



University of California, Berkeley

ADVENTURE, RISK, CHALLENGE
A Summer Leadership and Literacy Program
2006



Writings of
The Super Churliz

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Completing the Journey of a Lifetime



Caleb Soto



I am a falcon
With rust colored wings, opened wide,
Breaking through the wind

Free, as I fly
Over grass green conifer lodge pole pines
Gazing at the black, sharp rocks, covering Mt. Tallac
And the deep blue ribbons of Lake Tahoe

Feeling blissful
That I have already traveled this far
Completing the journey of a lifetime
Now I am filled with thrill,
With excitement
But I am still riddled with anxiety
About what awaits in the future
Will I forget where I come from
Or will I be transformed into the great symbol
That represents everything that I worked for

I am a falcon
Soaring under the dark starlit night
Remembering those who have helped me
And have been patient with me
As I soared above my obstacles
And trying to help others overcome theirs

My greatest fear
Is to be the bird that flew too far from the nest,
All alone,
Fending for myself
Everyday thinking of my lost family
Looking forward to the day
That my wings will take me home

I am a falcon
Back home I was just a sparrow
Afraid to try new things

Now I feel absolute about trying new things
Having transformed from
A small, scared sparrow
To finding the courage to become a falcon.

Always Pushing Myself

I, Caleb Soto, was hanging on a rope, 20 feet up a smooth, slippery, granite wall. My hands squeezed a ledge, while my left foot was barely hanging onto a foot hole in a small crack, and my right foot hung free. I felt frustrated and suddenly angry at myself because I couldn't do it. The rough, grey wall seemed impossible to climb. I had been trying the same move for the last 15 minutes. I blocked out the voices of the people below me, and I remembered something my mom had told me: to try new things and to try my hardest because if I didn't, I would regret it later in life. With this motivation, I just pushed myself higher and higher until I finally made it to the top. The sun hit my face. It was one of the greatest feelings I ever had felt. While I was on top, I promised myself that I would always keep going. As Stefany, my belayer, began to lower me, my stomach dropped to my shoes. As I got lower and lower, I felt like I was floating. Below me, everyone looked like ants. I never wanted that moment to end because the entire group was cheering for me. Now, looking back at that day and what I accomplished, I have no idea how I did it. Thinking of my family motivated me to overcome that challenge.

Coming to ARC, a program designed to teach leadership and literacy, I was afraid to attempt some of the activities, like rafting and rock climbing, because my fear has been to get seriously injured. But now, for 40 days, I have pushed myself and have been able to overcome my fears. Back home I never thought I would be doing stuff like backpacking, spending 24 hours by myself, or hiking Mt. Tallac, the most beautiful peak in Tahoe. I thought I was just going to spend the whole summer watching TV or hanging out with friends. But with the encouragement of my family, I came out here and now I know I won't spend the whole summer on my couch ever again. For the rest of my life, I will make myself more useful and keep on trying new things.

Many of my challenges this summer have been physical, but my biggest challenges have been mental. When the instructors told me about all the writing we were going to do this summer, I wasn't so excited.

Here at ARC, we have written a couple of essays and poems, and we have had only a few days to write them. This has pushed me because at school I have a hard time staying on track and expressing my feelings, and when I thought something was hard, I just simply didn't do it. This summer I have completed all my assignments and I feel more comfortable doing my work. Now that we only have a few days left, I feel like I have learned more in 40 days than all my years in school.



This summer I also have learned a lot of things like hanging bear bags, setting up a tent, and cooking out in the forest, but I especially have learned not to take things for granted. At home I didn't really spend a lot of time with my mom or my family. Now that I'm here, the thing I miss most about home is my family's

support, with soccer games to school work, as they were always there for me, cheering me on for every situation.

Since I haven't been with my family this summer, all of the people here have become my family who support me. After getting to know all of them, I have realized that it is important to put myself in others' shoes to see how they feel, because no one knows what they've been through or what their challenges are or have been. I know everyone has challenges in their life but I have never taken the time to find out what they were for other people who weren't close to me.

My biggest lesson I've learned in these 40 days, however, is to not be lazy. Every day we would go running or hiking and if I let my laziness show, it would be bad for the team because they would get mad with me and I didn't want that to happen. Now, I have an understanding of what my Mom has to do every day, like clean the house, cook for all of us, try not to get frustrated with us, and still have the strength and determination to spend time with us whenever she can and keep a good and positive attitude.

Coming to ARC was the best thing that I probably have ever done. At first I wasn't sure if I was going to come, but after Jen and Katie talked with my family and me, I made my decision to come. Having been here, I have learned a lot of things, like pushing myself at both physical and mental activities, trying new activities and meeting new people. I will never forget the experiences and memories from this program. I will always use the skills I learned again. But most importantly, I know that my biggest transformation has been to become

more of a leader. Now when I go back, my family will see the transformation, and I will never be the same. ARC has made me stronger and has made me think more about my future and to always try my hardest.

German Gonzalez

I am enormous, deep, and blue.
I am frigid yet still refreshing on hot summer days.

I've lived
For thousands of years.
I've metamorphosed from a pond,
Into a great body of water.

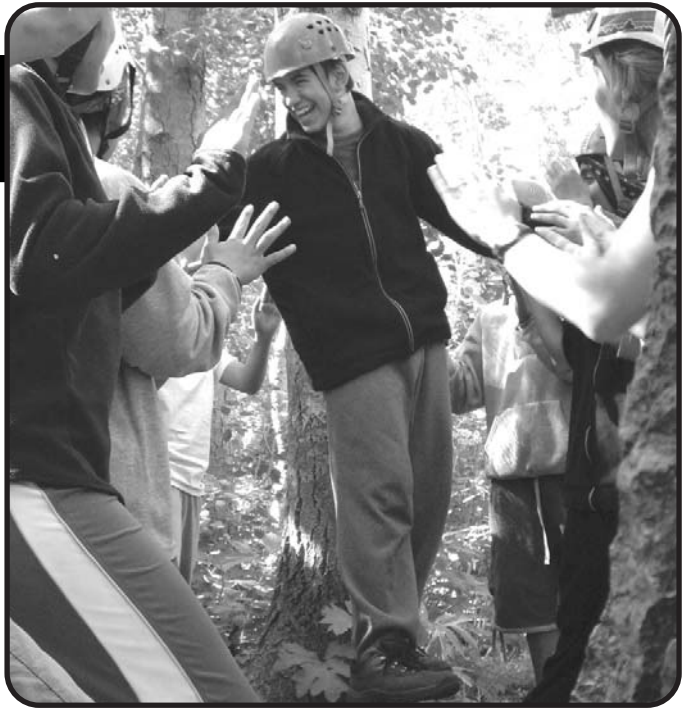
A creek runs out of me,
Draining my regrets and memories.
But when it rains,
And when the sun's rays hit the snow,
My family's love melts into me.
I am filled with memories,
All of us together,
On the porch,
Enjoying dinner.

Now, growing older,
With more responsibilities,
I fill up as the snow melts.
I make my family proud with good grades.
But I'm not always perfect.
Too much teasing can make my sister cry.
Laziness brings disrespect.
The creek drains my impurities,
Until I learn to change.

The Eagles watch over me,
My parents
Soaring high.
One showing me right from wrong,
The other supporting me every step of the way.
My heroes will always be there for me.
Now I realize how hard they work.
Until the end of time,
They will always fly above me.

The Bear,
My oldest brother Fernando,
Big and strong,
Intelligent,
Nice and lively.
My hero,
Who encourages me.
He paved the way,
By showing me,
How hard work does pay off,
Teaching me how to follow the right steps through college and life.
Until the end of time,
He will always lead the way.

The Marmot,
Cesar, my closest brother.
Small but strong,
Inquisitive
At all times, he is ready
To try new things.



I love the afternoons we hang out,
Going to the park.
Playing disc golf together.
The one who gives me confidence,
To do everything positive for my life.
Until the end of time,
He will always stand by me.

The Butterfly,
Isabel, barely born.
Curious,
With the courage to do anything.
She loves to play.
But one day, life seemed impossible without her.
She survived, and now I love her even more.
I learned to not take anything for granted and That my family is
everything.
Until the end of time,
She will never leave my sight.

I am a Lake
Enormous, deep, and blue
Frigid, yet still refreshing.
I'm still a teenage boy
But I would be nothing,
If it wasn't for:
The Eagles
The Bear
The Marmot
And The Butterfly.

