



# JOURNALING ON THE TRAIL

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**F**or the past decade, I've never gone on a long journey or a hike without first packing a journal. I keep a journal to capture the memories that most likely would otherwise fade away, to consciously observe my surroundings and to use as a means for meditation.

I was surprised to discover that many hikers I met last season did not keep a written record of their journey. They gave reasons that I could relate to: a lack of motivation, not finding the time to write or the belief that they aren't creative enough to keep a journal while on the trail. I have struggled with these issues as well over the years. But just like taking on a long trail such as the PCT, persistence can take you a long way.

In 159 days, I hiked nearly 1,700 miles of the PCT last season. In that time, I filled about 850 pages in four journals. By sharing my journals with you, I hope to show that it is possible to keep a written record while hiking and, hopefully, inspire others to write in a journal that they will cherish for the rest of their lives.

Keeping a trail journal shares many similarities to thru-hiking the PCT. At first, the prospect seems near impossible, but determination carries you forward. As you struggle with gaining your hiking legs, you contend with making time to write about it. It takes dedication and determination to keep a journal. The pages stare back at you, their blankness intimidating, just as the thousands of miles ahead can dishearten. Many thru-hikers told me their early goal of keeping a journal soon faded as they turned their concentration to the hike. They'd say to themselves that they'd spend time on their next zero day in town writing, but by then, their minds had turned to food. Eventually, the journal with its few filled pages was sent home.

Ah, but if only they knew: It gets easier! Just as your body strengthens and the trail miles get easier, so does the journaling. Diligence leads to habits. After a while, you can't imagine hiking a day without writing about it.

The key is to always keep your journal easily accessible. I kept mine in my breast pocket. Show me a journal stored in a backpack, and



Top, left: Walking the walk, Kolby Kirk always has his journal accessible in his pocket.  
Top, right: Daily journaling on a long-distance hike yields a stack of filled notebooks.

I'll show you an empty book. You need to have it handy so you can record those fleeting thoughts. I found myself writing in my journal a few dozen times a day, sometimes just long enough to write down a sentence or two. Stopping on the trail might be counterproductive to how far you can hike in a day, but it is possible to write while making the mileage. **Scott Williamson** spent a good 45 minutes chatting with me in Belden, where our treks crossed paths in early September. If he can chat with me for 45 minutes and still hike the PCT in record time, then anyone can make the time to keep a written journal on the trail.

There aren't any rules to keeping a journal. The motto on the trail is "hike your own hike," and I add: "journal your own journal!" If you want to just write down daily mileage, how much sleep you got each night, the number of times you dreamt of Julian pies, or how many calories you inhaled at the McDonald's at Cajon Pass, then I say go for it. I suggest, though, that you also include details that you might want to know many years from now, details about your hike

that relatives might want to read about someday. I included updates on how I was feeling, if I was nursing any injuries, how satisfied I was with my hiking progress, and people I met with their contact information. I also wrote down information that might be useful to future hikers: water sources, camping spots, cheapest burgers in towns, etc. I also tried to record as much as I could about my surroundings, the type of terrain I was covering and the plant and animal life.

While hiking allows me to experience the grandness of nature, journaling gives me the ability to capture and reflect on those powerful moments.

I wrote in my journal as if I was writing to a good friend who wanted to know everything about my journey. Who knows, maybe one day many years from now you will have a wide-eyed child on your knee, interested in hearing another story about your adventures on the PCT. Pulling out your dusty journal might be a lot easier than pulling out the memories from the dusty shelves of your mind.

