



SPRING 2013

THE GOOSEDOWN GAZETTE

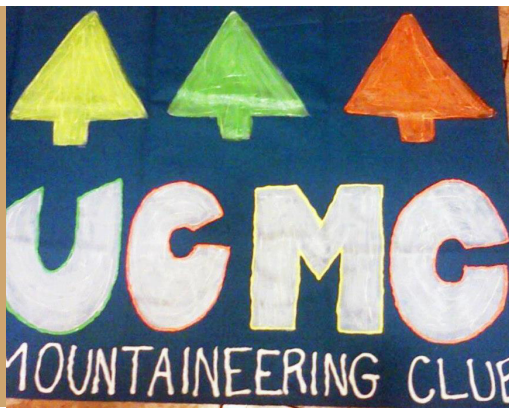
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The University's renowned adventures since 1971!

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Thanks for being part of the
UC Mountaineering Club



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Hey, hey Nature Crazyies -

I hope everyone enjoys this year's issue of the Goosedown! I had a lot of fun with it, and hoped to design it in a way to ramp things up and really show the true colors of this amazing club and all its members.

UCMC was a wonderful find when I attended my first club meeting two years ago. I finally found a club that invokes passion, has a family-like membership that continues long after graduation and keeps me wanting more of that natural highlife. If I could wish anything for this club after my presidency it's that no one forgets why they are part of UCMC, and never stop pushing themselves to exceed their limits. *But*, to also share our nature highlife lifestyle with those that have never had the experience of watching the sunrise over the mountains, jumping off cliffs, climbing those big things called rocks or tripping over a root resulting in a torn patellar tendon (yes that was my first UCMC trip experience). Bottom line is, UCMC hasn't surged on since 1971 for no reason, so make sure you pass it on!

All ya'all are *totally* wicked.

Megan Chambers

Editor's Note: The Goosedown Gazette is published by the University of Cincinnati Mountaineering Club, a student-operated non-profit organization. The articles and comments within are neither endorsed or acknowledged by the University of Cincinnati. All contributions including articles, poems, stories, pictures, rumors, quotes, cartoons, notes, gossip, money, drawings and food should be sent to the editor.

THE

Nathaniel Raymond Schneider ('08), from northwest Ohio, has explored some of the world's most exotic locations. On one of his globe travels, he came within 1,600 feet of accomplishing something no UC Bearcat graduate student has ever done before: reaching the summit of Mount Everest. However, bad weather, even by Everest standards, and low oxygen reserves forced Schneider to turn back with the elusive peak within his sight.

"I know I made the right decision," Schneider said. "I didn't want to succumb to 'summit fever' and try something foolish." Experienced climbers know that prolonged exposure to thin air produces a series of physiological changes, one of which is slowed and impaired reasoning abilities. Many problems are compounded near Everest's peak, which at 29,029 feet is the highest place on Earth. In fact, one of the 32 climbers in Schneider's expedition (7 summits club) reached the summit the previous day, but died on the descent, after falling and hitting his head.

In the area above the "Death Zone," which on Everest is between the final camp and the summit, Schneider needed to take 20 breaths between each step. He was mentally and physical exhausted and suffering from a cracked rib, an injury he received earlier on the trip as a result of a violent coughing spell. "You're just not supposed to be there," Schneider said.

His interest in climbing started before September 1998. The Perrysburg, native climbed Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro in 1997 while still in high school. While in undergrad

studying chemistry, he worked part time at Eastern Mountain Sports in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Using his half-off employee discount, Schneider started acquiring the specialized gear that climbers require. During the five years it took to finish his Bachelor of Science degree, Mr. Schneider added Aconcagua (South America), Mount Kosciuszko (Australia), Mount Elbrus (Europe) and Mount McKinley (North America) to his check-off list of the seven summits.

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SUMMITTS

Nate Schneider



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Reaching Everest's peak in May 2005 would have left Schneider only one summit shy of having scaled the "Seven Summits," the term given to the highest peaks on each continent. He has only Everest (Asia) and Vinson Massif (Antarctica) to conquer. Mr. Schneider is planning a return to Everest, but not any time soon. He's currently a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati. Plus, it cost more than \$45,000 for his "permit" fee and Russian expedition fees in order to attempt the Everest ascent, money he earned and set aside over a period of years. The journey began April 9 in Nepal, and was to culminate May 25, the scheduled day of his reaching the peak. His expedition included 32 climbers and 12 Sherpas (or guides). Summit expeditions take place in May, June and July.

Climbers can scale Everest from either Nepal or China, but access is regulated by the Nepalese and Chinese governments. If he had been successful, he said he would have left



behind a picture of his family as a memento. "As a climber, I've developed a strong respect for the beauty and power of nature," he said. "And I've learned that you need good judgment and patience to climb."

Trip Haikus

Kayla McKinney

Why do we rock
climb?
To conquer the whole
wide world
To conquer ourselves.

On top of the world
With rolling hills for miles
Infinite sunset.

Stack rocks are your
friend
Follow them despite
wit's end
Forever onward

Straw hats & Tank Tops
Knitting spoons on the
dashboard
Daisy driving west



TP Etiquette

Adam White

Last August, we were camped in the Cirque of Towers in the Wind River Mountain Range in Wyoming. The Cirque of Towers is an absolutely beautiful ring of mountains on the Continental Divide, and we camped there several nights. During the trip, I had to poop, so I pulled out my handy dandy trowel and wad of toilet paper. I followed all of the proper LNT principles correctly, except that I buried my TP. I have always buried my TP on backpacking trips, and I never knew it was a problem in the backcountry.

