

REFLECTIONS OF OUTWARD BOUND



"The following are personal commentaries of some of the participants in UNCC's Outward Bound seminar held August 25-September 8. We believe their experiences deserve to be shared. The Editors."

"It won't mean anything until I get back to civilization."

I look at the Outward Bound experience as an emphatic stimulant in my life. It's the epoch.

It gave me the opportunity to test and evaluate myself objectively without being interrupted or confused by the complexities that characterize society today. Life was simplified, but not necessarily easier. It is not easy for a person to face up to himself and see his actual strengths and weaknesses. Outward Bound creates an atmosphere where survival and understandable stress are reality. Through those death-defying

episodes I came face to face with myself and other human beings. I don't think society offers this kind of opportunity. Society is full of all kinds of symbols that people can hide behind and never really find themselves or let others see them as they really are. Outward bound breaks down the barriers.

I can say that as I was on my way back to this world I felt closer to people as human beings and I felt that all I experience there would mean nothing if I didn't find some way in my life to express the Outward Bound spirit.

Don Keaton

The Outward Bound experience means many different things to many different people. But I'd bet that most of those people asked themselves during each death-defying episode of the course, "What am I doing here?" They probably consoled themselves, as I did, by replying,

We all shared a unique sensitivity and compassion for one another. Climbing seemed to be the most difficult thing for most of us. I found that it's impossible to give up when hanging on the side of a cliff half way to the top. No matter how difficult it appears you must go up because going down is twice as hard. And upon reaching the top there's always that person at the end of the rope who understands because your life was in their hands. As Doug Orr stated, "you could feel a heartbeat through the rope."

Brenda Swindle

In my Outward Bound experience, "little things" came to mean so much. It was a true joy to lay down a fifty pound pack after carrying it for 3 miles. The sound of a near by stream brought smiles to perspiring faces and spurred aching feet to walk just a little bit faster. The smell of hot tea and a box of raisins made gourmet meals. A smile, a wink, the touch of a hand often renewed those who had already given up.

A dip in an ice-cold river washed away memories of the pain and misery of a 10 mile uphill hike. The knowledge that others were sharing identical feelings made the solitude of a 3 day solo not quite so lonely. The flames and warmth of a fire made the dark woods seem almost friendly. Love and acceptance for the group reduced fears of failing to a minimum. The huge feeling of accomplishment at the end of the course made the hardships of the two weeks seem very worthwhile.

The Outward Bound experience made me more appreciative of the "little things"...this appreciation has carried over into my daily life, and I feel I am a bigger person for it.

Susan Johnson

There are many dimensions of the Outward Bound idea, and to me they seemed to culminate in exposing us to the human learning and growth process in the fullest sense. Because of the shared nature of this experience, and the interrelationships that developed among our group, I am reminded once again of the broad responsibilities entailed in being a teacher. It was a two weeks I shall not easily forget. I certainly hope there is some way we can translate this concept into UNCC programs.

Douglas M. Orr, Jr.

Outward Bound held many meaningful experiences for me, and there are some that I have not been able to work through in my own mind and communicate to others. However, there are some that I find I am now able to share with others.

One of these was the experience of "solo" in which we were expected to spend three days and three nights by ourself in the woods on Shortoff Mountain. As solo began, I felt that I would enjoy being off in the woods by myself since as a boy I used to love to roam the forest back in my home in Wisconsin. Then around eighteen or nineteen I got caught up in other things and moved far away from that kind of experience.

On the rocks that we had climbed, I felt like a stranger facing an adversary who was cold and unkind, but in the woods on solo I often felt like I belonged there and although many things were unfamiliar, I still felt that they were good and that I must get to know them and feel at home with them.

While being alone these three days, I felt that my feelings ran up and down all their alternatives from serenity, exhilaration and peace to boredom, anxiety, and much restlessness. I found the nights to be pitch black and lonely, and I can't say I ever really got a good night's sleep those three days. It nearly felt like rebirth to see the sun come up over the ridge early in the morning.

We were encouraged to fast on solo, so I had lunch Tuesday at noon and did not eat another bite of food until three days later, which was Friday. Surprisingly, the lack of food did not bother me and I really never experienced hunger as such; but I did begin to feel during the last 24 hours that my body was weak, and that I was easily fatigued from minimal movement. I sensed that the timelessness of the days and nights and the absence of friends to share a meal with made the fast less of a hardship than I felt it might be.

In one sense, solo provided me with a different dimension of the concept of loneliness. Thoughts and concerns about the rest of the people in the group were important and the stuff that held up together on the trail brought meaning to the solitary experience of those three days.

R.B. Simono

Outward Bound was the most challenging experience of my life. It pulled from within me my most hidden fears and frustrations. It also taught me that I don't have to be afraid of failing, thereby giving me a freedom to try anything.

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