DAY	DATE	PCT MILE	MILES TODAY	MILES TO GO	TYPE OF ACC.	LOCATION @ END OF DAY	DAY	DATE	PCT MILE	MILES TODAY	MILES TO GO	TYPE OF ACC.	LOCATION @ END OF DAY
68	07/07	702.2	17.6	0.5	T	KENNEDY MEADOWS BEHIND GENERAL STORE	86	07/15	811.4	11.5	-	T	WHITE WATER CAMP ON SOUTH FORK OF KINGS RIVER
69	07/08	702.2	-	-	T	KENNEDY MEADOWS SAME SPOT	87	07/26	820.3	8.9	-	CC	"WATERFALL CAMP" LOWER MOUNTAIN LAKE
70	07/09	709.5	4.3	-	T	"CRAIG CREEK CAMP" WITH DENIAL, WINDMILL & ABBAC ACACIA	88	7/27	831.7	11.5	-	T	"BEAR POLE CAMP" LITTLE MOUNTAIN MEADOW
71	07/10	721.2	10.7	-	T	"THE GRANITE THRONE" WITH DENIAL, WINDMILL & ABBAC ACACIA	89	7/28	842.7	11.0	-	T	"LOST DINNER CAMP" BELOW WINDMILL LAKE - 4.33 MI
72	07/11	736.4	15.2	-	T	"HAPPY FIRE CAMP" WITH DENIAL, WINDMILL & ABBAC ACACIA	90	7/29	852.5	9.8	-	T	"SOULY BAG CAMP" S. FORK SAN JOAQUIN RIVER
73	07/12	741.5			T	PORTAGEE JOE CAMP ROUND OFF ISLAND VIA MULLEN PASS - MARISSA MEADOW	91	7/30	857.7	8.2	3.0	T	"BACK TRACK CAMP" MOUNTAIN RANCH (S) 2744' ELEVATION
74	07/13	750.8			T	CHICKEN STRING LAKE MARISSA MEADOW - CATTWOOD PASS	92	7/31	869.2	11.5	-	T	"DAMP CAMP" BEAR CREEK
75	07/14	767			T	"TROOP 512 CAMP" PONTANA BUT SENTS	93	8/1	878.7	9.7	6.0	HP	"VERMILLION VALLEY RANCH" IN A BUNK TENT
76	07/15	767	14.8	14.8	T	"WHITNEY MEMORIES" A.K.A. WHITNEY CAMP	94	8/2	878.7	1.0	1.0	T	VERMILLION VALLEY RANCH ZERO
77	07/16	774.5	8.5	1.0	T	"CAMP WET SOCKS" WITH CHAMONIX, DENIAL & ALL OF NOTHING	95	8/3	888.6	11.3	1.4	T	"MOSQUITO DEN CAMP" AROUND STYK
78	07/17	787	13.5	1.0	T	MIDDLE VIDETTE MEADOW CAMP	96	8/4	-	-	T	"CAMP COZY CAMP" I'M FEELING SHIMMY, DAW!	
79	07/18	788.5			H	INDEPENDENCE INN W/ CHAMONIX, ALL OR NOTHING	97	8/5	906.7		0.5	TA	"CHAMONIX CONDOS" NIKEL MALLORY & SARAH SHEPARD
80	07/19	788.5			T	"OUTBREAK CAMP" 99 WEST JAY STREET W/ STYK & ALL OR NOTHING	98	8/6	906.7		-	TA	"QUICKSAND IN THE HOUR GLASS" SINK WITH NIKEL & SARAH IN MARISSA
81	07/20	788.5			H	INDEPENDENCE INN W/ CHAMONIX, ALL OR NOTHING	99	8/7	923.6	15.8	0.3	T	"1000 ISLAND LAKE VIEW" SOLD STARTED @ 908.3
82	07/21	788.5			H	"STINKY HIKER PRISON" INDEPENDENCE INN W/ CHAMONIX & ALL OR NOTHING	100	8/8	936.1	12.5	-	T	"VOGELSBANG JUNCTION CAMP"
83	07/22	788.5	2.0	2.0	T	"FLOWER LAKE CAMP" W/ CHAMONIX, ALL OR NOTHING	101	8/9	942.5	7.4	1.0	T	"BACKPACKER'S CAMPGROUND" SOLD INVOLVING MARISSA CAMPGROUND, SPID
84	07/23	7939.9	10.9	5.9	T	MIDDLE RIE LAKE CAMP (A.K.A. "MOSQUITO CAMP") W/ CHAMONIX, ALL OR NOTHING	102	8/10	948.4	6.9	1.0	T	"GUEN AWLIN CAMPGROUND" STRAIGHT
85	07/24	799.9	6.0	-	T	"BRIDGE TO BOO CAMP" W/ CHAMONIX, WOOD CREEK CAMPGROUND WITH A WILL RF=RAIN FLY T=TENT H=HIVING/INTEL TA=TRAIL ANGEL CG=COBWOY CAMP	103	8/11	961.4	14.5	0.3	T	"CAMP FROlicking DOE" MATTERHORN CAMP

