



## Outward Bound

By TEMN Reporter Annemarie Brown

This summer I had the opportunity to travel for 14 days into the depths of Desolation and Labyrinth Canyons in the heart of Utah white water rafting on the beautiful Green River. Initially, I was not afraid. The best way to describe what I was feeling would be "no emotion." As a socially active fifteen-year-old girl, I didn't want to leave my friends, nor anything with which I was comfortable.



Courtesy Chris Moon

That's me in the middle with my two friends Graham and Alex ... resting after a long morning of constant paddling.

Outward Bound policy is to have each person step outside the boundaries of that with which they are comfortable. With each step a new fear arises, but also old fears disappear. Outward Bound began 35 years ago. Its mission is to challenge teenagers, as well as adults, to perform tasks that go beyond perceived physical, mental and emotional limits so as to enhance their belief in themselves and their capabilities.

The trip was truly the first journey of my self-discovery. Challenges and fears stared me in the face everywhere I turned. We had four amazing instructors teaching, guiding, and nurturing us throughout the trip. Their strength of character and joy in life were inspiring.

The first challenge, and one of the hardest, was making new friends and hoping they would accept me. In our society, we are judged by our outward appearances. On this trip we were able to glimpse into the souls of those with us. We became open and trusting. "Inward bound" is what it really was; isolated from the outside world, we were there just for each other, with strength, support, and love. Many times we held each other's lives in our hands as we climbed and

rappelled off cliffs. Trust was also a huge factor--if ever that trust was broken you were lost. Love was another factor without which we could not have survived. We adopted our instructors' motto, "My love will not fade away".



Courtesy Chris Moon

Happy me after completing my first successful climb ... what a view!

On several occasions I was faced with challenges I thought I could never conquer. The first was rappelling down a 60-foot cliff! As I stood at the bottom looking up at what I was about to do, it never dawned on me that I was actually going to do it. When my turn came, my instructor showed me what to do and courage washed over me as I stepped to the edge. Slowly I looked down--what hit wasn't fear; it was the familiar feeling of "I can't." On a deeper level, I knew I could and I would. Later, standing at the bottom and looking up again, I smiled and said "Hell, yeah! I can conquer the world!"

The journey eventually led us all into the depths of a canyon where we each spent 24 hours alone. We were only allowed to bring a sleeping bag, a gallon of water, some food, and a notebook for writing. Sitting alone on the canyon ledge did not frighten me and I thought more in that one day than I have in two weeks during my life at home. The journey through my soul was hard; I faced things about myself that I wasn't able to confront before.

Looking at the depths of Labyrinth Canyon, I stared into the heart of my fears. Fear stared back through red eyes, which like the colors of the canyon, slowly changed through the day to a glowing yellow. As the moon began to rise over the steep canyon walls, so did my feelings. The flaws I saw within myself shamed me, but the virtues I began to see built me up. I felt so strong and beautiful and amazing — but with a sense of humility that was also overwhelming. I realized that by accepting myself others would accept me, and by loving myself I am invincible.

The next morning as the sun rose, I sat in my sleeping bag watching the sunrise and my heart was calm and filled with such strength, clarity and freedom — total utopia. I re-entered camp that same morning a different person, with a deep sense of humility, strength and, most important, love.



Courtesy Chris Moon

Here's a picture of me (top) and some of the amazing people I met on my trip ... Sarah, Carmen (bottom), Graham, Emily, and Tom

The last and most brutal part of the journey was when a partner and I carried a heavy (hundred plus pound) canoe up three miles of steep windy roads. As that canoe sat heavy on my head I was overcome with pain, it felt as if my back would break. We were told before we set out to let our anger carry us, but I had no anger, only a deep hurt — one caused by the pain of self-doubt. I desperately wanted to complete this, only to prove that I could.

The emotional connection between my partner and I was incredible; in our support for each other we found true inner strength. As we climbed, the pain became too much to bear for us both. We broke down, but we were there for each other. When we reached the top, I was overcome with such joy, such peace, excitement, and love all wrapped into one.

Now, my friends and my experiences are precious memories. Letting go was hugely painful. Returning to 'reality' has been a very difficult transition. But the one thing I have that no one can ever take away is that I now know I can conquer the world — whatever world I might be facing. I hope to call on that experience whenever I feel down or whenever I need love. I know that all my new friends are out there somewhere and they care, they lived it with me. My love will never fade away.

For more information about Outward Bound, you can visit their web site at [www.outwardbound.com](http://www.outwardbound.com) and the Colorado Outward Bound School at [www.cobs.org](http://www.cobs.org).