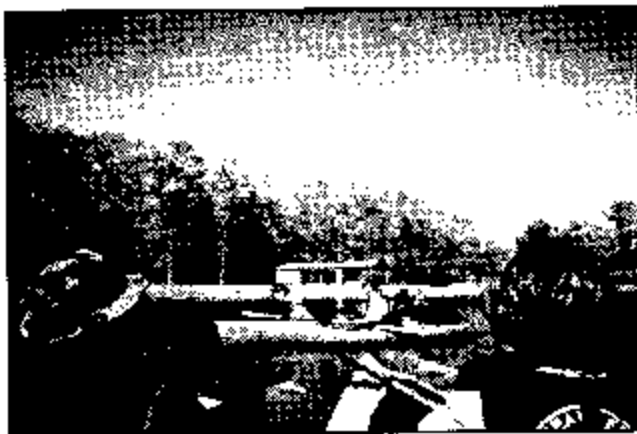
For those who have never kayaked before, the Introduction to Kayaking class taught by Matt Dalton is a great way to become acquainted with the world of kayaking. For those who have kayaked before, but have never taken a formal lesson, this class is a great way to learn the proper paddling form and better techniques to become a more efficient kayaker.

There were approximately one dozen students in the May class, which took place on May 12, 2007 at Heavner's Canoe Rental in Milford. The class was made up of people with no experience, people with some experience, and some who came equipped with their own kayaks. The class itself was well-structured, leaving the best part, the actual kayaking, for the end. During the first portion of the class, which took place on land, we were introduced to the many different types of basic paddling gear. From the different shapes and weights of paddles, to dry bags, to skirts (turns out they're not just for girls!), we were shown the gear a well-equipped paddler is likely to have.



In the second portion of the class, the students were shown the proper paddling technique, which involves using the shoulder and abdominal muscles rather than the biceps. This exercise was more difficult for those who had some experience kayaking, but had never had a lesson. Most people tend to use their biceps to pull the paddle back in the water in order to propel the boat forward. This generally causes the person to become fatigued rather quickly. The proper technique, as it was demonstrated, and as we practiced, involves using the shoulder and abdominal muscles to push or "punch" the air forward with the top of the paddle (the opposite side of the paddle that is in the water), while rotating the torso to the side. (So if the left side of the paddle is in the water, you would punch out from your right shoulder and twist your torso to the left). After Matt was satisfied that we understood this concept, we hit the water.

The remainder of the lesson took place in the water. We chose our paddles and kayaks, and began practicing the punching method of paddling. This was when it all came together. It can be hard to get a feel for how the kayak will react to the proper paddling technique while practicing on land. However, it quickly became clear that you can get some decent speed in the kayak while using the punching method of paddling, without feeling fatigued. As a class, we learned



how to paddle backward, turn, pirouette, and move sideways. We had time to practice going in different directions on the water, and, as a few of us tend to have a bit of a competitive streak, we each tried to outdo each other. (Who, me? Competitive? C'mon, that's crazy talk!)

Other little tidbits of useful knowledge also came to light during this portion of the class. The importance of having a water pump readily available became apparent, as Matt's kayak began sinking shortly after it was put into the water. It ultimately had to be towed back, and a replacement kayak was brought out for him. (The water pump could also double as a great squirt gun!) I, for one, found that choosing a paddle and kayak to match my outfit was not necessarily the best choice, as I ended up with one of the heavier paddles and the shortest kayak. We ended the water

portion of the class with a short paddle up the river and back, practicing and perfecting our newly learned paddling skills.

After we all made it safely back to dry land, Alan Heavner had pizza waiting for us. The pizza disappeared almost before the paddles dried off. All in all, a great class, and a great day.

Alan Heavner advised that he offers a 10% discount for SOLAR members who rent kayaks or canoes from him. (He requests an advance e-mail or phone call, so that his staff has a heads up). For further information or to make reservations, you can contact Heavners Canoe Rental, at www.Heavnercanoe.com (248) 685-2379.

SPOTLIGHT ON KEVIN COTTER

by Rebecca Sweeton



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER OF SOLAR?
5 years.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH SOLAR?

One evening I was searching the Web for singles groups and came across BS Hikers. I joined one of their hikes and it seemed that most of the people on the hike were talking about SOLAR. Laura Phillips (now Laura James) and Cindy Taylor suggested I come to a meeting and my life has never been the same since.

