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# The Goosedown Gazette

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The Official Publication of the UC Mountaineering Club

Spring 1996

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## Spring Message

from UCMC President Jay Gibson

The snow of winter is waning and I hate to see my skis go into the closet. The sorrow of winter's end only lasts a second, and I am filled with thoughts of the many great trips to come in spring. Fireside laughing sessions, mud on my boots, the return of color to the land, and half-cooked pasta dinners are all in store for the upcoming season.

Spring is a great time to enjoy the outdoors with UC's Mountaineering Club. Whether your interests lie with conquering sheer rock faces, walking long and meandering trails, or gulping cool splashes of white water, the club does it all.

We also have all the gear you need to get out and keep you warm and dry on your trip. I encourage you to go out and take a trip with us. UCMC is offering many beginners' trips this quarter for climbing, backpacking and white water. So don't be shy: jump in and have a great time with us!

Jay Gibson is a senior mechanical engineering student at UC, past UCMC vice president, and current UCMC president. Jay is the guy wearing the blue Ben & Jerry's hat.



Get on your bikes and ride! Spring brings the new cycling season to many UCMC members. Come ride with us!

## Michigander Bike Tour Coming Up

by John Ptasznik

For all you mountain biking fanatics, the fifth annual Detroit Free Press Michigander Mountain Bike tour across Michigan will be held again this July. The Michigander is sponsored by both the Detroit Free Press and the Rail-To-Trails Conservancy. The main goal of the ride is to raise money for the conversion of old railroad corridors to recreational pathways for hiking, biking, and other activities.

There are two tour options: the weekend trip from South Haven to Kalamazoo, or the week-long tour from South Haven to Metro Beach which is just north of Detroit. Both tour options provide breakfast and dinner, shower facilities, sag service, and transportation of camping gear from site to site. The

see **MICHIGANDER**, page 14

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### Inside This Issue

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- 2 UCMC member hikes the CDT
  - 3-7 Joe and Jerry recount trips
  - 8 Climbing high in Ecuador
  - 15-16 April and May calendars
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## 500-Mile Warm Up??

Long-time club member Paul Kramer has just finished hiking 500 miles of the Appalachian Trail as a warm up (*a warm up??!!*) for his summer hike on the Continental Divide Trail.

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail was established as part of the National Trail System Act of 1968. The CDT itself was approved in 1978, though the process of complete mapping and trail marking continues today. The Park Service is still trying to secure the trail by land acquisition and easement rights acquisition.

The CDT crosses six of the seven ecological zones found in North America (from harsh sandy deserts to the arctic tundra of the higher elevations on the trail). The CDT stretches approximately 3000 miles.

Paul will be known as a "through hiker" on the CDT; that is, he will hike the entire length of the trail at one time. Paul has given up his lucrative position as a pizza delivery man to spend the months of May through September on the CDT.

Being on the trail for so long makes a guy hungry!! Be nice to Paul (and support his brave adventure) by sending him some homemade cookies or other yummy treats. If you send along a postcard stamp, or some paper and a self-addressed stamped envelope, Paul might even drop you a line from the trail. Packages can be sent via general delivery to post offices that are near the CDT.

address to: **Paul Kramer**  
**General Delivery**  
**City, State ZIP**

note on the envelope/package label: **"Please hold for Continental Divide Hiker, expected arrival day, month."**

Here is Paul's tentative schedule.

Pie Town, NM 87827  
 May 15

*continued, next column*

Pagosa Springs, CO 81147  
 May 31

Lake City, CO 81235  
 June 16

Twin Lakes, CO 81251  
 June 21

Wamsutter, WY 82236  
 July 17

Macks Inn, ID 83433  
 August 10

Leadore, ID 83464  
 August 19

Wisdom, MT 59761  
 August 27

Anaconda, MT 59711  
 September 3

Lincoln, MT 59639  
 September 13

East Glacier, MT 59434  
 September 24

If you are interested in learning more about the CDT, the UCMC librarian suggests the book Where the Waters Divide written by Karen Berger and Daniel Smith, two of Paul's friends.



## Tale Of An Epic Wilderness Adventure

by Jerry Bargo

*"I have climbed highest mountains. I have run through the fields... But I still haven't found what I'm looking for." -- U2*

Several years ago, Bob Kessler put on a huge and fabulous slide production. Although the show largely featured a then recent trip to the canyonlands of Utah, it also contained a modest autobiography of Bob's and Cindy's outdoor quests. The U2 song "But I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" was somewhat of a theme song in the slide show soundtrack, popping up again and again at appropriate points.

The lyrics have since appeared on UCMC T-shirts, in the Goosedown Gazette, and on the chalkboard at UCMC meetings. Many subsequent slide show sound tracks have used the song. That song has, over the years, become the unofficial UCMC anthem, representing to many of us our on-going personal quests for whatever it is that each of us seek.

My own quest often leads me on solo hikes, solo backpacking treks, and solo climbs. Solo trips obviously hold the potential for serious epics. There is only one set of eyes and one mind to anticipate, foresee, avoid, and overcome all difficulties. There is only one body and if that one becomes disabled due to injury or illness, there is not another one to assist in any way. The significance of this never seems to deter me though.

Despite the cold, the urge was particularly strong on a Sunday morning late this January. The need to be at one with nature, and the feeling that I was close to *something*, was profound. A challenging hike in Red River Gorge, KY was just the ticket and the cold served to assure peace and solitude.

After following an old logging road up a

*continued, next column*

stream bed for over two miles, I stopped in a clearing. I was grateful for the warm reprieve of the sun as I changed into some dry socks and savored a late lunch. As the shadows encroached, I headed uphill to the cliff line. On this day I was going to find some outstanding new climbs, and I was close. I could feel it.

Half way up the hill, a pheasant exploded from the thick underbrush just ahead of me. The familiar startle and disorientation provided welcome excitement. I knew it was only a prelude and consciously restrained my quickening pace toward the rock. Finally amidst the thick rhododendron and laurel appeared a characteristically beautiful cliff draped in moss and ferns.

I knew that my presence in this remote area would not go unnoticed. A great horned owl circled overhead. The great hunter was curious to see who was invading his territory. The Native Americans considered this to be an omen as the owl represented evil spirits. But this was a magical moment and I preferred to think of it as a sign that I had come to the right place. I hiked the cliff line.

One by one, potential new climbing routes were revealed. They had waited for thousands of years for eyes that could appreciate their majesty. My hours of anticipation were now going unfulfilled. An easy scramble up an exposed carpet of lichen and moss led to the top of the cliff. Spectacular overlooks provided big views in almost every direction. Miles of cliffs, sky, trees, and birds -- shared only with the gentle wind. Holy ground.

