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THE OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

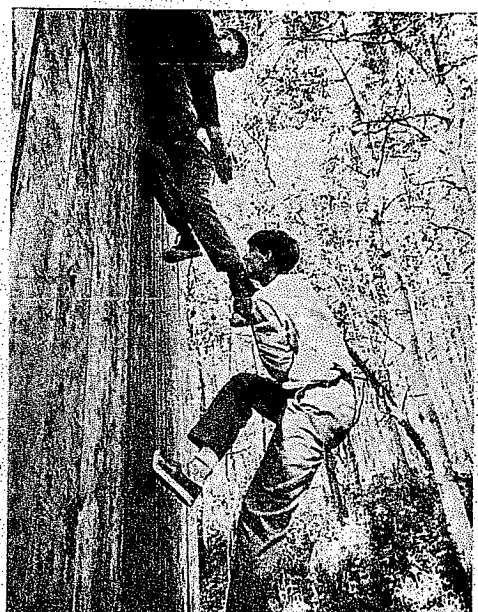


Photographs including cover: Bruce McAllister—Black Star

Half-mile run before dip in Lost Trail Creek marks the beginning of every day for students at Outward Bound School in Colorado. The run back to camp is uphill.



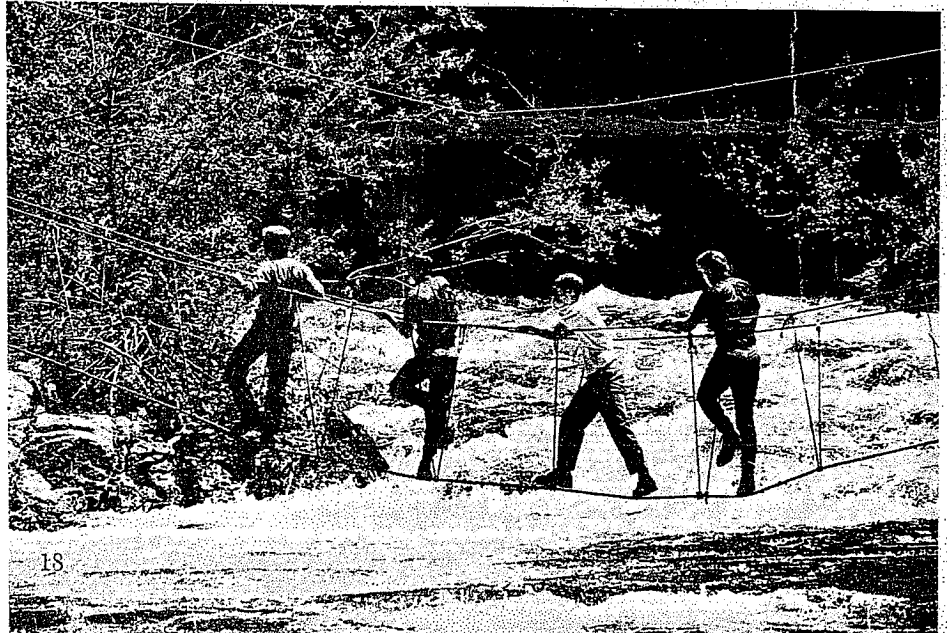
Morning plunge into icy mountain stream tops hate-list of most boys.



High-wall obstacle course teaches boys that they must cooperate as a team or face failure.

The Outward Bound program was conceived during World War II as a quick method of hardening up young seamen. The British had noted that many inexperienced men gave up and were lost during emergencies (mostly ship sinkings), while seasoned hands often possessed a will for survival that carried them through the same situations. Outward Bound's purpose was to let men find out how far beyond expected limits they could drive themselves. The program was a success and is credited with saving many lives. The concept also serves peaceful needs and has spread to other countries. The first school in America, at Marble, Colorado, was established in 1962. Each summer, groups of 80 to 100 young people (including some Peace Corps volunteers) are put through a rigorous 26-day course in the mountain wilderness, designed to pit them against the challenge of raw nature and, above all, against themselves. On these pages, Richard J. Steinmann, 19, a junior at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, gives an account of what it was like for a young man to discover himself in the Outward Bound program.

attended summer of 1964



Crossing tricky "Burma" rope bridge over roaring Crystal River left some students silent and shaking for an hour.

MARBLE, COLORADO, is a tiny town high in the Elk Mountains of western Colorado, 200 miles across the Continental Divide from Denver. A dirt road climbs west out of the place into the surrounding mountains. A sign on the road at the outskirts of town reads: "Colorado Outward Bound School—three hard miles." For the student just arriving at Outward Bound, those first three miles are the beginning of a month of blood, sweat, tears, and enough soul-searching to last a lifetime.