HOW DID YOU START BACKPACKING?

I had car camped quite a bit growing up and the idea of backpacking fascinated me, but I knew nothing about how to do it right, and I didn't know anyone else who wanted to go.

About 9 years ago I was dating someone who didn't want to do a full blown backpacking trip, but she wanted to stay in one of the backcountry cabins in Porcupine Mountains State Park. We reserved a cabin that was four miles from the parking lot, so I bought a cheap backpack to get our stuff from the car to the cabin. I had no idea what we were doing! I ended up carrying a solar shower, a small cooler with steaks and hot dogs, a bottle of wine, blue jeans and cotton shirts. My backpack must have weighed 70 pounds! We ended up taking 2 more trips to the Porkies before we broke up. I wanted to do more backpacking but had no one to go with, and I was sure I had a lot to learn, so I was very excited to be in the SOLAR beginning backpacking class in Fall 2002. That class was a really rewarding experience for me, even though it rained most of the weekend at Pictured Rocks, at least I learned what it takes to keep dry (which is exactly what I was NOT doing on that trip). Thankfully, all of my backpacking trips since then have had much better weather!

WHAT HAS YOUR FAVORITE TRIP BEEN SO FAR?

That's a tough one to answer, I've loved so many of the trips I've taken. Probably my favorite would be the one to Kings

Canyon and Sequoia National Parks last summer. I felt like I was living in a postcard for the whole 10 days of the trip as we hiked part of the John Muir Trail through the Sierra Nevadas. I had such a wonderful feeling of accomplishment getting through those mountain passes and reaching the top of Mount Whitney. My other favorites are my kayaking trip in Glacier Bay National Park in 2003, and my recent trip to the Grand Canyon area in May of this year.

WHAT WOULD YOUR DREAM TRIP BE?

Another tough one to answer; there are so many places I want to go! I would love to go to New Zealand and backpack through the mountains and valleys and rivers of Middle Earth. I've never been to Hawaii and would love to backpack through some of the wilder, more secluded islands. Lately I've daydreamed about hiking the entire Pacific Crest Trail, all 2600 miles of it.

WHAT CLASSES WOULD YOU LIKE TO ADD TO SOLAR'S CURRICULUM?

SOLAR does a great job of teaching the skills required to participate in a trip. I would like to see more emphasis on developing leadership, giving people the skills to lead a trip. One course I have in mind would teach leadership skills for a backpacking trip. This course would cover topics such as group problem solving, dealing with conflict and group dynamics, handling emergencies, and learning when to say "no" to someone who wants to go on a trip but doesn't belong there. This course would complement our existing Intermediate Backpacking course, and be less intense than our existing Advanced Backpacking and Leadership. I would also love to see a sailing class added to our curriculum.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCE IN SOLAR?

Definitely serving as Activities Chair. I've had so much fun, and the opportunity to touch peoples' lives has been very rewarding. I love hearing people talk about how much they've come to enjoy leading trips after I've given them some encouragement to get started. Being an assistant instructor for the beginning backpacking class has also been a wonderful experience. I love seeing beginners discover the joy of backpacking. One student was so excited after I showed him how to use a compass and he finally got it!

HOW HAS SOLAR CHANGED DURING THE YEARS YOU HAVE BEEN A MEMBER?

Names and faces have definitely changed, there are a lot of new people in the club. I like the fact that so many younger people (at least from my 50-year-old point of view) have joined SOLAR and become active. There have been a lot of new faces on the Steering Committee the last two years! I also like the fact that we offer a wider variety of classes, like car camping and tree ID that are geared toward outdoor lovers who are not necessarily hard-core backpackers.

BEGINNING CAR TENT CAMPING CLASS

by Lisa Frederick

Practical #1

May 19-20, 2007, Island Lake State Park

We had an informative and wonderful time on the first ever S.O.L.A.R. How to Enjoy Car Camping Practical at Island Lake State Park. Lead by Mark Speece with lots of input from Susan Speece and many other instructors, the eight of us students learned a ton of great information to make family camping enjoyable and safe. Many of the skills learned apply to other forms of outdoor activities.

We started out reviewing equipment lists which included a comparison chart of the top "10" essentials from various sources and just about everything else one can fit (cram) into their transportation vehicle. The instructors had us help them set up several different types of tents including Sarah Kirkish's awesome 2-door backpacking tent. We had instruction on setting up various tarps for different purposes from Dave Holt.



