

ECOEE 2007 Newsletter
2nd Edition

Journal Entry

9/5/07

I woke up early this morning to think that I must still be dreaming. As my eyes and brain tried to focus on the line of fire about ten yards away, I figured this must be a nightmare. At first I laid back down thinking this was true, but quickly got back up as I wondered how I can go back to sleep if I was dreaming. I was not dreaming. There were little dots of white light that I soon realized were headlamps of people scrambling to create a firebreak. How is it possible that I slept through the screams and orders yelled out by Jeff or Jennie? I had to be the cool guy that night by sleeping way out from the group and thus I did not hear the initial reactions and scramble to put it out. For a moment I watched as the fire slowly crept through the area where my comrades were previously sleeping. My initial thought was that I was the only surviving Econian and that I must live on the legacy. I could hear the firemen take their positions as I hurriedly gathered my things that in retrospect did not matter more than my life.

Fortunately, it was a night with dead wind and the fire moved very slowly, only devouring a small patch of the forest in which we were sleeping. I made my way out to the front of the Summit Adventure building, thinking how could this happen on our first night. I saw people I did not recognize and hesitantly asked if they knew where my group was, expecting a response that I did not want to hear. Their response quickly took care of my fears. "Oh they are just around the corner" Whew! I

checked my watch and it was about half past 5 in the morning. This was going to be a long day. We sat there and watched the fire and the firemen, our minds filled with questions, wonder, and awe at the power of nature.

Things settled down after an adrenaline pumped breakfast with people reliving the experience that took place hours before. Soon, however, it was back to business as we only have a few more days to get ready for our trip in the backcountry wilderness. The day was hectic but ran smoothly with Mikey as our fearless FOD. We had an interesting talk with Tom Smith, executive director of Summit Adventure. He let us in on the inner workings of the agency and overall it was very intriguing and thought provoking. Laundry and homework were the focus for the day, well at least my day. Food was great, as always. The weather here in sunny California was.. well sunny.

Quotes:

Breakfast: the frog does not drink up his own pond...or burn in our case..

Lunch: Carpe Diem (Seize the Day)

Dinner: Standing on the hill of my mountain of dreams.. telling my self it's not as hard, hard, hard as it seems

-Dan Legris



A Different Kind of Education

Dale Maxson

“I’ve got a feeling, a feeling deep inside, oh yea,” that our experience with ECOEE will stick with us for a long time. The style of education we are going through is what you would consider “Experiential Education.” One phrase that is linked with Experiential Education is “Taking the exam before you get the lesson.” This tends to make your progress permanent.

One exam we had during the passed 28 days was our camping skills. We were all dependant on being able to cook for ourselves, set up our own tents, hang our own food, filter our own water, tie our own knots, or find someone really nice that might help you out along the way. Since we were dependant on these skills, and independent from our instructors, the speed at which we learned was crucial.

Along the way we might pick up tips on how to do these things better. After about 1 week in the back country we got a lesson on how to bake. By that time we had all had a chance to get familiar with the backpacking stoves, and what you can cook, so with that little lesson on twiggy fires and baking we were able to verify what we’d experienced and take it a little further. Soon after that lesson nearly everyone was trying their hand at bread baking and we were able to enjoy making our familiar dishes such as pizzas, cinnamon rolls, and Jeff even made a quiche!

Through this process we transformed into super-camping maniacs. We’d get the experience on our own, then we’d ask the questions: “Why does it work this way? Why didn’t it work this way? How can I do it

better? Etc...” The process hasn’t just been applied to skills such as mentioned, but also to things like leadership. Since we take turns being Leader of the Day, or Facilitator of the Day, we get chances at developing and gaining experience.

The importance of all this is that it couldn’t be done effectively in the classroom. Sure we may occasionally give presentations in class, or create lesson plans, but the experience isn’t nearly as meaningful since we aren’t dependant on our performance for our day to day living. The point is that if we give a bad presentation in a classroom the worst that will happen is we get a bad grade. If we don’t pick up on the little skills of outdoor living and leadership, we might go to bed with an empty stomach.