I start all of my journals in the back of the book. Using the straight edge of a playing card, I graph out a mileage spreadsheet. Columns include the day of my hike, the date, the mile of the PCT I ended each day, the number of miles I hiked that day, the number of "plus miles," or miles off trail, what sort of accommodation I used (T=Tent, RF=Rain Fly, TA = Trail Angel) and my location at the end of the day. Following a long tradition in exploration, I would name each campsite, usually referencing a feeling or experience that occurred during the day or at the campsite. For instance, after sleeping near a pasture of cows, their lowing echoing off of the trees, I named the location "Camp Echoing Cow."

NIGHT UNDER OAKS NEAR INDEPENDENCE - B. BEAUTIFUL CAMPGROUND BOULDER OAK CAMPGROUND.  
 DINNER: HOT GRANITATION BREAKFAST (2)  
 BED AT 9:00-ISH  
**MAY 3 - BOULDER OAK CG - DAY 3 - MILE 26**  
 UP AT 6 AM. BREAKFAST - HOT GRANITATION SP (2), WATER FROM TRIP. BLENDAN LEFT AT 7:15 AM. I HOPE TO GET OUT OF OVER AT 7:30 AM. GITE & NEAR MT. LAGUNA 42  
 29.6 SWIMMING HOLE 9:35-9:30 AM W/ DENISE & AURELIE. COLD WATER! NOT GOING TO SWIM IN. JUST FEEL.  
 30 AM HIRNY TONG LIZARD, CAPSULE FOR PHOTOS.  
 AT KITCHEN CREEK FORD.  
 "MINER": "ARE YOU GOING THROUGH THE PET?"  
 "YEAH"  
 "WANT SOME WATER OR A SODA?"  
**TRAIL MAGIC!** RED DIAMOND RATTLESNAKE  
 31.3 RATTLESNAKE. ORANGE PITTS. SQUIGGL & LITTLE CRY & PATTY CROUCH UP TO US. HOT. NO SHADE. THANK GOD FOR THE WARD!  
 32 FRED CANYON IS 100% LUSH BUT BEAK UNDER OAKS/AWELI? AT 31.8, MET BUDHIST & HIS PARTNER WITH GIRLFRIEND. THEY ARE WRITING A FIELD GUIDE FOR THE PCT.  
 HE'S GOT PRESSURE POINTS STAMPED TO THE TOP OF HIS BUT. MISTOOK IT FOR A SNAKE JOURNAL.  
 ISHES OUT VERY SHORT STUBS. CUTE! ONE TO TAKE BEHIND  
 2:30 PM - BACK ON THE TRAIL AFTER A 2-HOUR NAP, SOME LUNCH (CAPTAIN CLUNCH & FISH NEWTONS) & FILTERING OF 8 LITERS OF WATER (THANKS TO THE SUBSTERS).  
 2 MILKSHAKES & A CAPSULE AND BOTTLE  
 COME THE 3L BOULDER, BT REMENT  
 300 FT PET