I walked by the same spot the next day, and I saw toilet paper scattered all over the ground and nearby bushes. MY own toilet paper was blowing all over the whole mountain range! Some small animal must have been attracted by the smell and dug up my cathole from the day before.

Let this be a lesson learned - either pack out your used TP or wipe with nearby materials like dead leaves and rocks. If you choose to pack out your TP, be sure to put it in an odor-proof opaque ziplock bag. However, true mountain men will use any available natural materials such as a large leaf or rock. Just be sure YOUR garbage doesn't blow through the forest like mine did. Pack it out or don't use it!



WHERE IN THE WORLD HAS YOUR WATER BOTTLE BEEN?

\$10

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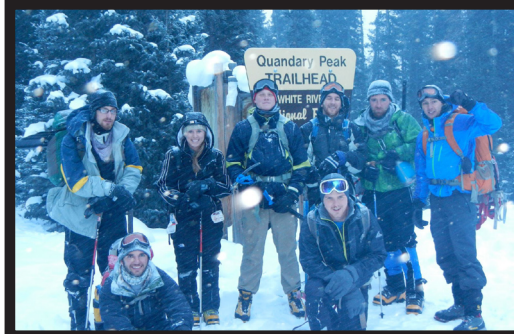
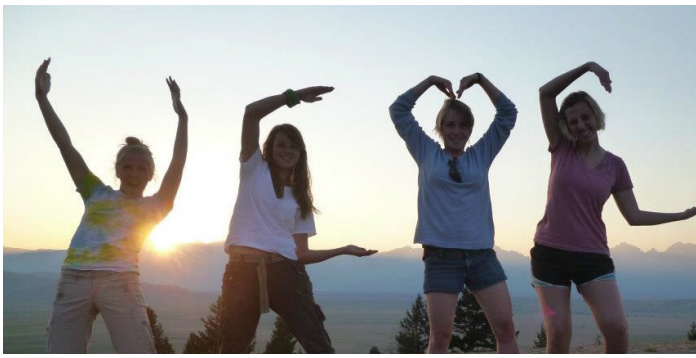
THAT KIND OF YEAR



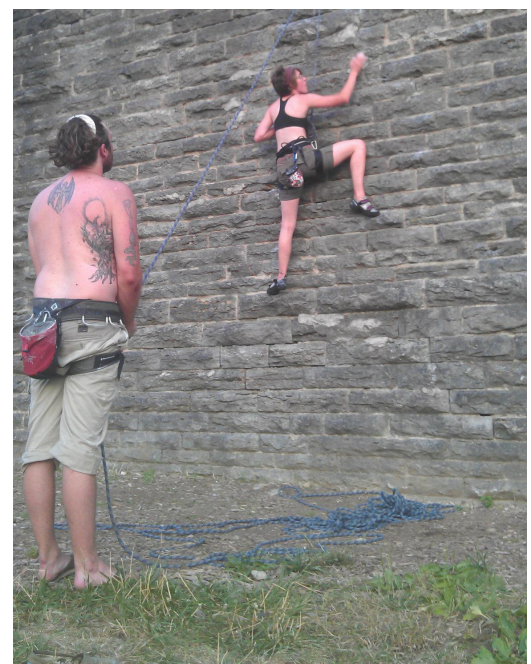
“We lose ourselves in the things we love. We find ourselves there, too.”

Kristin Martz





“When you stop doing things for fun, you might as well be dead.”
Hemmingway



ADVENTURE SATURDAYS

blog

Mark Schutte

adventuresaturdays.blogspot.com

Adventure Saturdays is exactly what it sounds like. Started on New Year's Eve 2011, I went on a new adventure of some kind every Saturday throughout 2012. Adventure Saturdays is an attempt at a few things. I want to spend my Saturdays doing something other than nursing a hangover or sitting around watching TV. I also want to spend time learning new things, doing interesting things, and seeing new places. I hope to spend most of my Adventure Saturdays with someone else, as I hope this time will give me significant one-on-one opportunities to get to know my friends and family. Finally, I want to document every Adventure Saturday through this blog as a way to chronicle my adventures and give myself an avenue for creative writing and storytelling (something that can be seldom as an engineer). I hope you enjoy it - feel free to contact me if you'd like to join me on an adventure or you have an idea for an adventure yourself!

Rock Climbing in Red River Gorge

April 14, 2012

"I'll tell you what's sneaky. Sneaky is going from a 5.11 to a 5.9, then finishing back on a 5.11! HAHAHAHA!" This was my introduction to rock climbing. Who do these people think they are? Don't get me wrong, I love a good, dorky joke when I hear one, but this seemed absurd. Climbers are an interesting breed, and this Saturday, I was privileged with infiltrating their ranks. The goal of the



weekend - espionage. I had to figure out what made these people tick - or more specifically, what made them think hugging a rock face for hours upon hours was enjoyable. When I heard the UC Mountaineering Club was planning a trip to Red River Gorge (a nostalgic camping and hiking venue for my family), I quickly jumped on board.

Ten of us went down - and we were quite the mixed bag. About three experienced climbers, four others with exceptional ability, and three beginners. Having all the arm strength of a Tyrannosaurus Rex, I humbly took my rightful place at the foot of the mountain as a beginner. I borrowed all my gear, and felt quite nervous as I put it together, trying to appear prepared for climbing, something I may have done only a handful of times on a ten foot wall.

