



The SOLAR Ray

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

June 2007

WILDFLOWER AND MUSHROOM HIKE

by Jim Coe

What a glorious day to be out in the woods discovering nature's wonders. We had approximately 16 people at Island Lake State Recreation Area for the walk. One group that wanted to cover a little more ground and look for wildflowers headed one way along the yellow trail, and I headed with a group for a slow route to look for morels.

After dodging mountain bikes for a mile or two we made it to a likely looking place for morels. That of course does not guarantee you will find them, but we were most likely in the right kind of place. I look for places that have some mature hardwoods with some poplars mixed in, the kind of place you expect to find ferns. Another plus would be dead elms or ash trees. In the end you may find them in a totally unexpected spot.

A group of us were a bit ahead and heard a war whoop so we went back to see what all the fuss was about. Eagle eye Dave had spotted some smallish morels and we all had a chance see what we were looking for.



We didn't find any more so we started back to the trail head. We had dogs and kids with us so we took our time. As we got closer to the trailhead blind Jim found some "false morels." They look like a morel that has melted basically and are avoided by most for eating since they make some people ill.



While waiting for the wildflower group at the parking lot Richard thought he had found some more, but after closer inspection they turned out not to be morels. Then eagle eye Dave found another and we ended up finding six or so in a group within 10 feet of the parking lot. These are of the black variety shown in the picture above.

Our wildflower walkers made it back and they all seemed to have had a great time identifying the ones they found. The plan was to head for the River Bend picnic shelter for a lunch. In usual SOLAR fashion we had more food than anyone could possibly eat and then all headed home.

By the way what happened to all the morels we found? Well as the expert, I had to take them home for positive identification. That involved an omelet with fresh picked asparagus from my sister's garden. I am happy to report that they were black morels and they were delicious!

I had to back out of the weekend camp out along with most of the others that were originally planning on going, but it went on anyway with Howard Weiss taking over so we will have wait for a report from them.

Thanks to all who made it. See you next year maybe.

TRIP TO HAVASU CANYON

by Kevin Lotter

For many years I have wanted to visit the Grand Canyon. After celebrating my 50th birthday earlier this year, it was time to move into action. One highly recommended destination was Havasu Canyon. Havasu Canyon is geographically part of the Grand Canyon, but it is not in Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP). It is, rather, part of the Havasupai reservation. Most of the 30,000 yearly visitors to Havasu come to see the blue-green waters of Havasu Creek and its famous waterfalls. Havasu Falls, the most famous one and closest to the Havasu campground, has appeared on the cover of more than one travel magazine and has been described as the best watering hole in the world.

So Marie Harrington and I made Havasu Canyon our first destination of our Grand Canyon trip. We arrived at the trailhead parking lot early on Monday, April 30 to begin the 10-mile hike to the campground. The trail starts with a series of switchbacks going down 1500 feet in the first mile, then opens into a dry canyon for the next six miles, gently sloping downhill. When the trail reaches Havasu Creek, the terrain changes from rocky and barren to lush and forested. One mile downstream along the trail brought us to the village of Supai, where 450 members of the Havasupai tribe live. We made our way through town, following a dirt road and passing by cardboard-looking homes. Since we had been expecting to see trash along the trail and in the village, what we did see was not nearly as bad as we had feared. The manure left by the passing horse and mule trains was a far worse nuisance. We stopped at the tourist office, paid our camping fee (\$189 for two people for 3 nights) and picked up our camping permit. After a visit to the general store for a few snacks, we hiked the remaining two miles to the campground.

Just before reaching camp, Marie and I passed by Havasu Falls. I stopped briefly but was anxious to reach the campground. Remembering the warning about the crowded campground, I wanted to make sure we claimed some open space. Marie kept looking at the 100-foot high falls of blue-green water (due to naturally occurring calcium carbonate) falling into an inviting blue-green pool, with a background of red rock cliff with lush green growth. We knew we would have to spend some time here. The campground was nicely shaded with trees and nearby canyon walls, with the blue green creek rushing by. When we arrived the campground was not too crowded, but we noticed several outfitters camped there, including REI Adventures, which was prominently set up near the campground entrance. There are no assigned campsites, but there are picnic tables, so we "claimed" a table and being good backpackers, pitched our tent on a flat spot about 10 feet away.

After setting up our tent, we headed straight into the creek to cool off. The water was surprisingly warm and refreshing. Adding to the fun is a large series of travertine (calcium carbonate) deposits, which creates natural dams and pools of water behind them. One such pool is at the

bottom of Havasu Falls. Of course the first thing we had to do after coming back to the falls was to swim behind them. The current forced us to swim along the edge of the water, and then sneak up alongside the falls. An adventurous soul could climb onto a small cave behind the falls, though we settled for staying in the water and getting sprayed. We then swam through the falls and were shot down the current for a natural thrill ride.

The next day we decided to make a day hike to Beaver Falls, 3 miles downstream from the campground. We first hiked through the campground to reach the top of Mooney Falls. One has to beware of anything named after someone who fell to his death there. Indeed, getting to the bottom of Mooney Falls was quite an adventure. We went down some steep steps, then through two manmade caves which opened to a nearly vertical wall with footholds, steel bars and chains. Thankfully there was a ladder leading us the last 15 feet to the bottom. At 200 feet high, Mooney Falls is the largest waterfall in the area, and in fact is taller than Niagara Falls. We then followed a trail alongside the creek.



The Climb down to Mooney Falls

About a half mile ahead, we saw a group of hikers crossing the creek, one of them was giving instructions on where to step. It turned out we were following two groups from Arizona Outback Adventures (AOA). This was an enormous stroke of luck, since the trail was getting difficult to follow with the frequent creek crossings, and their guides obviously knew the trail. We would sometimes pass the group, sometimes they would pass us, but we kept relying on them to find the next river crossing. At one point we saw a group stopped on the trail, quietly taking pictures. There was a big-horned sheep standing right across the creek from us! It looked at us, suspicious but obviously not afraid of us.

Later on, figuring we were close to Beaver Falls, we found a group from AOA taking a break by the creek. It looked like

the trail had come to an end, so we asked them how to get to Beaver Falls. The group's guide, a pleasant young woman named Angie, showed us where the trail continues to Beaver Falls. We passed through an area where ivy was covering everything and growing up the side of the red rock canyon walls. The contrast between the green ivy and the red rock of the canyon was breathtaking! Incredibly grateful for the help, we continued along a route high above the creek until we reached a sign indicating we had left Havasu Reservation and entered Grand Canyon National Park. Realizing we had gone too far, we backtracked until we found a route to scramble down to the creek, just downstream from Beaver Falls. Angie and the AOA group joined us. Angie was very friendly, telling us about AOA and inviting us to join them for dinner that night. We were very honored, but didn't feel right about joining a meal for which other participants had paid dearly to partake in.

After swimming awhile and having lunch, we hurried back toward Mooney Falls while a storm blew past us. We finally reached Mooney Falls, climbed the ladder, chains, and footholds until we reached the top of the falls and the edge of the campground. We were both exhausted, looking forward to soaking our feet and sitting down on our picnic table. But when we arrived at our campsite, someone else had pitched their tent right next to the picnic table and had taken it over. We had neglected to put anything on the table, figuring it would be stolen (we were also warned about petty theft in the campground) so someone else had

just claimed the table. Thankfully, while we left the area to soak feet and cool off, the new campers found an unused picnic table and moved it next to our tent!

The next day (Wednesday), was a perfect day to take it easy. We spent much of the day at Havasu Falls, alternating between sitting on the shore, relaxing in one of the pools formed by the travertine deposits, and swimming behind the falls. After lunch we decided to head to Navajo Falls, about a half mile from Havasu Falls. Navajo Falls is wider and not as high as the other falls, but is also full of nooks and crannies behind and under the falls. Marie and I played there for a while, then returned to Havasu Falls, perching ourselves on a ledge and relaxing while taking in a wonderful view of the falls. Angie, the AOA guide we met the previous day, said hello to us. Close to dark, we then returned to our campsite.