The sun was getting low, but I had not had enough. I resolved to stay until nightfall and hike out in the dark (as seems to be my usual). Besides, I wanted more adventure. I wished that it were only Saturday. I would manage an unprepared bivy to watch the sunrise. I had no had my fill. But I had to be at work the next morning so the arrival of dusk was my cue to go home.

see **EPIC ADVENTURE**, page 4

## EPIC ADVENTURE

*continued from page 3*

After carefully downclimbing back to the (relatively) horizontal world, I began the routine return hike. But I had seen beauty that mortal eyes were never meant to behold and to drive this point home mother nature tried to gouge them out. A limb sprung and poked me in one eye. It struck me directly and solidly on the eyeball. I had neither a mirror nor a companion to assess the damage. My eye hurt and was very blurry.

An eye injury is never what I had anticipated as a disabling injury. Although I was concerned that I might have done permanent harm to my vision, my more immediate concern had to become my self-extraction in the rapidly fading light down a steep, rugged hill plus nearly two miles of stream crossings with mono-scope vision. I quickly placed a sterile pad over the eye to protect it and held that in place with a triangular bandage. The bandage partially blocked my other eye as well and I regretted not having safety pins to hold a fold of it up out of the way. I briefly considered what it would be like to be completely blinded at that moment.

I had wanted a little more adventure; well now I had it. All I could want and more. I knew that I was going to have to call on my years of outdoor experience, especially all of my off-trail experience in the gorge. I had maxxed just about everything out and left myself with almost no safety margin. I was alone, in sub-freezing temperatures, with stream crossings and bushwhacking to do, in the dark, and nobody knew where I was. At least it wasn't raining, and I was adequately dressed. I also had first aid and other basic survival necessities. I was confident that I had things under control but was aware that the situation was ripe for further accident, injury, or other complication.

Bushwhacking down the hill with no depth perception and limited peripheral vision proved

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to be intimidating. I could see branches coming at my face but could not determine when to duck and weave. I had to keep both hands in front of my face to feel for them and push them aside. Each step down was uncertain as I could not accurately judge how far down I needed to step. It was with great relief that I reached the bottom of the hill.

A half moon behind thin cloud cover provided just enough light to navigate by. I reasoned that use of my four dollar Radio Shack headlamp would ruin my night vision. I would try to make due without using it. As I stepped into the creek for the first of fifteen wet stream crossings, ice cold water filled my boots. Perhaps it was because the evening had gotten colder or perhaps it was because I was tired, but my feet seemed to get (and stay) colder than they did on the way in. I was glad that I thought to leave a good hiking stick in the middle of the logging road right where I would stumble across it. A few of the stream crossings were swift enough that I was leaning on it heavily.

The stream crossings were fairly evenly spaced apart. Just as the water in my boot warmed up, it was time to plunge them back into the icy stream for a refill. The race was on to get my feet to the warmth and dryness that the car represented.

Two miles never felt so far nor seemed to take so long. But somehow, I relished every minute. I had come looking for a challenge and found it in a bigger way than intended, but I was meeting the challenge none-the-less.

At the car, I cared for my feet and checked my eye. By the meager dome light and the rearview mirror, I could see no obvious damage. The feeling of relief was immense. But I still had a three hour drive home with blurred vision to cap off the adventure. A visit to an eye specialist confirmed that the scratch to the eye was minor and would heal with medicated drops in a few days.

Although I still don't know what I'm looking

*see EPIC ADVENTURE, page 1*

## Spring Break in Utah

by Joseph Lampe

"Chuck, man," I said. "That's a bad idea. We're going to need our space. You can't put that many people in a space for that long." You have to admit that a fifteen person van, twelve people and gear for seventy-plus hours round trip borders on the insane, flirts with sado-masochism, and just isn't a smart plan. But it was cheap.

Friday the 15th found me doing my standard last minute ritual dance: running to stores to buy Coleman fuel, zip-lock bags, and film. I had had plenty of time at the beginning of the day, but by trip time, I still wasn't ready. "Take that bag of groceries, empty out all the boxes into ziplock bags, and throw them into this sac." Meanwhile, I was busily stuffing things into my pack, mentally checking that my body was covered: "head, hands, feet, legs, torso."

My computer's hard drive had crashed sometime in November (thank you Microsoft DoubleSpace), and in the rush of reformatting and rebuilding it in the middle of the school quarter, I managed to leave out some important files -- one of them being my trip checklists. I was flying by the seat of my pants on this one, trying to remember what I would need: stove, cook-kit, sunscreen. I knew I was forgetting something. Nothing left to do. I was running late.

Rush hour traffic brought me to Price Hill, or Delhi, or Western Hills -- one of those places on the hill in that part of the city in which I am perpetually lost. I found the street -- Gilsey -- right away, but as usual, had left the address at home. I looked and saw no van, no other travelers. Stopping at a muffler shop for the Guttadauros' address, I went back down the street and found what was supposed to be the house. Still no van, no other people standing

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out front. I pulled in to find out I was the second person to arrive. In my lateness, I was early.

We had pizza. The van arrived. We ate our fill and went out to do what seemed the impossible: pack the van for the long drive. I looked in the passenger door and immediately felt the smallness of the space. I had been in cave sections that pinched and pushed at me from all sides, sections that had felt bigger than did the inside of this van. The gear went in as we watched the van fill up between the last seat into the space where the second last seat had been. Sleeping pads rode atop the pile of packs as the floor level slowly rose to only a few inches shy of the top of the seats. I went around to the back of the van looking for some hope of salvation -- a trailer hitch -- but there was none. We had no choice. We were going. We were ready now: Two in the driver and shotgun seats: three in the first bench, three in the second bench, and four sprawled atop the gear and sleeping pads. I wondered which, and how many of us, would make it back alive.

An incredibly smooth twenty five hours later, we were pulling into Grand Junction looking for a good Mom-and-Pop kind of place for dinner. People were getting along. I was getting along. In a campground outside Moab we slept well, and were looking forward to getting up and having breakfast. Our ten o'clock departure time somehow turned in to eight o'clock. For some reason, Bob wanted to get into town before the stores opened.

Showers and T-shirt sales were the order of the day as we rummaged through the morning in the small Moab shops. A hot lunch, and we were off for a three hour ride to the trailhead. Bob and I drove to our destination to hide water and a bike: equipment that would make the seven mile trip back to the van a little easier. As we drove, I watched the odometer. We were traveling seven "Bo miles", which equaled 12.6 actual miles,

*see UTAH, page*

## UTAH

*continued from page 5*  
according to the odometer.

The next morning, I did the ritual last minute dance again: putting stuff in and pulling stuff out of my pack. Dave, my tent partner, was the first one ready. I was the last. In packing, I could see what I had forgotten: toilet paper and a lighter. Not bad for having no list, but it could be difficult to bum TP on the trail. Speaking of the trail, yes we finally got to it that Monday morning.

The sun shone brightly as we walked. We were happy to be away from the van, from any road, from any confining space smaller than the canyon walls that slowly grew higher around us. Within a mile of the trailhead, we saw the first Anasazi art, sunlit high on the canyon wall to our right. It was the first of many: we would find more art, ruins of former Anasazi dwellings, graineries, and kivas (ritual rooms). Since we were there during the spring equinox, Jerry searched for celebratory structures in which the Anasazi tracked the seasons by following the angles of the sun through carefully placed holes in the south-facing structure walls. On the day before the equinox, he found one, but the walls had been destroyed, leaving the four circular markings useless, but telling remnants of a solar calendar.