YOUNG MEN VERSUS WILDERNESS

The Colorado Outward Bound School offers a 26-day course in the art of mountain climbing and survival in the high country. Its purpose is to pit boys against nature, against the wind and the rain and the mountains, and, ultimately, against themselves. It's hoped that they will come out with a better knowledge of themselves and perhaps will be a little closer to manhood than when they went in.

The site of the school is a large clearing chopped out of the raw aspen forest, populated by a few wooden buildings and a host of green army tents mounted on wooden platforms. Ten of our 26 days were spent here, the 16 others on expeditions back in the hills.

On arrival, we (80 to 100 students in a full course) were issued an unfamiliar collection of climbing and camping gear and were sent off to our sleeping bags. Sneakers, socks, and swim shorts were left out, ready for the first morning "dip."

We had seen pictures of the dip in the catalog, and vaguely remembered a passing reference to an "early-morning plunge into an icy mountain stream." No matter. Nothing can ever adequately describe the half-mile run to Lost Trail Creek, shivering in the weak dawn sunlight, then the numbing plunge and the desperate uphill run back. One instructor claims to have recorded the water at 31 degrees. An optimist!

GROUP SURVIVAL

This is a course emphasizing teamwork and concern for the other man. We were divided into patrols of 12; individual responsibility was directed toward

AS IT LOOKS FROM THE INSIDE

this group. Survival in the high country depends on teamwork, and the person who ignores the rest of the patrol can make for serious trouble. My patrol spent one miserable night in nearby Bear Basin carrying down a student who had become separated from his patrol and was hurt climbing alone.

We spent the first few days in camp conditioning legs and lungs for the tasks ahead. Classes were held in ax-manship, map and compass reading, camping techniques, fire fighting, mountain rescue, and a flock of other basic skills. Short trips were made into the hills to learn rock and rope work. On one trip, we got our first taste of the rope course, a collection of ropes and logs strung between trees—from five to 45 feet up—and over which we were expected to climb, swing, crawl, jump, and hang, in an effort to build up muscle and confidence.

This was our first encounter with the fear that is an integral part of Outward Bound. Crossing a shaky rope bridge is one thing, but put it four stories up and it becomes a test of nerve and will that left me shivering and silent for an hour.

THREE FIELD EXPEDITIONS

The days in the field are divided into three expeditions, the Basic, the Grand Alpine, and the Final. The first two are designed to teach and perfect the techniques used in the mountains, the last as a test of knowledge and judgment over a long and rugged march, where the students operate entirely on their own.

For the Basic, the first expedition, we were up and moving at 3:30 the first morning, and ready to pull out as soon as the sun rose. Everybody was very sleepy and very clumsy and full of great oaths.

Breakfast on the trail was the first meal we cooked on our own, using open fires and messkits. It was sort of tragic with comic overtones. Bacon and fingers were burned with equal abandon. Coffee landed everywhere but in the cups. And nobody has ever made anything edible out of powdered eggs on the first try.

One boy opened his package of bacon to find it riddled with maggots. He complained to the instructor and was advised to "fry them up along with the bacon; they're good protein." Our instructor began to look less like a kindly old man and more like the ex-paratrooper he was.

The days were spent practicing rock and snow techniques. At the end of the third day we moved down into position for the solo survival test. That night, the first one alone in the mountains, can be a very lonely one. Being hungry doesn't help much. It seems appropriate to think about your girl or your family or something, but every time you close your eyes, all that your imagination will conjure up is visions of steaks and hamburgers.

The only food was what could be caught, killed, or rooted out of the ground. Under the stimulus of an empty stomach, some of the students became very proficient at catching, killing, and rooting. One boy set a school record by braining 18 trout with his ice ax in one day. Others lived less lavishly on spruce tea, ants, grasshoppers, roots, tubers, and berries.

CAVEMAN EXISTENCE

Anything that stood still long enough for an ice ax to be thrown at it was likely to get eaten. We would have done a caveman proud as we crouched by a marmot's burrow for hours, waiting for the little beast to stick his head out far enough to throw a loop of wire over it, and then dragged him out to where he could be clubbed with an ice ax. Not a terribly civilized activity, but you lose your civilization very quickly after a few days without food.

After the Basic, we moved back to camp to recover and to spend a few days preparing for the Grand Alpine.

The Alpine (seven days of concentrated insanity, one student called it) is the major expedition of the course. It includes scaling two 14,000-foot-high peaks, plus a 300-foot-long rappel and some very long, hard days of marching. (A rappel, for the uninitiated, involves fixing a rope so that it runs through a snap link at your hips and over the shoulder and across the back. You are then expected to jump off a cliff. You can stop

(Continued)

yourself at the bottom, it is hoped, by increasing the friction of the rope across the back and shoulder.)