With little forethought I started up. The first wall was small, a 5.7 only 25 feet into the air (at least that's what they told me). I pretended to understand as I scaled the wall. My forearms are already shaking. My fingers start to loosen around my already tenuous handholds. Where the hell am I supposed to find a place for my feet? It looks like it's going to be a long weekend...

“I'll tell you what's sneaky. Sneaky is going from a 5.11 to a 5.9, then finishing back on a 5.11! HAHA”



The rock climbing community is right up my alley. We arrived late Friday and camped in the field behind a pizza and climbing shop, Miguel's. The atmosphere is open and relaxed. It's a dry county, but we are in a field, so it's not much of a concern. There are apparently some regulars - going through a standard routine that might even be weekly. Many have their own cooking gear and supplies, but we opt for the delicious, readily available menu items. Everyone sits down in rows of picnic tables, and mingles with the other wayfarers. The welcomeness of these strangers is as surprising and refreshing as biting into a tangy, sweet green apple. I gaze up at the night sky to find all the stars that have been hiding from me in Cincinnati. My eyes close with the smell of grass and dew filling my nostrils, and the warmth of my companions at my side.

..."Mark, I think you can get up further if you can move your left foot into the crack just outside your left knee." Easier said than done. This is my third time climbing and the last climb did not end successfully. The advice is welcome - I've been getting better. But I can't keep my arms from getting tired. "Trust your feet and your fingers!" "Try a heel hook on that ledge out to your right!" My head is whirling. I lean back, trusting my belayer to hold me. Shake out your arms. Stretch. Enjoy yourself! But all I want to do is get up to the top. It's frustrating, but I know I can make it up to the top if I can just get over this lip. Maybe I can try matching my hands on that

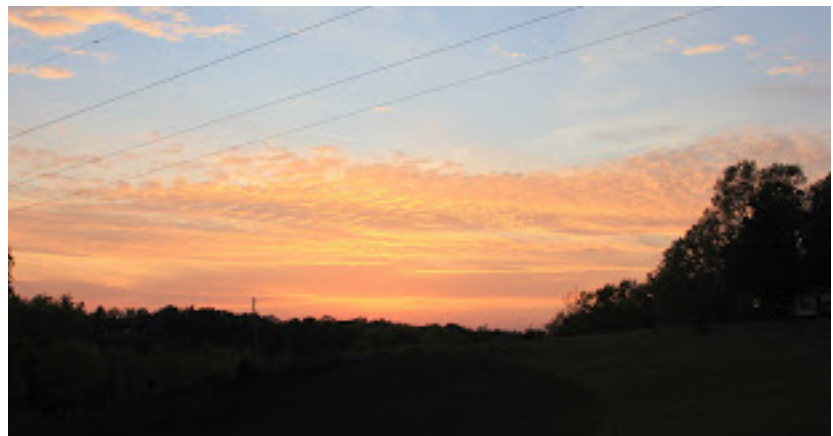
jug grip? ... Wait when did I learn all this lingo? "MARK! Just look around you for a second!" Now that's not a bad idea. I've been facing this rock for so long, I forgot where I was. I glance over my right shoulder. The sun is setting, but it still flicks off the green of the trees and spreads a thick coat of warmth across my face...

I think a lot of people forget that rock climbing has only part to do with getting up whatever route you're on. Being out in the wilderness, being a part of nature - that's something you need no experience to enjoy. I found myself wandering away from our climbing spot to enjoy the breeze, the views, and the rustic natural life swirling around me. But what is so beautiful, so perfect about rock climbing, is that you aren't just out in the woods. You're not just looking at it. You are in it. You can really be a part of it.

That's the unmistakable feeling I've come to understand after clinging to rock faces 40 feet up in the air - touching the wall in perhaps four places with only fingers and toes. The challenge of not getting a route is frustrating, but it's only more of a push to keep climbing and keep improving. I've heard rock climbing described on

more than one occasion as a physical puzzle. What a thought! I love puzzles, but how many times do you get to be a part of them? Your body and your decisions are literally the solution. And what a beautiful way to spend time with wonderful people! No phones and Internet and other media to take up our time - as they so often can. Just genuine time enjoying the company, support, and friendship of other people.

..... Just keep it up, Mark. It's about 50 feet, but you can handle it. Just keep



your feet beneath you. Let your legs do the lifting. Trust your fingers. That little jut is big enough for your toe, use that. I can hear people yelling up from below me, but I'm too concentrated to hear more than "left", "a little farther up.. yeah there", and "nice!". I keep pushing upward, I can feel myself paddling. The puzzle pieces are a bit more clear. This climbing thing is starting to click. I get to a tough spot and have to stop. "Take!" I lean back. I wring out my hands - they're starting to feel rough. I rub some chalk between them and look up at my next

Continued from page 9

set of moves. An audience of trees and flora peak out of the rock face and stare from nearby hillsides, wondering how I'll manage this portion. It helps to have long legs and arms, but right now I have to squeeze my legs up into my stomach to reach this next foothold.

"Okay, climbing!" I press the mental play button and assert myself against the grainy rock face. I brush a wasp off my right hand and reach up. My peripheral vision catches the smallness of my companions down below. And I turn my head skyward and believe my feet aren't going to slip - they don't. I look up for my next hold - but I'm already at the top. I hit the anchors with a feeling of satisfaction. I turn around and relax, taking in an incredible view of Muir Valley, which would be impossible if not for having lifted myself to this point. The gorgeous countryside is all the more intoxicating. I begin to think just how wonderful the world is. Cheers from below my dangling feet remind me time hasn't stopped, and after another look, I focus on the rough, solid reality of the rock as I push off to repel down. I would perhaps reveal a sense of longing for the awe and happiness I now had to leave, but in a world of uncertain futures, that's one feeling I know I will feel again.