Each day brought on more ruins, more art, and a different place to camp. Bob had set the days up so that there was plenty of time to day hike on the way to camp and once we were setup at each night's spot. During quiet periods, when the din of our small city of twelve had quieted, or when we had gone off to be alone with ourselves or a few others, we could hear the canyon wrens and some blue birds (whenever I asked anyone who we met on the trail what kind of birds those blue birds were, they invariably answered, "Bluebirds, I guess.").

At lunch on the second last day on the trail, we ate in the shade of the rock and the

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shadow of seven-foot high rock art. Above us hawk, lit up pinkishly from underneath by the sun reflecting off the rocks, circled and spiraled around three crows, all apparently looking for the same scarce meal of rabbit or mouse in the desert. During the day, lizards, most six to ten inches long, sunned themselves on the rocks. In the brush of a dense trail, I saw a jack-rabbit and frequently along the gulch bed, we saw tracks of some sort of cat, and what we figured was a dog. Along the rim, we saw many deer tracks, horse tracks, and unfortunately cattle tracks.

The last day took myself, Jeremy, and Julie out a little earlier than everyone else. I had to get to the bike so I could make ride the seven "Bob miles" to the van. The trail to the canyon rim was not bad at all. Yet in the event of a present parade of songs in my head, I managed to stand out through the climb: "The old gray mare just ain't what she used to be." Up on the rim, a storm front was threatening. In Utah, the weather doesn't seem as decisive as it is in Cincinnati. A front comes in: You see it. You smell it. There's no getting away from it. In our sky in Utah, there grew small and large groupings of black clouds, dotting the sky, but we could still see blue sky, as if the weather could not make up its mind. The breeze was welcome.

Three miles later, we found the bike, the water, and I put on my backpack and got ready to go. I did the ritual again: Powerbars, a rain jacket, and a Chuck-and-Kim-donated pack of gatorade. I put on my padded shorts and off I went to get the van. "An hour and twenty-five minutes," I told Jeremy and Julie. I was being optimistic. I was psyched.

Five minutes later, the level of sand on the road had become so thick that I had to get off the bike. The front wheel turned left, then right, then left. The back wheel spun in the sand, and I felt as if I were riding through quicksand. "This is going to be the longest

*see UTAH, page*

## UTAH

*continued from page 6*

twelve miles of my life," I thought. I drank some gatorade, pulled out a powerbar, downshifted, and just pedaled. Soon I was in my lowest gear, but I was still upright. I was moving forward. "An hour," I figured. "I can make it to the road in an hour." Two quarts of liquid, two Powerbars, three cowboys, a driving herd of cattle, one car that I didn't have the presence of mind to flag down for a ride, and an hour and twenty minutes later, I reached paved road, the two-thirds point of my ride. The wind was kicking up, so I put on my jacket and went with the tailwind down the gently sloping road, glad to be free of the sand, glad to have a view, glad to be moving faster than 6 mph. I came to a little bridge crossing, yellow and black diagonal stripes. When I got to the bridge, I discovered that it wasn't a bridge at all it was a cow grate.

Now, if you've never seen or heard of a cow grate, let me tell you about them. They are a series of round metal -- usually steel -- bars, spaced with about a four-inch opening between each bar, that cross the road perpendicular to your direction and parallel to an accompanying fence. The idea is to continue the fence across the road without actually putting a fence up across the road. It does a good job of keeping livestock on one side of the grate. As I approached it on my bike, I thought it would probably do a pretty good job of turning my front wheel sideways, trapping it between the grates, and hurling me to my unhelmeted -- the other thing I forgot -- death. I hung on, closed my eyes and prayed. The vibrations had stopped. I had made it.

Soon I could see the 2.5 mile long sand road to the van, and pulled off onto it. The sand had trapped me again, but not as bad this time; and since I knew I was near, I pushed harder. The road curved left and right, up and around; and the wind had left high spots in the road, spots not completely covered with sand. I felt

free, high on endorphins. I pushed and looked for the van over every rise. There it was! Mmmmmmm, sweet sugary vaaaaan. David Byrne got me up for the drive back to the end of the trail. Jeremy said they heard David Byrne before they saw me and the van.

Another Mom-and-Pop store! Mmmmmmm. The first non-trail food in a week! Showers in Moab, a comet somewhere off I-70, driver changes, caffeine, blocking out positioning for the good place to sleep, a buzz at Apple-Bee's, and home. Sweet home.

Joseph Lampe is a graduate in English Literature, former UCMC president, and long-time addicted cyclist.



UCMC will be offering a beginners' paddling course April 14.

## EPIC ADVENTURE

*continued from page 4*

for, I found a bigger crumb than usual one cold winter day in the wilderness -- and it was worth all the hardship and discomfort tenfold.

The painful truth is that few (if any) of us will find whatever it is we are looking for. Every once in a while we find little bits and pieces of it in the moss, the rock, the critter, the sky, or the trees. Perhaps that is what we UCMCers have most in common: the passion of our personal quests is strongest in nature's folds.

*"...But I still haven't found what I'm looking for..."*

Jerry Bargo is a long-time UCMC member, former club president, and is a rock climbing enthusiast.

# Trip to Ecuador - January 1996 Ascent of Chimborazo and Cotopaxi

by Bruce Bousfield

## Why Ecuador

As many of you know Rich Cyr, Rob Even, and I are planning to climb Mt. McKinley in May 1997. We are taking a technical route (West Rib) which is not well traveled and is not the sort of place to expect rescue parties to miraculously appear. Consequently, we plan on being well prepared for most eventualities. The high altitude of Mt. McKinley (20,320') obviously presents a large part of the challenge, but altitude sickness also presents a serious health risk. Cerebral or pulmonary edema can only be relieved by returning to a lower altitude, and if this isn't done quickly the risk of death is extremely high. Considering that the weather can turn bad in an instant and stay bad for many days, and that because the route is technical in nature it will often be more dangerous to turn round than to continue up, we wanted to make sure that none of us would be predisposed to altitude sickness. This is where Ecuador enters the picture.

Ecuador possesses what are probably the most accessible high-altitude peaks within easy reach of the United States. The highest peak is an extinct volcano called Chimborazo that stands 20,700' high. It also has a climbers' hut at 16,300', and as high as this might seem, the hut is only a 30 minute hike from the nearest road! From the hut, the summit can be made in approximately 6-7 hours with no technical equipment other than an ice axe, crampons and a rope. Perfect - so off we went in search of adventure!

## Ecuador

Of Ecuador's many high-altitude peaks, ten are over 5000m (16,400'), the tallest five being Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, Cayambe, Antisana and El Altar. As with Chimborazo, both Cotopaxi and Cayambe have climbing huts and good access. Antisana's summit is more difficult due to adverse weather, and all El Altar's routes are very technical with the first ascent only having been made in 1967. All of these peaks are within easy reach of Quito, the capital of Ecuador.