Our last day (Thursday), we packed early for the 10 mile hike from the campground back to the car. After packing up and starting on the trail, I realized we no longer had our hiking poles. A quick re-check of the campsite showed that the hiking poles had been missing and presumably stolen. Hiking 10 miles uphill with a backpack without hiking poles is not my idea of fun, but we managed by using sticks we found beside the trail to make it back to the car, and on to our next adventure white water rafting down the Colorado river.

In spite of the crowded campground, the petty theft, and the dilapidated village, this is a place to which I will definitely return. I love waterfalls too much. Just watch your hiking poles and leave a T-shirt or towel on the picnic table.



Havasau Falls

REMINDER

JULY: ANNUAL SOLAR GEAR SWAP & SUMMER BARBECUE

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

Bring your used outdoor gear
Bring a side dish, salad or dessert to pass
Bring a barbecue grill if you can (please contact Allen)

Any questions, please contact Allen Duncan at
programs@solaroutdoors.org.

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

ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST RESULTS

by Rebecca Sweeton

SCENARY

1st Place Dave DeFrance
2nd Place Moe DeFrance
3rd Place Samantha Schafer

ANIMALS

1st Place Moe DeFrance
2nd Place Tim Wellman

PLANTS

1st Place Moe DeFrance
2nd Place Tim Wellman

PEOPLE

1st Place Phil Crookshank
2nd Place Dave Sweeton

HUMOR

1st Place Tim Wellman

NON-SOLAR SCENARY

1st Place Tom Cloffo
2nd Place Jen Tislerics

NON-SOLAR PLANTS & ANIMALS

1st Place Leslie Cordova
2nd Place Jen Tislerics
3rd Place Tom Cloffo

NON-SOLAR PEOPLE

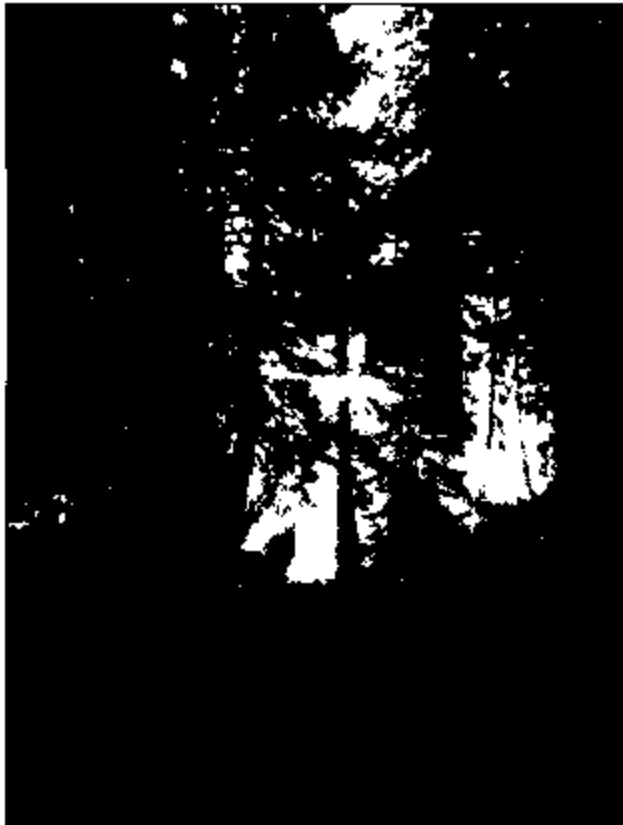
1st Place Jen Tislerics
2nd Place Tom Cloffo

PHOTO-PRO

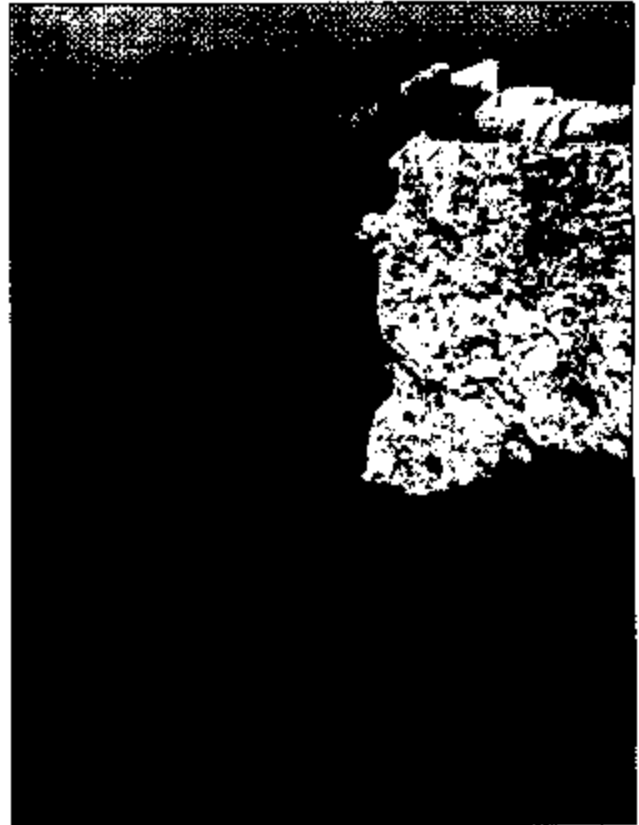
1st Place Karly Overheul
2nd Place Tom Cloffo

GRAND PRIZE

1st Place Moe DeFrance



PLANTS 1st Place: Moe DeFrance



NON-SOLAR PEOPLE 1st Place: Jen Tislerics





SCENARY 1st Place: Dave DeFrance



ANIMALS 1st Place: Moe DeFrance



NON-SOLAR PLANTS & ANIMALS 1st Place: Leslie Cordova



GRAND PRIZE: Moe DeFrance

HIKE & FLOAT ALONG THE BEAUTIFUL MASON TRACT

by Jim Coe

This year we will do another trip where we will set up camp at Caroe Harbor campground off M72, 15 miles east of Graying Friday night. Saturday morning we will drive south to the other end of the Mason Tract pathway leaving our camp and most gear set up. There, at the trailhead we will park our cars then hike North along the pathway 11.3 miles back to the campground. That evening back at camp we'll cook dinner and relax then Sunday morning a canoe livery will bring canoes to the campground and we will load all our gear into the canoes and paddle on the South Branch of the Ausable river down to where we left our vehicles. The paddle will take about 3-4 hours and we may stop for lunch so we should get to our cars by 2:00 or 3:00 then we can head home.

This area is a wilderness area that was set aside to keep it as natural as possible. Both the river and the trail are very nice and should be a great trip.

You should be an intermediate canoe paddler or have

someone with you that is. It is not a considered a difficult river but it has A LOT of tight curves. You should also be in great shape to do an 11.3 mile hike in hot weather, but I am not requiring the backpacking class for this trip.

I do not have costs figured out yet, but will try to reserve some camp sites and the canoes. More to come on the costs and more details. The trip will be on Saturday, August 3 through Sunday, August 5.

I am taking interest sign up at the next meeting and should have costs by then. Or you can e-mail me at jimc36@comcast.net.



SPOTLIGHT ON ELIZABETH SCHWAB

by Rebecca Sweeton



WOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER OF SOLAR?

Since fall of 2003. My first activity was Christmas Carding at Botsford Nursing Home.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH SOLAR?

My friend Katie Stone knew I loved hiking and snowshoeing, none of my friends did and I was wanting company. She also mentioned the various trips that went on and I thought it would be a good way to learn about new places as well.

HOW DID YOU START BACKPACKING?

I'm still a little surprised that's a question I can be asked! When I'd hike and I'd see those poor people with packs, I'd shake my head and pity them. Once I joined SOLAR, taking the Backpacking class seemed like the expected thing to do, so I signed up the spring after I joined. By that time I had also "stumbled" upon Glacier National Park in Montana, on a road trip out west and realized only a limited amount of it could be experienced day hiking. Also hiking in Porcupine Mtns Wilderness State Park in the U.P. (where I think I lived in a previous life!) I happened upon a lone tent miles from the road that was very near The Lake; I thought it would be heaven to be able to do that, realizing something more than day hiking would be necessary. And there were trails there that were too long for my meandering hiking style. I had many doubts throughout the class, despite the great instructors, but by the end realized the work, planning and sacrifices were worth it.