Now I'm a new kid,
Looking at life from a different perspective.
For 40 days my water level keeps rising.
But still I'm nothing without my family.
My journey teaches,
Respect and appreciation of life.

Until the end of time...
I will stand by my family ...
We Will Stand Together ...

My Solo Time

Summers ago, I remember sleeping in until noon. Summers ago, I remember making my sister cry and giving my mother a hard time. But this 2006 summer wasn't just going to be a regular, old, boring summer like the last. This summer was going to be the exact opposite. I was going to try new things that my mind always told me I couldn't do. This summer I was going to rock climb, rappel, whitewater raft, kayak, and go to a ropes course, although the challenge that interested me most was the solo. I was about to embark on the hardest challenge of my life, and my biggest fear ever: to spend 24 hours alone in the wilderness with hardly anything to eat. Twenty-four hours to just sit there and think about myself, my life, and my family.

It was July 19th, the 23rd day of our 40 day journey, and we were about to begin our Mokelumne backpacking trip. Everyone was eager because on our second day of the trip, we would be left alone in the wilderness for 24 hours. I was so excited. I knew I probably wasn't going to do this ever again. At the same time I was tense, because it was just going to be me ... all alone.

The second day finally arrived, and it was time. We had a couple of hours to swim before we started our solo. I was starting to get worried. I knew this was going to be really hard for me, but at the same time, the only thing in my mind was that I was going to accomplish my biggest fear and challenge. At last, the time we were all waiting for arrived. Jen broke us up into three groups and we all said our last goodbyes. Jen took me to my spot first. At that moment she told me to enjoy and have fun during this time alone. Then she disappeared into the trees and my solo time began.

I started to unpack all my gear and did everything I had to do. I remember it like it was yesterday. The weather was sunny with some gray, scattered clouds over my head. It kept getting darker because of the clouds, but I still went ahead and set my stuff on top of a huge, flat, smooth granite rock. I just sat there and started to think. I realized that I have such great friends in this world. If it weren't for their great humor, my personality would not be the same. I loved all those moments at school when my friends and I had great times and laughs. I remember all the times we spent together hanging out. These people helped me to be more outgoing and to just enjoy life to the fullest.

I started to think to myself about all the fears I had in life, and in that instant, my biggest fear popped into my head. The scariest fear in my life is to be all alone, without anyone to talk to, without my family and friends. There I was, all alone, experiencing the hardest thing in my life. The clouds started to get darker and darker. All of a sudden, I felt a tear run down my cheek and moments later it started to rain softly. I kept on thinking about my family. I never realized how hard they have worked for my brothers, my sister, and me. They work so hard to make us happy. They have expected good things from us, but we always let them down. Really all they want is for us to be successful in life.

I remember all the hard times with my family. I remember when my Mom kept on telling me to clean my room and to come outside to help her, but of course, I would just ignore her. I was always so dependent on my parents to do everything for me. My mom would always cook and clean for me. My dad would always be fixing the stuff I would break. But this was all about to change. I was about to be transformed into a responsible teen here at ARC.

Now that I was just sitting there alone without my family and friends, I was experiencing my biggest fear. I felt like the clouds, all sad and gloomy. I started to cry again and it started to pour. I started to build a shelter in the rain, but I was getting frustrated. I kept on trying harder and harder, and the angrier I got building my shelter, the louder the roar of the thunder was and the bigger the lightning was. I thought to myself, "I can't do it." I said to myself, "I can't believe my fear just beat me, and I'm giving up." So I kept on trying and trying. Hours of hard work later, I was done. I went into my shelter and started to think about how I've treated my parents. I started to take in how much I've disobeyed them. I felt so bad. A few minutes later, it started to hail, and everything was getting wet. I went outside to fix my shelter, but really I just felt like Mother Nature was punishing me because of all the pain I caused my parents.

The rain that was falling down on my head nourished me and washed away all my bad memories and then filled me up with the great moments I spent with my family. It washed my whole body and cleansed my soul. I knew I needed to have compassion and respect for new people I had met and I knew I shouldn't disrespect anyone. The thunder scared away my



fears. I knew I would not be scared to try anything and I would not let my fears take over. The lightning energized me when it struck the hard granite rock. It filled me with energy. I knew to just be myself, and I learned that I didn't need to act cool and do stuff that people tell me to do. I could have fun, if I made it fun. The hail punished me for all the times I disrespected my family. Now I will be the best son parents would ever ask for.

During my solo I learned so much about myself. I learned to not take anything for granted. I learned that I have such a supportive family, and they will always be by my side. I'm not always perfect; I have learned from my mistakes and grown from them. Here at ARC I have grown so much. Everything I have at home, from my mom and my dad, to the smallest things, I discovered I cherished. My family has been everything to me. The things I learned most about myself is that I can stay away from family and friends for a long time and that I can take challenges as they come and conquer my fears and always succeed in these risks. I learned to meet new people and just to enjoy life. Now with only a few days left, I'm so glad that I came to ARC and left my family for 40 days to try new things. Now I only wonder what I would have done if I would have stayed home this summer.

When I go back, I will take so many new memories, stories, and adventures home. I will take home the new leadership skills I learned here at ARC and use them at home, school, and in my community. I will also take my compassion back to help me be more joyful in life. I will be more respectful to my family, friends, and strangers too. This ARC program has changed me in many different ways. I can't wait to tell all about my Adventures, Risks, and Challenges to my family, friends, and the new students next year.



Jaime Alvarez

The Best Brothers of the Universe

I can see thousands of people smiling at me,
I shine my happy light.

When I set, people know that I'm scared.
The darkness is like losing a brother I loved.
When I'm sad, everyone shivers with my pain..
I have a flaming hot temperature.
When people make fun of me
When they diss me and call me names,
My temper scorches their skin.

I'm always trying to do my best
For something incredible to grow,
Like blue and red flowers and a tree that smells like butterscotch.
I'm always wanting people to enjoy my heat.

I have a brother
He is the moon
Always next to me.
He tries to do his best at guiding people at night.
Leading them so they don't hurt themselves.
People follow him because of his compassion for them.
We both make a day and a night
We can't exist without the other.
I make people wake up
Learn about nature, and meet new people.
He gives quiet and peace
Making people realize how much he cares about them.

We could never be apart
Washing the earth with happiness.
We will always be like a computer and a printer
Working together, never separated.
We are the sun and the moon.

He will always take care of me
And I of him.
The sun and the moon are part of the universe.
Without us the universe will cease.

Learning about Ruth Hall

Ruth worried about her family being upset with her when, after leaving college, she moved east to New York City. It was just like me leaving my family for 40 days and my brother Elias, who was upset with me. She was scared and sometimes questioned her decision. However; she was excited by the challenges and adventures she had in mind. Her challenges were similar to mine when I started ARC and had to hike for 8 days, but now I feel happy that I did something I had never done before.



The Transformation of Jaime Alvarez

I looked up to see the 40-foot tall tree, thinking I was never going to make to the top of the Tower of Terror. My partner told me, "Come on Jaime, we can make it." That made me feel like he really cared about me making it up to the top of the tree. He went first and helped me by telling me how to grip onto the metal brackets on the tree. It was hard. I thought that I was going to fall because they were not going to hold me. Finally the moment happened. We got up to the wood plank at the top. First I thought it couldn't hold Victor's weight and mine. I thought the plank was going to break. We both decided to jump sitting down because we had a scary feeling in our stomachs. Once we slid off the plank, it felt like we were flying in the air without a rope.

Our instructors told us to choose something in our life to jump for. I jumped for somebody I really love, my brother Elias. My brother shows me to not have fear of anything and just go for it. At that time, I felt he was beside me, telling me, "Come on, Jaime, you can do it." So I took that advice from him and I jumped for that person I really loved. My brother has been my hero for encouraging me to not be frightened and to do things I've never done. Jumping for my brother felt great. It felt like he was holding my hand in air saying, "You made it, brother." That made me feel that there has been somebody that loves me and takes care of me.

At that split second I jumped, I realized I was changing from a lazy boy to a young man. Now I know that being lazy is sad. At the beginning of the course, the team needed my help and I didn't give them all the help I could have. After these 37 days, I understand that helping my team feels great. Now I do all my jobs, like cleaning the dishes, filling up water, leading the group, and being a great "Head Honcho." This means I take care of everyone on the trail and I pay attention to being on time for all of our classes. When they tell me to do something, I am there for them. Helping out is just like climbing a peak, reaching the top, and being proud of myself because now I've done my part.