HOT, HOT, HOT. WAKE THIS MORNING, THERE'S VERY LITTLE BEEZEE TOUCH GOING. I'VE JUST BEEN WALKING AT TINKERBELL'S BOOTS FOR THE LAST HOUR.  
 3:45 PM - HAVE TO TAKE A REST. TINKERBELL & AURELIE DON'T SEE THAT I'VE STOPPED (OR DON'T CARE). THEY MOVE AT A SLOW & STEADY PACE FOR MILES AT A TIME. I'M GRATEFUL WHEN THEY STOP, BUT IT IS INTERRUPTING & SLOW.  
 I'M SITTING IN THE SHADE OF THE CHICKS. I HAD BEEN LISTENING TO MUSIC FOR THE LAST FEW HOURS SINCE WHICH, NOW I HEAR THE INCREDIBLE SOUND OF THOUSANDS OF BEES (IS THAT POWER LINES?) I RECALL A HIKER IN VENTURA COUNTY WITH ALYSE & REMI THAT SANDED THE SAME. WE COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT THE SOUND WAS & DIDN'T SEE MANY BEES.  
 PINES EVERYWHERE HERE. 6-10 CANNING IN NE AT A TIME. GOOD THINK THEY DON'T BITE.  
 NOT VERY LONG AGO, WE SPOTTED MT. LAGUNA OBSERVATORLY IN THE DISTANCE. I'LL BE THERE UNDERNEATH MORNING, HOPEFULLY.  
 4:11 P - MOVING NORTHWARD  
 B W B R20  
 4:50 CALIFORNIA MOUNTAIN KING SNAKE!  
 HAVEN'T SEEN A KING SNAKE IN 20 YEARS! A  
 CALIFORNIA SNAKE  
 REUPLOADED ELOC ON CAMERA + 1 HOUR  
 5:00 PM - IN TO CAMP. SKIPPED ONE AT 36 (NO WATER)  
 38 100 FT (WE RANNO FURTHER). SO TIRED! ONLY 12 MILES TODAY. FINISH BEHIND SCHEDULE. SIX OTHER CAMP THRU-HIKERS IN CAMP. NOT THE BEST CAMP. NO EVEN SUBJECTS. ~~STAY~~ SLEEPING ON A SATT. KITCHEN SINK  
 PIVINGO 2 LOTS OF WATER  
 WANTED MATCHED BOTH TUBS FOR DINNER - SO GOOD!  
 POSSIBLE TRAILNAME: SHIT UICK. SHIRT CRUSTED IN BODY SATT!  
 CREAR NOT FOR OFF. 150 YARDS UP TRAIL FOR ACCESS.  
 7:15 PM - IN BED.

Here are some of my thoughts and sketches from the third day on the trail. Early on, I played around with starting each journal entry with a mileage stamp, but I would soon move to a time stamp to make it easier. Some of my wildlife sketches were just simple doodles that I hope recorded enough identifying features to look up later.

AFTER GETTING MY FOOD, I TOOK THE FREE YOSEMITE SHIRT TO THE MARKET/POST OFFICE / GRILL. WHEN I GOT OUT OF THE SHIRT, LETS MAKE SOME "CANDOR!" IT WAS KITCHEN SINK & A BEARLESS MAMMOTA! AND ORBIT, ZOO & CRUISE THE WIDE TRAIL AS NEW! ITS A PCT REUNION!

I KEEN MAMMOTA & KITCHEN SINK WERE NOT FAR AHEAD OF ME. I KEPT SEEING MAMMOTA'S HEADS DOWN ON THE TRAIL AND THEY WERE FRESH. SINK & MAMMOTA HAVE BEEN JUMPING AROUND. THEY WANT TO RUN TO GO TO REST TO EXCHANGE GEAR. THEY'RE STILL CRAZE & RESPONDED MAMMOTA THAT HE STILL OWES ME \$20.

HE SAID HE GOT \$10 FOR WORKING ON THE BOA CAMP IN KENNEDY MOUNTAINS & I HAD TO PAY JUST 10 MIN EARLIER. HE SAID HE SPENT MY \$20 AGAIN DURING THE MONTH THAT HAD PASSED. ONE DAY I WROTE HE CAN BUY ONE BACK. HE NEGRO THAT MONEY.

ORBIT & ZOO WERE NO LONGER FIXING THE PCT. AS IF ROCK BISHOP PAS OUT & HAVE BEEN ROCK CLIMBING IN THE AREA. I THEN JUST BEGAN WALKING MAKING A A MAMMOTA SWIMMING.

"THE POST OFFICE DIDNT HAVE ANY PHOTOS FOR ME. SANDY'S PARKER DID NOT ARRIVE. I HAD FIGURED THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN SO I ATKSD HIM TO RESOLVE IT UP TO TOMORROW WHEN IT COME IN. WHEN EVER THAT NIGHT IS. HE SAID THAT A "2ND DAY DELIVERY" WENTY TAKES THREE TO REACH HERE!