WHAT HAS YOUR FAVORITE TRIP BEEN SO FAR?

It's a very hard decision since I loved them all for different reasons, but I'd have to say Isle Royale. It was SO beautiful and remote. And challenging, but in a doable way. And I saw a moose! I was with a superb group of people also. It was in Sept. and the boat ride back was god awful, the worse since June the Capt said, and even that couldn't

detract from it.

WHAT WOULD YOUR DREAM TRIP BE?

Do you mean, "dream trips" since I can't possibly pick one?! Glacier, Olympic Mtn Park, North Carolina, Alaska and Hawaii. Doing the rest of the trails on Isle Royale. Doing the whole North Country Trail in the U.P. is near the top of the list, even if it takes several trips; and I'm sure I'll be back to my Porkies. Although I've been to "grander" places out west and east and plan on visiting more of them, I always find Michigan pretty magical.

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

No other classes come to mind. It seems there have been quite a few new additions in the last year or so, which is great, like mountain biking, knot tying, car camping and scuba diving.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCE IN SOLAR?

Giving back by helping with the Spring Backpacking class (although I took this year off) and leading trips/activities. And no, Kevin Cotter didn't pay me to say that! I was amazed I had picked up enough knowledge to pass on in the classes, and continued to learn both preparing for them and listening at them. I've "eased" into leading by going to places and doing things I'm familiar with, love and want to share. It's very gratifying to see people having a good time because of my efforts and planning.

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

A great increase in younger and/or newer members stepping up to lead trips, offer classes and run for the Steering Committee. This can only help our growth.

SOLAR PROGRAM SCHEDULE

by Allen Duncan

JUNE: A Glimpse at Bryce, Zion and Grand Canyon National Parks

By: Karen Bates

Did you know that the bottom of Bryce National Park is the top of Zion National Park and the bottom of Zion National Park is the top of Grand Canyon National Park? Karen Bates will present a slide show of her treks through these three fantastic parks after the June meeting. Join us for an arm chair travel that you may want to turn in to reality. Karen's favorite place on earth is the Grand Canyon and she can answer questions for those interested in backpacking there since she has backpacked the "big ditch" several times.

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

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@solaroutdoors.org.

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



SIGN-UP FOR NATIONAL TRAILS DAY 2007!

by Pam Riehl Szakal

Now in its 15th year, National Trails Day (NTD) continues to inspire the public to flock to their favorite trails to discover, learn about and celebrate trails while participating in educational exhibits, trail dedications, gear demonstrations, instructional workshops and trail work projects. In 2006, a record 1,210 events registered with American Hiking Society for national sanctioning.

SOLAR has been participating in National Trails Day for over 10 years. For 2007, National Trails Day will fall on Saturday, June 2 from 9:30am-12pm. SOLAR will work with the Friends of Maybury at Maybury State Park to relocate and improve existing trails.

After the work is done, Friends of Maybury will provide a light lunch and then Peg Campbell, a founding member of SOLAR, has invited everyone to her house for adult beverages and chips. Peg's house is adjacent to Maybury

State Park and she is a member of Friends of Maybury.

So come join SOLAR, give back to Maybury State Park and enjoy a great day outdoors. Event will be held rain or shine. If interested in volunteering, contact Pam Riehl Szakal at pariehl@gmail.com.

- Meet at the park office off of Beck Road, Northville
- Wear work clothes and boots, be prepared for bad weather
- SOLAR will provide work gloves or bring your own.
- Please bring any long handled shovels, rakes, and weeding tools for pulling or scratching invasive garlic mustard
- Bring water, sunscreen, and mosquito repellent.

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.

June 3, 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).

June 9, 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 Heaven's or go have lunch in Milford.

June 17, 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).

June 23, 2007, Saturday 9:30 AM, Brighton State Park. Celebrate the 1st summer weekend. Meet at the Bishop Lake parking lot. Take I-96 west go past 73 take first Brighton exit, go South past downtown Brighton. Local hike leader needed. Go out for lunch afterwards.

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).



TRAIL FLAT BREAD RECIPE

by Craig Kosmowski

I've been using a bread-making machine at home for many years now. (I'm actually on the second, having worn out the first.) To make it even easier to use, I started pre-measuring all the dry ingredients, and storing them in individual containers in the pantry. To make bread, I pull out a container, dump it in the machine, added water, and push start. It occurred to me one day, that I could just grab one of these pre-made mixes, throw it in a ziplock bag, and take it out on the trail with me to make. Thus was born one of my favorite trail foods. Judging from the feedback from others who have tried it, they really like it too! This is a recipe for plain old white bread, the kind I usually take on the trail with me, but I make other types too. I encourage you to try it with any bread recipe. So to satisfy the overwhelming number of requests, here it is:

Ingredients:

- 2 1/3 Cups Bread Flour
- 1/2 Tablespoon Dry Skim Milk
- 1 Tablespoon Sugar
- 1 Teaspoon Salt
- 1 1/2 Teaspoons Dry Yeast

You'll also need later:

- 2 Cups of Water
- A small container of olive oil

Combine the ingredients in a ziplock bag. Lug it into the backcountry with you. When you're ready to prepare it, add water to the bag. Knead it thoroughly. Set bag aside and let it rise for 20 minutes. You can do this in advance of getting to camp if you want, and it will rise before you get there. In cold weather, stuff the bag in your jacket to keep the little yeasties happy. Although it's better if you let it rise a while, I sometimes cook it immediately.

Fire up the stove. (A simmer feature is highly desirable for this, as otherwise it's easy to burn on high heat.) Add a shot of olive oil to a pan or pot and place on the stove. Rub a little oil into your hands. (Clean first please!) Grab a chunk of dough from the bag and pat it out as flat as you can. Slap the dough onto the pan. Slide it around until the dough touches the oil everywhere and flip it. Do the same on the other side. You just want a light coating of oil on the surface of the dough. Let it cook a bit, and when you get some nice browning on the underside, flip it again. When that side is brown, it's done. (A little black is ok too, just don't overdo it.) Repeat process till you're out of dough. Toss around hot bread to your hungry friends who have been smelling the wonderful odor, and laugh as they juggle it. Enjoy!

An "advanced" variation is to make pasties. Prepare some kind of cooked filling in advance (or while dough is rising.) Instant potato mix, dehydrated vegetables, cheese, spices, meat, use your imagination. Make a flattened dough section as above, add filling in the center, and then layer another flattened piece of dough on top. Pinch the edges securely shut. Cook as you would above. Mmm, mmm, good, and if there are any leftovers, they make a great lunch the next day.

NORTH MANITOU ISLAND: APRIL 20 - 22, 2007

by Allen Duncan

No one is quite sure how it happened. The fact is, whether Mike Banks sold his soul to the devil, offered sacrifices or simply made a deal, 15 SOLAR members experienced a weekend on North Manitou Island that they will remember for many years. What were some of the things that made this trip hard to forget? How about having the entire island completely to ourselves? How about perfect weather; no bugs; flowers and trees just starting to bloom and bud? Fifteen people that all seemed to jell very quickly as a group?

The trip started at the Early Bird Café in Leland. Around 8:30, SOLAR members started to arrive at the Early Bird in groups. The morning was crisp, clear, and remarkably windless. Good breakfast food, tea and coffee were consumed before we made our way to the boat.

The water that morning was as flat as you will see Lake Michigan. But not flat in that hot, humid August morning kind of flat...flat in a 45F, low humidity, perfectly blue sky morning. You could clearly see the bottom, silt free in 20 foot deep water. It was "Caribbean flat." We were briefed by the Park Ranger before we departed and were on our way. Some went up top 'or the ride, enjoying the smooth water and brisk air.

Once on the Island we broke up into smaller groups, each with an itinerary. The agreement was to be back at the dock for the return trip by 11:00 a.m. Sunday. There were base campers and hikers.



Friday morning, preparing to break up into groups and head out.