## Travel

Two flights got us from Cincinnati to Quito via Miami without much problem, although our orienteering skills were put to the test when we found ourselves in the wrong terminal minutes before the flight was to leave. Could five hours in the bar have had anything to do with it? A short taxi drive and the first test of my newly-learned and definitely shaky Spanish, got us to our hotel, the only pre-arranged accommodation of the trip.

## Quito

The capital of Ecuador is home to about 1.2 million people and is situated in a valley at 9,400'. At this altitude it made perfect place to begin acclimating for our climbs of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo, so we spent our first day exploring Quito. Although the city dates back to the Inca time, an Incan civilization and the soon-to-arrive Spanish Conquistadors demolished the buildings. The Spanish built a new city over the old one in the 1530's. Some of these early colonial buildings are still standing, especially the churches. Of particular interest is the monastery of San Francisco which has some beautiful iconostasis and wooden carvings.

As well as visiting the old city, we also hiked up a small hill at the south end of the city where there is a huge statue of the virgin of Quito (the local joke is that she is the only virgin in Quito!). This is a great place to view the city to the north, the valley extending away to the south where Chimborazo and Cotopaxi are situated. Cotopaxi is only thirty miles away from Quito and towers over the city. Near the summit of Cotopaxi there is a rock band, which from the city, looks like a huge eye. There are many folk stories associated with what the eye sees. Also from this statue we could see Rucu Pichincha rising directly out of the city to the northwest. This volcano rises about 15,400' (no one seems to know the exact height) and would be our project for the next day.

## Rucu Pichincha

The true summit of this active volcano is actually called Guagua Pichincha which stands at 15,720'. This however, is a two day climb from Quito so we opted for the more popular destination of its minor summit, Rucu Pichincha. This is still a long day's hike so we took a taxi from our hotel to the edge of town. Starting at 10,500' we set off up a pretty good trail for the summit. We passed a number of small houses, an assortment of farmyard animals, and men and women who were obviously much better acclimated than us, as evidenced by the huge loads they were carrying. We were also joined by a kindly middle-aged man in laceless sneakers who showed us the way to about 12,000'. There are no trail maps and the directions given in the guide books are vague at best, so it was nice to get some help although we had to walk at a pretty good pace to keep up with him! Further up, having somewhat lost the trail, we found ourselves hiking along the edge of some fields where nearby farmers were tending their crops. Not being sure if we were supposed to be there, we expected angry cries from the farmers instead they shouted out greetings of "Buenos Dias"!

Except for the increasing altitude the hike remained easy until we reached the summit rock band. This is about 1000' high and has two main routes to the top. Either a non-technical traverse around the back side, or a slightly-technical climb directly up a ridge. Needless to say, we took the ridge. It was mostly class 3 and 4 climbing up rock and gravel, but there was one small section of pretty exposed 5.0 or 5.1 climbing. A rock would have been a nice idea but as ours was in the hotel we went solo, which made for a pretty exciting time. Much scrambling, and by now some pretty heaving breathing and frequent rests finally brought us to the summit. We were rewarded with some great views of Quito way below us, and the summit of Guagua Pichincha to our west. On a clear day you can see Cotopaxi, Chimborazo, and the third highest-peak.

*this article continues on pages 9-*

## ECUADOR

Cayambe, as well as numerous other smaller peaks and ranges. Unfortunately we could only see the base of Cotopaxi due to a layer of cloud at about 16,000'.

On the way down we tried a variation of our route up, only to lose the trail completely and end up face to face with a couple of bulls. Fortunately for us the angrier of the two was roped to a stake, and the other, although pawing the ground with his front leg, stayed put. Definitely got the adrenaline going!

The volcanic material that makes up the mountain side forms a very loose soil, consequently the numerous streams cut very deep ditches. Our path intersected one of the larger of these ditches (about 6' wide and 12' deep) without a bridge. Rich and I quickly made the leap leaving Rob quaking in his proverbial boots. Now if this had been a crevasse there wouldn't have been a moments hesitation, but I guess the thought of getting all muddy was just too much. Rich and I had a hell of a job coaxing him across the ditch. Finally, after about 5 minutes his day pack was jettisoned to our side, and then Rob made the leap (of faith) with about 3 feet to clear! Needless to say Rob did not hear the end of this for this whole trip.

Passing more very small houses, pigs, sheep, cows, dogs, and scruffy kids, we made it back to the edge of the city where we caught a taxi back to our hotel and a well-deserved beer.

Not a bad day considering we had climbed to an altitude of about 1000' higher than any of us had been before, with nothing more eventful than some slight headaches. But could we all go another mile higher?

### Cotopaxi

We were now ready to take our first real test of altitude by tackling Cotopaxi (19,300'). This is about 30 miles south of Quito in the Cotopaxi national park. It has a climbers refuge (Jose Ribas Refugeo) at 15,600' (just below the snow line) with thirty five beds, a water supply, cooking facilities and a toilet block, and is only a 45 minute hike from the end of a gravel road.

Having picked up some information from the South American Explorers Club in Quito about the best ways to travel, we decided that local buses and taxis would be our best way to get around. Although a rental car would be a bit more convenient, they are fairly expensive (about \$40 a day), especially when compared to local transport. Long-distance buses work out at about 40 cents per hour of travel and they don't stop too often. In fact, outside of major towns they don't stop at all - they just slow to a jogging pace and people jump on and off. This was a bit worrying as our packs were on the roof! Taxis, which are quite often pickup trucks, will take you absolutely anywhere, are very reasonably priced, and can be ridiculously cheap if you bargain (which is expected). Unfortunately this is likely to change in the near future as the government has stopped subsidizing the price of gasoline.

We caught a bus from Quito to Lasso, which is nearest town to Cotopaxi, and then caught a taxi for the remaining couple of miles to a hotel called "Hacienda de Cienaga". This had been highly recommended to us, and rightly so. It is a beautiful old building, and has a wealth of family and political history associated with it. It has beautiful furniture and paintings, well

surrounding countryside. Well worth a visit for the climber or non-climber alike.

During the taxi ride from the bus stop to the Hacienda worked out a deal with the taxi driver to take us in his pick truck up to the climbers hut on Cotopaxi. He would drive us to the hut the next morning and pick us up two days later for total of \$40. This is quite a deal considering the trip takes about an hour each way, and we would climb 5,000' up a gravel road.

The next morning, after storing our excess gear at the hacienda, we headed off to the Cotopaxi national park. So we had only had the smallest glimpse of the mountain through the clouds, and our journey through the park quickly took us into more clouds where we could see even less. After about fifteen minutes of this, we started to feel the warmth of the sun coming through the clouds, and knew we would break through at any moment. In anticipation, time slowed to a crawl. Suddenly we broke through the clouds and found ourselves on a large plain, with a perfect view of the volcano to our right. It was awesome. It rose majestically out of the plain to a height of 7,000' above us. The top two thirds was covered in snow and ice, and the huge brooding eye looked over us towards Quito.

