

The S O L A R Ray

September 2008

Riding for a Cure

By Craig Kosmowski

The annual MS 150 bike tour to raise money to fight the effects of multiple sclerosis took place the weekend of July 12th and 13th. This is a devastating disease that generally affects adults in the prime of life. It was my 18th consecutive year riding, and as usual, it was a blast! This is a very well organized and well supported event, and I look forward to it every year.

This year, I once again rode with my old friend Shira for the first time in a number of years. Despite my notable lack of training for this year's event, we both managed to successfully knock off the optional "century loop" each day. Total training miles for me for the entire year leading up to the ride - less than 300. Cost of potential medical bills due to lack of training - priceless.

Saturday there was a threat of severe thunderstorms, luckily, it never did. Although we got rained on lightly a few times, the severe weather missed us, and the only thing we had to contend with was strong headwinds.

After a long day in the saddle, we arrived at Michigan State for the evening, we cleaned up, and relaxed for a short while before dinner. My notoriously large appetite caused the food service staff to chuckle as they loaded me up. ☺ (Using rather precise mathematical formulas it is possible to estimate calories burned while. For my body weight, and a number of other factors, I burn around 6000 calories on a 100 mile ride. That's about 12,000 in two days riding the double century

Day two always starts too early! I don't understand why they won't let us sleep in till say, noon, before we have to get going. ☺ After a hearty breakfast we got our gear to the gear trucks, returned keys, and hit the road. Sunday morning can be most difficult on the tush. Climbing onto your bike saddle is about the last thing you want to do, but somehow is necessary to complete the ride. The day brought us a cloudless, crystalline blue sky and a welcome coolness to the air. It was truly spectacular weather to be riding. The wildflowers were seemingly everywhere along the route, and their sunlit images still dance vividly through my head. Later in the day, the winds picked up, but this time as we rode generally eastward, they assisted rather than hindered. The start of the ride has changed many times over the years, and now is northwest of Fenton. I like this because the entire route, with the exception of coming into East Lansing, is rural, and the scenery is fabulous.

Everything was going along quite well until we hit the "fly traps." Very few people do the century routes. The gluttons for punishment like Shira and I who did do it the second day were

lucky enough to be treated to several county road crews spraying hot, sticky, bitumen on stretches of the century loop. This crap gummed up our tires, stuck all over our shoes, bike bags, brakes, cables, and bike frames, and threaded a gooey black web from the bottom of my bike seat to the frame below. Our beloved machines were compromised. To make matters worse, the gunk on the tires picked up small stones that made riding my high-tech bike more akin to something seen on the Flintstones. With all the stone on my sidewalls, taking sharp turns was a bit dicey. I learned quickly to adjust after almost losing traction and dumping it on one turn. At one point just beyond one of the dreaded tar-belching trucks, my bike rode unavoidably into a freshly sprayed patch. I almost went over the handlebars. I literally thought I had blown a tire or the brakes had become jammed. I quickly realized it was just the goo trying to hold me for all eternity. Now I know a little of what it must have been like to be a prehistoric animal wallowing futilely in the tar pits at La Brea. ☺

Somehow we survived the ordeal, got to the next rest stop and cleaned off as much of the crud as we could. We pushed hard the last 40 miles or so, and I was pleasantly surprised at how well my knees held up. I had not trained enough, but we still cruised the last 10 mile stretch to the finish at a respectable speed of about 23 miles per hour. Yummy veggie burgers with salsa awaited me, and the three beers we had left in the car Saturday morning still were on ice. Shira and I each had one and toasted our achievement, and I gave the third to the woman who came across the finish line last this year. It was her second year of riding the tour, and although she was "only" riding the 75 mile route, was swept off the course at 5:00 pm. while still five miles out. The sag truck dropped her off just short of the finish, and she was able to experience the cheers and excitement of crossing the finish line knowing she had done something extraordinary for a noble cause, and for herself. That's what this ride is all about.