Temperatures Friday pushed into the high 60's with virtually no cloud cover. Everyone filled trash bags with beach debris and marked the locations of trail-blocking, downed trees on maps for the DNR. In the trash category, balloons and streamers seemed to be the most frequent find. More interesting finds included

a road construction barrel, a spare car tire (complete with wheel), and even a couple "messages in bottles." Friday evening concluded with a remarkable sunset on the west side of the island. Friday night was completely clear and in the low 40's. People who slept with a view of the sky were treated to amazing stars. The only occasional mechanical sounds were the low drones of freighters a few miles off the island.



Sunset on North Manitou's west coast.

Saturday's weather was a repeat of Friday's, with temperatures pushing a little higher, maybe into the low 70's. Saturday night was not as cool, dropping into the 50's.

Sunday morning, groups started arriving back at the dock. It had been an amazing April weekend in a special part of northern, lower Michigan. The boat ride back to Leland offered just enough chop to make things entertaining. Buffet lunch at the Bluebird with a killer dessert table and our own private dining room finished the weekend off just right!

Mike Banks set a big standard this year for an April trip to Manitou. I think a lot of us will try again next year to see how it stacks up.



THE RECUMBENT VOYAGER

by Winnie Chrzanowski



The Complete Idiot's Guide to Canoeing and Kayaking
By The Editors of Canoe & Kayak Magazine and Dennis O. Stuharg
Alpha Books, 376 pages
\$18.95

As I contemplate getting back in my kayak after a long winter I find I need some paddling refreshers. **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Canoeing and Kayaking** offers plenty of information to help restore my memory and hopefully improve my skills on the water. If you're new to paddlesports or contemplating getting into paddlesports, this book may offer you some insights into the world of canoes and kayaks.

I admit I don't like being addressed as an idiot, but I ignored my dislike and picked up the book anyway (since it was only a buck at the library's used book sale). When I began reading it, I realized its usefulness. It's informative. It offers advice on buying a boat, paddling instructions, and travel planning tips. The writing, like all of these "idiot" books, is clear, and straightforward.

Along with the text, the book has plenty of illustrations and helpful information on the side. These "sidebars" are inserts with headings of "rocks and shoals" to indicate trouble areas, "the old paddler says" gives tips and tricks about paddling, etc.

The book is divided into six parts: Part 1, *Let's Go Paddling*, goes into detail about what paddlesports are, how to determine the best boat for you, what makes a canoe or kayak, and what the boats are made of. Part 2, *You and Your Paddle*, discusses paddle shapes for canoe and kayak paddles. Part 3, *Gearing Up*, describes how to match gear to boat, the kinds of clothing you'll need, and the all-important PFD (personal flotation device). Part 4, *At the Water's Edge*, discusses how to get your boat in the water and how to make it go. Part 5, *On the Water*, talks about paddling rivers, oceans, seas, and lakes. It offers navigation techniques specific to the different types of water bodies you'll be paddling, and what to do if you find yourself lost in a large body of water. Part 6, *Go Paddling*, gives particulars on how to jump-start your paddling skills and how to plan a paddling trip. If you're interested and can't get hold of someone who's already done it, Chapter 20 tells you how to build your own canoe or kayak.

The appendixes offer a glossary, paddling resources (a list of organizations and associations dedicated to paddling), and a float plan that the paddler can use to identify who is going paddling, where, what, etc.—just the kind of plan hikers would use if they were going on a backpacking trip.

No, we're not really idiots. We just want to learn more about safety considerations, how to dress properly and get the right personal flotation device, improve our paddling techniques, and learn a bit more about canoes and kayaks. This book covers it all in easy to read and follow format. Whatever extras we learn from this book can only make being on the water safer and more fun. Happy paddling.

BIKING THE HART-MONTAGUE TRAIL

by Dave DeFrance

The Hart-Montague Trail State Park is a paved, 22-mile trail (rails to trails pathway) passing through rural, forested lands. Scenic overlooks and picnic areas are located along the route. That's the official promotion line, but there is a lot more.

Five "iron butted" Solarites tackled the HM trail on May 12: Linda Rodrick, Debbie Zuchlewski, Sheila Hardy, Moe and Dave De France. Friday night, Joy at the White River Campground fixed us up with two secluded sites right on the river. After hot showers and cold cereal, we were off to Montague to start the 22 mile ride. Within moments we were transported back into history as we followed the old railroad line through the small towns of western Michigan. As we peddled through the tunnels of trees, we had occasion to stop for fresh asparagus from the field, dairy products right at the farm and great views of the country side.

At the Hart end, we explored the town and shops and got several great recommendations for lunch. We ended up at the Hearthside in Mears but had to forego several other opportunities. Now we had another 20 miles to go to burn off nachos, onion rings sold "by the foot", beer battered asparagus and great soup and sandwiches. Montague is a beautiful old city on the White Lake. We toured there, saw some local art, met some locals and stretched our calves out. Some opted to bike back to the campground for an almost 60 mile day.

Back at camp, we were all able to still move and stay awake for the potluck dinner and campfire chats. We drifted off to the sounds of the wind in the trees, owls getting ready for the hunt and frogs looking for mates. Next morning started with a pancake breakfast and then we packed and split up. Some for tulip time and others for events back home. We were all were happy with our bikes, the trail and our performance. No excuse not to be back there soon.

BACKPACKING IN GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK OR, HOW MARIE AND KEVIN GOT LUCKY

by Kevin Cotter

After visiting Havasu Canyon and rafting one day on the Colorado River, Marie Harrington and I headed to Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP). We wanted to backpack from the South Rim to the Colorado River and back, but had been turned down for a permit back in March because they had all been taken. As a backup plan, we reserved a car campsite on the South Rim for 4 nights beginning Friday, May 4. We would then try to get a walk-in permit but were warned we might have to wait 2-3 days for a permit since May is a popular month for backpacking in GCNP. Our schedule would not permit a wait of more than 1 day, so we were prepared for a weekend of day hikes near the rim.



Marie near the Colorado River

As it happened, the next few days involved outrageously good luck.

First, our rafting trip ran late, so we never made it to GCNP on Friday night. We ended up stopping at a motel in Williams, about an hour's drive away. That was our first piece of good fortune, because a snowstorm blew through the area after we checked in. Imagine our surprise to find snow on the ground Saturday morning! After brushing off our rental car, we headed to the South Rim and checked in at the campground. We then headed to the ranger on duty at the backcountry office and told her we wanted to get on the waitlist for a backcountry permit. She asked me what itinerary we wanted. I quickly rattled off: "South Kaibab trail to Bright Angel campground for 1 night, Bright Angel trail to Indian Springs for 1 night, then hike out Bright Angel trail." The ranger checked the computer, and then informed us we could get a permit leaving tomorrow morning! She then issued our permit, which I took like a winning lottery ticket.

Our other ambition was to have dinner at Phantom Ranch, a lodge at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Dinner seating

is strictly limited and must be reserved, usually well in advance. Riding on our good fortune, we went to check on the availability of meals for Sunday night when we would be at Bright Angel campground. We were told they were sold out for that night, but we could come back at 6:30 the next morning in case there were cancellations. We would then catch a shuttle bus at 7 to the trailhead and begin our hike.

Our next order of business was to replace our hiking poles that were stolen in Havasu Canyon. We went to the nearby gift shop. They had lightweight hiking poles, but what caught our eye were lightweight wooden hiking sticks for \$8. We bought one for each of us. After lunch we spent the afternoon sightseeing the South Rim, taking the free shuttle bus to the overlooks west to Hermit's Rest. Of course I had seen many pictures of the Grand Canyon, but my first view took my breath away. Looking down I saw a huge, colorful maze of plateaus, buttes, ridges, cliffs, and canyons. And we were about to explore just a fraction of that maze!

We had set two alarms to wake us up at 5 am on Sunday morning, but we managed to sleep through both of them. Fortunately, Marie woke up at 5:15 and quickly roused us out of the tent. We packed up and broke camp in record time (without my morning coffee!), and headed to check on meals at Phantom Ranch. Sure enough, they had seats available for their steak dinner that night, and breakfast the following morning. I gratefully pulled a sound of food out of my backpack, and then we caught the shuttle bus to the South Kaibab trailhead.