To read more on Adventure Saturdays, visit Mark's blog: adventuresaturdays.blogspot.com





YEAR'S FUNDRAISERS

- Cincinnati Triathlon
- Cincinnati Half Marathon
- Shine the Shoe
- Bockfest 5k
- Flying Pig Marathon
- Club Nalgene for sale
- UCMC Tshirts for sale
- Gear Auction

*Thanks for everyone's help!
All money earned benefits club trips and gear cave.*



Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics teaches people of all ages how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly, and is the most widely accepted outdoor ethics program used on public lands.

Ellen Foster

1 Plan Ahead and Prepare

2 Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces

3 Dispose of Waste Properly

4 Leave What You Find

5 Minimize Campfire Impacts

6 Respect Wildlife

7 Be Considerate of Other Visitors



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AN EPIC MOMENT

the force of mother nature

Kayla McKinney

On the evening of the first day of what was to be an epic spring break at Guadalupe Mountains National Park in west Texas, Chad Griffiths, Alex Huller, Zach Altman and myself all went for a run on the El Capitan Trail.

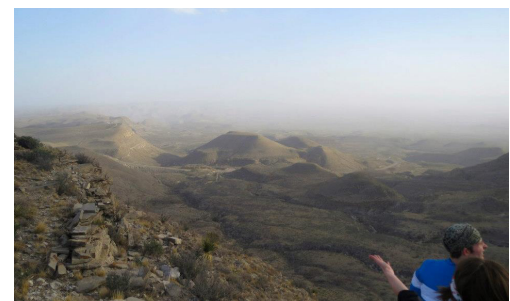
I did not know what to expect but was excited to explore a new mountain desert territory and to work my legs after a 24 hour van ride from Cincinnati. We set off on rocky trails with only an hour or so until sunset, climbing up and down steep inclines and winding down cactus valleys.

We ran until we came across our first panorama-esque view of our new home, miles upon miles of rolling desert hills and the peak of El Capitan, a rock-face peak that is only accessible by rock climbing. We set off, continuing to run, towards the highest point we

could run to...the monster El Capitan. Chad turned a bend towards the setting sun, and screamed for us to stop suddenly. Then he told us to get low on the ground and to be careful.

We were practically crawling around the bend when we felt winds as strong as a hurricane threatening to knock us down into the valley. The winds were so strong, I was literally being pushed by the wind and had to hold on to the ground as securely as possible. Sand and dust circled everywhere, in our hair and eyes, and into our mouths. Our windbreaker style running jackets were screaming in the wind as we crawled up a narrow mountain path towards El Capitan. The force of Mother Nature was too much to handle; we had to turn back.

We came to a secure boulder and stared at El Capitan, a peak far too intense for us to master. That first night was an introduction to the intensity of Guadalupe that was yet to come.



WHO'S WHO?

BEHIND THE SCENES ON THE 2012 - 2013 EXECUTIVE BOARD

Crosley Brammer: Co - Vice President



Hi, I'm Crosley! I'm a 2nd year majoring in International Business, Marketing and German. My favorite outdoor activity is kayaking. My first trip was Homecoming weekend of my 1st year. I was hesitant about going because I knew absolutely NO ONE and I would miss my FIRST homecoming weekend. BUT I went. It was the best trip ever! We went to the Red River Gorge for a weekend of rock climbing. I had never climbed a rock before, but I managed to get to the top (multiple times). I knew I was hooked on NC the moment Tim pulled out a bag of Skittles and M&Ms, while sitting on the cliff watching our fellow UCMC-ers climb some rocks, as birds flew through the sky on a gorgeous autumn afternoon. IT WAS AWESOME. I love UCMC. Bet you didn't know...my front tooth is half fake because I ran into a glass door in the 6th grade. I am freaked out by raccoons and opossums. Once my fortune cookie said "You have the ability to see the good in the bad" I think that is true, and I make it a priority to smile & laugh everyday." :)

Ellen Foster: Fundraising Chair



Hola, I'm Ellen! I'm a 2nd year at UC as a transfer student, 5 years undergrad currently majoring in Exercise & Movement. My favorite outdoor activity is cycling. I had only been at UC for a few weeks when I volunteered to be part of UCMC's first ever canoe battleship team, and that's when I was hooked with UCMC! I have a guinea pig named Carlton.

Hey, I'm Adam, your fellow nature enthusiast! I'm a third year majoring in computer science. Backpacking/hiking is my favorite outdoor activity. My first outdoor trip was ... sometime before I was old enough to remember I guess, although I started backpacking mainly in high school. I'm currently in the process of section hiking the entire Sheltowee Trace Trail through Kentucky.