What started for me 18 years ago as a simple personal challenge, has grown into something much larger. It made such a huge impression on me the first year, that I vowed I would ride it every year until either a cure was found or I could no longer do it. It has been difficult sometimes to keep my vow. For instance, one year I had to go to Wisconsin to do their tour because I was living in Washington during the time of the Michigan tour. Despite the occasional inconvenience, I consistently show up year after year to support a cause I believe is worthy. I've raised many thousands of dollars, and met many extraordinary people along the way. This ride transcends physical challenge. It is a reality check and a reminder of so much we as humans have a tendency to take for granted.

Fall Return to Jordan Valley Pathway

By Kevin Cotter

I will be leading another SOLAR trip to the Jordan Valley Pathway from Friday, October 17 to Sunday, October 19. It is listed as one of the top 10 backpacking trips in Michigan in Jim DuFresne's book, *Backpacking in Michigan*, with scenic overlooks, forests, and wildlife. There is a good chance we'll also see some spectacular fall colors!

The trail is about 15 miles west of Gaylord, and is 3.5 hours from Detroit. You can find a map of the trail at http://www.fishweb.com/maps/antrim/hike/jordan_river/.

Our plan is to camp at the Pinney Bridge Campground Friday night (I will send directions to those who sign up). The

campground is about 1/4 mile from the road, so it's not really car camping; no 100 essentials. There is a water pump and outhouses at the campground. Saturday morning, we will drive from the campground to the trailhead at Dead Man's Hill and hike 10 miles back to the campground. You can leave your tent and whatever else you wish, or carry whatever you wish, it's up to you. We will then hike 8 miles back to Dead Mans Hill on Sunday.

Cost is \$10, cash or check made payable to SOLAR. I will be taking signups at the September (not August) meeting. You should have some backpacking experience, preferably the beginning backpacking course, and be in fairly decent physical condition. If you are taking the Fall backpacking class, this will be a great opportunity to try out your new skills and gear!

BASIC MOUNTAINEERING & SAFETY SKILLS CLASS

By Lou Szakal

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to stand on the Summit of a Mountain? Or to even know what it takes to get there? How about just advancing your Winter Camping or Snowshoe and Cross-Country Ski skills to include one to two week expeditions to places like Yellowstone or the Canadian Rockies? Here is your chance to find out. Starting in December 2008, I will be teaching the Basic Mountaineering and Safety Skills Class to a few lucky students who are interested in devoting their time and energy to the sport of Mountaineering and Advanced Winter Adventure.

Here are some of the things you will get:

Self Arrest, Fixed Lines, Roped Travel, Running Belays, Risk Assessment, Snow Shoeing Skills, Health/Fitness Issues, Cross Country Ski Skills, Basic Mountain Skills, Avalanche Issues, Chest Harness , Camaraderie , Ice Axe Use, Leadership, Navigation, Prussiks, Fun, 2 Mountaineering Books, Technical Tool Usage, Mountain Safety, First Aid Issues, Crampon Use, 3" Binder, Nutrition, Knots, LNT, Weather, Sled Skills, Glacier Travel, Climbing Issues, Group Dynamics, Frost Bite Issues, Winter Safety Skills, Z & C Pulley System, Optional Mountain Trip , Clothing, Rappelling, Gear Issues, Effects of Cold, Reading Material, Crevasse Rescue, Expedition Planning, Environmental Ethics, 2 Weekend Practicals, Altitude Awareness, Ascending Ropes, Ropes/Webbing, Alpine Rescue, Team Building, Stewardship, Movies, Clinic

PREREQUISITES:

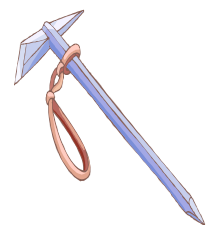
MANDATORY

Basic Backpacking
Land Navigation
Winter Camping (aka Enjoy Michigan Winters)
Belay Card (Rock Gym)

CLASS SCHEDULE

Location: TBD 6:00 - 9:00 PM

Class 1	12/11/08	Thu.
Class 2	12/18/08	Thu.
Class 3	01/08/09	Thu
Clinic 1	01/10/09	Sat.
Class 4	01/15/09	Thu.
Practical 1	01/23-25/09	Fri.-Sun.
Class 5	01/22/09	Thu.