This program has changed my life because I realize how hard my Mom has worked for me. I used to be lazy and never do chores around my house. When she asked me for help, I would always come up with another excuse. I never helped her enough. I knew this was wrong, because I often regretted it and came back to help. From now on, I'm not going to wait until she asks me to help. I'm going to do my chores like picking up my clothes and cleaning my dishes right away. Whenever she's feeling sick, I will clean the whole house for her. I'm not going to make her repeat, "Please, please, please.



Jaime, Jaime, Jaime." She is going to feel relieved that she finally has somebody to help her. She will realize how much her child has changed.

This program also has changed my life in school. I will not be disrespectful to my teachers and not be too lazy to do my homework. Here, I learned to come to class prepared with my pencil and my folder, to be organized with my backpack, to be on time, to focus and not to have side conversations. During the ARC program, I learned that it is possible for me not to get distracted while the teachers are talking. After teaching the Boys and Girls Club about my science poster about bears, I learned that teaching kids is hard and it's important not to talk back to the teacher. When kids listen, it feels great because you know they learned something new. When I go back to school I want my teachers to know that I appreciate the hard work they do for us to learn new things and to become smarter. For now on I'm going to do my best in all my classes and get at least C's and not F's. I'm going to respect my teachers and I'm going to do my work and try to get along with the students in my class.

I thought ARC was going to be easy, but it hasn't been. It has been challenging in all kinds of ways, including the essays and the hiking. It's a challenge for me because I never have rock climbed, river rafted, back packed, and climbed peaks. These forty days were great because I got to do the coolest things that people have ever done. Thanks to this program, my life has changed in a lot of ways. This transformed me into a strong helping man that can do anything. Now I know I can help my friends with their problems, not be lazy, and help with what the team has to do.

I looked up to see the 40-foot tall tree, thinking I was



Jessie Wang

Freedom Brings Me Home

I am a bald eagle
In that endless blue sky
I always fly, up and high
Over the mature trees
That have many years of history
Over the experienced white clouds
That fall from every storm

The view of the lake
Like a flat mirror
Allows me to see my strengths
Allows me to see my experiences

I see my courage
I see my future
Like the reflection of the blue sky
Bright, endless
Luminous, limitless

But the experiences in the clouds
Sometimes become the rain
Become the snow
Become something that I will never forget
Like the loneliness
I felt when I was excluded from the group

I fly through powerful storms
Flap by flap
Trying to reach
The sunshine that melts the snow

Day by day
Floating around
Playing on the branches
This is freedom, home
This is what I want

The sound of the wind
Like the song on the radio
I enjoy it, I sing with it
It teaches me lessons



It helps me through the darkness, the loneliness
I can taste it, feel it
Like the cold granite cliff I landed on
No one noticing I had arrived

But I continue on flying
The joy, the peace
It passes through my feathers
It passes through my life

I long to share the same stories
I long to share my memories
Like the words in the history book

I want to fly up and high
To find a place called freedom
I want to fly up and high
To find a place called home.
I am a bald eagle



Behind the Door

Sagehen, a place where I began to change, a place where I walked toward my independence. I remember how lazy and shy I was, always playing computer and too afraid to communicate with people, until I got a chance to discover myself. The first eight days of backpacking in Desolation turned me into a new person. It was short, but it seemed so long to me. At the beginning I didn't know how to do anything, but at the end, I was a girl who was strong enough to walk away from the protection of my family.

The first day seemed like it would never end. I put my backpack on and didn't even want to start my journey. All the new faces made me lock the door so people wouldn't walk into me. Our journey was long and silent until we got our camping place. Then it started to rain, and it was cold and windy. I was like a child, waiting in the dark and wanting someone to come. All my strength held the last bit of heat in my body. The rain became the storm, and my body tightened even more.

I remember the second day. Eight miles of hiking made me want to scream. I was so far behind the group that they needed to stop and wait for me. My breath was on fire and it just made me think the hike wasn't going to be easy. The encouragement seemed so far away; it was close at first, and then disappeared into the distance. I locked my door even more, until the day of rock climbing and rappelling.

I felt something that I never felt before, like a sad girl happy for ice cream, like a hungry person eating a nice meal. The encouragement had come back to me, and made me want to keep going. I climbed to the top and rappelled to the bottom. I trusted people with every step I took. The belayers let slack into the rope little by little. Finally my feet touched ground. I felt safe. I saw happy faces surrounding me. I knew that we all had something in common, and that was trusting.

The darkness became lighter. I found out I had been locked in a room, trying to find the key to get out.

Halfway through the eight Desolation days, cooking seemed impossible to me. Too lazy to go down the river and get water, too afraid of cooking because of fire. The first time I cooked out in the woods, I almost died from the boiling water. I waited until someone told me what to do, never doing it by myself. Now I understand how my mom felt, and I understand why she got angry with me every time. But now cooking seems so easy. Making dinner in the rain is no longer a challenge. Lighting up the stove no longer scares

me. I have found out that fire is no longer a fear.

At the night of the fifth day, I started to think about my family. I sat on the rock and looked up at the stars. Each of the stars showed the happy faces of my family: a mother full of wisdom and a hard-working father. They all have helped me on everything, and everything seemed so easy to me. But without their help, I felt like I couldn't do anything, like someone suddenly

taking away the important things from me. It is a challenge for me to have been away from my family. All the happy moments we had were flashing in front of me. I closed my eyes, trying to escape, until the day I came back home, hugging them and telling them that I'm not the girl who always has been lazy. I'm not the girl who always has been playing, but I'm the girl who my parents have loved so much.

After Desolation, I faced the challenges that I needed to face at the ropes course, like walking on a log that is 45 feet up in the sky. My body was shaking and my hand held the rope so tightly that I didn't want to let it go. My feet moved little by

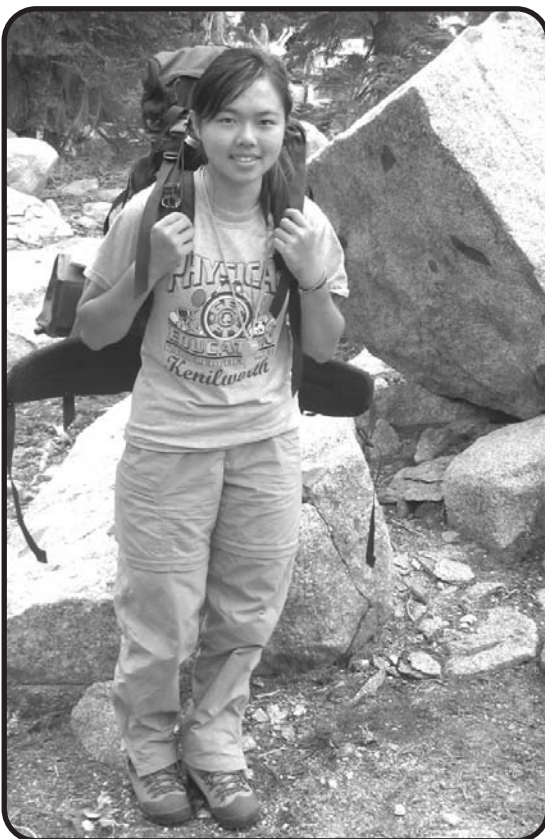
little until I was in the middle of the log, no more ropes to hold onto, afraid to look down. I knew that I was half way through. I continued to move forward, and then all of a sudden, I hugged the big tree at the other side of the log. I made it. Overcoming the fears that I needed to overcome, step by step, I climbed to the top of the Tower of Terror. I stood up and screamed out loud that I was jumping for my dream and my family. I closed my eyes and took one big step forward. I felt the wind blow on my face. I swung up in the air, surprised by what I had done.

More than half way through the summer, finally I became strong and independent. I held my last breath and climbed to the top of Dead Wood Peak. I saw the beautiful sunrise that I had never seen before. I never wanted to spend time alone, but I liked the solo time all by myself. I was afraid of the dark until I sat on the stone and looked up the stars. I grew up in a nature place.

