

Kings Canyon Crew: Josef Salvador

Someone once said that the CCC program was the moral equivalent to war.

Young people in today's world are missing something. There is a void in our lives. Some of us fill this void with gangs, alcohol, drugs, even television. There are so many things that are too easily found at our disposal so many distractions that keep us from truly living. The Backcountry Program allows you to free yourselves from those distractions. Find out what you can live without. Find out what you're made of.

So many of us are looking for something to live for; even possibly die for. We're looking for something bigger than ourselves that takes more priority than our own feeble existence. This is what I found in Backcountry.

We're looking for a community to serve. We're looking for comradery. We're looking for a group of people, set with a common goal. We need people to connect with and strive toward that special something, platoon to complete the mission. This is what I found in Backcountry.

There is a carnal instinct that is ingrained in each and every one of us that wants to be part of something. It begs us to move forward, get out of our comfort zones, find our limitations – and then break them. This instinct begs us to find hardship and diversities: hard work, miserable conditions, hunger, sweat, and tears. We want to be tested through fire, to find ourselves stronger than tempered steel. This is what I found in Backcountry.

A small group of young people went out into the wilderness. We left our homes, warm beds, running water, and electricity. We left our comfort foods, cars, and jobs. We left civilization and found a whole new world.

In this world we depend on each other. We build comradery. We mold and bond together. Every individual gives to the community. Everyone's weaknesses are overcome by our combined strengths. Everyone is a part of a well oiled machine. We are bombarded with projects like cutting tread, trail rehab, and rock work. Our armory is a tool cache made of rock bars, R-5's, and jackhammers. Like soldiers we hump our packs to the battle front. We attack and overcome. This is what young people need. This is what I found in the Backcountry.

As my season comes to a close...sure I'm tired. Sure I want to go home. I miss my friends and family. The things I learned here will always be a part of me. I learned to serve my community. I learned about good work ethic. I experienced much more than I could have imagined. But more importantly, I learned about myself. I learned my physical limits then I overcame them. I learned to work with others in a small group in adverse condition for extended periods of time. This is what I found in the Backcountry.