We could see the gravel road winding its way up the almost featureless lava flows to a point 500' below the snow line. From there we could just make out the light brown zigzag of the trail up to the hut situated at the snow line. Above the hut we could see the face that we were to climb. It seemed incredible that we were so close.

After stopping to take photos, we continued upward in the taxi to the end of the road. At this point I had to push my Spanish to the limit to make sure that the taxi driver would return for us on the right day and at the right time. A short hike from the parking lot brought us to the hut.

We had ascended 6,000' from the hacienda with only one trip to this altitude a few days before on Rucu Pichincha. Our plan was to take it easy and use the rest of that day and the following day to acclimate. As we talked to some of the people in the hut we learned that the previous night a person had been taken down to a lower altitude due to altitude sickness. Needless to say we were quite apprehensive as to how we would cope during the coming night.

The hut was nearly full of climbers from all over the world, although most were either European or North American. About two thirds of the people were there with guides. It became quite obvious that many of these people were not as dedicated to the climb as those of us doing our own thing. Consequently they were not as fit as they might otherwise be, and they had not really prepared themselves psychologically for the stay in the hut. One fairly large group of Americans had been in the hut for three days due to a combination of illness and bad weather. A number of them were now quite edgy and loosing interest in the climb.

When we had arrived at the hut at 11 am everything about us had been in solid cloud. It remained this way until about 10 pm when the clouds quickly cleared for a beautiful sunset. At 10 pm the sky was a mass of crystal clear stars and there was not a breath of wind to be felt. We were quite envious of the people who would begin their attempt on the summit in another two hours.

Fortunately the night came and went without any und

## ECUADOR

during the early morning. All we really suffered from were slight headaches which were easily dealt with by scoffing ibuprofen. We did, however, suffer from one disconcerting, but not particularly dangerous, condition. We all found ourselves waking up every twenty minutes or so gasping for breath. This is a condition where the body relaxes to its "normal" breathing rate while asleep. The trouble is, at this altitude it is nowhere nearly fast enough to get sufficient oxygen, and we kept waking up partly suffocated. Fortunately this was the only night we suffered from it.

The next day we took a casual hike up the snow field and onto the glacier. We reached an altitude of 17,000' - another record for us. We didn't do much else that day, preferring to save our strength for our summit attempt that night.

The climb itself is not particularly technical in nature. However there are many crevasses and there is always a chance of slipping on the steeper (45 degree) sections, thus essential equipment consisted of an ice axe for self arresting, a rope for the glacier travel, and a snow picket each to aid in a crevasse rescue. Crampons are needed on the glacier and on the snow field at night when it freezes over.

The weather that day was a repeat of the previous day (and was in fact the normal pattern at this time of year). The clouds moved in at around 11 am and cleared around 5 pm to reveal another beautiful sunset and a still evening. We set our alarm for 12 am and hit the sack about 7 pm.

At midnight the hut erupted to a cacophony of alarms. About twenty other people were also to try for the summit that night!. Getting ready for an early morning start when we are camping is usually a stressful and unpleasant time due to space restrictions, the cold tent, and in particular the cold hard bagels or granola bars that pass for breakfast. Getting ready in the Jose Ribas refuge couldn't be more different. Electric lights powered by a small generator were turned on, hot water was boiled for oats (or mashed potato in Rob's case), and there was plenty of room to get dressed and prepare our day packs. We set off from the hut at 1 am, jostling for position up the rough rocky trail to the start of the snow field. At this point the guided groups turned into chaos as inexperienced climbers tried to put on crampons by the dim light of their headlamps. With deft ease, we cramponed up and left the grunting and groaning groups behind as we settled into a steady rhythm up the crispy snow field.

The trail is marked by wands all the way to the summit, so there really isn't much to do in the way of route finding. On this particular night we also had the advantage of a beautiful full moon, so our headlamps weren't used much either.

Once onto the glacier we roped up and again set off at a steady pace. It grew quite cold (mid teens) as we progressed higher and into the early morning, so by the time we reached the rock band we were pretty desperate for the extra layers of fleece we had in our packs. We were now at 19,000'. During the climbing we had been breathing pretty hard but now we found that we were also breathing hard even when we stopped. Somewhat disconcerting was the fact that every time I stopped to take a swig of water I had to breath incredibly hard afterwards just to catch my breath back.

Now we were ready for the last 700' of the climb which steepens considerably. We could now only take about 20 steps

between rests. The slope seemed never ending, but to help take our mind off the slow slog the stars were disappearing and the sky was brightening. It would not be long until sunrise. The summit came up very quickly; One moment I was counting steps and thinking of the next rest, and the next moment suddenly realized that I could see over the summit to the far horizon. I was unprepared for the surge of relief that flowed through the mind and body when the summit is made. All I could do was stare in wonder at the stunning scene around us. The sun was now just coming over the horizon bringing the first orange glow to the summits of Chimborazo, Cayambe, and Antisana. Thin red streaks of cloud lined the sky above us, and the deep volcanic crater disappeared beneath us. In such awesome surroundings I found it hard to keep a grip on my emotions.

With the gentle heat of the sun, and no wind, it was quite comfortable on the summit, we stayed for about 40 minutes taking photographs and watching the scenery change like a kaleidoscope as the sun rose. We could easily see Quito from our lofty tower, at first just as a mass of orange lights, then we could make out Rucu Pichincha behind the city, and finally the small hill crowned by the only virgin of Quito.

As much as we wanted to stay on the summit there was a real need to get back to the hut before the snow bridges grew soft and the weather inevitably turned bad. As we descended the summit hill we passed the guided groups coming up. With much panting, cursing, and frequent rests, the majority of the guided climbers would in fact make it to the summit.

The sun soon began to beat down on us and the snow started to soften. It wasn't long before crampons and layers of clothing came off, and the sun block went on. As we descended we could see a low layer of cloud snake its way round Antisana and then up the central valley over Quito. The clouds rose up to surround Antisana and the base of Cotopaxi but never quite reached the hut before we got there. It was now just before 1 am, it had taken 5 hours 15 minutes to ascend and 3 hours to descend.

After a refreshing cup of tea, sleep was the order of the day - or at least for the rest of the morning. I had arranged for a taxi to pick us up at three in the afternoon, so we certainly had some time to spare. The weather repeated its regular thing and by noon it was cloudy and snowing.

Our biggest concern now was whether the taxi would actually turn up. We walked down to the parking lot at the designated time and were relieved to find him waiting for us. We returned to the Hacienda de Cienega for a well earned beer (or two) and a great meal.

Having accomplished our "training" climb we were now ready for Chimborazo and our venture above 20,000'.