Throughout the whole summer, I learned that there are so many things I can do besides playing. What seemed to be dull now seems interesting. What I don't usually do, I now do everyday. The running in the morning made me tired and strong. A voice inside of me told me to keep going, but my body wanted to stop. Step by step, I knew the finish line was inside of my mind. It could have been short or long. It could have been easy or hard. I stopped seeing the road in front of me. I kept thinking the finish line is just one step away. I felt proud that I could cross it.

I am still searching for the key to open my door in the darkness, because I still need to face my last challenge. The challenge is to be open with people. I'm trying to communicate with people more than before. I wish that someone could open the door and walk into me. The room has become lighter and lighter, but it hasn't been light enough for me to see things. I only see the shadow of myself, the weak light coming from behind the door. If the door opened somehow, I would keep it open to shine on my world. Inside of my world, there is a place to rest. There is a place to have fun. There also is a place for people to feel safe. No one has walked into the door yet, but I promise if someone wants to come, I will welcome them. The key is a part of me, and if someone holds onto that part, they will open the door easily. Inside the door, there is a perfect place for anyone. Behind the door, there is the real me.

Sagehen, a place where I began to change, a place



Liliana Mondragón



Colorful Freedom

I am a butterfly
as big as your heart,
living in the bright, blue sky,
learning new life
as I emerge from my cocoon.

Discovering the joyful and gloomy qualities of life,
I just want to fly away as the wind,
but sometimes I lose sight of the real world.

Every flap of my white, yellow, and brown mottled wings
brings me closer to my destination,
to begin my career and to be independent.
Every flap taking me to new challenges.
Obstacles and danger may await me each day,
but I will be not stopped.

I am free,
flying slowly and deliberately,
tasting each flower,
looking for the one that will feed my soul.
Some are sweet some are sour.
Sweet as the company of my best friend,
sour like mama's angry eyes.
Each taste makes me stronger.

I am a butterfly
with beautiful, petal-like wings
always laughing with life and talking with truth.
Some might believe that I am an annoying bug,
others may abhor me,
but I will be there showing my wonderful wings.
And if you look closely at me,
you will see that I am one of the most spectacular bugs in the world.

I will continue to fly,
seeking happiness,
looking for the pieces that are missing in my life,
looking for the pieces that make me whole.

Learning about Daphne Hougard

At the end, I asked Daphne one more question, “what is the most special memory in your life?” She answered that it was when she got hired for a dream job by the United Nations to photograph traditional fishing in Tokula, a small island in the South Pacific.

I started imagining this incredible place, hoping that someday I could travel like Daphne. I learned from her how important is to focus on my goals and dreams. To conclude she gave me her advice, saying: “Follow your passion and don't be afraid to ask for help from the best people you can find.” I think that is true because my parents and teachers in school have helped me express myself. Like Daphne, I will succeed in life and become an archaeologist or a dentist or whatever I commit to.



Challenging Summer



I was standing in front of 90 Foot Wall, which really looked like 1000 feet. The rock was flat and jutted straight into the sky. Small holes and cracks were the only things that I could see. Three ropes hung down and one of them was waiting for me. I was excited because I was one of the first ones to climb, but I was nervous at the same time. I knew that just a rope and three of my friends would be holding me, and my life would be in their hands. Before I started climbing, I looked carefully at the wall, catching each little detail, trying to find a way to make it simple. For a moment I thought that it would be easy.

As I started moving up the wall, it started getting hard. I fell down over and over again. My arms and shoulders felt like there were ants crawling into my veins. I got tired but my mind told me "You can do it," but I almost gave up. Every time that I thought I couldn't do it anymore, I started to think about how proud my parents would be. Suddenly I jumped to reach the crack above me, and my sweaty and tired hands tried to find holes for my fingers and my feet tried to find ledges to hold my body. I pushed myself up the rock then I knew that I would reach the top. When I got there, I looked down and I felt the challenging feeling in my belly and I felt proud. I enjoyed the beautiful view of Lake Tahoe, with its blue water like the sky and white clouds like snow. It was at that moment that I realized my challenges for the summer had just begun.

On the first day of our eight-day expedition, I met nine strange people and I didn't know what their personalities would be like. The only thing that I knew was that I would be living with them for 40 days. It was a real challenge because I have never met nine strangers at the same time. Then I realized that some of them knew each other and I didn't know anyone. The rain and freezing winds weren't the only thing that made me shake with cold. On this expedition, I thought, "What am I doing here? Now I could be in my house with my real friends and not with these people." During the entire expedition, I was shy and I didn't want to talk to them. Then I

saw that all of them were having fun, and at that moment, I realized that they were there to be my friends and I knew that they were just like me, without their families and friends. It made me feel better and my miserable world became wonderful with all these friends, my new family.

As the days disappeared, we began new adventures, such as backpacking, rappelling, rafting, hiking, ropes course, rock climbing, and kayaking. In every



adventure I found it difficult, but in every challenge I learned something new. I learned to work as a group. I didn't know how it was, but now I know that it's better than working alone. I realized this when I was kayaking I was tired and I didn't know how to paddle. My partner got mad at me because we were one of

the last ones. We zigzagged all day, but there was my group supporting me, just as my family. The last day of kayaking was better because paddling became easier. I was in the front, proud of myself, because I overcame that challenge.

Not only did I learn from the adventures, but from our English class, too. I shared my feelings, even if they were onto a piece of paper with words that together formed a poem in which I expressed myself.

When I saw my poem finished, I felt glad because that was my first poem in my life. It had a special relation with my feelings, experiences and favorite animal, a butterfly. If I didn't share my feelings, I could feel that pressure in my chest and the sour taste in my mouth, but when I started sharing, I felt better. I felt like a new person, happy and anxious, waiting for a new challenge.

This summer I have done things that I never expected to do in my life, starting with leaving my family and friends. The first week I missed my family and friends because I had never been away from them. I started to think about how important my family has been to me, especially my parents. They are always working hard to give me what I want and to give me an education for my future. Now I understand that when they try to talk to me it's not because they are trying to make my life harder, it's because they know that I'm doing things wrong, and they want a better future for my life. Now I'm going to give them all the respect that they deserve because I want I teach them the phrase "treat each other as you want to be treated." I want to show them the new girl who grew inside of me this summer.

This new girl can now appreciate the hard work of my parents. This new girl will never give up. I have learned many things: to overcome my fears, to try everything in life even if I haven't done it before, to listen others, to be respectful, to express myself, to do chores without being asked, and most importantly, to understand worth of life. I never thought that a simple summer could change my life.

I was standing in front of 90 Foot Wall, which really

Lupe Kochihua

Keep Me

I am a tarp
Gray, smooth,
And long
Built in the middle
Of the
Woods

Warm and comfy is
What I have to offer

Lay on or under me and
You'll fall asleep
Just like a baby
I will make you feel like you're
Floating on top of
clouds
Follow me and everything will be easy
I'll trample a path for you to walk on

I'll give you warmth and shade
And the feeling of being a little kid again

Then I'll give you a
Big, fat, wet, juicy thanks for
Shaking the past away from me
Receiving the good
healthy life I'm living

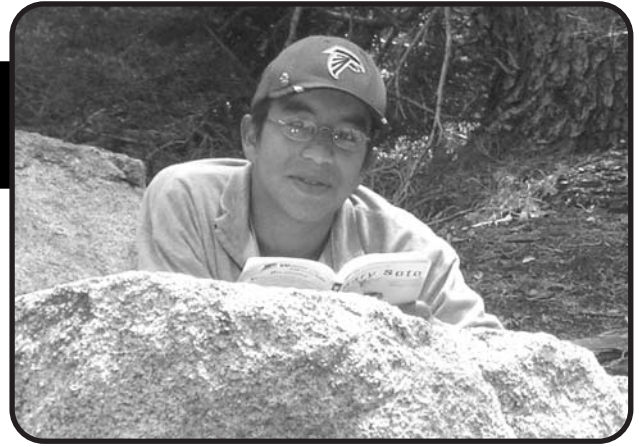
Thanks for
Giving me a sister so smart,
A brother so strong, and wise with his words
a caring, loving,
family

What else do I get?
Rocks and dirt
Crushed into me
The feeling of how
My grandpa felt

The feeling of being
Six feet under ground
Alone

With only red, beautiful, wet roses
Above me

The fear of waking up and not
being complete
my family shattered into
pieces all around me



Sagging from all
The heavy wet rain
From all the hail
Which bounces off me
Like friends
Coming in and out
Of my life
Not being truthful.