We managed to take a break for lunch and hiking. But I think I can speak for most if not all of us that our very favorite part of the weekend was all the cooking and sampling. We learned how to cook various dishes using the cast iron Dutch oven, pie irons in the fire, baking in a Coleman camp stove oven, and foil dinners. Here is a run down of the various dishes we consumed then you can be the judge as to whether or not you want to miss the next class with the Speeces! They sure know how to spread the joy of camping!

In the Coleman Camp Stove Oven (demonstrated by Jorrie Kostishak): Warm brownies with orange chocolate bits

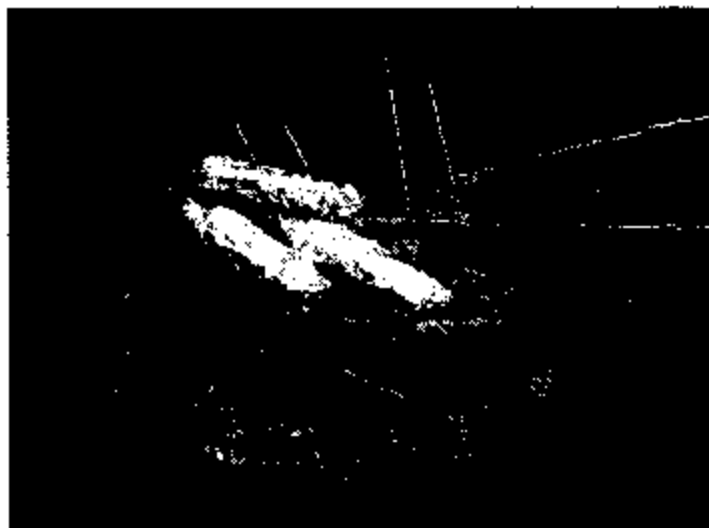
In the Pie Irons of various shapes (demonstrated by Kristi Holt): Ham and cheese sandwiches, apple pie bake; chicken with spinach and feta sausages; pepperoni, salsa and shredded cheese pudgies; Jam and cream cheese on English Muffins; Peanut Butter, marshmallows and chocolate pudgies; falafel burgers, tuna burgers, stuffed French toast, veggies, and finally my personal favorite, Musselman's

Apple Butter and mini marshmallows pudgies-YUM!

In the Dutch Oven (demonstrated by Susie Speece): Pigs in a blanket; Nachos; hot and sour soup; cinnamon rolls; blueberry muffins with blueberry jam in the middle; Adult Macaroni and Cheese, Hot Fudge Pudding Cake-UNBELIEVABLE!!!



In foil (demonstrated by Mark and Susie Speece): garlic bread; dinners which everyone picked the ingredients from a spread themselves which included cut up: potatoes, sausage, onions, carrot, garlic cloves, broccoli, green pepper, red pepper, mushrooms, yellow squash and hamburger balls.



As you can see, none of us starved and we gained lots of great ideas for when we venture off on our own camping endeavors and for the upcoming potluck at Practical #2.

Practical #2

June 1-3, 2007, Rifle River, Michigan

We met in Rose City at 4:00PM Friday, June 1st after about a 2 1/2 hour drive. From there we caravanned to the Devoe Lake Rustic Campground within the Rifle River



Recreation Area. The sites were wooded, flat, quiet and very beautiful.

The instructors were Mark Speece, Susie Speece and Sarah Kirkish. The students included Pam Schmelzer, Dave Schmelzer, Lisa Frederick, Norwood Catron, Rebecca Sweeton, Dave Sweeton, Tom Scott, Alan Calunas. It was a group with a lot of synergy and we had a blast together.

Friday afternoon we set up camp then started a fire and started roasting. We all did our own thing over the fire but there was plenty to share including hot subs roasted in foil; cheddar dogs and other gourmet varieties of sausages/dogs; kielbasa kebabs; now pic irons were seasoned and then grilled cheese was attempted (got a little black-good lesson though); the apple butter and marshmallows on cinnamon swirl bread was a big hit in the pic irons and didn't get burnt (Kristi Holt please take note of this delicious variation you will be proud of!).