We had perfect hiking weather, sunny and cool, with current temperatures in the 40s and a forecast high at the bottom in the 70s. The South Kaibab trail is a popular one for hiking down to the Colorado River because it is relatively short at 7.5 miles, easy to follow in spite of an elevation drop of 4800 feet, and allows fantastic views of the Grand Canyon not available from the rim. It is less suited for hiking up because there is no water available on the trail, so between us we brought 7 liters of water. We were in constant amazement as we headed down, looking forward to a steak dinner at the end of the trail. A few hours later we arrived at the Bright Angel campground, set up camp near the Bright Angel creek where we could soak our feet, and later walked by campers making freeze-dried dinners while we sauntered to the Phantom Ranch for a wonderful steak dinner. After dinner we could not resist buying a souvenir: a Phantom Ranch T-shirt that is sold nowhere else, as proof of our visit there. Each T-shirt was sold as a brick shaped package, saving space (but not weight) in our backpacks.

Monday morning, we went back to the Phantom Ranch for

Continued on page 12...

a delicious breakfast of eggs, pancakes, bacon, and coffee. We then broke camp and started the 4.5 miles, 1400 feet up the Bright Angel trail to Indian Springs campground. This was our "easy" day, since we were facing a climb of 3400 feet the next day. After following the Colorado River for a mile, the trail headed into a side canyon, making it easy to follow but lacking the vistas of the South Kaibab trail. We set up camp and soaked our feet in the nearby creek. Around dinnertime, a ranger came by to check our permit, and he recommended hiking to Plateau Point, a flat hike of 1.5 miles to a ledge overlooking the Colorado River. We hiked there after dinner and were rewarded with a wonderful sunset over the Grand Canyon. The best part was watching the canyon walls changing color to deep red to orange as they reflected the last bits of sunlight.



Sunset at Plateau Point

We woke up early Tuesday morning to hike out, leaving camp about 6:30 am. We could see the moon over the South Rim ahead of us. As we headed up, we started to encounter day hikers and mule trains headed downhill. The hikers became more numerous and visibly less fit, a sure sign that we were close to the top. The last mile and a half was a real killer. I remembered that just a few days ago I was looking from the rim at the seemingly endless switchbacks and recalling the notices posted everywhere that canyon hiking is not like any other hiking...the uphill climb is at the end...when one is tired and weary. Many day hikers marveled in our story and shouted out encouraging words like you're almost there! We could see the top but wondered when we would ever get there. Slogging along, we reached the South Rim about 11 am, avoiding the heat of the day. After the ceremonial photo opportunity next to the trailhead sign, we celebrated with a cold beer, headed to the showers, and finally to the car for our next trip to Sedona.



SPRING BACKPACKING 2007: THE NEW HIPPIES

by Eileen Fallon

Well, June is just about here. For many Solarites, that means another Spring Backpacking class has just ended. As one of the backpacking graduates, I'm sure I speak for many in the class when I say that this experience was, if not life changing, at least something I will remember fondly for a long time to come.

The class was made up of people with varying levels of backpacking experience, from the three who said they should be teaching the class, to people like me, who had never backpacked before.

I was impressed, if not a little surprised, at how much I actually got out of the class. The classes leading up to the first practical were a bit tedious at times, but worthwhile nonetheless. From learning new knots (I just love that trucker's hitch), to the different types of equipment, to the reasons not to use a wind screen with certain stoves, to knife safety (which should now include the hazards of carrying a Leatherman tool on the outside of your pack), to how to poop in the woods (nice demo, Chrissy), each class provided valuable information, and answers to questions that many of us had.

The first practical was, to a certain extent, an exercise in endurance, as it seemed the days lasted forever. Even though the location and the sleeping outside portion of the practical were cancelled in the days leading up to the weekend due to a weather forecast of freezing rain, we still did most everything we would have, had the plans not changed. (I still can't figure out the point of the "Mrs. Mumm" exercise. What was that all about? And no, I still don't know her.) Although it seemed to take forever, the "name game" at the end of the first practical was nothing if it wasn't hilarious. What with the caterpillar, the tornado, tsunami, playful cub, the worm and, oh yes, the blade of grass and a tree just a tree, it made for a fun end of the day.



The second practical at Hoist Lakes was more like what backpacking is really all about. The weather was perfect

backpacking weather—sunny in the 60s during the day, no bugs, and cool (ok, downright cold) at night. We learned a lot during those three days. Some things we learned will be useful in future trips, and some may be used for blackmail:

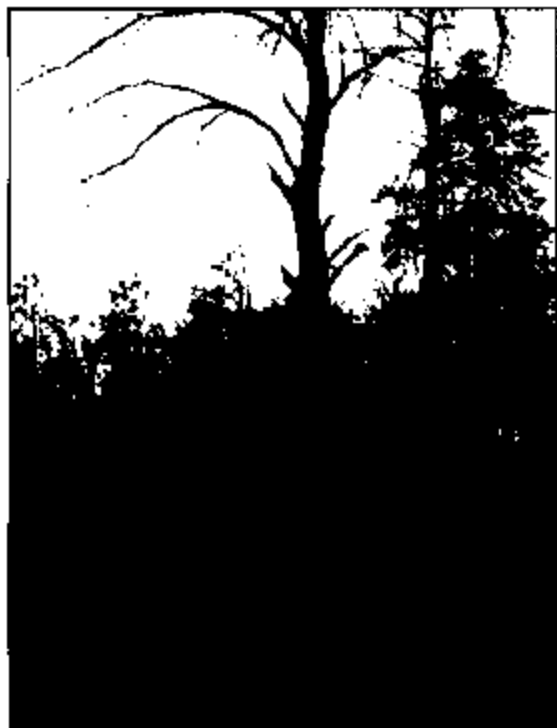
We learned to appreciate nature without having a campfire, but we also learned that we can appreciate nature even more so, and more comfortably, with a campfire.

We learned that looking up into the night sky for a meteor shower while standing up can cause a sore neck.

We learned the importance of at least one person in the group being proficient in wilderness first aid.

We learned that, by staying at the campsite while others go on a night hike, one can serve as a beacon to guide those lost night hikers back to camp.

We learned how to get a Nalgene bottle stuck 30 feet up in a tree, and we learned how incredibly funny it is when it is Mike Banks who gets the Nalgene bottle stuck in the first place. (Mike, do you need a refresher course on how to bear bag?)



We learned that nothing tastes as good as freshly cocked bread after a long day of hiking. (Thanks, Craig.)

We learned that friends who backpack together, despite attempts at being kept apart, can become a single entity.

We learned that existing friends who are kept apart can still have a great time backpacking with new friends.



We learned that woodpeckers make great alarm clocks.

We learned that a deck of cards could easily become the eleventh essential.

We learned that earplugs would have been useful to deaden the symphony of snorers.

We learned that we don't necessarily need a marked trail to backpack.

We learned that bushwhacking is most definitely a team effort.

We learned how beautiful Birch trees can be when the setting sun shines upon them.

In short, we learned that, whether you're younger or older, experienced or inexperienced, man or woman, State fan or Michigan fan, with old friends or with new friends, backpacking is something that everyone should experience at least once in their lives. It brings people together, allows them to commune with nature and see things that are natural and beautiful in this world. It makes the owls and birds sound more harmonious, the trees look more beautiful, and the water taste better. It makes an imperfect world seem, at least for a short period of time, a little more perfect.

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THANK YOU

by Mike Banks

I never had the opportunity to thank the Education Committee for all their hard work, inspiration and counsel over the last couple of years. So please let it be known that the following people were the backbone of SOLAR education.