DAWN FROM 14,000 FEET

We climbed both peaks before dawn on succeeding days. Each ascent was timed to put the patrol on the summit just as the sun rose. Looking out over 150 miles of snow-capped mountains at dawn can't really be described, but it can't be forgotten either.

One patrol we passed on the trail told of being caught on a high ridge coming down from Capitol, the more difficult of the two "fourteeners," when one of the daily thunderstorms struck. An electrical storm in the mountains can be terrifying. The captain of the patrol described it as "thunder and lightning and the wrath of God. The lightning wasn't so bad, but when everybody's hair began to stand on end, and we started getting St. Elmo's fire glowing and crackling off our pick frames and ice axes, it was too much. There wasn't even any place to run. All we could do was stand there and shake."

The climax of the Grand Alpine was a six-mile marathon run over rocky mountain roads. It is a big event at the school, and the winner gets his time (best so far, 33 minutes) and picture posted in the mess hall at camp.

"GUTS RACE" IS REAL TEST

The run is made along a narrow road that follows the course of the Crystal River, in a hilly sort of way. It is what the students call the "guts race." The winner doesn't get there on speed; he gets there on the ability to push himself longer and harder than the others. On guts!

After the marathon the students return to camp for two days of patrol competition. The patrols are rated as groups in performing a series of tasks to test their knowledge and ability to function efficiently as a unit. The marathon is the first of the events; others include work with the crosscut saw and double-bitted ax, a scaling wall and beam, water-boiling, rope-coiling, and a series of ingenuity tests calculated to leave the captain of the patrol a nervous wreck with a sore throat from yelling at his men to "shut up and do something, for Pete's sake—we're being timed!" Points are totaled

and the winner is announced with great ceremony when the course is finished.

The Final expedition is the last and hardest of the three tests. Our patrol was divided into three groups of four men, each with roughly the same abilities. Each team is assigned a route through the mountains, ranging from 30 to 60 miles, depending on the strength of the members. A double-A route is the hardest, and those who get one are extremely proud. They are also a little apprehensive. Twenty miles a day with a pack is not a pleasant thing in the mountains, where a team may creep up a steep slope at one mile per hour for several hours a day.

The four students are alone on the Final. To get us over the route, we had only a compass, maps, and dumb luck. We relied most heavily on the last.

FINAL LOG: JOURNAL OF COURAGE

The Final is preceded by hours of planning, selecting food and equipment, and poring over maps. Everything is cut down to a minimum; the only extra clothing is fresh socks, which are essential to prevent the terrible blisters that can turn a foot into a mass of bleeding sores in two days. A partial record of the Final, taken from my log (kept by each team leader), follows:

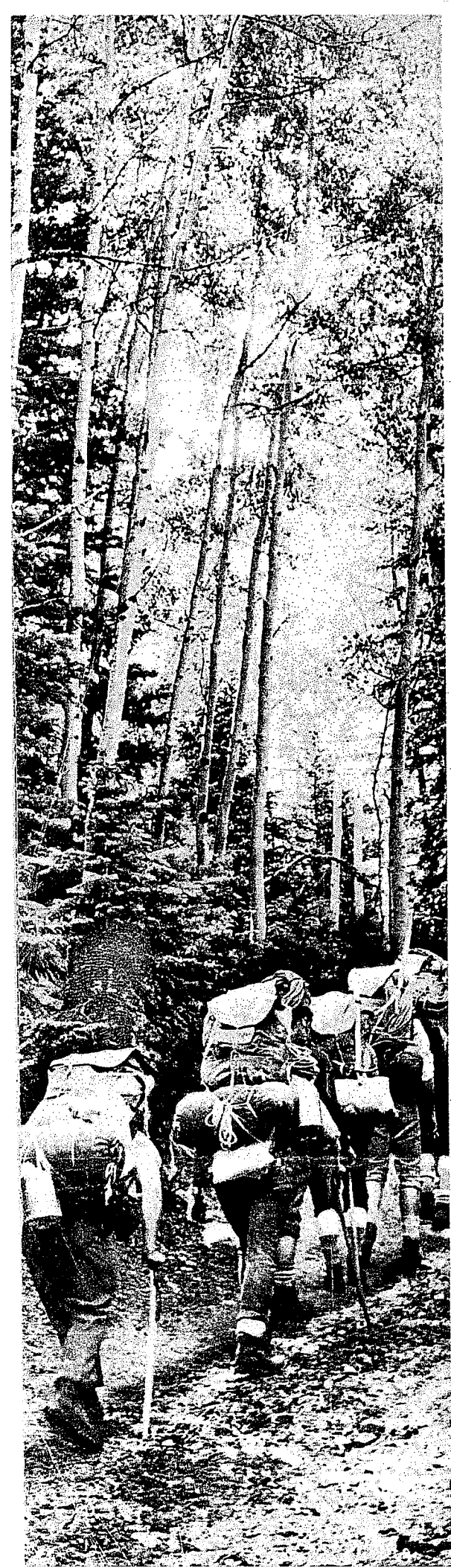
"First day: Up at 4:00. Load packs and wait for dawn. 5:15—light enough to travel. Pull out. Trail to Silver Creek. Everybody in high spirits—the first day on our own. 7:30—breakfast at Silver Creek; fried cream of wheat, bacon, and Green Death. (Green Death is lime gelatin mixed with hot water. It's a lot more nutritious than coffee.)