GRILL - LINE OUT THE DOOR & WAITED IN IT FOR A LARGE SODA AND A BEE COFFEE. ALL THE MAMMOTA WERE IN EXPENSIVE NO SINKS AS THE PCT REMOVED SINKS. CUTS OF BREAD - BISHOP'S

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I made an effort to get postmarks whenever possible. At the tiny post office in Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park, the postal clerk was nice enough to give me an assortment of postmarks, including one made only to be used on June 5, 2010, commemorating National Trails Day.

WEATHER IS GOOD TODAY. CLOUD THROUGHOUT THE DAY BUT NO THUNDER. APPARENTLY, DRAKESBAD WAS HIT HARD BY RAIN & THAT THE DAY I WAS IN CHESTER.

SAW A NEW BUTTERFLY THINKING WERE DRAGSIBAD. AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS A MOURNING COAT, IT WAS A DARK BROWN - BUT THE EDGES OF ITS WINGS HAD WHITE SPOTS - SO MANY & SO CLOSE TOGETHER, IT LOOKED LIKE LACE.

6:55PM - I'M STAYING HERE FOR DINNER. MIGHT HAVE A BEER, TOO - HAVE A GOOD SELECTION OF GERMAN IMPORTS.

A SECTION HIKER ARRIVED: "NO WHERE MAN"

"TENACIOUS TAPE" - M-NETT

8:11PM - ENJOYABLE DINNER W/ MAMMOTA MAN, TRUSKY & VEGGIE LASHANE. PUSHER BEER - PEACH COBBLER MAMMOTA. (\$11.00)

Ready to hit the trail.

10:03PM - IN TENT. CAN'T BELIEVE THAT IT'S 10 PM. DRANK WAY TOO MUCH COFFEE AT DRAKESBAD. 4 CUPS, I THINK. BUT I WAS WIDE AWAKE FOR THE HIKE HERE, WHICH IS WHAT I HOPED. DRIOUSNESS LEADS TO ACCIDENTS.

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE A LOT EARLIER BUT I TOOK A WRONG TURN AND ENDED UP WALKING OVER A HALF MILE DOWN A WRONG TRAIL! IF I DIDNT STOP TO CHECK MY GPS, I MIGHT STILL BE THINKING DOWN THAT TRAIL! I DIDNT GET BACK ON THE PCT UNTIL 9:40PM.

LOTS OF MILLIPEDES ON THE TRAIL. I COUNTED OVER 30. TRIED TO GET A PHOTO WITH 4-5 IN MY HAND BUT THEY HATE TO BE HANDLED AND THEY DEFINITELY HATE TOUCHING OTHER MILLIPEDES. THEY FREQUENTLY CRAWLED DEEPLY UNDER TO GET AWAY (WHICH I LET THEM DO). ONE EVEN SECRETED TOXIN IN MY SKIN (A TYPE OF CANNIBAL) I WASHED IT OFF BY NW.

GOLDEN  
SMALL BROWN #104  
TREE FROG FROM COMPOSITE 09/14

\* NAME IDEA FOR WIFE TONIGHT'S CAMP: CAMP BUDDING BEGS SINCE I AM SO HIGH AT DRAKESBAD.  
\* THERE'S NO WHY MY SPOT IS GOING THROUGH TONIGHT - TOO MUCH INTERFERENCE BY THE TREE CANOPY & MAYBE EVEN THE CLOUD COVER. I W HAVE TO SEND ONE OUT IN THE MORNING FROM A SPOT NEARBY.

11:11pm - IT'S BEAMING COOL AND DRIVING TONIGHT. GOT OUT OF MY SLEEPING BAG TO PUT ON RAIN PJs. HOPEFULLY THAT WILL WARM THINGS UP IN HERE.

\* MIGHT HAVE TO DO SOME MOTOR WHEEL TOMORROW.  
 OLD STATION REST OFFICE MIGHT BE CLOSED ON WEEKENDS. CAN I GET SOMEWHERE TO CHG THEM BEFORE THEY APPROX AT 4:30 PM TOMORROW?