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| • EJ Brooks | • Larry Mergentine |
| • Lynn Dubay | • Pat Murad |
| • Steve Hoffman | • Judy Petrella |
| • Jim Kadlubowski | • Dennis Phillips |
| • Mike Malon | • Joan Tobin |

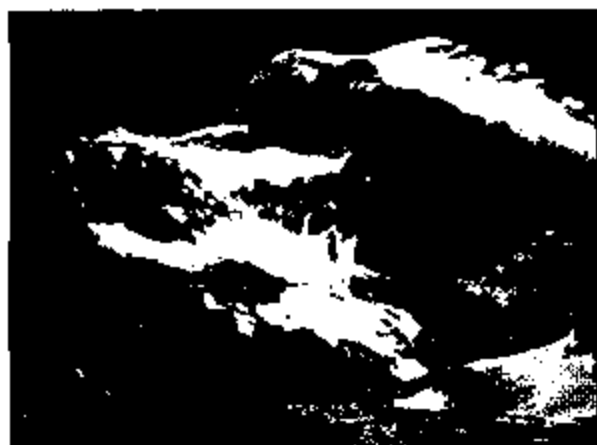
MY ACONCAGUA ADVENTURE, PART 1

by Craig Kosmowski

I departed for a SOLAK mountaineering trip on the morning of 13 Dec 06. The trip lasted 29 days, and turned out to be one of the best adventures of my life. I went with five other mountaineering instructors that included Lol Szakal, (lead instructor and trip organizer), Pam Szakal, Larry Mergantine, Chris Meyers, and Bob Massa.

Aconcagua sits near the border with Chile in western Argentina, and is the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere. Indeed, at 21,841 feet, it is the highest peak outside of the Himalayas. It is part of the Andes, the longest mountain chain in the world.

An expedition of this magnitude was filled with adventure, and it is very difficult for me to decide what to write about. I have a journal from the trip that's over 100 pages long. Almost every day something extraordinary happened. After great thought, I've decided to focus on two especially notable days of the trip, paraphrasing from my journal, and giving additional background information where necessary. The first day, described in this article, will hopefully give you a small sense of what it was like in Argentina. Part Two, will describe my summit day on the mountain, and will appear in next month's issue.



East Face of Aconcagua

Part One - "It's a whole different world down there."

Day 5. Sun. - 17 Dec 06, Mendoza, Argentina - I am definitely not feeling well. Not sleeping before I left must have run me down. (No sleep at all the night before departure, 4 hrs. the night before that.) I must have picked up some kind of bug on the 36 hour journey down here. Traveling by air is like being a cow herded from one gate to the next, and then corralled in your little seat on the plane. The only difference is people are coughing on you, and kids sneezing on you for much of the way.

We had to abort our trip to obtain our climbing permits yesterday, as we got to the permit office 10 minutes after they closed. Luckily, we did find out the office was open

on Sunday, so we set out again this morning. We've gotten several bits of misinformation both before leaving the states, and since arriving. Come to find out we cannot pay for our permits at the permit office. We have to go to a local grocery store! So the procedure is this: Fill out your permit application, get some sort of voucher, go to grocery store, pay, bring proof of payment back to permit office, and finally, get your climbing permit. Besides the inefficiency of it all, there was only one problem: we had to pay in cash, with Argentine pesos. All of us had U. S. dollars, because we had been told specifically that that was the currency they used for permits. More misinformation!

What could we do on a Sunday with all the banks and exchange houses closed? We were scheduled to leave the next morning for Los Penitentes, the last small town near our trailhead for the three day approach hike to base camp. We needed our permits before leaving! We had all filed dejectedly out of the permit office, and were standing on the sidewalk outside when I turned around and went back in. I talked again with one of the women in the office, to try to solve our problem. I said there must be someplace in a town this size that could exchange currency for us. She thought for a moment then said, "Well, you could try the casino." Bingo! We have a winner! She told me it was in the fancy hotel off the central plaza. I thanked her and went back outside with my friends and told them the news. We quickly embarked on our new mission. We had to not only go through all the steps previously mentioned, but now additionally had to get to the casino, and hope they could exchange our currency. All this of course, before the permit office closed again. The Queen/Bowie song "Under Pressure" thumped through my head.

We traveled in town almost exclusively on foot, and this was no exception. We covered the ground fast, and my long legs stretched me out ahead. I arrived at the hotel first, located the casino, went through the metal detectors, and approached the gentleman behind the main desk. I explained our problem, and he phoned down to the cashier's office. Yes, they would exchange our money for us. Of course we had to pay a slightly higher exchange rate than we would have at a bank or exchange house, but it was well worth it.

We all went downstairs into the smoke-filled casino and found the cashiers. They had piles of money to trade with us behind the steel bars. We exited the hotel, and then it was off to the grocery store to pay. The permit fee was 1000 pesos per climber. (About \$330.00.) That is a great deal of money to the people down there, and pulling out a wad like that turns more than a few heads. With our paid receipts in hand, we all made it back to the permit office before they closed. Our ordeal was over. We were now official, with our "Permiso de Ascenso Parque Provincial Aconcagua." A relaxing late lunch helped sooth our stressed souls.

As the day progressed, I continued to feel worse. In the evening, while the others went out for dinner, I decided to stay back at the hotel room, and try to nurse myself back to health. I drank many cups of instant soup and tea, but nothing much was helping. Earlier in the day, I had called Fernando Grajales on his cell phone. (Owner of the guide service that supplied us with mules to get the bulk of our equipment to base camp.) I wanted to know if I could purchase antibiotics over the counter in Argentina. He told me yes, but had another idea. Another one of his climbers was sick and staying at the same hotel. He was sending a doctor over to see him, and wanted to know if I wanted to see the doc also. I said that would be great. It would only cost 100 pesos, (\$31.00) and since I wasn't even sure antibiotics would help with whatever bug I had, a medical exam seemed wise. We made arrangements for the doctor to see me right after he saw the other climber. He would meet me at my room about 10:00 pm.



The Streets of Mendoza

In Argentina, there is a 3-4 hour period in the early afternoon when siesta occurs. Most shops and businesses shut down. People go home from work, they see their families, they go to the plazas and parks, they leisurely take lunch, or they just nap. It is a lovely custom. My friends and I quickly adapted to the routine. For me it was a welcome change of pace from the rushing and stress of our society. One consequence of this however, is that folks down here take very late dinners. At 9:00 pm, people just start to fill a couple tables at restaurants. By 10, they begin to arrive in earnest. It isn't until 11 or midnight that they really fill up. It's not unusual seeing a young couple pushing a stroller with their child down the sidewalk at 1:00 am.

So it was that at 8:30 or 9:00 pm, my friends went out for an evening stroll and dinner. Since I was stuck at the hotel, I began to write Christmas cards to send to family and friends back home. Around 9:45 pm, I heard what I thought were dozens of firecrackers going off in the distance. The sounds got progressively closer. I thought it was some sort of parade or celebration at first, but as the sounds approached, I suddenly realized it was gunfire! What started as dozens, literally became hundreds of shots fired. Worse, the commotion had worked its way through the streets of Mendoza right up to the hotel. My initial instinct was to dive for the floor, but my curiosity/stupidity got the best of me. I made my way to the window of the

2nd floor room I was in, and cautiously peered out one corner trying to figure out what was going on, and hoping the exterior walls were made of concrete. As the mayhem ensued outside, I could hear voices very near, shouting and screaming, and then more gunfire. As I looked out the window, I saw only the darkness of the unit: alley below. I felt as though I was in a war zone. This was not like the gang shootings or occasional police shootings we here about on the news in the U.S., this was more like an all out bloody war! An unimaginable amount of semi-automatic small arms fire, accompanied by shotgun or larger caliber rifle fire, all overlaid with bloodcurdling screams. It was pure insanity.

I became gravely worried about my companions. We always walked to dinner, so they couldn't be far. If they weren't caught up in the horror, or at least witnessing it, surely they could hear the awful sounds echoing through the streets. Then, almost as suddenly as it started, the gun battle ceased. A few shouts, then a single shout, then silence. A dog was barking, but there was nothing else. I strained my ear to hear more, but all I heard was my rapidly beating heart. I still had no clue as to what had happened outside the window of my temporary home. For the last 15-20 minutes, all I had heard was the near constant sound of gunfire and shouting. Now there was only the silence of the night. I sat back down at the table with my Christmas cards and collected myself. Again, I was concerned for my friends and their safety. I didn't know where they went, where they were, or what I could do.

