

Journal entry:

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011

Inyo National Forest,  
Sierra Nevada's

"Day two in the Sierras -- saw my first bear of the summer! The group and I just finished cleaning up and putting away the pots and pans from another great meal accompanied with yet another interesting and entertaining dinner conversation. Some of the volunteers had just settled in for the night while some of us began our nightly rituals and prepared ourselves for bed. I was standing over the group sump, brushing my teeth, when out of the corner of my eye I saw something move. I slowly turned my head only to see a dark figure standing roughly 15 to 20 ft away looking directly at me. We locked eyes and the brushing stopped. Standing motionless, mouth wide open, I slowly lowered my toothbrush and fixed my eyes on a handsome, healthy looking black bear. Very aware of each others presence we both stood very still for what seemed like forever and checked each other out. I figure I must have startled him just as much as he startled me because we both abruptly stopped what we were doing. To break the silence I made the first move and began to raise my toothbrush back to my still wide open mouth. As I apprehensively went back to brushing my teeth, the bear stood up, looked towards me once more, and then ran off onto the trees opposite of me. Whew.... I could 'bear'ly continue my nightly brushing due to my exhilarating 'brush' with a bear!!! What a spectacular place filled with amazing experiences! I can't believe I have had the opportunity to be in so many incredible places all summer long. How can a guy be so lucky?"

That my friends, was a little taste of one of my many journal entries from the 5 incredible weeks I spent with Wilderness Volunteers this last summer. My name is Cassidy Hopkinson and I had the best summer of my life working as an intern with WV.

You may be asking what an intern does for WV. Well, besides having a whole year worth of fun packed into one summer, I learned what it takes to become a good leader because of the example set by my remarkable co leaders and an awesome leadership training course. Not only did I learn a great deal, but I was fortunate enough to lead 5 extraordinary groups of hard working volunteers into some of the most incredible backcountry this side of the Mississippi.

Thanks to Dave, Debbie, and WV I just recently graduated with a degree in Natural Resource Management from the department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism at the University of Utah. As part of my course work I was required to find an internship in the field of work that I would like to pursue. Well, luckily that internship found me.

I was approached by Dave Pacheco who asked if I would like to spend 5 weeks planning menus, working, and leading trips in Great Basin National Park, Jarbidge Wilderness, Pecos Wilderness, John Muir Wilderness, and the Popo Agie Wilderness in the Wind Rivers. It was a no brainer. I had never been to any of these places before! The internship was a perfect fit, how could I turn it down? For an entire summer I would get to explore new areas that I had never even heard of and I would finally get to use my infinite knowledge that I had worked so hard for.

After the initial excitement wore off I started to get a bit nervous about the whole leading bit. I mean don't get me wrong, between my innate ability to lead and my classes at the University I was already a perfect leader...(insert sarcasm)... but I had never actually led a real group before. Nor had I ever planned a menu for more than a few people for a couple of days, let alone shop and prepare meals for up to 12 people for a week. Shopping on a budget and picking out meals that don't include rice and beans every day was something a poor college student isn't used to. Thankfully I received some menu, shopping, and repackaging wisdom from none other than the menu gurus themselves, Debbie and Dave, at the leadership training. However, I could not have become the menu master and backcountry chef that I am today without the help of the fine men and women of WV who guided me in the ways of outdoor dining at its finest. They shared with me some of their most secret recipes, and because of these backcountry culinary giants, I am able to satisfy almost any palette, even the pickiest of eaters. Watch out ladies, I have since taken those backcountry lessons and expanded them to the front country.

Cooking wasn't the only thing I picked up from WV this summer, I learned a lot about what it takes to be a good leader. However, being around and watching others lead was far more beneficial than any class I took at the University. It became quite evident that a good leader has to lead by example, have confidence in his or herself and in the decisions that they make. All of this can be accomplished by three simple steps . . . be prepared, be prepared and be prepared. Choosing to put a little more time and effort before your trip can change the outcome of your entire trip as well the experience of those you lead. Being prepared instills not only greater confidence of your leadership skills and abilities but it builds trust in all those you lead. They see you definitely have a strategy and concrete plan. I learned simple guidelines such as, having the right gear, knowing your area, be physically prepared, planning the menu and repackaging food for ease of carrying and usage, knowing the work and results that are expected, and the equipment needed to complete the work. Throughout the summer I began to see that the more confident I was in myself and with my decisions the more the volunteers seemed to trust in my ability to lead. That self confidence came from being fully prepared. I also learned the value of leading by example, the old saying 'monkey see monkey do' is sooo true. If I the leader works fast and hard that sets the pace for the crew. I saw this lesson of leadership in action by watching my co-leaders lead, they exemplify the saying "the speed of the leader is the speed of the gang." Together as leaders our pace helped to motivate and increase productivity for our gang.

However, we as leaders cannot take all of the credit, the volunteers that I was privileged to work with this summer deserve the majority of the credit. What an amazing group of people, they come from all different walks of life, taking time out of their lives, spending their money to come work, and work extremely hard, all for a common cause and goal. I have such huge admiration and respect for each of them and I am in awe and appreciation of their passion for this cause. People like this and their passion will keep WV alive.

Like my initial encounter with the bear, at first I was kind of scared, apprehensive, and not sure how to react to the position of leadership. But when I stared directly into the eye of leadership, took a deep breath, and realized I had prepared and trained for this role I realized that the position of a leader doesn't need to be threatening. By asserting yourself and performing your duties with a level of certainty and confidence then those around you, just like the bear, will follow your lead creating a level

of trust which allows everyone be comfortable and work together and complete the business and goal at hand.

As I look back through the pages in my journal, they read like a chapter out of Jeremiah Johnson which as a young boy was my idea of the storybook adventure. Through this experience I feel like I was for a mere moment in time, Jeremiah Johnson! And I grew the beard to prove it.