Class 6 01/29/09 Thu.
Practical 2 02/6-8/2009 Fri.-Sun

COSTS (Non Refundable)

Pay in Full on or before Oct. 7 \$140.00 ea.
Pay in Full after Oct. 7 \$160.00 ea.
Couples: On or before Oct. 7 \$255.00 cpl.*
Couples: After Oct. 7 \$295.00 cpl.*

*Couples will receive 1 full binder for each person and 1 set of textbooks to share.
If you want your own personal textbooks, add \$25.00 to your total.

CONTACT: Lou Szakal @ everest2008@comcast.net

Too Early

*Today on my doorstep I found a leaf,
Perfect and autumn red,
But the words I spoke as I picked it up
Had better be left unsaid.*

*I usually welcome the autumn shades,
But our summer has been so brief,
I cannot be happy in early September
At finding a bright red leaf.*

By Ruth Cushman Carlton from *An Anthology of Verse About Michigan's U.P.*

Solar September 2008 Calendar

WWW.SOLAROUTDOORS.ORG

SEPTEMBER ACTIVITIES

9/2	Tues	Monthly Meeting **	Colony Hall	<i>Cindy Taylor</i>	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
9/2	Tues	eco System Wildlife Management in Serengeti**	Colony Hall	<u>Janet Duncan</u>	SolarPrograms@solaroutdoors.org
9/6	Sat	House Warming Party**	Roseville, MI	Stacie Kitchen	smk4980@att.net
9/12-21	Multi	Isle Royale Trip – Feldtman Loop	Isle Royale National Park	Elizabeth Schwab	qes1339@yahoo.com
9/13	Sat	Full Moon Canoe Paddle	avner's, Proud Lake State	Margaret Martin/ Alan Heavner	AlanHeavner@heavnercanoe.com
9/26-28	Wknd	NordhouseBeach Clean Up**	Nordhouse Dunes	Vida Ruggero	rageti@hotmail.com

SEPTEMBER CLASSES

9/4,11,18,20-21,	Multi	Beginning Backpacking	outhfield,MI/Pinckney Rec	<i>Carol McCririe</i>	cmccririe@sbcglobal.net
9/9,13-14	Tues Wk	Women in the Woods	TBD	<i>Pam Rielhl Szak</i>	pariehl@gmail.com
9/10, 12-13	Wed Wk	Advanced Land Navigation	TBD/Waterloo Rec Area	<i>Karl Overheul</i>	cyber.nomad@comcast.net
9/25, 26-27	Thur Wk	Wilderness First Aid	TBD	<i>Mike Malon</i>	mmalon@comcast.net

OCTOBER ACTIVITIES

10/3-6	Multi	Backpacking and caving (more in http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Pictured Rocks National Lakes	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
10/3-4	Wknd	Hocking Hills Weekend**	Hocking Hills Ohio	Susan Speece	sspeece@yahoo.com
10/5-11	Multi	Fall colors in the Adirondacks	Lake Placid, NY	Don Wold	DWold12972@aol.com
10/7	Tues	Monthly Meeting **	Colony Hall	<i>Cindy Taylor</i>	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
10/7	Tues	National Trails System**	Colony Hall	Janet Duncan	SolarPrograms@solaroutdoors.org
10/11-19	Multi	New River Invasion**	New River Gorge, WV	Karl Overheul	cyber.nomad@comcast.net
10/12	Sun	Full Moon Canoe Paddle	avner's, Proud Lake State	Margaret Martin/ Alan Heavner	AlanHeavner@heavnercanoe.com
10/17-19	Wknd	Backpacking	Jordan Valley Pathway	Kevin Cotter	solar@wowway.com