Saturday morning started off with homemade donuts made right on site by Dave Schmelzer with his donut nurse, Pam Schmelzer. What a treat! And a great way to bribe...er get on the good side of the DNR and canoe/kayak rental associates. Alan Calunas set up a wonder 5-grain hot cereal bar where we could add what we liked from honey, walnuts, raisins, dried cranberries, raw sugar, butter &/or cream. The Speeces made a wonderful potatoes O'Brien and corn beef hash dish in the Dutch oven over the fire (note: pre-boil the Yukon Jacks). Dave and Rebecca Sweeton made a sinfully delicious stuffed French toast with cream cheese in the Dutch oven.

Saturday afternoon some of us went hiking (Sarah and Alan). The rest of us headed to the canoe and kayak rental place right outside the camp. Most rented kayaks or had their own, and Norwood and I had our first attempt together at canoeing. Not sure why everyone was joking with us that it was a great relationship tester but we soon found out. Fortunately we passed the test. We launched on Grousehaven Lake and then soon found the Rifle River and headed down the beautiful, windy water path. Just a couple of the kayaks tipped, and we learned a

valuable lesson about not leaving your personal belongings unattended (never know where misguided souls may lurk). But all in all, it was a great time and the weather was perfect.

Saturday evening back at camp, we prepared for our potluck dinner and testament to our newly learned camp cooking skills. Our feast included a green bean casserole from Dave and Pam; pesto calzones in pie irons from Lisa and Norwood; bacon wrapped corn on the cob from Tom; taco chili and cornbread crescent rolls with salsa and cheese from Rebecca, Garlic Bread from Alan and a gorgeous pineapple upside down cake prepared in the Dutch oven by Dave Sweeton (its hard to get it to turn out this good at home!).



It may sound that our class focused around food and yes, food was one of the highlights along with the camaraderie. The reason I listed the food in detail is to assist others with the task of meal planning for camping, other outdoor activities and barbecues. Planning food for group outings has always been one of the more stressful parts of camping for me but now I feel confident and am armed with more skills, ideas and recipes. This class is highly recommended for anyone, even the more experienced SOLAR members can gain a lot from it.



JULY: ANNUAL SOLAR GEAR SWAP & SUMMER BARBECUE

****PLEASE NOTE: THE JULY MEETING WILL BE ON
MONDAY, JULY 9****

BRUCE PENINSULA BACKCOUNTRY ADVENTURE

by Joanne Sarrasin, Cindy Taylor, Ati Tisterics, Pam Schmelzer & Jen Tisterics

Participants: Donna Beltran, Jim Coe, Tim Davis, Grey Ivanov, Caroline Kudwa, Brian Nordhaus, Joanne Sarrasin, Pam Schmelzer, Conchita Snuverink, Cindy Taylor, Ati Tisterics, Jen Tisterics

A group of SOLARites recently spent a few days in Ontario, exploring a section of the Bruce Trail along the western shore of Georgian Bay. The Bruce Trail runs from the Niagara region to the northern end of the Bruce Peninsula. The area we explored was only about 15 kms, but it is considered to be the most rugged and beautiful section of the trail.



What Parks Canada lacks in customer service, they more than make up for in landscaping.

The drive up on Friday was under a mostly cloudy sky, but by the time we arrived on the Bruce Peninsula the sun was shining, which boded well for a great long weekend. Four of the participants chose to stay at the Cyprus Lake car-campground Friday night. An evening trip into town for a bottle of wine resulted in the only bear sighting of the weekend. The car campers' evening was made complete with a relaxing evening around the campfire. As it turned out, the bugs prefer the Cyprus Lake campground to the backcountry campsites, so this group took the brunt of the biting.



Some of the gang en route to Storm Haven the first night.

Those who did not car camp at Cyprus Lake headed off on the 4 km hike to the Storm Haven backcountry campground. En route, they were joined by Ati and Grey, who had arrived a day earlier to fit in an extra day of hiking.

Even though the Hike to Storm Haven is quite short, it can be an ankle-twisting experience with fully loaded packs (or even without a pack). Some sections of the trail run on the boulder beach along Georgian Bay, so we needed to pay careful attention to our footing. But we had the beautiful blue-green water of the bay as a constant distraction, so we couldn't just keep our heads down all the time. Other sections of the trail are in a dense forest of pine and cedar trees (some of which are said to be over 500 years old) where the path is strewn with moss-covered limestone. There is very little elevation gain or loss in total, but there are many short - almost vertical - sections that make trekking poles a blessing.