Unfold me in the snow
Icy, freezing, and cold
Is how I'll turn out
But, I stay strong
Keeping everyone
Safe In my heart

I get crumpled up.
And thrown
Aside
You can ignore me
But someday
You'll need me

Whether it's pounding rain,
Or heavy, snow
You'll need me

Even if it's scorching,
Blazing hot
You'll need me

But then,
I'll need you

To tighten my cords,
Push me to that extra step
To pull out my long gray stakes
And fill up the holes
In my life

Keep me in a bag,
Clean and dry,
Keep me in your heart,
Keep me by your side,

I'm here with you
Till I die
I am a tarp



And Life Goes On

Obviously there weren't going to be any dishwashers in the middle of the woods, so we had to clean the dishes with our hands. We were all cleaned up and ready to go to bed. Not receiving a kiss from my mom each night for the next thirty-nine days was going to be difficult. We woke up and did the same routine all over again for seven more days. Throughout the Desolation, we all started to realize were on our own. We had so many challenges ahead of us we didn't even know what to expect next.

At the end of our eight-day expedition in the Desolation Wilderness, I was finally ready to give 100% commitment to the ARC program. Before that I wasn't sure or ready for all the challenges the instructors had in store for us. We were ten strangers from Truckee, Kings Beach, Napa, Sonoma, and Petaluma, all ready to learn new things. Without our families, it was going to be difficult. I felt overwhelmed that everything was happening all at once, when just a couple days before, I was still wondering what the summer would be like.

After we all met, we headed toward our first challenge. It was already tough on us because we didn't know each other and we had to hike all day carrying a 40-pound backpack, which didn't make it any easier. But our real challenge awaited us later that afternoon. It was just day one, and as we started to unpack all the group gear, black, roaring clouds blew in and started to pound rain. While seven kids were struggling against the wind and rain, the other three were learning how to cook...and unfortunately, I was one of them. "I want my mom," I yelled in my mind. I felt as if my challenge had already begun because I hardly knew anything about cooking. At home, my parents had done most of the cooking for me. I found out that cooking wasn't as hard as setting up the tarps, especially trying to find a flat, non-rocky spot to sleep well at night.

After dinner, the challenges seemed to grow.

The biggest challenge I had, aside from not having my mom there to clean up after me or yelling at 12 o'clock at night, "Go to bed, only crazy people like you are up this late," was that my two best friends were missing. It felt as if I was a little baby and they took my bottle away from me. Friends and family that I cared about the most were gone in a split second: my brother protecting me and taking me out to eat, my sister helping me with my homework or sometimes doing it all, and me, a little whiny boy, too lazy to even get up and take the trash out. But there I was, leaving my crib to play with the big boys on the block and having to leave my parents to do all the hard labor work. I was unhappy at first, but glad I had new friends there by my side.

Making fun of each other and talking bad about one another was how we started. Laughing and making jokes about one another and not getting mad was how we finished. I made new friends here, and they really helped me through the thick and thin. When I was there laughing, making jokes, I had someone there to join me. When I felt sad, the group was there and always knew when I was feeling home sick. The group pushing me and knowing that I could count on them for anything made my journey easier. Friends are what I made and are what I want to keep forever.

Now I'm a changed man after having to hike for 70 miles or more. Pushing myself to go over

peaks was hard, but now I can push my mind to overcome any challenge that comes my way. If I was able to scream and nervously jump off a 45 foot tree, I know I can try in school and at least graduate. I know I can get all A's instead of F's if I can spend 37 days outdoors, doing school courses. Pushing myself in rock climbing is harder than studying for a big exam.

So now I ask myself what's next. I know I can try my best and be the best that I am. Home is the place to be, school is the place to learn. Trying my hardest will definitely decide my future that sits ahead of me. Making my mom happy is my goal right now. Making my dad feel proud that his son has changed is my second goal. Now that my mom and dad have taught me all the lessons in life, I will follow my dreams, grab them, and make them real. I have learned throughout these 40 days as we start to pack home that my mom is always there for me to give me a hand, help me throughout life. Finding my life on my own would be harder, but in the future, it will pay off.

Having the opportunity to do things I would have never pictured my self doing has been the greatest thing that has helped me in my life. I look at life as helping others and having fun because you only live once. ARC teaches you a lot of things. The thing it taught me the most was that I can change and be helpful. It's going to be hard to leave our lives here at Sagehen; we've overcome our fears and seen each other in tears. The only thing left to do now is to say good-bye, keep our heads held high, and not cry.





Raul Felix

Alpine Lake of Love

I am an alpine lake,
Mysterious blue.
The history of life
Running through my veins.
I am deep with feelings
With the scars of the cold, cutting glaciers.

Revealing true reflections
Of those who surround me.
The rocky peaks,
The enormous trees,
And the ancient mountains
Who were formed
By the soul of nature.

I evolved from the glaciers
Generations ago.
From the hard, crude ice,
My shame slowly melted,
Gaining the respect
Of the ones who laughed at me.

The majestic force of creation
Has revealed my transformation.
Slowly shifting each season
From cold ice of history
To the brand new generation.

The sky above me
Is the brightness of life,
And life for me
Is the sun, moon
And the great stars.



The sun provides me with heat,
Giving me strength.
The moon provides me with brightness,
Giving me compassion.
And the greatness of the stars,
Properly guiding me to the future.

Someday I'll be where no one has been,
A place where every one wants to be.
This place has everything you need
From tremendous compassion
To a great sense of love.

My mission in this world:
Providing the freshness of my soul,
Giving more of myself,
Continuing and finishing my journey.
For someday I'll be remembered
By those who swam in my love.
I am an alpine lake,

The Journey of 40 Days



I remember the moments when backpacking, kayaking, water rafting, rock climbing, rappelling, and ropes course seemed so hard. I thought of the crazy risks I was taking each and every time I did any of these activities. Rock climbing seemed impossible when I stood in front of that 45 foot wall of hard granite. I felt my heart beating like a car going 120 miles per hour. The encouragement of my friends pushed me to climb that enormous vertical and hot, burning, granite rock. I had trust in my friends, but unfortunately, not in myself. I knew that it was up to me to never fall. I decided to do it and never look down. My body was tense and I had the great fear of being so far from earth. Many things went through my mind: my family, my friends, and my strength to make it to the top. Suddenly, I stopped, and I realized how far I had gone, but also realized that it was a long way to climb. At times I felt the desperation of not having a place to step or to hold onto. I found a new way and started all over.

Finally at the top, everything was quiet. I looked down with the fear of falling, but for some reason, the sensation was gone. All I could see was the greatness of nature that surrounded me. I realized that I had transformed and that I had just conquered a fear. I remember that before this program, I would let things go when I thought that I couldn't do them. That day I learned something so important in life. I learned that to live life, you always have to risk something, and that life itself is the biggest risk.

The challenges have revealed themselves in many different ways. They could have been as simple as being the Aqua Bear, all the way to being the Head Honcho. Each and every one of us had a challenge on one of those 40 days to make the team run smoothly. In order to make the team work to the max, I knew that I had to do my job. I realized throughout this journey that if I failed to do a job, even if I was the Aqua Bear, my whole team was going to fail, no matter what. I learned that it only one person to make the strongest team weak. Our mission as a team was to conquer as many fears as we could. We did it with success and without the fear of failing. My team has been the biggest

tool to make each day a success. I remember from the first day we worked as a group. We managed to get along with each other and make it through our Desolation week. As a team, we earned the freedom to do those activities that one day seemed impossible to do. We realized how hard it was to accomplish those challenges, but as a group, we completed them and succeeded.

Now 38 days into this journey my transformation has been revealed. I learned this summer that I am compassionate about the things I do, and I feel bad every time I let anybody down. I try to do my best and every time I have the chance I give a little extra of myself to make my team work like a well oiled machine. The shy and afraid



person is gone forever. Now I am confident and I take challenges without thinking of the risks, but instead I think of the benefits that the challenges will provide me. Little by little I worked on giving

110% of myself and being confident, as well. I learned how to deal with the problems in my life and the lives of the people that I cared about the most. I also learned to have a lot more patience and to understand people a lot better.

Living with 10 people for 40 days was very hard; there were times when I did not know what to do when people didn't understand me. I remembered the good times and the bad times, my laughs and my tears, my accomplishments and the times I failed. As the activities got more exiting, friendships started to grow. The friendships that I built throughout this program were the soil and nutrients that I needed to stay in this program. The appreciation of those friends gave me the extra push that motivated me to keep going. I will never forget those nine friends, and one day I will make sure to see them again.