Adam White: Gear Manager

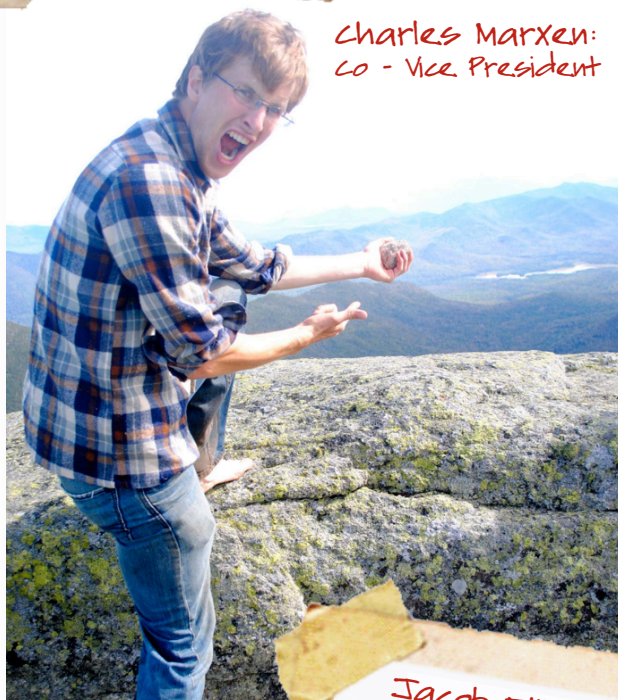


Carter Harlan: Gear Manager



Hey, I'm Carter, one of the gear managers! I'm a sophomore majoring in Psychology. My favorite outdoor activity is trail running. My first trip with UCMC was caving at Sloan's, but I was an addict long before I was in the club. I like adventure. I like to try new activities, and master old ones; all while having fun.

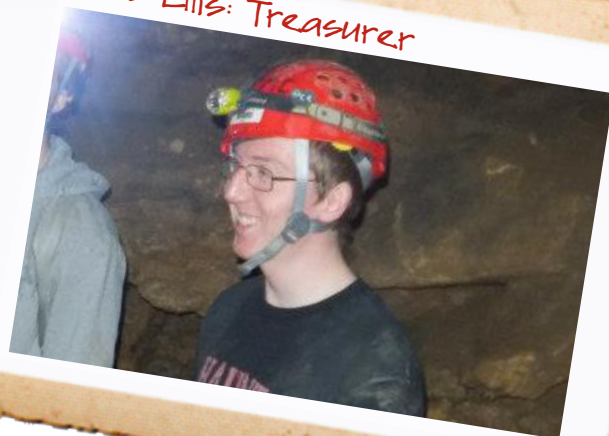
*Charles Marxen:
Co - Vice President*



'Ello good friends! Chuck here!

Currently I'm a 4th year studying engineering. My first legitmate club trip was the Ozarks (same first trip as Megan!) for a weekend of backpacking - it was pretty awesome. I'm a pirate and short shorts with built in underwear are, unequivocally, the best.

Jacob Ellis: Treasurer



Hey friends, I'm Jacob! I'm a 4th year studying Information Technology who loves caving, camping, hiking and biking. I knew I hooked on nature crack (NC) on my first caving trip when I moved into the Smurf House (the designated UCMC fan club house in Clifton). Thanks to the Smurf House, I was immediately introduced to a club that I have been looking to do crazy outdoor adventures with. Now I can try things that I would normally not have dared attempted on my own thanks to the NC lovers in UCMC.

'Ello Crazyes, I'm Megan! I'm studying (sometimes) Environmental Studies, Organizational Leadership and Visual Communication at UC, currently finishing my 1st victory lap (5th year). My favorite outdoor funtivity is backpacking/summiting those natural highrises, and eatin' icecream...outside. My first trip with the club was a beginner backpacking trip to the Ozarks where I also managed to trip over a rock, cutting my patella tendon in half... BUT IT WAS SO AWESOME!! I'm in love with cities I've never been to, and people I've never met. I believe a day without laughter is a day wasted, especially when there is ice cream to be eaten.

Megan Chambers: President



HEY HEY HEY, I'm Taylor Ayn Grizzlefoshizzle (Griggs if we're being proper)! I'm majoring in Graphic Communication Design and am currently a Sophomore. My favorite outdoor activity would be general romping amongst trees and rocks but I guess we'll just say backpacking. My first trip was last winter, it was a backpacking trip down to Red River Gorge and the weather was miserable, I came down with the flu, and suffered from pretty rough asthma at the time. We couldn't keep a fire going the whole time, and our water filter broke. But hell, I was hooked then and there. I'm fluent in English.



*Taylor Griggs
Secretary*



Larry Bortner: Advisor

Hey UCMCers, I'm Larry Bortner!

I'm the manger of the College Physics Labs and an alumni of both UC and UCMC. My favorite outdoor activity is biking. My first trip with UCMC was when The University of Akron sponsored an Ohio Outing Clubs outing one weekend in the spring. About 20 club members piled into cars and vans to show up late on Friday night. We brought the party-- enthusiasm, energy, and fun. Activities over the weekend included hikes, trail runs, and canoeing on lakes. Yeah, I could get used to this. My Gmail username is "tiedyeandcookies" and in 1998 I came in 4th in the world in individual line dancing.

YOU ARE NOT HARDCORE AND NEITHER ARE WE

Andy Schriener &
Eric Miller

You are not hardcore. Yes, your mother would “rather not think about what it is you do on the weekends” and your grandma thinks you’re “something else” and most of your friends are rather impressed by your “cray-cray” exploits, but really, your day of climbing was not epic, nor was your weekend of backpacking nor your week of fill-in-the-blank. Did you spend 10 years separated from your spouse and son during which you witnessed the deaths of most of your friends, gouged out the single eye of a giant, endured music which drove you mad with desire, visited dead relatives that you didn’t even know were dead, and, upon returning from this quest, did you still have the moxy to slay the freeloaders occupying your house? And your trials and tribulations were captured in thousands of lines of dactylic hexameter? Ok, Odysseus, your trip was indeed “epic”.