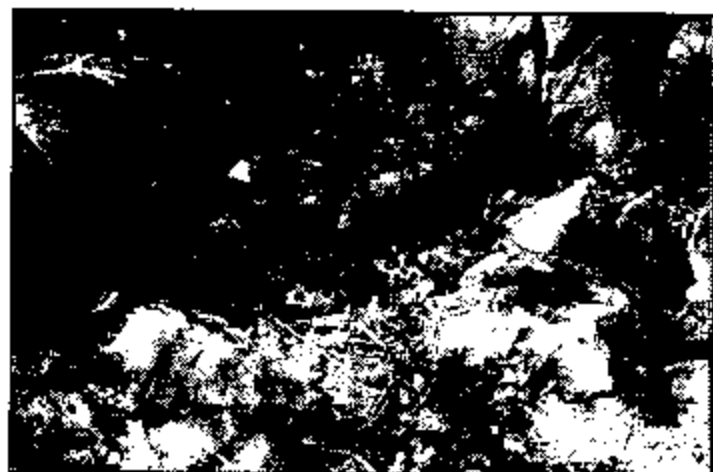
Sleeping arrangements were made upon arrival at Storm Haven. The backcountry campgrounds are equipped with wooden tent platforms, bear poles and composting toilets - pure luxury! The tent platforms compensate for the total lack of flat ground and reduce the impact on the ecosystem, and were the perfect size to fit two smaller tents or a larger one. Everyone gathered together for dinner and we were treated to a beautiful sunset. Many of the people on this trip had not met before and it was great to see everyone getting to know each other and having a good time. In the evening we played a game of Apples to Apples that Jer and Ati had customized for SOLAR. It was clear they put some thought into the additional SOLAR specific cards, as they even included a card with the name of one of our favorite SOLAR members - Lucky DeFrance. Ask any one of us about it some time.



The "beach" at the Storm Haven backcountry campsite.

The rest of the weekend was enjoyed in different ways by everyone. Saturday morning, the car-camping group (made up of Jim, Conchita, Pam, and Cindy) hiked from Cyprus Lake in to Storm Haven. Along the way they ran

into a group of SOLARites from Leslie Cordova's Tobermory trip (consisting of Pete, Jim G., E.J., Kevin, and Matthew). Pete grilled Jim Coe with questions trying to figure out how Jim ended up with a group of women, while Pete was hiking with an all-guy group. I'm not sure where he got the idea from, but Pete walked away mumbling something along the lines of "on the next trip, I'll just give all the guys wrong directions." So all you guys on Pete's future trips: consider yourself warned—you may want to do your own navigating.



This massasauga rattlesnake didn't appreciate hikers passing by.

Back at Storm Haven, Donna, Tim, Grey and Ati headed off to spend the night at another backcountry campground, High Dump, 10 Massasauga-infested kilometers away (well, they saw one rattlesnake, anyway). Some people spent their days at Storm Haven catching up on reading, some scrambled along the boulder beaches, and others hiked out to a cave called the Grotto. We saw other SOLARites everywhere, either from our own group or Leslie's group going day-hikes down the peninsula.



Chillin' before dinner at Storm Haven.

The group reunited nightly for dinner, conversation and more games. Except for a little rain on Saturday night, which made the hiking on Sunday more challenging (moss-covered limestone is slippery but wet-moss-covered

limestone is very slippery), the weather was mostly sunny and warm during the day. The cool nights were made more comfortable with Nalgene bottles of hot water.

In grand SOLAR tradition, we stopped for lunch on the way home Monday afternoon, at the Lion's Head Inn. There's nothing like a burger and a beer to finish off a great trip.

So, next time you hesitate to sign up for a trip because you don't know anyone else, sign up anyway. Remember, this group is made up of like-minded individuals and you are bound to have a good time! You are likely to learn something about other SOLAR members that you didn't know before. For example, we learned that Jen has a secret hair braiding talent, that Ati has a knack for making pop-can stoves, and Grey is keeping chivalry alive and well.

Special thanks to Jen and Pam for organizing this delightful trip.

Photos by: Grey Ivanov and Donna Beltran

SAGINAW BAY TRIP

Kayaking, Swimming, Fishing, Eating, Drinking, Sleeping In, Car Camping, and More!
by Matt Dalton

When: August 24, 25, 26, 2007

Where: Great Lakes Shores Marina, Standish, MI
North 43 57.10, West 83, 52.50 for GPS people

Arrive Friday afternoon, stay over Saturday and Sunday.

Bring kayaks, canoes, bikes, fishing poles and books. It will be a fun relaxing event. Kayaks are also available to rent.