Now I am so close to completing my transformation, and I still remember the words of wisdom that my parents told me when I left, "Cuidate y no te olvides de tu familia" (take care of your self and never forget about your family). Now those words are shattering into pieces because I know that I will be there for them soon. I'll never forget about them even when I die. My 40-day journey is about to end, and I feel proud of myself and I feel like I have accomplished a lot throughout this journey.

I don't know about my future, but what I know is that some day I will be telling this great experience to my family, friends, and who knows, even my own family. I also remember the good times and the bad times, my laughs and my tears, my accomplishments and the times I failed. I've completed my journey and I feel sad and happy at the same time. I feel sad leaving those moments of fun and sadness. I feel sad of leaving those people who one day helped me out. I feel happy because I am now reuniting with the people that I love the most. There is only one thing left to say, and that is telling the people who helped me GOODBYE.

I remember the moments when backpacking,

Stefany Mendoza

My Spirit

I am a spirited, strong Jeffrey Pine.
My strength helps me stay alive,
through torrid storms,
through tremendous hail.

My roots anchor me in this earth.
Never giving up.
My roots are my family
my mother,
my father,
they are my inner roots.
My brothers
and sister
complete my outer roots.

They stabilize my life
in a very unique way.
Despite the tree-bending wind,
my roots will always secure me,
never will they disappoint me.
My roots sustain my life.

I am a spirited, strong Jeffrey Pine.
I am easy to see
but hard to define.
People confuse my outer bark,
think I am rough,
or they may think I am just a tree.

From the outside
I may seem unbreakable,
yet, if you come close and look deep,
you manage to behold and savor my sweetness.

My unique scent of vanilla
helps you define the inner me.
If you grab a hold of me
you'll notice that
I am cozy,
I am sweet,
I am special.
I am a spirited, strong Jeffrey Pine.



I have three special needles in me.
I keep them close and tight:
my friends,
my teachers,
my personality.

These needles are my education,
helping me grow stronger
and preparing me for my future
with their knowledge.
With them
I am open minded.

The beautiful cones
surrounding the outer and inner me.
They are my laughs,
they are my happy moments
of my life.
Keeping me steady through every
down moment in life.

My tree is my life.
Roots.
Bark.
Needles.
Cones.

Without one of them,
I would be lost
in this vast Earth.

I am a spirited, strong Jeffrey Pine.
I am a spirited, strong Jeffrey Pine.

My Life Changing Summer

I stood there, next to 90 Foot Wall, an immense granite rock, with all different shapes, sizes, and colors. People were dangling like tiny ants from ropes scattered across the rocks. It seemed to me as if it was a thousand feet high. I was getting ready to rock climb for the first time in my life. Jen, one of my instructors, was making sure the harness was on safely. As I touched the rough rock with my sweaty hands, I felt my stomach shoot all the way up to my throat. I felt as if I was going to die. I was trying to get to the top as my group cheered me on. I had my foot jammed into a tiny hole, too small for my foot, and my hands pushed in a thin crack, in between two rocks. It was extremely painful, and it seemed like my feet and hands were going to fall off.

At that moment I felt like giving up on the entire situation. In the process of not giving up, all I could think about was my family. I wondered how they would feel to see me conquer my fears and climb to the top of this gigantic rock. The answer I came up with was "proud." Not only did I think that my family would be proud, but also my group. That helped me find the courage in myself to keep going. Without even thinking, I jumped up onto a rock and before I knew it, I was at the top, feeling like I had overcome my fears.

As I reflect upon this moment in my life, a quote by an unknown author comes to mind, "Hard things get put in our way not to stop us, but to call out our courage and our strength." This is a quote I read about a week after rock climbing. I was sitting at the tables outside of Leo's Lounge reading a quote book. When I read this quote, the first thing that popped into my head was that one moment that I was getting lowered by my group, putting my feet on the hot steaming ground with my pointy rock climbing shoes. Every single

muscle in my body was shaking as if I had just swam a thousand miles. That was a special moment for me because I felt like I overcame so many fears. I felt excited to have done it because I am really afraid of something going wrong and dying; these are major fears for me. Thinking about this as I was going up made me stop millions of times, even though I was barely 10 to 15 feet away from the ground.

Despite all my fears, I have done many things that I would have never thought about back at home, such as rock climbing, rappelling, river rafting, kayaking, ropes course, backpacking, waking up every morning at 6:15 a.m. to run, dealing with a



minute of the day, and being on my own without my family for 40 days. Every single one of these challenges came with a little treat for me. The treat was that every step I took in all of the challenges gave me confidence and strength to



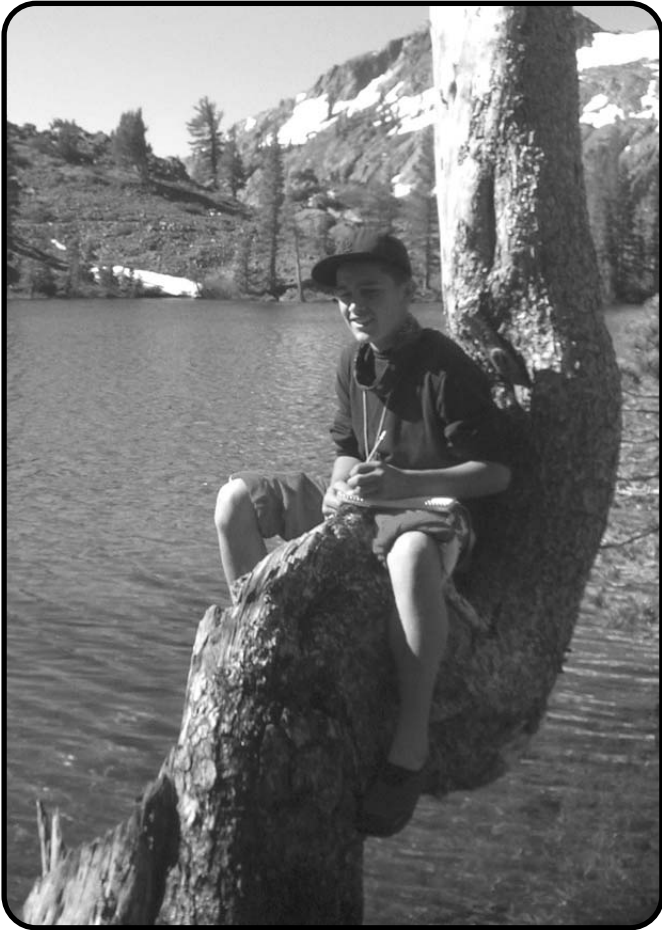
keep going and to conquer my fears. I have always been afraid of many things, like deep water, darkness, loneliness, and heights. I felt like I have gone through all of these things in the past six weeks, but I have overcome them.

Throughout the 38 days of being in the ARC program, I became a completely different person. I have learned to care about others and to be a leader. Now I think about my past, and I remember the kind of person I use to be. I used to be the girl who always wanted to do everything on her own and never asked for help, even though she needed it. I used to be the girl who was too shy to speak up and tell people how she really felt. I used to be the girl who wanted was a little bit of her family's love but too selfish to care about what other people needed. I also used to be the girl who was scared of change.

Now, as I reflect on what kind of person I have become, I don't want to be the person that I used to be any more. All I really want to be is the girl who will ask for help if she needs it. I want to be the girl who will always speak up and say her true feelings. I want to be the girl that will show her family love without expecting anything back. I want to be the girl who will always have a shoulder for someone to cry on. I want to always be a supportive person.

The most major transformation I have gone through is not being afraid of change. I have learned that change is not always a bad thing, but not always a good thing either. Now I think that if you just take a risk in life and make changes and experience things that you aren't used to, you will never have to say "Man, I wish I could've done that." So now all I can think about is how much a summer of challenges can help you become a better person.

I stood there, next to 90 Foot Wall, an immense granite rock, with all different shapes, sizes, and



Tony Jimenez

I Am the Rising Sun

I am the sun
 Whose rays shine upon everyone
 And scorches you with flames on your back
 Warming up your souls.

I am the sun
 It is debilitating to look at me
 When I set in the evening sky
 Feeling like a person who is sick and cannot breathe

Sitting in the darkness looking up at the universe
 Searching for the purpose
 For which I was created
 Always willing to help those in need.