About 10:15 pm., the doctor showed up. Although he, like most people down here spoke little English, and I spoke little Spanish, we communicated quite effectively. (If not painstakingly slow.) After introductions, immediately told him of the gun battle outside. He told me his wife, who was waiting for him in the lobby, had come up and told him about the trouble outside while he was seeing the other sick climber. He told me he had grown up in Mendoza, and up until about 15 years ago, you could walk around town any time of day or night and not have to worry. Today, however, things were different. Although he was in a different part of the hotel at the time of the shooting, I was amazed he hadn't heard a thing.

He began his exam by taking my vitals. I had been coughing periodically, and he spent a lot of time listening to my lungs and chest with the stethoscope. It didn't take him long to tell me I had an upper respiratory infection. (With a little help from a good Spanish/English phrasebook!) He wrote me a prescription for antibiotics and told me to start taking them that night. He said there were all night pharmacies in town, and gave me the location of one nearby. Otherwise, he told me I was very strong, and there were no worries about climbing, but warned me to beware of the dust, especially at the lower elevations on the mountain. He himself had climbed Aconcagua several times in his youth, and had summited twice, so he was very familiar with its environs. I had read about the dust in my research prior

Continued on page 16...

to leaving home. After he made mention of it, I stepped over to my backpack which was on the floor in the room, and dug out a good dust mask I had grabbed from my shop before leaving on the trip. His face immediately lit up and said, "Si, si, muy bien. This is very good."

My comrades and I would soon learn the miseries of the fine dust on the mountain. It clogged zippers, entered closed tents, and generally got into everything, including your hair, ears, eyes, mouth and food. I eventually went on to wear my trusty dust mask during much of the roughly 25 mile, 3 day approach hike to base camp. I even wore it while I slept. Judging from the filth it collected over just a few days, I believe it really helped keep my lungs clean. (There was a price to pay by wearing it however, I had gone from being just a geek, to a total dork!)

As the doc was packing up his medical bag, and preparing to leave, Bob and Chris returned. After introductions, my conversation quickly went to the gun battle. "What gun battle?" they said. I couldn't believe it! They had no idea anything had happened. At that point, I had assumed the entire city was on high alert, and everyone knew what had transpired. I soon learned I was very wrong. After thanking the doc, and saying goodbye, my friends offered to accompany me to the pharmacy. They seemed a bit shocked by my story, and we were all I think a bit nervous about stepping out into the night.

Our destination was only a kilometer or so away. The odd thing was, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. As usual, lots of people were out on the streets at this late hour. People were eating dinner, walking, talking, laughing, and eating ice cream. It all seemed strangely normal. The only thing I saw that seemed odd were two heavily armed policemen that walked briskly by. Their faces looked nervous and shell-shocked. They seemed stressed and in a hurry to get to where they were going.

Down there, they don't let you into the pharmacies at night. When we arrived, there already was a long line stretching across the sidewalk. We stood in the queue and waited. There was a little sliding window where you passed your prescription through to the pharmacist on the other side. We could see several working behind the glass. After filling your order, he'd return, you'd pay, and he'd slip your drugs out the little opening. The whole thing reminded me of the not-so-legal drug deals we've seen images of in the U.S. The boarded up abandoned building with the little hole in it. Buyer passes money through, dealer passes drugs back out. I got to the front of the line and passed in my prescription. The pharmacist returned after a short while, and with some difficulty due to the language barrier, informed me that they didn't have enough of the pills to fill my order. After a brief discussion with my friends, I decided to wait until morning to fill it, as I didn't know if there would be a hassle filling a partial one. Our trip was for naught, and we headed back.

We reached the intersection adjacent to the hotel. Only

a few hours earlier, a huge gunfight had raged on this very spot. In the U.S. whole city blocks would be taped off, and there would be lots of people and flashing lights. Here, however, the street was empty and dark. It was strangely silent considering what had occurred. No police, no detectives, no radio chatter, just the night seeming like any other. We entered the hotel and turned in for the night. It had been a crazy day.

We found out later that a policeman had been killed at the intersection outside the hotel. It was about 150-200 feet from where my room was. I don't know if the bad guys were captured or killed, or if anyone else was hurt. The only other information I could learn was that it all started at a soccer game. The next day I saw a man in the street with a water hose. I think he was washing the blood away.

Even after this tragedy, I never felt unsafe walking the streets of Mendoza. After the incident, I was perhaps a little more alert to my surroundings, a little more wary, but never afraid. As things turned out, I spent about a week in town on my own, and at no time, did anyone ever bother me. I worked for over three years to earn a black belt in karate, and I may have a little more confidence walking around in a foreign place than some people do, but that is not why I felt safe. Generally, these are good, beautiful people, with lovely customs. I had a wonderful time in my interactions with them, and even made some new friends. People down there are warm and genuinely friendly. The few who speak any English love to converse and practice what they know. The food and wine is incredible. It was delightful to soak in their culture, and I feel privileged for having done so. They were kind to me, and I did my best to return their kindness. I would go back in a minute.



At the trailhead with my amigos.

See the July issue of the SOLAR Ray
to read Craig's next installment of his
ACONCAGUA ADVENTURE!

BEACH CLEAN UP NEWS: IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ANSWERED

By Vida Ruggero

This spring's beach clean up was the best April camping weather anyone could have asked for! The beach was cleaner than expected, but we did find more balloons this year than cigarette butts. The group divided and went in opposite directions on the beach. At one point, Carlo and I could not see anyone else in either direction on the beach, what a cool feeling!

A good variety of wildlife was spotted: a whole pack of coyotes crossing 10 by Lesia McQuade and Gregory, wow! Deer, turkey and owls were also spotted. A big brown trout followed Carlo and I along the shore, which was pretty funny since it was opening day for trout fishing! It was great to watch the kids play on the dunes, make forts and play hide and seek. Who says kids don't make their own fun anymore?!

If you were unable to join us, you missed out on some important questions that were answered such as... how do you know something bad is going to happen in a song? What is a kite nerd? How do you play toilet tag? Join the next beach clean up in September and you'll get all the answers and if we're lucky, we'll find the answers to more of life's interesting questions.



The beach clean up crew: The DeFrance's, The McQuade's, friends of the McQuade's, Carlo, Lucky and Coco.



Coco finds a new tennis ball on the beach!

SOLARITES TACKLE THE MICHIGAN GRAND SPRING TOUR

by Dave DeFrance

The MGSF is an annual bicycling event hosted by the Down River Cycle Club. During the 25, 45 and 62 miles routes, you pass through several of the Metro Parks, wind along the Huron River and peddle through many miles of rural areas. The entrance fee includes a dynamic pancake breakfast on the shores of Lake Erie and two other well stocked refreshment stops. We had planned to meet and launch as a group, but Darrell and Denise started at 8 while Cindy, Debbie, and Janet missed the group by 45 minutes late due to a late start, getting lost, and two train stops.

We all fought head winds for the first 13 miles but we were inspired to keep going knowing that a fantastic pancake & sausage breakfast awaiting us at the first official stop. Cindy headed back to the car since her hybrid bike did not do well against the strong wind, and Debbie and Janet continued on to do the 45 mile route. Debbie took a small spill on her bike and is still trying to come up with an interesting and heroic story to explain the road burn on her knee. She and Janet ended up taking a short cut to preserve the day for other activities. No complaints of sore butts, however, later in the day, we definitely needed a nap.

Besides the scenery, we saw many different styles of bikes, from recumbent to kiddie cars to a four seater. Of course the riders varied even more in their appearance and biking styles.