### Chimborazo

The jumping-off point for Chimborazo is either Ambato or Riobamba. Both these towns are on the Pan American Highway and are easily accessible by bus. Neither of these towns is of particular interest to the tourist so we just went to the closest to Ambato. The bus ride from Lasso to Ambato was again interesting, with people jumping on and off, and street vendors riding the bus through each village. We also passed another bus with a live sheep standing on the roof rack!

After shopping for a bit of food we went out for a meal and a quiet drink. What we thought was going to be grilled steak

## ECUADOR

turned out to be a sample of all the parts of a cow including "blood" sausage and something we suspected to be the brain. After this, the intended quiet couple of drinks turned into a four hour session with some rowdy locals. The conversation consisted of very bad English spoken by one of these locals (although he seemed to think he was pretty good) and my equally basic Spanish (which as the night wore on I also thought was pretty good). Either way, we managed to keep a conversation going for four hours. After declining a ride to a night club in a small beat up Fiat with our new found, and very drunk friends, we stumbled back to the hotel.

The next morning a taxi came to take us up to Chimborazo. It took about two hours to cover the 40 miles from Ambato to Chimborazo. We had come to realize that Ecuadorian roads (and buildings) are not built with much in the way of foundations. In this particular area this is a really bad idea as the mountainous terrain is prone to severe rain storms. As a result the roads tend to get washed away or covered in mud and rock slides. As the road wound its way through valleys and ridges the taxi driver had to make numerous swerves and diversions to avoid running into mud and rocks or disappearing down huge holes in the road.

This particular road however, is a real eye opener in terms of seeing the indigenous Indians (descendants of the Inca's) doing their thing. They are quite distinctive, particularly in their clothing. Amongst other things, they all wear red ponchos and both men and women wear "pork pie" hats. For the most part they live in very small villages on the hillsides in wood and mud buildings and are obviously extremely poor, truly living at a subsistence level. We also saw numerous llama grazing on the hillsides.

Finally we turned onto a gravel road and started our ascent up to the "Whymper refugio" at 16,400'. I should point out that Edward Whymper (a fellow Brit. and the first person to climb the Matterhorn in 1865) climbed many of Ecuador's high peaks, including the first ascent of Chimborazo in 1880. Later that year he also spent a night in the crater of Cotopaxi. Needless to say he's considered a bit of a hero by the locals.

Just as with Cotopaxi, we still hadn't actually seen the mountain due to low clouds (15,000' is considered low here!). Within a couple of miles of the hut the road became snow covered, and our driver started to show visible signs of concern. I suspect he wasn't so worried about the car, but that if he didn't get us to the hut we wouldn't pay him - taxi drivers also live pretty much at a subsistence level! With much patting of the dashboard the driver coaxed the car to the hut, where we were surprised to see a full-size tour bus!. Fortunately they were just day trippers and wouldn't be staying at the hut. After the previous nights "conversation" with the local drunks, I confidently arranged for the driver to pick us up in a couple of days.

There are actually two huts on Chimborazo. The first hut is right at the parking lot and the second (the Whymper refugio) is about a forty-minute walk up the mountain. The first one is useful for late arrivals and for storing equipment; This is where we left our "tourist" bags. At the start of the trail to the upper hut you come to a very sobering sight - dozens of headstones for the people who have died up on the mountain! The most recent was from 1993 when an avalanche took out a small

group. The short walk brought us to the hut at 16,400'. This is slightly smaller but a bit more comfortable than the Jc Ribas hut, and is at the base of the huge west face.

Our plan for this mountain was a little more adventure than on Cotopaxi. Although the route we would take ("Direto" or "Condor" route) was still not particularly technical in nature we would try to spend one night bivied at 18,000'. This would be a real confidence booster for McKinley as it would be pretty close simulation of altitude (but not temperature) of our planned highest camp on McKinley at 16,000'. We spent our first night at the hut with only half a dozen other people in company - much more peaceful than on Cotopaxi. The following morning we set off on the direct route, first crossing talus basin and then zigzagging up the wall of the north west ridge. During this part of the ascent we got a good look at the main face to our right. This had looked pretty spectacular from the hut, and now we could see that it would make a terrible climb. The face consists of a stair stepped glacier that slopes at about 50 degrees. The steps are 100 to 200 feet high. It goes up like this for about 2000' and runs out onto the north west ridge just below the summit. Definitely a climb for the adventurous.

With the increasing altitude, the hotter sun, and the softening snow our packs seemed to go from a pre-lightweight twenty five pounds to forty or fifty pounds. I was certainly glad to reach the ridge and dump our packs. It took quite a while to get motivated to dig the platform for the tent. We had brought up a two-man tent and a bivi sack (Rico's home for the night), plus fuel to melt water, and cold food for that evening and for breakfast. As we set up camp another three people passed us on their way down from the summit, this was quite late in the morning and they were obviously very tired.

With the camp set up, we settled in for a relaxing afternoon in the now-very-hot sun. We stayed in the tent as any skin exposed to the sun felt like it was being seared off. My altimeter has a temperature indicator, and upon taking it out of the top of my pack (which was out in the sun) I found it was reading 125°F! I then hung it in the tent where the reading dropped to a disconcerting 95°F. Here we were at 18,000', on a snow field and sweating like pigs in our underwear!

This of course was not to last. Just like Cotopaxi Chimborazo also has a very cyclic weather pattern, and the clouds that had hidden the mountain the day before were returning - with a vengeance. First a few high clouds moved in and the temperature dropped quickly to a comfortable 50°F in the tent. Then it started to snow. Then the snow turned to stuff that looked and felt like 1/4" diameter polystyrene balls. This stuff was created by snow being blown up and down through the clouds many times - And what causes that? You got it - thunder clouds. This stuff was coming down pretty hard when the thunder started. I can vividly remember us looking at each other but saying anything, what could we say other than "Oh Shit". There really wasn't anything we could do but sit it out. This continued for almost an hour before tailing off, how close it ever came to us we'll never know, but we were sure glad when it left. After another hour the sun broke through and we moved outside to boil water and eat our evening meal.

The sun was now setting through the remains of the storm clouds. After surviving a raucous storm, we were now witness to an absolutely stunning sunset. The night was so still it was

## ECUADOR

After a few hours sleep we got up at midnight, ate our tasteless granola bars, took the tent down, and packed away everything we didn't need for the day's climb. With just day packs (or should it be night packs?) we headed up the ridge. Snow had covered footprints from the climbers of the previous day, but the route was again marked with wands. Some of these seemed to be missing so we occasionally got off route, but nothing very serious. Again it got colder as we progressed higher and into the early morning. The ridge slopes up at about 35 degrees with occasional 50 degree spots, and only a handful of crevasses the whole way up, so it was not very technical, however the thinning air was definitely noticeable.

Our frustration grew as we moaned and panted our way over half a dozen false summits. With the night sky giving over to the impending sunrise we finally mounted the ridge summit (Veintimilla) to see the true summit (Whymper) standing half a mile away, and 150 feet higher. The trouble was that between the two summits there was a saddle going down 300 foot below us. We of course knew this to be the case, but faced with the reality it was daunting. We were already at 20,500', higher than we'd ever been, and on a summit, did we really need the higher one?. Of course we did. There was no question of not going on further, so off we trudged to the Whymper summit, whimpering as we went.