Cost is \$35.00 per Person, (\$40.00 for couples) Children welcome!

We will be camping next to the water and have full access to bathrooms and showers.

Continental Breakfast on Saturday AM. Basic kayak paddling lessons and advanced rescue and bracing lessons - practice included in the trip.

Sunday we will go into Standish and have a great all you can eat home style breakfast.

Contact Matt Dalton at 248 360 0031 or by email at mdalton@ameritech.net for more information.



SAILING CLASS PHOTOS

by Sergey Ivanov



SOLAR FALL BACKPACKING COURSE

by Carol McCririe

Coming in August is one of SOLAR's most popular classes, the Beginning Backpacking Class. Beginning Backpacking teaches basics about trip planning, equipment, food, and other backpacking issues. It also gives you hands on experience at practicals, fun times, and new friends.

This class is for those of you that a) never backpacked and have always wanted to try it, b) new members that need the class as a prerequisite for other advanced classes or just to meet people, or c) members who just want a refresher or need an excuse to backpack. The only prerequisite for the class is that you are a current paid member of SOLAR and that you are interested in new experiences, new friends, or both!

Class begins August 15 and runs for six weeks with a break for Labor Day week (8/22, 9/6, 9/13, 9/20 and 9/27). Class time is from 6 to 9 pm. The weekend practicals are September 22 - 23 and October 5-7.

The tentative class location will be in Lathrup Village and the Practical's are currently planned for Pinckney Recreation Area and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Stay tuned for more information at the July SOLAR meeting.

In order to get a certificate for the class, you need to participate during classes and complete the entire 1st practical in September. The certificate for the class qualifies you for the Intermediate and Advanced Backpacking Classes, Wilderness Canoeing, and Enjoying Michigan Winters.

Space is limited so sign up and pay early. The cost of the class is \$100 and includes a textbook, a class handbook, and camping fees for both Practical's. Please bring cash or a check payable to "SOLAR" when you sign up (Sorry, no credit cards.) This will guarantee your spot in the class.

Any questions regarding the class should be directed to Carol McCririe at cmccririe@sbcglobal.net or Leslie Cordova at lesliegene@aol.com.



SOLAR 2007 CALENDAR

JULY ACTIVITIES

7/2-7/19	MULTI	Scotland Trip**	Scotland	Don Wold	twold12977@aol.com
7/9	MON	GENERAL MEETING	Colony Hall	Lou Szakal	Everest2008@comcast.net
7/9	MON	PROGRAM: Annual Cookout & Swap Meet	Colony Hall	Allen Duncan	allenduncan@aggienetwork.com
7/13	FRI	Paddle to the Symphony**	Kensington Metropark	Monwood Catron	ncatron@earthlink.net
7/14-7/15	WKND	MS 150 Bike Tour**	Lake Fenton HS	Craig Kosmowski	woodwonders@att.net
7/20-7/23	MULTI	Backpacking Trip	Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia	Natalie Jewell	woodsromer@yahoo.com
7/21-7/23	WKND	Canoe Floa:	Manistee River, Grayling, MI	Tom Oloff	mcmountainman@yahoo.com

AUGUST ACTIVITIES

8/7	UE	GENERAL MEETING	Colony Hall	Lou Szakal	Everest2008@comcast.net
8/7	*UE	PROGRAM: Fall Class Preview	Colony Hall	Allen Duncan	allenduncan@aggienetwork.com
8/10-8/12	WKND	Hike and Float	Manistee River Trail	Jim Coe	jimc36@comcast.net
8/11	SAT	Hike**	Oak Openings Nature Preserve, Ohio	Lisa Frederick	Lisa.Frederick@us.yazaki.com
8/11-8/18	MULTI	Canoeing	Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario	S Smelter/P Cronkshaw	ssharon_35@hotmail.com
8/11-8/19	MULTI	Kayaking and SCUBA Diving**	Tobermory, Ontario	Chuck Smith	cbryarsmit@aol.com
8/17-8/19	WKND	Canoeing and Camping	Pere Marquette River	Mary Bogush	notdev@yahoo.com
8/24-8/26	WKND	Kayaking and Car Canping	Great Lakes Shores Marina, Standish	Matt Dalton	mdalton@ameritech.net