Journal Entry:

Josh

September 17, 2007

Well we moved from the Balls area to Lower Jackass yesterday and on to Upper Jackass today. Betsy was our LOD and Brian our scout. The hike wasn’t too bad although we ended up a little bit out of the way, which made for a good teachable moment for Jeff. It was triangulation only without three points, maybe it was just angulation. Either way it showed us close to where we were on the map. My tent-mates, Brian and Cody, and I made some killer

A gratin potatoes and beans. It's probably going to be a rough night in the tent because of our dinner. Actually I am writing this journal a day late and I can tell you that it was a rough night in the tent. There was a storm brewing in our stomachs all night and it made for plenty of noise to scare the bears away. Sorry to bring this up Brian but you did break your camera today. Not exactly a funny part of the day but memorable nonetheless. An early bedtime tonight because tomorrow we are leaving at 7 so we can summit Madera Peak. Go Cubs!!



Alex Barajas
RPTA 446
10/6/07

Eye Opener? Oh, For Sure!

I can remember the spring semester of '07 at Western. All of ECOEE were at Horn Field Campus doing on group building stuff and Jeff asked the group a question towards the end of the day. He said, "What goal do you want to achieve after you complete ECOEE?" I remember not taking a long time to think about my response. Keep in mind that at the time I was physically active, running at least five times a week and lifting weights. I told the group, "I want to be proven wrong that backcountry will not take it out of me. I confident that my body will be able to throw all challenges at me!" Sounds

pretty cocky, huh? Well, this is my recap of the whole experience.

I thought that I would have no problem as far as the physical aspect of it goes. Man, was I proven wrong to the ninth degree! There is only one other experience I can closely relate this too. It is when I was taking creatine and running every day of the week. I ran so much that I gave myself terrible shin splits. Backcountry slowly but surely began to do this to me over the entire course of 28 days. Everyday, pains in my knees grew and I started to feel like my father at the young age of 23. At debrief, after the expedition, I shared with the group that I felt that my heart is into this whole thing but I do not think my body is. Not only was the physical part of things exhausting but the mental part of things I ever even imaged would have of imagined being grueling also.

My first experience as Leader of the Day (LOD) in backcountry will definitely be a learning experience for all the rest of my future LOD days. I am a very task oriented person. We walked down a dangerous part of a chute with our helmets on and our leader Jeff scouting the way down. When we finally reached the bottom, the first thing I wanted to do was to put down our packs and begin with lessons in 20 or 30 minutes from when we arrived. I forget to remind you that the whole time walking down, the day had bad cloudy overcast and a cold front had moved through. I was so worried about getting lessons done and out of the way I had not even realized something that could have been potentially dangerous to the group- the weather. Up to that point, I thought my "bigger picture" was pretty big to the fact that I should have seen a hazard like that a mile away. Right at the moment, I realized that my "bigger

picture” was not so big. It makes me want to thank Jeff for teaching me something new everyday as far as factors that could be a risk or hazard to our group.

Now, after the 28 days in backcountry are said and done with, I have come to the comprehension that I might not be certifiable at this time to become an outdoor leader to lead 7 people for ten day in the wilderness safely. I am not disappointed because I know now how hard it is and it makes me respect other outdoor leaders around the country for what they are doing. This includes Jeff and Jennie. I’m glad that I will be able to spend another two months with Jeff and be able to receive more knowledge and how I can apply that knowledge in my life.

Reaction/Reflection:

Josh

Journaling is something that I’ve never been too big on. When I thought of journaling I thought of a girl writing in her diary. When I knew for sure that I was going to be going on ECOEE, I realized that it would probably be a good idea to have a journal for this trip. I think it was because I knew this was going to be one of the most important things that I’ve ever done personally. I think I understood that ECOEE was going to be one of those things that I’d never forget.

I guess I have some pretty high expectations for ECOEE. I see it as a great opportunity for me to experience plenty of personal growth. I think that the best way to learn anything is by constant repetition and reinforcement. The more you hear, see, or read about something, the more you think about it and the better you learn about it. When it comes to my writing in my journal, I

first experience something, then reflect on it, and finally transfer it to writing in my journal. That is three times that I think about my experience and what I was feeling during it. I am also forced to think about how the experience affected me. By doing this I think about what I learned from it. Throughout this process of experience, reflection, and transferring into words on paper, I actually learn more about myself as an individual.

So far, journaling has made me look at some of the decisions that I have made and has helped me realize what thoughts or feelings I had at the time that contributed to why I made a certain decisions. On an expedition such as ECOEE there are plenty of opportunities for us participants to make decisions that not only affect us personally but the group as a whole and the individuals within it. This makes each decision more important and therefore requires a little more thought. I am learning a lot on this long travel workshop because I am constantly looking back at the decisions that I have made and experiences that I have had and using them to gain a fuller understanding about myself.