1377.6  
-1356.6  
21 MILES ... BY 4:50 PM!!  
NO WAY!

sign ↑ PCT ↑↑↑↑↑ PCT ↑↑↑↑↑  
 WINDY WAY ↑ PCT ↑↑↑↑↑ PCT ↑↑↑↑↑  
 RIDGELINE  
 OFFICE/ DINING BUILDING  
 DRAKESBAD  
 MEADOW  
 GRVEL ROAD  
 HOT SPRINGS CREEK  
 PCT ↑↑↑↑↑ PCT ↑↑↑↑↑ PCT ↑↑↑↑↑

I FOUND THE SHORCUT BACK TO THE PCT WITH HELP FROM THE STAFF: "TAKE THE TRAIL ON THE RIGHT OF THE TRAIL JUNCTION WINDS YOU'LL MEGO TO GO RIGHT OR LEFT. GO RIGHT. FOLLOW THE TRAIL ALONG THE TOP OF THE RIDGE UNTIL YOU HIT ANOTHER TRAIL. THAT IS THE PCT. TO HEAD NORTH OF THE PCT, GO LEFT."

I GOT ON THE WRONG TRAIL BECAUSE THERE'S A SWAMP TRAIL SPURT NEAR THE TOP OF THE RIDGE. I TOOK A RIGHT, THEN A MOMENT LATER, WHEN I HIT ANOTHER TRACK (DRINKING THAT THIS WAS THE PCT), I TOOK A LEFT. A GOOD BEAUMOTA/TIP WHICH WAS HIT THE PCT, THERE WILL BE A TRAIL JUNCTION SIGN. IF THE TRAIL IMMEDIATELY CLIMBS & DOWN TO CLIMB, YOU ARE NOT ON THE PCT. AT THE JUNCTION ON THE RIDGE, THE PCT IS FLAT FOR A FEW MINUTES BEFORE IT CLIMBS A BIT.

RED BODY  
GREEN  
YELLOW  
RED WINGED DRAGONFLY

Trail journaling promotes learning and a gained appreciation of your surroundings. Writing forces you to look around and try to explain what you see. If I'm inspired, I'll stop and sit down to sketch a flower, tree, or a view "to make its acquaintance and try to hear what it had to tell me," as John Muir put it. It is the accumulation of these small moments that ended up defining my PCT journey.

THANKS TO ONE OF THE OCCUPANTS WHO BO STAYED OUT UP THE MOUNTAIN. THEY'RE OFF TO BURNING MOUNTAIN. THANKS TO THEM FROM THE BAY AREA. SANDY HAD TO GO TO THE FESTIVAL NEAR ITS END. THEY GOT A 3-HOUR DRIVE STRIKE. THEIR VAN IS LOANED - BAK SAYS ARE FLAT - BECAUSE THEY'RE BUILDING AN ART PIECE THERE & FEELING 40 MILES A HOURS TO MOUNTAIN.

DECIDED TO HAVE LAST NIGHT'S CAMP SITE "CAMP TRUCKS LOVE TO REMEMBER THE LOVE & SUPPORT. I GOT FROM THE LOCALS OVER, THE WAITRESS (NOW A FACEBOOK FRIEND), THE OTHER AT ROUND TABLE PIZZA WHO SAVED ME MONEY BY MENTIONING THE BUFFET THE TWO PEOPLE AT SHERWOODS WHO OFFERED ME RIDES BACK TO THE TRAIL & ANNA BRAUN WHO DID GIVE ME RIDES TO THEM FROM THE TRAIL.

ADDED SOAP MIX TO TOP RUMEN. WAY TOO SALTY. MAYBE I'LL TRY IT WITH MORE WATER NEXT TIME. I GOT UP WITHOUT ENOUGH SOAP AT A PASTA RATHER THAN A SOAP - WHICH ISN'T BRO. BUT IF I GOT MORE WATER, IT WOULD BE SO SALTY ME THINKS.