The slope up the far side of the saddle was quite steep and our progress near the top was pretty slow, stopping every ten steps or so to catch our breath. The sun was now high enough to warm us up as we slumped down on the summit. Once our labored breathing had subsided, it was incredibly peaceful. There was no wind and just a few clouds scattered below us. We took the obligatory photos and tried identifying the surrounding peaks. Cotopaxi was easy to spot 50 miles away with its perfectly symmetrical sides. It looked just the way a child would draw a volcano. Staring at Cotopaxi, I could imagine climbers standing on its summit staring back at us. But we were 1,500' higher. In fact not only were we the highest people in Ecuador, we were also higher than anyone north of us in the Americas. What a great feeling.

We were the only people to reach the Whymper summit that day, although while there we did briefly see a couple of people on the Veintimilla summit - they must have turned back at that point.

After about twenty minutes we began the journey back over the Veintimilla peak and down to our packs. It was interesting to see the full size of the crevasses we had crossed in the dark, and where we had missed the trail. After reaching our packs and taking a short break we made the last leg back to the hut. Crampons had to come off because the snow was now quite soft and balling up under them. Almost immediately Rich gave Rob and me a perfect demonstration of an ice axe self arrest as he took a short slide down some soft but slippery packed snow. By noon we were back at the hut.

We packed the few items we had left at the hut, and gave our remaining food to the warden. This included two pounds of macaroni, carried as emergency rations, which I'm sure would have tasted disgusting on its own. We set off to the lower hut to meet our taxi driver at 2 pm. Of course by now the clouds had rolled in and it was snowing.

We had done it, our goal of reaching the summit of Chimborazo and spending a night above the hut had been accomplished. We had camped at 18,000' and none of us had problems with the altitude. What a relief.

With no bad-weather days used up we were ready to be tourists!

**Banos** (Spanish for spring, well or bathroom!)

As far as tourism goes, Ecuador can be roughly divided into four distinct areas. The Galapagos islands, the western coast and beach resorts around Guayaquil, the central highlands, and the eastern lowland rain forests (Oriente). We had spent all our time so far in the central highlands south of Quito, but we also wanted to visit the popular market and weaving town of Otavalo, 60 miles north of Quito. But before going there we also had the chance to go to the town of Banos which is the jumping-off point for most of the tours into the rain forest.

We had planned to have the taxi take us from Chimborazo back to Ambato, and then catch a bus to Banos. But once the taxi driver knew of our plans he practically begged us to let him take us there (about 50 miles). This seemed a pretty good idea, and would save us quite a bit of time, so after haggling over the price, off we went by taxi.

During this same journey the driver asked where we were heading after Banos, "Back to Quito" I said. Bad move. Now the taxi driver really started pleading and begging with us to let him take us the 80 or so miles to Quito. However we had already decided we wanted to travel by bus as it was a good way to meet the locals and we were in no great rush. So it became quite embarrassing as the driver proceeded to spin a tale of woe about the huge loan on his taxi, trying to feed his wife and kids and on and on and on. I was certainly glad to be out of the taxi at Banos, but couldn't help feeling a mixture of guilt and sadness. If we had taken him up on his offer, it would have made a significant impact on his financial situation compared to the small sacrifice on our part. This, and some other similar incidents were hard to come to terms with. Our personal expenses for this trip would be more than the majority of Ecuadorians would earn in several years, and more than a good many would ever earn!

Banos is one of those towns that attracts a vast number of impoverished students, world travelers, and professional bummers. Consequently the town has a cosmopolitan feel to it. There is no doubt that you could find a drunken party any night of the week, and weekends would be a riot. For the most part this didn't seem to phase the locals who seemed more than thankful for the influx of badly needed cash. As the saying goes, "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth".

The evening brought for Rob what must truly have been a memorable experience. It was his first visit to a Hard Rock Cafe. I must confess I'm no expert on these establishments, but this wasn't quite up to the usual standards. There wasn't a single guitar, drum stick, or article of clothing from the Beatles or Elvis hanging on the walls. Rich and I didn't let on, so Rob probably still impressed by the jukebox, pool table. Yes, I distinctly remember there being a pool table.

As we bar hopped our way around the town we got our first taste of Ecuadorian music. The traditional music, which is still very popular, uses pan flutes, regular flutes, Spanish guitar and hand held drums. However, just as popular is a more

## ECUADOR

contemporary version that also uses electric guitars and violins. The style is essentially the same, but the tempo tends to be a bit quicker and they also include Western songs. All their music has a very lively feel to it and is great to dance to.

The next day we did the usual tourist stuff, which in Banos includes a short hike up one of the surrounding hillsides to a lookout point 1000' above the town. Then in the afternoon we caught a bus back to Quito. On this journey we passed another bus that had a dog tied to the roof rack! Also, near the end of the journey in Quito the bus driver apparently picked up someone from a place not designated as a bus stop (I don't think we ever saw any signs), but this was noticed by a nearby policeman. After a short confrontation the driver handed over what appeared to be all the takings for the journey and we went on our way. Bribery's such a marvelous thing!

The next day we first went to the Mitad del Mundo (middle of the world - or equator) monument. This is incredibly touristy, but considering that it is only 15 miles north of the city we couldn't resist. Actually it did have an interesting (and not-too-big-as-to-get-boring) natural history exhibit right inside the monument.

After visiting the equator we traveled to Otavalo.

### Otavalo

This town is very well known for its Saturday market and it's weaving industry (co-operatives). We stayed in a hotel built and owned by an expatriate American couple, Frank and Margaret, who happened to be hippies (or at least they were until they discovered capitalism). They were very generous and helpful, and have been taken in by the locals. This is largely because they employ all locals, and treat them with great respect.

The local people are quite different to those in the highlands South of Quito. The men wore calf length white pants, blue ponchos, rope sandals and long single pigtailed. The women wore embroidered blouses, long black skirts and folded head clothes that seemed like they were always about to unfold into a complete mess, but of course never did. They were also very clean.

Frank arranged for a taxi driver to take us on a tour of the local weaving co-operatives. This was a great experience as we actually went into peoples homes to see them work. One of the local master weavers showed us an old traditional method that he still uses which takes him a month to weave an eight foot by six foot blanket. He sells these to tourists for \$100!

That night we hopped the local bar scene. There are only Ecuadorian bars in Otavalo, but the locals didn't seem to mind us Gringos being around. In fact some of the more-drunk locals (and there were plenty of them) insisted we do shots with them. The local firewater is made from fermented and distilled sugar cane with caffeine added for good measure. This is served hot and is absolutely lethal. Frank delighted in telling us of some his more drunken moments under its influence, to which Margaret would remind him that he usually spent the next two days in a coma.