Outdoor Education:

Cody

My outdoor education topic is insects. There are over one million species of insects and over 100,000 thousand species live in North America alone. Insects fascinate me and they are everywhere and affect so many different people, places, and things everyday. They are the largest bio-mass in the world. And what is so interesting to me is that spiders are not insects. But I also enjoy teaching and learning about spiders. I have given two teachable

moments to our group on spiders alone. Teachable moments are times when you come across let's say a wolf spider. I would gather the group around and then proceed to tell you about its food, its home, its predators and prey, and maybe a few interesting little facts about the spider itself. And if there are any questions I will hopefully be able to answer them for the group, or at least look it up in one of my books and get back to the group with the correct information. Some haven't gone that well but others have.

When the group was in the Badlands of South Dakota, we came across a burrowing wolf spider who was very close to his hole. I didn't know much about those spiders then but that triggered me to go and learn about them, so I know the next time I cross one I will be able to give a little bit of information about it.

I have seen an insect every day we have been out in the Sierra Nevada's. And probably at least that many even when we haven't been. Insects are everywhere, so you think they would be easy to teach about; but sometimes it is hard to narrow down a specific species or even what type of insect it is.

I am loving learning about insects, even though it is hard for me if someone just brings me an insect. I have to usually look it up in my books but if I am helping people learn and learning myself, it is a good thing.

Journal Entry

9-20-07

Mmm...snowday! Some of my fonder memories of childhood are of looking out my attic/bedroom window to find that this meant a few things to me then:

It meant it was time to bundle up, time to drink cocoa, time to eat chili,

time to go into the woods, and time to go sledding. Sometimes it even meant time to cancel school.

When the snow and cold comes, everything gets quiet. The air crispens up; you can hear for miles. I like to be sitting in a tree next to Salt Creek, nodding off in the cool, only to be awoken by the crash of deer breaking the ice as they continue to cross the creek, as they do every morning, now in spite of the seemingly harsh conditions. In a land that may at first appear dead you can find life still persisting, as evidenced by the tracks in the freshly fallen snow.

Snow this time gave me those same feelings. Although you must be much more cautious in the mountains, since Mom isn't making you cocoa and you are carrying your home on your back, I still felt that same excitement as I pulled on another wool sweater.

A few new memories to associate with snow:

- Freshly cooked granola
- Sierra Nevada Ice Cream
 - Vanilla
 - Cocoa Chocolate
 - TANG Sherbet
- High altitude mountain snowball

fight

In general I do love all parts of life, but the snowy cold parts have proven to hold a special place in my memory.

-Dale



28-Day Backcountry Reflection
The 18-Point Curriculum and
Evaluations:
Dan Legris

Ok so we spent pretty much 28 straight days in the backcountry wilderness of the Sierra Nevada's, but what was the point? Well, to become certified outdoor leaders of course. Simple you might say to yourself. One could easily accomplish this over the span of a month in the wilderness. False. This was no walk in the park ladies and gentlemen. Not only were we succumbed to the forces of nature and stripped of all luxuries, which were previously thought of as God-given rights such as plumbing, refrigerators, pizza, television, newspapers, and toilets; but also we are supposed to be learning at the same time. This may not seem like much at first to a typical bystander, but it adds up over the span of a month, believe me. Some may be asking now if I regret this decision or have come to a conclusion that this lifestyle may not be for me. Allow me to answer this question with this statement; I loved every minute of this experience.

I believe I can speak for everyone when I say that at some point of this experience we struggled, were challenged, frustrated, disappointed, or to put it in a RPTA 111 sense, going way beyond our flow. Reflecting on it now, it is ok for that to happen because it is all apart of the experience. Growth lies beyond our comfort zone. The WEA curriculum, although I do not feel as though I have conquered, I feel as though I have come along way in regards to my leadership and decision-making. Our peers and instructors have evaluated us and now it is our job to use this invaluable tool to refine our skills so

as to complete our journey to become certified outdoor leaders. I know I am ready for the challenge.

Experiences
-by Michael Evert

Everyday you can learn a new skill and a new lesson can be taught. A new experience can be gained and a new memory can be formed. That's how my whole time in the backcountry felt. Everyday was a building day up to what is called final. Final is the last couple days of our trip where our instructors leave us and we are to find our way back to the vans or meeting place. We use the skills, experiences, and memories we earned and learned to help us through these couple days. This is also a great time to find oneself and sit back and reflect on what you have learned. I learned to be more patient unless you are losing sunlight and losing it fast. Being a team member is better then trying to be the team leader. Some things so beautiful should stay beautiful and not touched because everyone should enjoy them. Bears are harmless and squirrels love your food. I learned to protect what you love and never harm what doesn't harm back. Always trust your group and always trust the map, neither lie. Most of all I learned that an experience like this would never go away and never leave my memories. This course has opened up so many doors for me and I cannot wait to explore each and every one.