"Climb Meadow Mountain. High traverse down. 10:50—Geneva Lake. Making great time. 15-minute break.

"2:00—cross Trail Rider's Pass. Are run off the trail by two rangers leading a string of dude campers and 35 horses. Don't ever try to walk on a trail after 35 horses have been over it.

"Snowmass Lake—lunch. Afternoon storm here. We huddle under the trees, waiting out the rain. No sense in getting wet the first day.

"6:40—over Buckskin Pass. Very rough. We climbed for four hours, and it was steep all the way. My legs shaking uncontrollably at the top.





Mountain climbing and high-country survival are techniques developed during training.



Six-mile marathon run by teams over rocky mountain trails is the toughest test of stamina.



Crossing improvised log bridge with full pack requires sure foot or liking for a cold dunking.

After 11 rigorous days out in the field, students enjoy mail, refreshments, and entertainment.



"7:50—down to Crater Lake. Camp here for the evening. Spam, powdered potatoes, and more Green Death for supper. On the trail for 16 hours; covered 25 miles."

The next two days were the same, except for added notes on blisters, twisted knees, and traumatic periods when compass and map wouldn't agree. Everybody gave up on the possibility of locating the team any more precisely than western Colorado.

When we finally pushed into camp on the last day, there was no delirious joy at being finished—just a sort of numb happiness that it was all over. All the pain and sweat, all the poor food and cold nights, the hours of loneliness . . . it was all over.

Outward Bound, although it stresses teamwork, is essentially an individual affair. Whatever the student learns, whatever he does, he does by himself. The patrol operates as a unit, but success or failure is measured in terms of the individual. One boy who ran the marathon in his socks because his feet were so badly blistered that he couldn't get his sneakers on helped his patrol in the competition, but the triumph was his as well as the team's.

CREATES SMALL, PERSONAL WAR

Ernest Hemingway once said it was a great pity that wars are so infrequent, because a man might go his whole life without ever finding out whether or not he was a coward. In a sense, Outward Bound creates wars—small, individual wars between what the student thinks he can do and what he is told to do. And somewhere amid all the pain and fear and frustration, the student gets a chance to look at himself in a new light, to see just what he is really worth and what he is capable of. He gets a chance to look into his soul.

Outward Bound is not enjoyable; it is not meant to be. Only under the pressure of fear and pain does a person get the chance for such self-analysis. It is something you can't find in the soft routine of ordinary existence. It is something very good.

A MATTER OF WILL AND NERVE

There is a great deal of satisfaction for the student at Outward Bound, sat-

isfaction that comes from pushing himself to the limit, and then beyond. Beyond is more than just a physical thing. It is a matter of will and of nerve and of the ability to "gut it out" just a little longer and a little harder. It is a matter of living to the extreme in response to a challenge.

To be thrown back onto his last resources of strength and ingenuity and courage is a harsh thing for the student, but he can learn more about himself in those 26 days of striving than in a lifetime of unchallenging ease.

The final day in camp, running the hated dip for the last time, members of one patrol found themselves alone, with no instructor to make sure they went in. They paused for a second, and then very solemnly jumped in, one by one. The last man to go in climbed out and looked back at the stream for a minute. "It's too bad that the course is over," he said, "I was beginning to like the darn thing!" ■ END

There are three Outward Bound Schools in the United States, and it is likely that there will be more. Besides the Colorado school, there is one at Ely, Minnesota, and another will be in operation this summer at Hurricane Island, Maine. Following the example set in the British Isles (where there are now six Outward Bound Schools), the concept has spread to other countries, including Australia, Germany, Holland, Malaysia, and New Zealand. The programs vary somewhat, depending on location and available facilities, but all share a common goal—to bring confidence and maturity to participants by testing their endurance to the limit. In this country the courses are open to young persons from 16 to 22 years of age, with no restrictions as to background. About half of those who attend are on "scholarships" sponsored by businessmen, church and service organizations, boys' clubs, and civic groups. Enrollees are accepted on a first-come first-served basis. For detailed information, write to: Outward Bound School, Star Route (Marble), Carbondale, Colorado, or to: Outward Bound School, Box 450, Ely, Minnesota.