

MAY 2010 OVERVIEW

KINGS CANYON BACKCOUNTRY TRAIL CREW

AGNES VIANZON

Lewis Creek camp has been home to early season C's crews for as long as I know of. We have made ourselves at home now. We have become accustomed to the daily schedule and routine but in no way have we become complacent. On the grade we work hard daily and push ourselves whether it was fine tuning a universal access trail at Zumwalt Meadow, tread work on Copper Creek or Don Cecil, or brushing the Bubbs Creek switches. In camp we were forced to deal with some tough situations, but we are still 17 strong and continuing to build our community every day and every night.

Mother Nature also has her own way of making sure we're not getting complacent with the weather by the gift of snow about once a week. Even though the weather and snow pack has delayed our move into the backcountry, we are making the most of our front country time. With the help of our old faithful van, Betsy, we made the trek back up the hill to Grant Grove to explore the giant Sequoia groves, Kings Canyon N.P. Visitor Center, Grizzly Falls, and Boyden Cavern.

This month, backcountry birthdays were in full effect. Much of the crew are summer babies. Our birthday committee has their hands full but each celebration so far has been unique. Dewey (May 2) came home from the weekend to a whistle salute from Meredith and home made decorations, Jenell (May 13) got her first mail, roses, and a card, Brian (May 20) celebrated with games of Pin the Beard on the Corpsmember and hide and seek, Laura (May 24) woke up to a giant rock Happy 25! sign and perhaps the largest cinammon roll to date, and last but not least, Noemi (May 29) blasted her way through her colorful birthday pinata.

WEEKEND ADVENTURES:Heading out from various trail heads while we can, we've enjoyed spectacular spots including Paradise Valley, Fry Pan Meadow, Sphinx Camp, Wildman Meadow, Upper Paradise Valley, and Woods Creek.

CURRICULUM/EVENING ACTIVITIES: Together we've carried on our conversations from orientation about sobriety. We started working on our crew Mission Statement and agreed on a backcountry contract.

We're learning about each other with our 10 minute Q&A sessions, practiced active listening exercises and learned our lessons about unregulated goods with a Tragedy of the Commons lesson.

NPS employees Erin Degenstein and Patrick Rizzo taught us all about Sierra Nevada plants and trees.

Corpsmember taught classes also continue with Manny Salazar teaching us all how to make p-cord birds nests and how to tie some very useful knots.

WE APPRICIATE YOU: Thanks to Karlson Hubbard for your energizing visit and for reading a relevant story to us – In a Poor Country by Jack London while we huddled under a yellow rain fly in the snow.

Thanks to Ken Hires who brought us to Zumwalt Meadow to learn about Kings Canyon natural history and for your generous donation to our crew library.

Thanks to all the folks on Kings Canyon trail crew for bringing back the NPS vs. CCC volleyball tournament. It was a valiant effort by the CCC but NPS claims victory this year.

Thanks to all of our Memorial Day weekend guests: The LaFollette Family, The Camp Family, The Mattinger Family, and Andi's friend Pamela.

CORPSMEMBER WORDS OF WISDOM:

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

Day 1 in the Wilderness

"Have you peace, the quiet urge that reveals your power? Have you remembrances, the glimmering arches that span the summits of the mind? Have you beauty that leads the heart from things fashioned of wood and stone to the Holy mountain? Tell me have you these in your houses? Or have you only comfort, and the lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house as a guest, and then becomes a host. And then a master? Verily the lust for comfort murders the passion of the soul, and then walks, grinning at the funeral."

-Kahlil Gibran

Each day here brings a new challenge, and there are few comforts except a warm fire and some worn down but smiling faces. But we make it work because we love what we do and we believe in what our work stands for, what it will stand for tomorrow, in a year, in a hundred.

We all made sacrifices and took risks coming here. Risks of losing the ones we love but left behind. Risks of entering the unknown accommodated by strangers. Risk of injury. Risk of failure. But these risks, no matter how varied reveal clearly what we collectively value. Our commitment to Kings Canyon. To one another and to society. To environmental conservation through the trail work we do everyday. Everyday we work this canyon, shaping it with our hands and our feet and our minds and our hearts.

And everyday this canyon in return is shaping each of these parts of ourselves. She is changing us. Immersing us so deeply into the simple act of living that we jump and swim and play like otters in the frigid snow melt rivers. We breathe in the air. We look to the stars. We howl at the moon and dance and sing wildly around the campfire late into the night. We let the pure impulses of life overcome our reservations because we are so determined to live – fully and feel – fully. We said to hell with a life of comfort. Give me rough granite to rest my head upon, heavy tools that burn my muscles and callous my hands, and stiff boots that blister my feet. Give me frustration. Give me hardship. Give me doubt. Because what we find here is greater than comfort – camaraderie, strength, courage, accomplishment, love – the rewards are limitless and will continue to reveal themselves to us throughout the season. As long as we remember our commitment, as long as we never forget why we are here, what our work stands for and believe that living authentically is more valuable than living comfortably.

-Laura Gunter "LB"

2010 KINGS CANYON BACKCOUNTRY CONTRACT

We the Backcountry Trail Crew of Kings Canyon 2010 promise to put our crew first by upholding the following ideals:

We promise to...

1. We promise to push ourselves in every aspect of the backcountry program.
2. Practice safety first.
3. Practice leave no trace ethics.
4. Treat your brothers and sisters with utmost respect, love, and generosity.
5. Live presently and appreciate everyday like its your last.
6. Communicate purposefully and respectfully.
7. Trust that people have integrity; have integrity so people can have trust.
8. Commit to a peaceful crew.
9. Commit to upholding sobriety.
10. Be adventurous and take advantage of every opportunity.

11. Replace the word with the deed.

12. Be grateful.

13. Hope for the best; prepare for the worst.

14. Uphold the traditions of the backcountry program and ensure its continuation.