Newsletter #2:
Greg Rolf

When I was sitting on top of a granite rock in the Sierras I started to wonder about the Sierras and the real world or

plastic world as Jeff likes to call the outside world. Since we have had no connection with the plastic world I started to wonder about my family and friends. I wondered if the war was still being fought by teenagers and people in their twenties. This is sad to me because I have now just realized how much I have been missing out of life ever since I have come to these mountains. I realized that I need more than 28 days to get the full experiences of the Sierras in the Ansel Adams wilderness. I found out that I would need a life time to explore the mountain tops, the bottom of the stream beds and the ridges that seem to go straight up into the great blue sky. The mountains here look so tired. Massive boulders have broken off from a constant up push from the mantle below. I look at these mountains only to be in more wonderment than the day before. I look at Ritter and the Minarets and I am fascinated and put my imagination to work and question how they were formed. Were the mountains formed slow or fast in the sense of a geological formation? How much has the weather changed these mountains? What affects have people had on these mountains? These are only a few of the questions that I ask myself when looking at the mountains in the Sierras. Ritter looks like it has been slowly pushed up from the earth since it has a broad base and ridges that look like a stair case while the Minarets look like they were forced out of the ground with one big push from below. A quote that has stuck with me is "Only the Mountains and Earth live forever."

Reflection of the Backcountry

Betsy Williams

When I initially signed up for ECOEE, almost a year ago, I felt I had a significant amount of outdoor experience to bring to the table to be a strong member of the team for our 28-day backcountry trip. I had spent many summers backpacking in Northern Wisconsin, Western Michigan and parts of Canada. I thought I had not only the technical skills down pat, but the mindset of being able to hike all day was there for me, too. While it is great to be positive, there were factors that I had not even considered when it came down to hiking in the mountains of California. The biggest problem I encountered was the elevation difference with the 75+ lbs of weight in my backpack and it continued to be a problem most of the way through the expedition. For those of you who have never been affected by elevation, it makes it very difficult to breathe and wears you down much faster than normal hiking on flat terrain. This made me frustrated very quickly and I felt as though I was not cut out to handle the course. Not since horseback riding lessons at the age of seven have I wanted to "quit" something due to my lack of skill.

The feeling of not being able to do something that you love is a bittersweet feeling. While on one hand, you are humbled, and it makes you work all that much harder, you also are left with the bad taste of defeat. When something appears easy for others and so difficult for you, the activity starts to lose the pull it once had on you. Sadly, about half way through our backcountry expedition, I had stopped enjoying hiking. I still enjoyed the "camping" aspect of it- that of reading maps, cooking under the stars and sleeping in tents with people I would not trade for anything, but there was still that feeling

of loss. As I am sure many of you readers know, the minutes can feel like hours when you are not enjoying yourself.

Luckily, the last week of the course also changed my course of thinking. While we began to prep for the portion of the course called “final expedition”, my spirits began to lift again. Final is the part of the expedition that is completed without instructors- where the students can show off their skills as individuals. My patrol, of myself and five other students, was able to plan our hiking route out of the woods and Jeff and Jennie would not be with us for one part of it- nor would they tell us if our routes were good or bad. The more we started to plan the more the feeling of love for what I was doing came back. When our planned hike out started I found myself laughing with my group and enjoying what I was doing again! I was so happy that I was able to leave the backcountry with a feeling of uplift, and being excited. I am not sure if the freedom changed my mind or if it was the beautiful mountains that I was leaving behind- but I am thankful for whatever altered my thoughts.

While my experience in the backcountry was very difficult at times, I am grateful for the opportunity to have gone through it with the people and instructors I did. I hope that at some point everyone had the chance to take part in something that challenges not only their body, but their mind and soul as well.

Outdoor Education
Brian Rittenhouse

Outdoor Education, what I have seen and what I have taught is what I would like to talk about today. Outdoor Education is the teaching of the

environment using many different techniques to reach you participants. I would like to talk to you about one of the outdoor education facility we visited, and I would like to talk about what I have taught so far along the way.