I am a son
 Who wants to please his father
 Always trying help him warm him up
 When he is feeling as grey as clouds, ready to burst a tear
 From fifteen-hour work days
 I wait to see his smile breakout
 When he laughs, I feel like the whole world brightens up

I am the sun
 Rising every morning
 With a fire inside of me
 That will set me free
 And
 Continue to take me to a magical place
 I am the sun.

Once a while when the sun doesn't shine
 I am tired
 My eyes turn blurry then the clouds come out
 My head pounds

I feel like someone is playing the drums in my ear real loud
 So I go to my quiet please in the wood
 Waiting to come out again,
 Taking in some air

My body calms down
 My head stops pounding
 The clouds move and begin to open
 I come out of all the stress

Learning about Tad Kitada

I think that this man gets a lot done during his free time. For example, he plays nine instruments. He plays in a Bluegrass band that plays every Monday. He cooks for the family every night and manages the shopping. He enjoys trying new things, and being creative with his food. He told me that when he wakes up in the morning, he thinks, "What does this new day have to offer?" I thought that is well said and it got me thinking about what each day has to offer me, even in the future.

I noticed that Tad and I had some things in common. He used to go fly fishing with his dad, like my dad and I do in the summer. Another thing that we had in common was how our dads have taught us a different language. My dad, however, is teaching me how to speak more Spanish to help me out later in my life.



The Person I Was Looking For

I woke up in the morning thinking to myself, "What does this new day have to offer me?" I thought about all of the other adventures that we had already accomplished, but this one was going to be the most difficult: the ropes course. Later on that day, I was getting ready for the next challenge that I wanted to complete. Just as my partner and I were getting ready to climb the Tower of Terror, the wind began to blow in our faces, the birds chirped in the trees, and the insects flew around us. This made us nervous and distracted us from climbing the scary, dead tree that stood 40 feet in the air. We built up our confidence to complete the long climb, thinking about how we were going to overcome our fears, and we made it to the top quickly. We were breathing hard, as hard as a bull running in a rodeo. We made it. There we were, standing on the top of the Tower of Terror. As the queasy feeling in our stomachs slowly went away, we looked down at the people who were belaying us and the miles and miles of trees before us. As we got ready to jump to the trapeze, which seemed like it was 20 feet away, but it was only 7, we exposed our feelings to the group, like a bear exposes the core of a tree as it tears away the bark to eat. My partner and I both jumped for our family and friends, the people we have always trusted and taken advice from in life.

My family and friends told me to do things that I would never try at home, like kayaking, rock climbing, rappelling, rafting, backpacking, climbing peaks. My family is the most important thing to me in my life. My sisters are like the moon that gives me light at night when I can't see. My dad is the sun, trying to make sure I go in the right path and always making sure I don't think about stepping out of line. My dog is my fitness partner looking at me, waiting to go running with him in the morning.

After two weeks at ARC, I realized that I had become a lazy person at home. I had always wanted things to be done my way. If nothing got finished my way I wouldn't do it. I always had to be asked millions of times before I would do chores at home. I finally realized what my dad was always trying to tell me, when he used an angry tone with me because of all the excuses, and when I always gave him a headache when he just got off work.

Now I have changed from someone who tried to be like others to someone who is now his own person.

During the first few days I came to ARC, I grew into the person I didn't want to be. I thought everyone would like me as a different person, but I came to find out that being someone else isn't that fun. When I'm myself, I may get something wrong in my life, but it's a lot better making my own future than not having any future at all and being someone I'm not. As I started being myself, I felt like everyone got to know the real me better than the person I had been pretending to be. That person I tried being did not help me do the things I wanted to do, but instead, helped me do the wrong things. It was the people that wanted me to be myself that cared about me. They wanted to help me graduate from high school, then college, and get a well-paying job to help me out in life. I felt good when the people I loved and trusted told me what was wrong and how I can be successful by being myself.

That person was locked in a chest since the ARC program began. I tried to find the key for the lock, but I became distracted because I was a different person that got along with others by laughing at them, putting them down, and making their self-esteem go low - so low that they gave up. After 20 days went by, the staff said that they were going to ask me some questions. I leaned in the chair, playing with sticks in my hands, looking off in a different

direction. I tried not to look the staff in their eyes as they told me, "You don't seem like the same person you were on Memorial weekend. You were much better and looked excited to come to ARC, but now we don't know if you are being someone else or just being yourself." It made me feel good knowing that someone was actually telling me how to be a better person, reminding me who the real Tony was.

The next day I began working on improving myself. As I began to look for the answer, I found it in the last few days. I thought of how the staff felt when I was cruel to them, and I figured out that they have been giving me the key this whole time but I just wasn't taking it. As I finally accomplished my goals for the summer I felt like a champ, a champ that could always keep on going.

Now that I have accomplished all of these things and have overcome my fears, I feel like I can do anything. I feel like I can go on to the next big thing in life. I learned that when it comes to doing something that you want to do, you can do it, even if you feel like your head is going to burst from pressure and stress. I feel like I've transformed every day at ARC because I express my feelings and stress when I am not OK. Now I can have the future I want because I found the person I was looking for.

I



Victor Cisneros

Curiosity

I am a Yellow-Bellied Marmot
Short and fat
Gazing at the lake
Where I grew up.

I'm curious about
How other animals live
My head held high
Sniffing the world
And its fresh air.

I live underground
When I'm threatened.
I am afraid to come out.
I disappear from the world
When I find out
My family is injured.

When other immense animals
Pick on me
I feel dispirited
For being diminished.
I feel neglected
Because I can't play with you.

You might see me
Walking around
Thinking I'm up to no good.
Judging me.

I cause no harm.
I'm just looking for food
To nourish my body
For new adventures.

Every night
Roaming for different friends
From place to place
Never home
Until it gets late.



When I'm wandering
I meet fresh Marmots
Who I can talk to.
And not be terrified
Of getting hurt.

When I learn
They don't want to destroy me
I feel better
That I have conquered my panic.

Here
I am changing
Becoming a stronger, more independent being.
Not afraid of facing life
Not afraid of challenges
Ready for opportunities.
I am a Yellow-Bellied Marmot

Wise Words

“Ok Victor, are you ready?” Mark said as I was standing in my harness, attached to ten other people. I knew as soon as they started running they were going to lift me 30, 40, 50, maybe even 60 feet off the ground. I said, “Yes.” As I started running toward the cone, I saw it get closer, and I had flashbacks of my parents’ words. When my feet left the ground I felt like everything paused, and I was talking to my parents.

My parents told me that this summer was going to be a good opportunity for me and I would grow more as a human being. If I was in this program, I would lose a lot, but I would get better things in return. I could sacrifice things and receive things that are going to help me in the future. I didn’t have to be like my friends to have fun. I could be sober, myself, and have even more fun than drunk and drugged people.

Before I left home this summer, my Dad said, “Tu puedes hijo, cuando te vayas vas a regresar como mejor persona. No pierdas esta oportunidad. Te voy a extrañar.” “You can do it son. When you leave your going to come back a better person. Don’t lose this opportunity; I’m going to miss you.” My mom also was sad, and she said, “Yo se que tu eres un niño bueno. Nunca cambies, pero si cambias, cambia a lo bueno no a lo malo.” “I know you’re a good kid. Never change, but if you do change, change in a good way, not in a bad way.” I felt good that my parents care about me and talk to me about things I should do. I don’t want to let my folks down, so I’m trying my hardest to do things I’ve never done before.

After my parents told me that, I’ve been thinking. It’s not hard for me to try to change. I’m doing things I’ve never done before like cooking, doing laundry, cleaning my bed, and taking care of myself. I have never been away from my parents for this long. That made me think of how hard my life would be without my family. For me to understand this, it took along time. Now that I have realized that, I’m going to change.

I’m going to help around the house. When my brothers need help I’ll be there for them.



When I’m at home I never clean my stuff up and my brother gets mad. Now that I’m in the tent with the guys and they’re dirty, I know how my brother feels. I’m not going to be lazy and I’m going to do my chores. I know it’s not going to be hard or easy, but I’m going to do it. I’m going to fulfill this challenge.

One of my challenges that I have is not thinking about home that much. When I start to think I’m OK, and I try to stop, but I can’t. That’s when I get sad. I just want to stop what I’m doing and say, “I quit, just take me home,” but there is no reason for that. I was thinking of what I would have done if I had quit. I would be ashamed of myself for quitting and not finishing things that I started. I know my family is doing well and I don’t have to worry about it. Right now I feel really good that I’m still here at the ARC program at Sagehen Forest, with just three days to go.