To be clear though, we’re not hardcore either. We’ve climbed thousands of feet of rock and then rappelled by moonlight and headlamp, simul-soloed on ice, run stairs in freezing rain for training, and gotten ourselves

caught in an avalanche. But, before we sink our club dues into a statue depicting Andy and Eric gently wrapping a sick comrade in a down jacket before leaving him on the side of Long’s Peak with the last of our food, let’s remind ourselves: Andy and Eric are not hardcore. We’re definitely not hardcore.

Andrew Skurka backpacked and packrafted a 4700 mile loop through Alaska and the Yukon. Lynn Hill dedicated 4 years to be the first person to free climb The Nose on El Cap. Mark Twight and Randy Rackcliff climbed a 2000 ft WI6 route with two ice screws: one for each belay, and zero for the pitches. Kelly Cordes and Josh Wharton went 48 hours without water descending Pakistan’s Great Trango Tower. These are the best of the best – going the biggest, farthest, hardest, lightest and fastest. We’d be willing to bet, however, that if you asked any of these folks if they thought they were hardcore, they would squirm and defer. Because, similarly, they know that Lawrence Oates walked away from his tent into an Antarctic blizzard, saying, “I am just going outside and may be some time” when he knew his poor health had become too heavy a burden to his friends’ chances of survival. They also know that Ernest Shackleton and his crew survived when their ship was entrapped and crushed by sea


ice, were forced to camp on the ice for months, sail in lifeboats to a remote and uninhabited rocky island, send one of their tiny lifeboats across 800 miles of open, icy ocean, and then walk 26 miles across mountains and glaciers to reach their only chance of aid.

Do we mean to say that all of our sub-hardcore endeavoring is less worthy, or less worthwhile? Certainly not.

The value of the things we do is not measured in comparison to what others have done, but in how it affects us, or in comparison to what we might do instead with our time.

How do we challenge ourselves, and grow, and learn how much we can handle, and otherwise gaze at our navels through the process of outdoor recreating? These questions are masked when we just pat ourselves on the back for being “so hardcore”.

The stage of the outdoors provides boundless opportunity for the application of skill, endurance and courage. It is important to choose objectives which are meaningful, but also attainable, to give ourselves tests that we stand a chance at passing. It’s hard to set appropriate goals with the uninitiated label of everything that we do is crazy.

A person is seen rappelling down a steep, rocky cliff face in a narrow gorge. The scene is captured from a high angle, looking down into the gorge. The rock is light-colored and textured. The person is a small figure against the large rock face. The background shows a bright sky and some greenery on the opposite side of the gorge.

Perhaps we use these benchmarks, established by the best of the best, to define directions in which we will test our limits; on the other hand, if we write off their exploits as suicidal or needlessly difficult - if we think of these things as things what "other people" do - we excuse ourselves from their challenge and become isolated from the dialogue of actions which links novice and elite in advancing sports, societies, and the people which constitute them.

At the same time, we recognize the value in just spending a day outdoors with friends and having fun. It doesn't all have to be xtrem!! hardcore awesomeness to the max. A lazy day on the river is a lazy day on the river.

When you lead your first climb or complete your first overnight backpack or first crawl through a cave, you deserve a handshake and a knowing look in the eyes; by your tenth such endeavor, what is the merit of the accomplishment? Did you up the ante somehow, and grow as a human being because of it? Or did you repeat your previous endeavor, and squeeze some new perspective from the experience? Did you learn something? Can you articulate that? Even better, can your description leave room for future exploits to be more meaningful, worthwhile, grueling, meditative, etc? If it were

it indeed the case your rainy weekend in the Gorge, when the car wouldn't start, was the most trying test of human endurance the world had ever seen, then it would seem you have no need to go backpacking this weekend, having already probed every corner of your immortal soul.

Why does any of this matter? It matters first because words have meaning, which is defined not by a dictionary but by their shared use and understanding, and a word that is used to describe everything (epic, hardcore) eventually comes to mean nothing. It also matters because there is as much value in reflecting on our pursuits as there is in the doing of them. We cheat ourselves if we fail to summon that value into words, both for communicating to others and for understanding ourselves. So please, think on it. Choose your words wisely. By all means, express the value of your pursuits, entice others to join you, recognize the exceptional character of the people that join you, but save the superlatives and leave room in your language to express improvement by yourself and others. Let's impress ourselves; it's easier and more worthwhile than impressing others. What objective is more worthy of 60 or so kids (in body or mind) sharing a pile of heavily used sporting gear and meeting to talk about it every week?



Silence in the Mind & Adventure in the Heart

Louie Knolle

John Muir once said, “In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks.” Before coming to college, I would not have given much thought to this statement. However, that was before I ever truly experienced all that nature had to offer. A few weeks after I graduated high school in 2010, some close friends and I went backpacking for 3 days in Shenandoah National Park, located in northern Virginia. We wanted to go on some sort of trip, and one friend (a former boy scout) suggested hiking. And we figured, why not? It would be a good challenge and most importantly, it would be cheap! Little did I know however, I would be coming back from that trip with a changed perspective. Growing up, I had never camped for more than one night, and that was only car camping. My family was never one to venture deep into the outdoors, just the occasional walk in the park or visit to Eastfork State Park to go to the free public beach located there. But after returning from Shenandoah and

not seeing a road, car, or building for 3 days straight, I was thrilled by the prospect of going and doing it again. And that was even with 90+ degree days, too much in my pack, and pushing myself to new limits, but that’s all part of the fun! And in the years since, I have gone on numerous weekend backpacking trips (2-3 days) and more recently a 6 day/75 miles hike on the Appalachian Trail, climbed mountains, whitewater rafted, kayaked, rock climbed, and even gone caving.