OCTOBER CLASSES

10/3-5	Multi	Beginning Backpacking	Pictured Rocks	<i>Carol McCririe</i>	cmccririe@sbcglobal.net
10/9,16,23,31, 11	Thur Wk	Search and Resuce	Detroit HS/D Bar A Scout	<i>Tom Hayes</i>	thomashayes@wideopenwest.com
10/19-19	Tues Wk	Women in the Woods	Red River Gorge, KY	<i>Pam Rielhl Szak</i>	pariehl@gmail.com
10/29	Wed Wk	Basic Land Navigation	TBD	<i>Karl Overheul</i>	cyber.nomad@comcast.net

NOVEMBER ACTIVITIES					
11/4	Tues	Monthly Meeting **	Colony Hall	<i>Cindy Taylor</i>	SolarPresident@SolarOutdoors.org
11/4	Tues	TBD**	Colony Hall	<u>Janet Duncan</u>	SolarPrograms@solaroutdoors.org
11/7-10	Multi	Off-trail Backpacking (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Hiawatha National Forest	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
NOVEMBER CLASSES					
11/5,7-8	Wed Wk	Basic Land Navigation	TBD/Waterloo Rec Area	<i>Karl Overheul</i>	cyber.nomad@comcast.net
UPCOMING ACTIVITIES					
12/5-8	Multi	Off-trail Backpacking or sledging (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Pigeon River Country SF	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
1/16-20	Multi	Off-trail Winter Camping (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Hiawatha National Forest	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
2/7-22	Multi	Arctic Ocean Expedition (James Bay) (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Moose River, Ontario	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
2/7-22/2009	Multi	Costa Rica Adventure	Costa Rica	Maureen DeFrance	moelifeisgood@lavecbit.com
3/8-14	Multi	Off-trail Winter Camping (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Pictured Rocks Lakeshore	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
4/5-12/2009	Multi	Return to St John USVI	Jago Bay Camps, St. John, U.S.	Jim Gessner	gessnerj@comcast.net
4/24-27	Multi	Off-trail Backpacking (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Pigeon River State Forest	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
5/23-6/1	Multi	Trail Canadian Backpacking Expedition (more information at http://therucksack.tripod.com/trips.htm)	Lake Superior Provincial Park	Michael Neiger	mneiger@hotmail.com
UPCOMING CLASSES					
11,18,1/8, 10,15,29,2/6-8	Multi	Mountaineering	TBD	<i>Lou Szakal</i>	

** Denotes NON-SOLAR activity (SOLAR will not be held responsible for this activity, on calendar for informational purposes only)

If you would like to plan/lead a SOLAR activity, contact our Activities Chairperson, Samantha Schafer, at Activities@SolarOutdoors.org.

If you would like to teach or suggest a SOLAR class, contact our Education Chairperson, Allen Duncan, at Education@SolarOutdoors.org.

SOLAR HAS A NO-REFUND POLICY. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND AN ACTIVITY, YOU MAY "SELL YOUR SPOT" TO ANOTHER CLUB MEMBER

The Recumbent Voyager Reviews:



Walking to Mackinac

By David E. Bonior The University of Michigan Press, 251 pages ISBN 0-472-11200-

I happened upon **Walking to Mackinac** while browsing the Royal Oak Public Library stacks for a book to review for the Ray. The title intrigued me so I picked it up. I noted the author but didn't put two and two together at the time. I had no clue the author is the former United States Congressman from Michigan's Macomb and St. Clair counties. Upon discovering that fact, I decided to read the book anyway. ;-) I was pleasantly surprised and found them to be a most likeable couple—probably good candidates for membership in SOLAR.