Another challenge is my laziness. When I was at home I really never did anything. When I got to the ARC program I figured out it’s not the same. Everything they tell me to do I have to do it. I have to cook for other people and myself, and I’m not a good cook. It was harder for me to do this because I never cook and I had to learn. I have to walk up hills with backpacks that feel like they have rocks in them. Every day we have to run for miles, we go to school a lot of hours, and we go to bed at 10:30. That’s the whole day. There is no “I’ll

do it later,” or “I’m too tired.” You have to do those things right away. It was hard to stop being lazy. I wasn’t used to it.

Now that I’m not lazy anymore something else has crossed my path. That’s fostering my leadership skills. I know I had them but I haven’t really used them. I tried to be cool and hang out with friends. That’s not the way you’re going to be cool; you’re going to look dumb. I started to use them and I saw how hard it was, so I tried to cooperate the most I could.

Now I know how frustrating it is when you’re talking and no one is listening. When you’re a leader you have to set a good example. Don’t try to be cool by dissing people and being a bad kid. That’s one mistake I made. As soon you make that mistake people are going to look at you as a bad kid. It’s easier to set a good example than to have to make a good impression after you do something bad. That’s something I learned from my mistakes.

In the future I can use all of the skills I’ve learned. I can help my dad, mom, and brothers. It’s not going to be as hard because I know how to do a lot of things. I can take my family camping or backpacking. I really appreciate the ARC program for giving me an opportunity to do things that I never would have thought of doing it. This was the best summer ever.

Community Interviews

On July 15th, halfway through our summer course, ten community members volunteered their time to be mentors for our students. These are excerpts from the narrative biographies students wrote about their partners.



Learning About Tony Pastore

As time was running out for our interview, I asked him for some advice. He told me to follow my heart and to trust myself, to know what the right choices are for me, to respect others and nature, and to always continue learning. I really liked getting paired up with Tony because he was open-minded and easy to talk to. As a result, I found out that even when people make mistakes, they can still be successful if they are motivated. As I have been thinking about the interview, I have realized that in the future I want to do my best and do better work. - *Caleb Soto*

Learning About LeeAnn Malone

My first impressions for Lee Ann were that she was peaceful, but she also had a great personality and a wild and adventurous side. All her rings and tattoos showed me that she liked to go out and just have a great time. I first thought that she was going to be very humorous which she was, but she also had a serious side. I couldn't wait to ask Lee Ann the questions because I knew she wasn't going to be shy and she was going to answer every question honestly. I thought to myself that this interview was going to be fun and entertaining. I knew that I could reflect myself back to her because I have a soft side but a wild and adventurous side too.

- *German Gonzalez*



Learning About Barbara Ando

I asked her what has been the biggest challenge in her life. She thought about it for a moment. Then she told me, "Learning to speak up for yourself." She looked deep in my eyes. I think that has been the challenge for me too, because I don't know how to speak up for myself either. She said growing up in a Japanese family makes it hard to disagree with family members. I have felt the same way, because I think it is a part of the Asian culture, respecting people. "It's hard to change," she said, but sometimes we must speak up for ourselves. That is what she did, speaking up for her business, speaking up for herself. She said one day she spoke up in front of a city council to prove something that they did wrong. They were making some untrue statements. If no one stopped the city council, Barbara's business would have been damaged. So she spoke up, to prove somebody was wrong. I know that took a lot of courage and confidence, because I am always trying to speak up, but it is usually too challenging for me to do it.

We had a very good conversation. I wished I could have had more time to continue. At the end of the interview, I asked her for advice. "Speak up for yourself," she said once again, stood up and moved the chair away. As she said, once she grew up in that situation, it was hard to change. I felt the same way as she did. But she stood up at least once in her life. Why can't I? As she left, I looked up in her eyes again with a big smile on my face. She smiled back at me and said, "As long as it's in your heart."

- *Jessie Wang*



Learning about Michael Cruz

On July 15th, instead of having a usual, boring base camp day, we were so excited and nervous for our interviewees to arrive. I felt as if I was in the middle of the desert. I was really hot, and to make matters worse, I forgot my water bottle. As I sat anxiously looking at the cars pulling up, my hands began to sweat. I wiped the sweat on my blue, old, dirty jeans. I wondered who would sit next to me, man or a woman. I didn't care. I just didn't want to be lonely. As we finished the "A-what?" game, and everybody felt more comfortable with each other, I looked around and wondered who I was going to be with. Then Jen finally announced, "Lupe your partner is....?" "Who?" I felt like screaming! "Who is it?" She continued, "Lupe your partner is Michael." I was hunting him down like a tiger hunting his prey and finally spotted him. He gave me the biggest smile that went from ear to ear. I felt better and thought I had the "easiest task". He had an evergreen tie which matched his pants and socks, that I saw when he crossed his legs. His dark hair and smooth skin made me think he was around thirty years old, but he told me he is going to be 53 on December 3rd. His gold name tag read "Michael R. Cruz". From Michael's outfit, his "ranger suit," I learned that he worked at the Forest Service. I started to put together the pieces of his puzzle.

- Lupe Xochihua



Learning About Jerry Booth

Despite his rebellion in high school, Jerry said he hasn't faced a lot of challenges. "A white guy has it easy," he said seriously. That came as a shock to me. The reason is that to me, that quote says that because he's white, he can do whatever he wants to do very easily. I don't feel that is the same for me, given that I am Hispanic. It makes me think that maybe he knows how other people that are a different race might not have it as easy as a white person...

When I asked him if he had any feedback for my own life, he said I should really consider being a poet. He said I had a good sense of description and thoughts. That made me feel delighted because up to this point I wasn't really confident about speaking English and grammar.

- Stefany Mendoza



Learning About Barry Babba

I decided to build a little more confidence between the two of us so I asked for his hobbies. Barry told me that one of his favorite hobbies was working at his job and I thought for a second that biology was his real passion. He told me that he wanted to be in the basketball team back in high school but he couldn't make it because of his height. He said that basketball was something that he loved to do. Barry said that water rafting was very exiting and every time he has a chance he doesn't let it go by. I asked him what he did in his free time. He told me that he would stay quiet and just think a lot. That showed me that he was a person who had deep feelings, and I realized that he and I were not so different.

- Raul Felix



Learning about Ray Villaman

One of Ray's challenges has been discovering what he wanted to do with his career and his business. However, his greatest challenge has been discovering his purpose. I have never thought about this until I heard him say those words. My purpose in life right now is being a role model to both of my brothers. I want to talk to my brothers about the good choices in life that they could accomplish. If I can keep my family together and happy, I know that I have fulfilled my purpose.

Another challenge for Ray has been, "How to be a good father and a husband," he said. This all began when he took the risk to follow his girlfriend and come out to the west coast about 10 years ago. They now have two sons. Their names are Jacob and Nicholas. Jacob is six years old and his brother is four. I think Ray is going to accomplish all of his goals.

- Victor Cisneros

Que Haríamos Sin Nuestros Padres

Los padres que nos dieron la vida, que nos apoyaron en las buenas y en las malas. Que cuando les dejamos saber que íbamos a dejar la casa por cuarenta días, nos dieron la libertad de venir.

Tuvieron fe y confianza en nosotros esperando que cambiáramos para bien.

Pero después de estos cuarenta días, hemos cambiado esperando que nuestros padres se den cuenta de este gran cambio.

Durante estos cuarenta días nos dimos cuenta de todo el daño que causamos al desobedecerlos.

Día a día hemos trabajado igual de duro que nuestros padres y nos hemos dado cuenta que tan difícil son los trabajos que nuestros padres han hecho por mucho tiempo, que la responsabilidad y la madurez son los factores más importantes para vivir una vida exitosa.

Finalmente queremos agradecer a nuestros padres por habernos aceptado tal y como somos, con todos nuestros defectos y virtudes. Por habernos dado la oportunidad de venir a los Estados Unidos para brindarnos un mejor futuro.

Esperamos que ahora que regresemos a casa, regresemos como personas diferentes, personas que ahora pueden valorar, a esos maravillosos padres.

*~ Presented to the parents by all of the ARC graduates.
ARC Graduation Ceremony, August 2006*



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