We listened to a lot more of the local music and saw one band which had about a dozen musicians. It was difficult to tell exactly how many there were as they kept swapping instruments and new people would just walk onto the very small stage and

join in, including the bar staff. It all made for a very fun and lively atmosphere.

A little worse for wear, we arose the next day at 4 am and headed for the local cattle market. Not that we intended buying any farm animals, although upon overhearing some of the prices we certainly could have, but we wanted to see a truly local tradition where tourists (and there weren't many) were completely ignored. As Rob and I had hoped, this turned out to be a truly marvelous photographic opportunity. We saw everything from pigs being wrestled to the ground and their tongues yanked out for inspection, to bulls being manhandled, quite ineffectively, in and out of rickety old trucks, bulls mounting neighboring cows while owners tried their best to separate them, and much much more. This was all going on in an open field with no fences whatsoever, while numerous children ran around, usually with a chicken under one arm. Quite an experience.

This tailed off at about 7 am, at which time we went for breakfast and then to the "tourist" market for which Otavalo is most well known. Although there was a high percentage of tourists there, mostly for the woven and other hand crafted goods, a large part of the market is dedicated to meat, vegetables and corn. The meat section includes Guinea pigs! This of course turned out to be another great photographic opportunity.

Needless to say we all broke down and bought lots of the local crafts, even Rich who is not renowned as the world's most patient shopper. The traders expect to be haggled with, and will usually come down to about 60% of the initial asking price. This made Rob a bit nervous as his Spanish was still limited to "Water without gas" and "Where's the toilet". Fortunately for him the local traders knew how to count in English.

After lunch we set off back to Quito. There we did our final packing in quiet abandon and went out for a last meal and not-too-few beers on Quito's liveliest street - Avenida Amazonas. A fun night to end an excellent trip.

I think we all looked forward to returning home, speaking English, and drinking decent beer, but at the same time we were reluctant to leave such a friendly and exciting place. Ecuador definitely gives you the feeling that you are exploring new lands, rather than being just another tourist. Not just for the mountains, Ecuador is definitely a place I plan on returning to.



## MICHIGANDER

*continued from page 1*

campsites are local high schools along the route which provide showers and other facilities. Volunteers run the sag service, help with food preparation, and basically make sure the ride goes smoothly. Anyone who goes on the ride should be in good physical condition, which basically means being able to ride from 50 to 70 miles a day.

The weekend ride starts on July 20 in South Haven, ends for the night in Kalamazoo, and then returns on Sunday along the same route. Almost the entire trip is on the Kal-Haven Rail

Backpacking course is April 13 -14. The classroom portion of the course will be taught on April 11. Sign up now!! Jay Gibson, course leader, can answer questions you may have about the course.



Trail, which is about 40 miles of beaten down gravel. I don't suggest this tour since you pay \$55.00 for basically a nice casual day trip, and because the ride is usually very crowded. In fact, last year 1,100 people went on this tour.

The week-long ride starts on July 21 in South Haven and ends in Metro Beach on July 26. I have participated in the week-long tour three times and plan to go again this year. The week-long tour tends to have more serious riders and has always had less people than the weekend trip. Last year there were only 625 riders, which still may seem like a lot of people, but they spread out quickly. I can remember several days being the only one on the trail for

an hour or two. Another nice feature of the week-long tour option is that the terrain varies quite a bit. Some parts of Michigan are surprisingly hilly, while others look more like Indiana with all the corn fields. For the most part, the tour is on varying types of gravel and sand with occasional paved sections, so bring good tires. In fact, many of the rail trails that the tour goes on are not yet open to the public, so they tend to be quite rough in spots. My friend Mike and I usually are more adventurous and go off the beaten path to find a bakery or a place to swim. The five overnight campsites for the week-long tour this year are Kalamazoo, Olivet, Jackson, Pinckney, and Lake Orion.

For more information about the tours please visit my homepage at "[www.eng.uc.edu/~jptaszni/michigander/](http://www.eng.uc.edu/~jptaszni/michigander/)" or see me at the Wednesday meetings for applications and more information. The price of the tours goes up by \$10.00 after May 1.

John Henley Ptasznik is a freshman computer engineering major at UC. John can be reached by e-mail at [jtasznik@uceng.uc.edu](mailto:jtasznik@uceng.uc.edu).

## General Club Information

The University of Cincinnati Mountaineering Club meets every Wednesday at 7:00pm in 601 Old Chemistry on the main (west) campus of the University of Cincinnati. We usually discuss trips, do a little business, then kickback for a program. Club dues are \$10 per quarter or \$25 for the year (offered during fall quarter only). Membership entitles you to the use of the club's equipment and library, but membership is not necessary if you have your own gear. Club gear can be checked out on Wednesday after the meetings, and should be returned by 6:45PM the following Wednesday.

The UCMC office is located in 217 Tangeman University Center, and the office phone number is 556-6014. Please come visit us to learn more about the club!!

UCMC's internet homepage can be found at <http://soaserver.tuc.uc.edu/org/ucmc>

Need some more information? Call President Jay Gibson at 579-9460, Vice President Sarah Gray at 961-4820, or Treasurer Dave Core at 961-1893. Equipment questions should be directed to Equipment Manager Jeremy Siebert at 921-6959.

## April

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	WEEKEND
1	2	3 <b>OPEN HOUSE</b> 525 Old Chem 7 pm Social following Open House, at Daniel's Restaurant	4	5	6, 7
8	9	10 Meeting 7pm 601 Old Chem  Bill Strachen's Wind River Range slide show	11 <b>BACKPACK COURSE -</b> UC classroom	12	13, 14 <b>PADDLING COURSE - TB</b>  <b>BACKPACK COURSE -</b> Southeast Ohio (TBA)
15 <b>CLIMBING COURSE -</b> UC classroom	16	17 Meeting 7pm 601 Old Chem  Rob Even's & Rich Cyr's Ecuador slide show	18	19	20, 21 <b>CLIMBING COURSE -</b> Yellow Springs
22 <b>EARTH DAY</b>	23	24 Meeting 7pm 601 Old Chem  Presentation by climbers Jason Campbell and Tiffany Levine	25	26	27, 28 Climbing Course Rain Date
29	30				

# May

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	WEEKEND
		1 Meeting 7pm 601 Old Chem	2	3	4, 5 Saturday: <b>GREEN UP DAY</b> for Clifton Parks Sunday: <b>MICHAEL KENNEDY</b> from <b>CLIMBING</b> magazine at UC 12:30pm
		First Aid Video			
6	7	8 Meeting 7pm 601 Old Chem	9	10	11, 12 <b>TOSRV</b> Bike tour
13	14	15 Meeting 7pm 601 Old Chem <b>ELECTIONS</b>	16	17	18, 19
20	21	22 Meeting 7pm 601 Old Chem	23	24	25, 26 <b>MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND TRIP</b> - Ocoee River, Tennessee (TBA)
27 <b>MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND TRIP</b> - Ocoee River, Tennessee (TBA)	28	29 Meeting 7pm 601 Old Chem  Last meeting of quarter	30	31	