Both in their 50s, Bonior and his wife, Judy, left behind his role as the Democratic whip in the U.S. House of Representatives to walk 300+ miles from their home in Mt. Clemens to the Straits of Mackinac. According to Judy, Bonior can come up with some pretty “harebrained” ideas. It was just such an idea that caused them to decide to walk to Mackinac. Upon sharing the “idea with friends and family, we were met with responses ranging widely from enthusiastic support . . . to incredulity.” They were determined and ready to “meet the challenge: to convene with nature; to inhale the beauty of Michigan; to learn our history; to test our flexibility, resourcefulness, and stamina; to expend our vision; to see our world differently; to walk every single step of the way—one million steps to Mackinaw City.”

They plotted their own course stringing together trails, back roads, and abandoned railway beds. They carried 25-35 pound packs and set out to walk distances that were doable. They would end each day at a campsite or a motel. They experienced high bear anxiety, high dog anxiety, and a lot of rain. Neither of them had ever taken on a journey of this magnitude nor had they ever done much camping. Bonior points out several times in the book that he forgot to bring a compass, but he did have plenty of maps.

Walking to Mackinac invites the reader along on a journey that begins in Mount Clements and terminates with the Labor Day walk across Big Mac. Throughout the book, Bonior writes with honesty, conviction, and a passion for the task at hand and the state he and Judy are traversing. Each chapter describes a day in their walk up the state of Michigan. The pages are filled with how Bonior meets the challenges of “butterflies,” blisters, and his own self-doubt about taking on a trek of this type. Along with his honest assessments of his shortcomings, he provides history on the areas they pass through along with insights to some of the legislation he helped pass to make Rails-to-Trails a reality. He draws on Judy's courage and stamina. It's clear from his writing that he adores her and that they are best buddies.

Although the book focuses on the Boniors' journey, the story of Michigan moves the narrative forward. Bonior's historical tidbits link the Underground Railroad and waterways, the fur trade and the lumber industry, agriculture and the automobile. Of course, the story and history of Michigan are not much without the people, and Bonior includes plenty of locals and local color as they make their way Up North not to mention an excellent bibliography.

As outdoor adventure lovers, you often ignore the “sensible” voice inside your head and decide to take trips on a whim, so I'm positive **Walking to Mackinac** will delight you. As most of us know, the longest journey begins with a single step. By the way, if you decide to buy this book, you'll be glad to know that David Bonior is contributing all royalties from its sale to Rails-to-Trails Conservancy of Michigan

WHAT IS SOLAR?

SOLAR is a non-profit club with 400-plus members dedicated to the intelligent enjoyment of nature and outdoor pursuits.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is only \$40 a year per person (\$55 per family) and includes discounts to a number of retail outfitters, access to club-owned equipment, a monthly newsletter, and a chance to meet hundreds of other like-minded adventurers drawn together by a common love of pristine lakes, breathtaking vistas, virgin forests, scenic shorelines, and the experiences to be found there.

MEETINGS

Our monthly meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month in Southfield at the Colony Hall, 21780 Evergreen (between 8 & 9 Mile Roads) at 7:30 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

SOLAR RAY NEWSLETTER

The SOLAR RAY is a monthly publication of SOLAR and is available online at www.solaroutdoors.org. To receive a copy in the mail, please contact Mary Price at membership@solaroutdoors.org.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submissions for the SOLAR Ray are due on the Friday two weeks prior to the monthly Steering Committee Meeting (June 13 for the July issue). Electronic documents only, Word is preferred and please attach your images. If you have any questions, please contact **Pete Lamb** at rayeditor@solaroutdoors.org.

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STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Steering Committee meets on the last Tuesday of every month at 7:30 pm. These meetings are usually open to the general membership. Anyone who is interested in learning what topics are discussed, the decisions being made or contemplating running for a position on the Steering Committee, is welcome to attend. If you are interested in attending the Steering Committee Meeting, please contact Lou Szakal at president@solaroutdoors.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at: www.solaroutdoors.org.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE SOLAR RAY ASSISTANT EDITORS

Winnie Chrzanowski, Kathy Dreyore, Sheila Hardy, Pam Schmelzer, Carol McCririe, Elizabeth Schwab, and Ati Tislerics

SOLAR

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