The feeling and kind of person I am when I am doing these things is hard to explain. The best way I can think of describing is that it just feels natural (no pun intended, not even sure if that is a pun). There is a sense of calm and serenity, the likes of which I have never experienced before. When you wake up in the morning, peer over the edge of your hammock and see light refracted through dew covered spider webs, dawn breaking through a mist blanketed lake,

nothing compares. It’s both the small sights and the large vistas alike that draw me back time and time again. You feel ever the accomplishment when you realize that the only way to see these sights is to walk away from any road or parking lot, and nothing can take that away from you. I always like to imagine that every sight or object that I’m seeing is being viewed in a completely original manner. Whether it be because I climbed a tree to get a better look, the stream was running especially high and fast that day, or even standing two feet to the left of a friend, what I am taking in is 100% original.

Enough about me though! You can be having these feelings and revelations too! First thing you have to do, is go outside of course. One of the most positive things I find I get out of hiking is a closeness to the earth that cannot be duplicated anywhere else. In this day and age, the average person spends eight hours in front of an electronic

screen, in some form or another, each day. Ironically, that is what I'm doing in writing this article... But despite this slight hypocrisy, I am an advocate of removing oneself from these screens. All this screen time really accomplishes is separating yourself from the world around you, numbing the wonderful machine your mind can be, and not making use of each and every person's unique skills. I know when I spend too much time on my laptop whether it is on Facebook, Netflix, Reddit, Stumble-upon, etc. I sense an inner restlessness within me and am much less productive as a result. Not only are these websites time wasters for me, but they are motivation killers too.

One of the most therapeutic benefits of hiking is the sense of peace it brings you. You totally forget about work deadlines, trivial personal matters, and anything else that may worry you on a day-to-day basis. I know the best sleep I ever get is in a tent or hammock after a day or days of hiking. And of course you can argue, sure you sleep soundly after hiking 15 miles with a 30 pound pack on your back, but I'm referring the silence in my mind as I am closing my eyes for the night. We all have those nights where we toss and turn because it doesn't seem like our mind wants to turn off, but rarely will you find that as a problem when you simply let your mind exist. I'm not saying you need to strap on a pack and carry 3 days' worth of gear off into the wilderness to achieve this, I can reach the same level of inner calm by simply walking my dog in the park for an hour (a black lab/border collie mix named Korra, she's adorable). And once you have done this a few times, you can bring this state of mind into your daily routine, whether it is through meditation, yoga, counting to 10, or whatever it is you do to calm yourself after a stressful day. And as a side note, if you don't do some sort of meditation, I highly recommend it!

Perhaps the most important part of all of this is to be happy. Look deep down and find what makes you happy. It doesn't have to be hiking. It could be any sort of activity you truly love doing. Every single human being is born with an adventurous spirit, it is

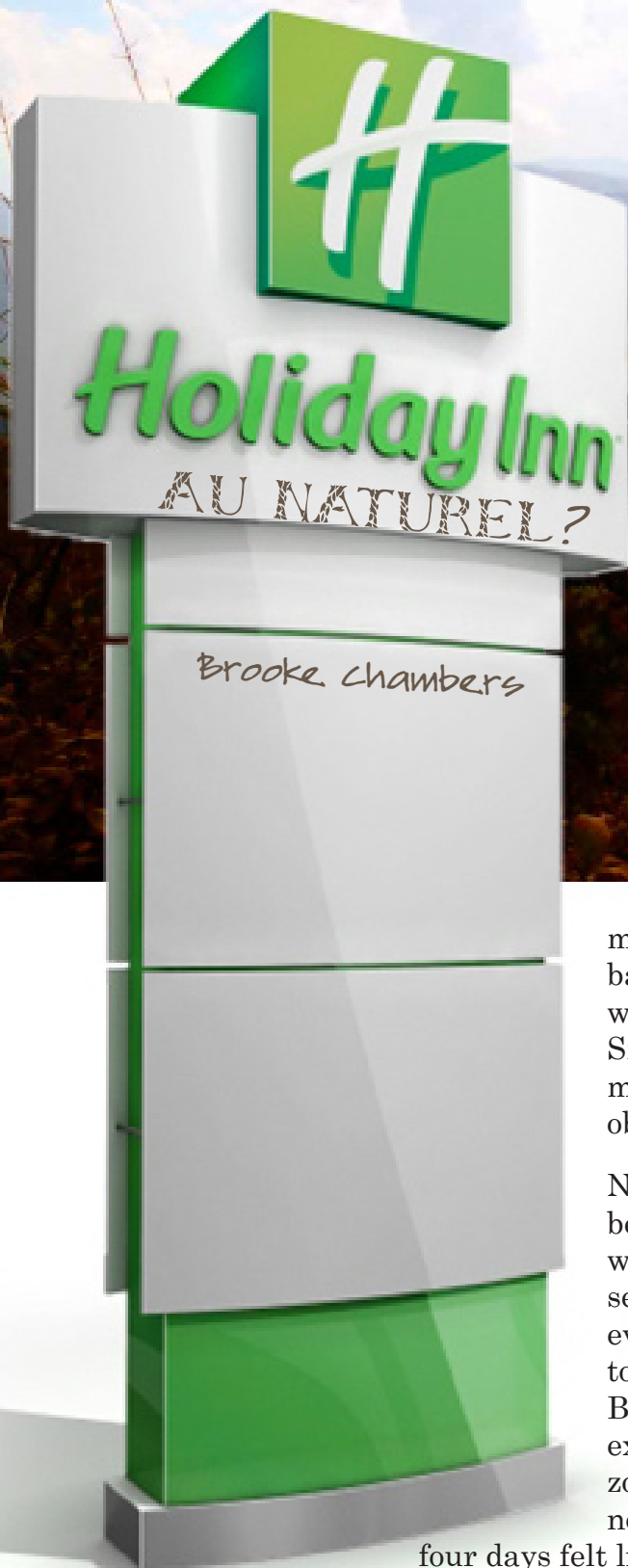
up to you the individual to utilize it. For me, going on adventures helped me find a purpose in my life. Not that my life was destitute and directionless before, but planning hikes and other adventures with both myself alone and friends helped remove me from a state of silent acquiescent acceptance. I did not think deeply about most things, just took them as they were and did not question them. I was not able to realize all the blessings I had in my life.