Teton Outdoor Science School (TOSS) was one outdoor education facility that really had an impact on me. It was located in Jackson Hole Wyoming and is a relatively new facility. It is using state of the art technology in combination with environmentally friendly material, which makes one fascinating facility. It is located in a valley where there is plenty of wildlife and beautiful scenery. We met with Jack, the Executive Director, for a tour and questions. He talked all about TOSS and what programs they had. One that stuck out to me was their Journey School. It is somewhat like a privet school that uses Place-Based Education. This is a type of teaching that is really hands on. Students learn about topics in that environment. If they are learning about elk in the Tetons, they will take a trip to the Tetons to view the elk in their natural habitat. It seems like TOSS is a place that is challenging the old ways of teaching and using new style, Place-Based education.

My outdoor education topic for ECOEE is predators. Some of the predators that we have seen along the way, that I have taught on, are bears and coyote at Yellowstone. When we were at the Yellowstone Institute, off in the distance about a mile, there was a Grizzly Bear. This was a great opportunity for a teachable moment, an outdoor education teaching style, on bears. Did you know that a Grizzly can climb trees only for about the first year of its life? After the first year their claws get too long and they can no

longer grip the tree. I also talked about Mountain Lions in the Ansel Adams Wilderness. A Mountain Lion, in a harsh winter, can starve if it cannot get more than one meal out of its prey before the carcass freezes. The reasons being that their teeth are meant for slicing meat, and they have a hard time chewing frozen meat. These are just a few of the interesting things that I have learned and have shared with the group.

Ryan McLaughlin
The Newsletter (446)

It feels very strange to finally be back in what Jeff refers to as the Plastic World. I am happy to be back. One never really is reverent to the porcelain throne, which we pass and use daily until one is deprived of its use. The modern world is not such a bad place; the ease with which any modern American passes through this world is incredible when compared to the life lived in the backcountry. The Ansel Adams Wilderness, the portion of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range in which we stayed, was one of the most beautiful places that I had ever seen. To wake up and look down on a valley floor stretching off for miles into the distance, fading into the mist is something that every person in this world should experience. In the same breath the life in the wilderness is a very, very hard one. The weather can be extremely volatile, switching between 85 degrees and not a cloud in the sky one day and driving snow the next morning piled up over a foot. Being prepared for all of these climates takes more than just a versatile wardrobe, but also a very resilient attitude. Often dragging my body out of that sleeping bag in the morning was the hardest part of my day. Moving from the relative warmth of the niche carved in the tent, between your slumbering cook group, is an arduous task. We arrived at the end of our journey and seeing our vans and trailer felt very eerie. I felt as if I was a caveman, staring in wonder at the mystic metal object that appeared before me. The smell of exhaust and the roar of the F-350 15 passenger van was so alien that ones senses seem under attack. I will never forget that day. I already miss the feeling of that place but I know that I will never attempt to live

out in the wild for that long again. I was happy to have it end but I am sad to see it go.



The Near Fatal Bear Hang

Every great tale needs a little back-story and explanation. What is a bear hang? It requires a rope and nearly every smelly object that you have in your possession. Meaning all your food and toiletries. You smell as well but you don't hang yourself. The objective of the bear hang is to put all your smelly objects high enough in a tree so a bear can't stand up and eat all your food. Hence the phrase "bear hang." Now hanging food needs to be at least twelve feet off the ground so your branch needs to be at least thirteen feet high. Now not every tree has that perfect bare limb that sticks out perpendicular to the trunk at that magical thirteen feet so in many cases you must settle for something less than perfect. That day was one of those less than perfect days.

It was the end of our first major hike in the backcountry and we were staying near Lower Jackass Lake and yes that is the real name of the lake. I was in a cook group with Dan and Mike and it was that time of the day to cook and do the bear hang. I, believe it or not, volunteered to throw the bear hang that day. I grabbed our seventy-five foot rope and walked off uttering that

horrible phrase, "I'll be back in just a minute".

I looked around and found a limb that I thought was suitable and began preparing my rope for the toss. To prepare, I grabbed a long rock, put a clove hitch around it and added an overhand follow through to top it off. (If you don't know what those knots are, it basically means that that rock was attached to the rope and it wasn't going anywhere). My limb was about twenty feet high with a bunch of smaller twigs and limbs around it. The tree was on a small rise about three feet high, (this piece of information will come in later).

