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Ed Shaw

Mark McGuiness

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Outward Bound!

Ed Shaw and Mark McGuiness, both on the New York office staff, have something in common. Last summer each participated in Outward Bound, a world-wide system of thirty schools offering wilderness experience courses. Begun in Wales during World War II to develop spiritual tenacity and the will to survive in young British seamen, the first U.S. school opened in Colorado in 1962. The purpose of Outward Bound is to strengthen character by making demands on the body, forcing the individual to use all his or her mental and physical resources to acquire new skills. It's an experiment in group and personal dynamics, in which the participants learn when they can rely on themselves and when they should turn to others in the group for support. Outward Bound uses the wilderness as a teaching medium because of its plentiful opportunities for putting students into increasingly difficult situations that require initiative, perseverance and imagination.

Mark had met the vice president of Outward Bound at a reception in New York City, and as they talked he found the concept of the program so exciting that he decided to try it. Because of his fondness for sailing, he enrolled in the Hurricane Island School located ten miles off the rugged coast of Maine. At the New York office dinner-dance in the spring of 1975, he talked with Ed about his plans and Ed, too, decided to give it a try. Ed selected the Northwest School in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon.

Ed spent twenty-three days hiking in the Cascades, where the terrain varies from forests of Douglas fir to bare rocks and glaciers. His coed group of ten learned basic camping skills such as building a fire, pitching a tent, maintaining body temperature to prevent hypothermia (a lowering of body temperature, usually through exposure, which can result in death), first aid, map and compass techniques, and search and rescue. After a course in the specifics of climbing and the use of ropes, the group was prepared for many of the rigors that lay ahead.

"We made our descent from Broken Top as the sky turned pink, orange and deep red. Twilight faded and the stars came out. I could not help stopping occasionally to gaze upward. The air was so clear, the stars so bright, I felt I could step off the ridge and walk right into the Big Dipper."

From the journal of Ed Shaw

The weather generally was good, except for three miserable days of snow, rain and hail which trapped them between the peaks of two mountains. The highlight was a climb up Broken Top, one of the oldest and most eroded volcanic peaks, to a breathtaking altitude of 9,000 feet.

Meanwhile, Mark and eleven other men and women were on board a thirty-foot pulling boat. Taken by fishing trawler to Hurricane Island, they began their twenty-six-day voyage. Each morning started at five o'clock with a three-mile jog and a quick dip in the "refreshing" Maine waters. The instructors taught the crew the basic theories of sailing but left them pretty much on their own to puzzle out the intricacies of raising a sail, navigating and learning how to make ten oars go in one direction. Relying on the wind during the day, the crew rowed hard in one-hour shifts at night. Their final expedition was a six-day trip to the Canadian border some 150 miles away, a location determined almost as much by the wind as by the group.

All Outward Bound schools have certain activities in common, like the early morning run and dip, or the Marathon, a cross-

country foot race at the end of each course in which the goal is not so much to win as to make it to the end on your own terms. And each student has the all-important solo, three days in which he or she is absolutely alone, with a small supply of food, a minimum amount of camping equipment and a notebook and pencil.

Mark's solo was on Bald Island, a name he says literally describes the terrain. He explored the island, caught clams and crabs which he boiled in an old tin can he found, and weathered a severe storm on the final night of his stay while waiting to find out if the six-foot waves would prevent the boat from reaching him the next day.

Ed found himself in a small meadow alongside a half-submerged mountain stream. He spent his three days updating his journal, reflecting on his experiences and observing the wilderness in a way he had never been able to before. His seclusion was broken only by an occasional humming-

“The first rays of sun crept over the horizon, emancipating the hope for a full day’s wind. The stroke of the oars picked up, breaking the mechanical motion of our strokes through the darkness. At intervals throughout the night oars would slam against each other, and the person who had momentarily dozed off would hurriedly catch up with the crew’s pace.”

From the journal of Mark McGuiness

bird, a passing deer and the creaking of the trees bending in the wind. It was fascinating but “by the third day I was ready to join the group again,” he said.

Rappelling, a controlled descent by rope down a vertical rock face, is also a typical Outward Bound test. You must rely on your own strength and coordination, as well as have confidence in the team member who is holding the safety rope, prepared to help you if you fall or lose control. The most difficult part is taking those first backward steps that will put you over the edge of a 100-foot cliff, as you prepare to descend with your body perpendicular to the rocks, according to Ed. But Mark and Ed both agree it is well worth the doing.

According to the two men, the Outward Bound experience was a valuable one, for their professional as well as their personal lives. As Ed explains, the course is unique in its absence of external motivation. There is no pressure from the instructor to achieve; you get from the program what you are willing to invest in it. Mark, who was raised in Ecuador, found that women

are as capable as men, carrying the same heavy packs, rowing just as long and climbing just as far. “It was a kind of utopia in which everyone was equal, without the status we are aware of in our everyday life. The course helped me develop a better attitude toward people, our most valuable asset.”

Originally the term “outward bound” referred to a ship leaving the safety of its harbor for the open sea. In a similar way, the Outward Bound program takes its students into the unknown, although the unknown varies for each individual. As Ed says, “You may find yourself doing many things that build your sense of self-confidence and self-reliance. But there’s a curious twist to it. You realize how important was the help you received from others, whether it be your instructor, your group or the Outward Bound program itself.”