The tour was very enjoyable, although it was quite windy; especially the last part of the ride. Right after the last food stop, we had about six miles straight into the teeth of the wind which wasn't much fun, but may have been the most beautiful part. Overall, we enjoyed it and will probably be back next year. We hope that you can join us.

| BIKER | DISTANCE | BIKER | DISTANCE |
|-----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
| Darrell Ahlberg | 52 | Denise Korsetz | 62 |
| Dave DeFrance | 45 | Maureen DeFrance | 45 |
| Don Wold | 62 | Bonnie Michalak | 45 |
| Joan Westbrook | 45 | Mike Crossman | 45 |
| Cindy Taylor | 26 | Debbie Zuchlewski | 36 |
| Janet Schester | 36 | | |



WHERE HAVE ALL THE HIPPIES GONE?

by Mark Nordhaus

A member of the Spring SOLAR backpacking class, via the class Yahoo group, asked of the class and instructors before the final practical: Where have all the hippies gone?

Was this to posit that there are no hippies today? Was it a cry for the hippies to make their presence known? Or was it a call for all of us to waken the hippie within us? Maybe to bring attention to the fact that sometimes the lighter side of just "being" in the outdoors was often lost.

Some of the group discussed this during the trip May 4-6th at Hoist

Lakes foot trails after watching the lead instructor (name withheld to protect the guilty) climb a tree to retrieve a stuck Nalgene bottle after a less than graceful attempt to demonstrate how to hang a bear bag.

What I heard was "We are still here!" and "We never left!" I never thought of myself as a hippie, so I just listened. But throughout the weekend, I saw myself identifying with the hippies of today.

After the practical, I felt the need to reply with my new connection to the question. I didn't feel I was qualified to answer the question when it was asked, but felt I could at least report what I saw and learned while hanging out with, hiking trails with, sharing a stove with, and learning from hippies.

And the question of the weekend was answered:

Where have all the hippies gone?

They are still here! They just have children, careers, and there are not enough remaining functional VW Microbuses to make them as visible. Pot is not as "in" as it once was. Styles have changed and they know the benefits of modern outdoor clothing, so they don't wear as much denim or sewn in peace signs anymore.



But they still gather to pass on their ways to anyone willing to learn. Just last weekend there was a gathering of them up north at Hoist Lakes' foot trails. They followed new trails, found new paths, saw things they'd never seen before. Like an old hippie climbing a tree as a bear would after a hippies food. A new class of hippies was set out upon the world. Maybe younger, maybe only almost as hip, but still learning more of the hippie ways. It will take time before the new class finds their own way as individuals, but the learning goes on, and they will carry on the traditions of the hippie.

So where have all the hippies gone? They never left, they are still here, they just evolved to take on an evolving world. They went underground to try to change the world from the inside. They still commune with nature and see the beauty in maintaining what is natural and beautiful. They protest in different ways, they vote, they make their stand.

Congratulations to the new hippies! Thanks to the old hippies willing to spend their time to pass on their knowledge and ways. Peace, man.



SOLAR 2007 CALENDAR

| JUNE ACTIVITIES | | | | | |
|---|-----------|--|--|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 6/2 | SAT | National Trails Day Cleanup** | Waybury State Park | Pam Rehl Szakal | parieh1@gmail.com |
| 6/2 | SAT | Celebration** | Southfield, MI | Mike Malon | mmalon1303@W@comcast.net |
| 6/5 | TUE | GENERAL MEETING | Colony Hall | Lou Szakal | Everest2008@comcast.net |
| 6/5 | TUE | PROGRAM: A Glimpse at Bryce, Zion, Grand Canyon National Parks | Colony Hall | Allen Duncan | allenduncan@aggienerwork.com |
| 6/9-6/10 | FRI/SAT | Camping & Free Sailing Lesson | L of Michigan Sailing Club, Dexter | Vida Ruggero | rageti@hotmail.com |
| 6/15 | SAT | Solstice Sunset Canoe Paddle** | Heavner Canoe Rental, Proud Lake | Margaret Martin | mpluscat@hcmail.com |
| 6/22 | FRI | Summer Solstice Kayak Paddle** | Lake St. Clair | Chuck Smith | chryansmit@aol.com |
| 6/29-7/1 | WKND | Kid-Mandatory Backpacking Trip** | Manistee River Trail | Kevin Cotter | solar@wowway.com |
| 6/30 | SAT | Summer Moonlight Canoe Paddle and Motorcycle Ride** | Heavner Canoe Rental, Proud Lake | Margaret Martin | mpluscat@hcmail.com |
| 6/30-7/4 | MULTI | Summer Trip | Leland, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Frankfort | Mike Hobbie | mhobbie@ford.com |
| JUNE CLASSES | | | | | |
| 6/2-6/3 | WKND | Canoe Carrying Practice | Rifle River | Mark Speece | mspeece@midwaync.edu |
| 6/9 | SAT | Introduction to Kayaking | Heavner's Canoe Rental, Milford | Matt Dalton | mdalton@ameritech.net |
| 6/19, 6/21, 6/26, 6/28, 6/30 | MULTI | Wilderness First Aid | TBA | Mary E. Price | mehildet@sbcglobal.net |
| JULY ACTIVITIES | | | | | |
| 7/2-7/19 | MULTI | Scotland Trip** | Scotland | Don Wold | dowold12972@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@aggienerwork.com |
| 7/20-7/21 | MULTI | Backpacking Trip | Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia | Natalie Jewell | woodsromen@yahoo.com |
| 7/21-7/22 | WKND | Canoe Float | Manistee River, Crayling, MI | Tom Clifton | mcmountainman@yahoo.com |
| AUGUST ACTIVITIES | | | | | |
| 8/3-8/5 | WKND | Hike and Float | Manistee River Trail | Jim Cox | JimCox@comcast.net |
| 8/7 | TUE | GENERAL MEETING | Colony Hall | Lou Szakal | Everest2008@comcast.net |
| 8/7 | TUE | PROGRAM: TEA | Colony Hall | Allen Duncan | allenduncan@aggienerwork.com |
| 8/11-8/13 | MULTI | Canoeing | Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario | S. Smetzer/P. Crookshank | ssmetzer35@hotmail.com |
| 8/11-8/19 | MULTI | Kayaking and SCUBA Diving** | Tsbermory, Ontario | Chuck Smith | chryansmit@aol.com |
| 8/17-8/19 | WKND | Canoeing and Camping | Pere Marquette River | Mary Rogich | mrodev@yahoo.com |
| AUGUST CLASSES | | | | | |
| 8/15, 8/22, 9/6, 9/13, 9/20, 9/22, 9/23, 9/27, 10/5, 10/7 | MULTI | Beginning Backpacking Class | Southfield/Pinkney/Pictured Rocks | Carol McCrife | cmccrife@sbcglobal.net |
| UPCOMING ACTIVITIES | | | | | |
| 9/28 | FRI | Full Moon Canoe Paddle** | Heavner Canoe Rental, Proud Lake | Margaret Martin | mpluscat@hotmail.com |
| 9/29, 10/11-10/14 | SAT/MULTI | Women's Backpacking Workshop | TBA | Pam Rehl Szakal | parieh1@gmail.com |
| 10/3, 10/10, 10/17, 10/19, 10/21 | WED/WKND | Search and Rescue | Eastpointe | Tom Hayes | thomashayes@wideopenwest.com |

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@solaroutdoors.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 (June 15 for the July issue). Electronic documents only. If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Sweeton at rayeditor@solaroutdoors.org.

STEERING COMMITTEE

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| President: Lou Szakal | Vice President: Cindy Taylor |
| Secretary: Michelle Delaporte | Treasurer: Carol McCrinie |
| Activities: Kevin Cotter | By-Laws: Chuck Smith |
| Education: Sarah Kirkish | Equipment: Rob Schwenke |
| Historian: Pam Schmelzer | Membership: Mary Price |
| Programs: Allen Duncan | Public Relations: Heather Hall |
| Ray Editor: Rebecca Sweeton | Webmaster: Dave Sweeton |

PRESIDENTS AT LARGE

Mike Banks | Leslie Cordova | Aoe DeFrance | Al Fylak
Steve Gardner | Bill Halvingis | Cindy Harrison-Felix | Tom Hayes
Doug Lanyk | Larry Martir | Joan Hettinger | Tom Olofo
Joan & Rob 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's 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, McCrinie, Elizabeth Schwab, and Atr Tislerics

Visit our website: www.solaroutdoors.org



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