I did a few warm-up windmills, gave the surrounding area a quick glance to make sure that nobody was watching, and threw. Short. Gathered up the rock and threw again, short again. I thought to myself, "alright, this time it is going over!" I reared back and launched that thing...and it just went over. (Just to let you know it is a lot harder to throw something with a rope attached. Yes, you probably already knew that but I need to defend my throwing skills). Anyway the rock just went over but unknown to me the rope had lodged itself in a v of another branch. It had also gotten tangled in several smaller twigs if you want to be technical. I started flicking the rope so the rock would slide to the ground, but the bark was too coarse and the rope too fibrous and the rope got stuck.

No worries I thought all just pull it back over the branch and try again. I pulled and sure enough the rock got caught. Mildly frustrated I pulled harder, nothing. I started yanking and still nothing. Rather annoyed now, I rapped the rope around my hands and started throwing my 200 plus pounds into it. The branch bent but nothing more. I

started pulling and tugging from every available angle, I even went so far as to stand on a fallen tree and lean back till I was parallel to the ground hoping my falling weight would free the ensnared rope. Nothing, save the limb bending into a smile; mocking me.

At this point I was in such anger that I had to walk away. (Just to let you know punching a tree only hurt you). After eating supper I came back; too proud or embarrassed to ask for help. I grabbed the rope and again pulled and tugged from every angle, and again nothing but the smile. I thought to myself, "Time to get serious." I grabbed the rope and walk over to the rise that the tree was on and held on with both hands. I knew that when I swung out the rock would be coming down after me but at the moment I didn't care. I wasn't going to be the guy that couldn't get the rope down from the tree and climbing wasn't an option. With that in mind and my pride on the line, I took a breath and swung out, and to my surprise swung right back! "No way! I thought. I walked back up the rise put a slip knot in the rope and put that around my foot.

Now I knew that this was getting into the grounds of really stupid but I just had to get that rope down so I looked both ways and swung out again. About midway through the swing and taunt rope went slack! The rock was coming after me! With some quick processing I thought I'm swinging North and the rock should be following the rope so if I run West I shouldn't get hit. (Sounds right, doesn't it?) I took off, went about ten feet when some of the rope that was near the top fell across my right shoulder! I said, "oh, shoot!" or something to that effect and dove to my left. I hit the ground as I hear the thud of the rock hitting the ground.

I sat there thinking, “wow, I can see the headlines now, ‘Bear hang more dangerous than bear.’” Snapping out of the daze, and before I could think to much on how close that had been, I grabbed a new rock, found a new tree, and got the rope up and over in under five minutes. Mission accomplished.

I think I hold the record for longest ECOEE bear hang this year, one hour and thirty minutes give or take. The moral of the story is this, throw the rock farther and/or don’t tie such good knots when doing a bear hang!

Until next time, God
bless,

Daniel Buren
A.K.A. “Alpine”



Reaction/Reflection:

Well we just finished our 27 days in the Ansel Adams Wilderness and I have to say that there was a lot of learning that took place in the last 4 weeks that happened on a lot of different levels. I went into the trip with some expectations, but mainly I went into it with an open mind. I knew that I was ready to experience it but I wasn’t sure what the whole experience would look like. I knew that I was going to be

challenged and that these challenges were going to come in different forms.

First, I figured that the longevity of what we were doing was going to take its toll on me both mentally and physically. Now that it’s all over, I’m not even sure where the biggest challenge was. I repelled off of a 160-foot ledge, which I thought was something that never needed to be done by me. I have a little thing with heights especially when I’m only attached to a rope. Once I sat at the top of the edge for a couple hours watching each person go over the edge I began to relax a little. I knew that I was certainly not the only one who was feeling nervous about it. When it got to be my turn it ended up not being nearly as bad as I thought it would be. When I got to the bottom, I yelled and screamed as if the Cubs had just come from behind to win it in the ninth. I looked up and felt awesome for overcoming a fear that I had and loving the experience that I thought I didn’t want.

Near the end of the 28 days I began to get a little antsy about leaving. I kept thinking about the cheeseburgers that I would scarf down when I got out and the sports that I had been missing all this time. I began to really look forward to leaving the backcountry but I didn’t let it disrupt that flow that we had created up to that point on the expedition. Now that I am out, I must say that it is a little bittersweet. Yes I can watch the Cubs and Bears and eat all the food that I can handle (and not have to carry the weight in my pack) but I can no longer experience what I had during the previous month again. Even if I got back to the same places, I won’t be with the 13 other people that I was with this time. The experience lies with the people that you’re with as well as the

landscape upon which you are living. I've come to understand this point and even thought about it during the expedition. There was many times where I caught myself looking at the people around me and thinking that it really means a lot that each one of them is with me.