AUGUST CLASSES

8/15, 8/22, 9/6, 9/13, 9/20, 9/27, 9/23, 9/27, 10/5-10/7	MULTI	Beginning Backpacking Class	Southfield/ Pinckney Pictured Rocks	Carol McCrie	cmccrie@sbcglobal.net
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SEPTEMBER ACTIVITIES

9/4	TJE	GENERAL MEETING	Colony Hall	Lou Szakal	Everest2008@comcast.net
9/4	TJE	PROGRAM: TBA	Colony Hall	Allen Duncan	allenduncan@aggienetwork.com
9/28	FRI	Full Moon Canoe Paddle**	Heavner Canoe Rental, Proud Lake	Margaret Martin	mpluscat@hotmail.com

SEPTEMBER CLASSES

9/12, 9/14-9/15	WED/ WKND	Wilderness First Aid	TBA	Mike Malon	Mmalon130190@comcast.net
9/26, 9/29-9/30	WED/ WKND	Basic Land Navigation	TBA	Karl Overhaul	cyber.nomad@comcast.net
9/29, 10/11-10/14	SAT/ MULTI	Women's Backpacking Workshop	TBA	Pam Riehl Szakal	pariehl@gmail.com

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

2/14-2/29	MULTI	Costa Rica Adventure**	Costa Rica	Jim Gessner	Gessnerj@comcast.net
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UPCOMING CLASSES

10/3, 10/10, 10/17, 10/19-10/21	WED/ WKND	Search and Rescue	Eastpointe	Tom Hayes	thomashayes@wideopenwest.com
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All classes and activities are limited to SOLAR members except for non-SOLAR events marked with **.

For information on joining SOLAR, contact Mary Price at membership@solaroutdoors.org.

If you would like to help plan and/or lead a SOLAR activity, please contact Kevin Cotter at (248) 544-9637 or activities@so.aroutdoors.org.

If you would like to help plan and/or teach a SOLAR class, please contact Sarah Kirkish at education@solaroutdoors.org.

SOLAR has a no-refund policy. If you are unable to attend an activity you may "sell your spot" to another club member.

** Denotes non-SOLAR activity or non-SOLAR class (SOLAR will not be held responsible for these activities/classes)

WHAT IS SOLAR?

SOLAR is a non-profit club with 400-plus members dedicated to the intelligent enjoyment of nature and outdoor pursuits.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is only \$40 a year per person (\$55 per family) and includes discounts to a number of retail outfitters, access to club-owned equipment, a monthly newsletter, and a chance to meet hundreds of other like-minded adventurers drawn together by a common love of pristine lakes, breathtaking vistas, virgin forests, scenic shorelines, and the experiences to be found there.

MEETINGS

Our monthly meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month in Southfield at the Colony Hall, 21780 Evergreen (between 8 & 9 Mile Roads) at 7:30 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

SOLAR RAY NEWSLETTER

The SOLAR RAY is a monthly publication of SOLAR and is available online at www.solaroutdoors.org. To receive a copy in the mail, please contact Mary Price at membership@solaroutdoors.org.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submissions for the SOLAR Ray are due on the Friday two weeks prior to the monthly Steering Committee Meeting (July 20 for the August issue). Electronic documents only. If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Sweeton at rayeditor@solaroutdoors.org.

STEERING COMMITTEE

President: Lou Szakal

Secretary: Michelle Delaporte

Activities: Kevin Cotter

Education: Sarah Kirkish

Historian: Pam Schmelzer

Programs: Allen Duncan

Ray Editor: Rebecca Sweeton

Vice President: Cindy Taylor

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Mike Banks | Leslie Cordova | Moe DeFrance | Al Fytak

Steve Gardner | Bill Halvingis | Cindy Harrison-Helix | Tom Hayes

Doug Lanyk | Larry Martin | Joan Hettinger | Tom Oloff

Joan & Bob Westbrook

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Steering Committee meets on the last Tuesday of every month at 7:30 pm. These meetings are usually open to the general membership. Anyone who is interested in learning what topics are discussed, the decisions being made or contemplating running for a position on the Steering Committee, is welcome to attend. If you are interested in attending the Steering Committee Meeting, please contact Lou Szakal at president@solaroutdoors.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at: www.solaroutdoors.org.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE SOLAR RAY ASSISTANT EDITORS

Winnie Chrzanowski, Kathy Drewyore, Sheila Hardy, Pam Schmelzer, Carol McCrie, Elizabeth Schwab, and Ali Tislerics

Visit our website: www.solaroutdoors.org



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