I learned what it truly meant to live in the present and fully enjoy what I was doing, instead of simply going through the emotions. Without adventure in our lives, life can get stale really quickly.

And what's worse than not using our natural adventurous nature? My wish for you reading this right now is that if you have not already found something you truly love to do, that you keep trying new things until you do find it.

And even after you find it, keep trying even more new things. No one ever loses their childlike sense of curiosity; all they need is a kick in the rump by something that truly invigorates them to clear the film from over their eyes and see the world how it truly is again, a wonderful and spectacular place.





I like pink and frilly things. I like shopping until my closet can't possibly fit any more clothes, then I shop some more. I hate spiders, dirt, and smelly boys. So when my sister asked

me to come on a backpacking trip with her in the Smokey Mountains, my answer was obvious. YES! Now this might not be the answer you were expecting, seeing as I hate everything that has to do with nature. But I wanted to expand my horizons, to see what not showering for four days felt like (real great by the way, you couldn't even smell the stench by the second day.) I wanted to be more adventurous like my sister and I figured throwing myself into the woods with warnings of brown bear attacks was the perfect place to

start. I needed to just jump start my dislike and fear of nature and get over it.

Turns out, the whole nature side of the trip wasn't bad at all. Except for the spiders that were hanging over me and crawling over my mouth when I slept, I actually thoroughly enjoyed the outdoors. It was something else that I ended up being afraid of, something I wasn't expecting of being afraid of at all. It kept me up at night and haunted my mind throughout the entire day. In fact, it scared me so much I couldn't even concentrate on all the dirt, spiders or smelly boys. I call it SFOPO, serious fear of peeing outside.

When I first had to go to the bathroom, I was expecting a nice little white toilet. Heck, I would have even taken a Porta

Potty (with hand sanitizer of course.) But when I asked my sister where the restroom was, she pointed to the woods. Um...what? The woods? Sure, yeah, let me just make my way over there and lift my leg on a tree like a dog. Not to mention the poison ivy I could get in places one *never* wants to get poison ivy. So naturally I held it in. I made it one whole day before I couldn't hold it in anymore and I forced myself to at least try to you know...pee in the woods.

I slowly hiked away from the safety of my group, tentatively walking into the open mouth of the dark forest. With each step I could feel the hairs on my arms rising, my heart racing, and the sweat trickling down my forehead, all serious symptoms of SFOPO. Once I found a spot I thought was safe enough, I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. *You can do this. It's just like going at home with your Coastal Living Magazines and Sudoku to keep you busy. Just picture the nice fuzzy toilet seat cover that matches the fuzzy rug.* I opened my eyes; ready and raring to go when I realized I didn't know how to pee in the woods. What do I do with my pants? Do I take them off completely? Do I one leg it? Where do I put my pants? What if it gets on me!

My internal debate of what to do with my pants caused me to start hyperventilating right there in the middle of the outdoors, a whole symptom of SFOPO I wasn't aware of.

The sweat that was once just a mere trickle started rushing down my face like a mini Niagara Falls and my heart was beating so far out of my chest I think it was making my boob bigger. *Get it together Chambers! You used to pee in the woods all the time when you were younger!* My breath started to slow with each little motivating subconscious comment and all my SFOPO symptoms started dying down. I decided what to do with my pants (information I have declined to share in this story) and finally, finally peed in the woods.

When I was done, I felt like a weight had been lifted off my chest, or more like my bladder. I raced back to my group with a smile on my face that reached ear to ear. I had overcome my SFOPO! I was a changed woman. Not only had I taken my first backpacking trip, I had PEED in the woods! I was ready to tell this story for years to come. However, my smile quickly turned into a frown and my excitement dissipated when I soon realized something else. I had to take a shit.



WHITE SNOW BLANKETING

THE RED DESERT SANDS
AIR WHISTLING THROUGH THE CANYONS

THE WHOLE WORLD IN MY HANDS
STRONG WILLED PLANTS RISE FROM THE EARTH

SUN RISES OVER HILLS

A BEAUTY YOU CANNOT BEHOLD
LOOKING OUT YOUR WINDOWSILLS

THE SUNSHINE ON MY FACE IS WARM
AS THE COLD AIR RUSHES BY

MY FRIENDS SIT DWELLING IN THE VAN
WHILE I WATCH THE CLEAR BLUE SKY

HEAVY PACKS AND BROKEN BACKS
DRY HANDS AND SORE FEET

HIKING THROUGH THE CANYONLANDS
WANDERINGS YOU'VE YET TO MEET.

Kayla McKinney