LISTENING TO MUSIC. COLIN HAY. I ONLY HAVE ONE OF HIS SONGS - "I JUST DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET OVER YOU" BUT I REALLY WANT TO SEE HIM IN CONCERT. HIS GUITAR PLAYING & HIS COUNTRY VOICE IS CALMING TO MY SOUL.

11:20 AM - RAINY TO GET BACK ON TRAIL. STOWACH: FULL. GAVE A 24 HOUR OF TRASH TO SOME DRY ROCK CHANGERS.

11:42 AM - WOW. I WAS OFF THE PCT BY MORE THAN 1/4 MILE! BACK AT THE JUNCTION AND I CAN SEE MY COLOR.

WASH I CAME THROUGH HERE THIS MORNING. I ONLY CAN SEE THE SUN TO THE LEFT. I DIDN'T EVEN THINK TWICE ABOUT IT. I'M NOT WET - I'M GLAD TO HAVE FOUND A TOILET & CLEAN WATER - BUT IT IS A LITTLE FRUSTRATING. I'M NOT OUT TO DO 14.5 MILES STRIKE TODAY. THAT CUTS OFF MY BREAK TIME, FOR SURE. :-(


SING FOR TIMELAPSE: "KOLNIDUR" BY JONST

11:59 AM - AT MILE 1159.0, STRANGE COINCIDENCE - LIKE WHEN I REACHED MILE 1000.1 AT 1:00:01. BONNER SUMMIT. (PCT) TWO TUNNELS UNDER LINES OF HIGHWAY, SIMILAR TO THOSE IN AGUA DULCE.

1:53 PM - AT CASTLE PASS, ELEVATION 7680 (11618) MICE ROSEZE UP HERE TO CHELL THE LEFT OF THE MOUNTAIN.

2:24 PM - NOTICED A THICK METAL PIPE - 1 1/2 IN CIRCUMFERENCE - STICKING OUT OF ROUND VALLEY MEADOW - AS I WAS CROSSING A STREAM. "I MUST BE NEAR THE PETER GRUBB HUT," I THOUGHT. INDEED, I HAD JUST PASSED IT, AFTER STUDYING MY MAP. I TURNED AROUND AND HEADED BACK UP THE TRAIL BUT ONLY 150 YARDS OR SO.

THE PETER GRUBB HUT



THIS INT LOOKED EVEN MORE AWESOME THAN THE BENSON HUT! I TOOK THE 20 FOOT LADDER UP TO THE SECOND FLOOR DOOR. THIS MUST BE THE MAIN ENTRANCE DURING THE WINTER MONTHS, WHEN THE SNOW LEVEL COVERS THE FIRST FLOOR. THE HUT HAS THREE ROOMS - THE ATTIC (WHERE I ENTERED), A LARGE 40' x 20' FLOOR MAIN ROOM, WITH A STOVE, A WOOD PICNIC TABLE, & A KITCHENETTE. WHITE-WASHED WALLS ON ALL SIDES. THE THIRD ROOM IS THE COolest: A STOVE, A TABLE & FIVE BENCHES ON EITHER WALL, EACH CARVED OUT OF A SINGLE LOG!

THIS MUST BE A VERY COZY PLACE TO SPEND THE NIGHT DURING THE WINTER, WITH OLD FRIENDS AND NEW. -OR- I MUST CONTINUE. I HAVE 11 MILES TO HIKE AND IT'S GETTING LATE!

IT LOOKS LIKE THERE ARE FOUR HUTS IN THE AREA ALONG THE PCT, CALLED THE "SICARA CUBA HUT", PETER GRUBB HUT, BRANCO HUT, LUDLOW HUT AND BENSON HUT. ALL ALONG THE SIBILLA SIL TRAIL, (WHICH IS THE PCT IN THE SUMMER).

5:00 PM - BREAK AT THE FOOT BRIDGE (?) SPANNING THE 10-15 FOOT WIDE NORTH CREEK (1160:25). FOOD BREAK: HAZELNUT BUTTER ON TORTILLA & MY FAVORITE TRAIL DRINK AS OF LATE, CASHWAS W/HT SUNDLE CLASSIC ORANGE WITH A GRAPE FLAVORED MOUNTAIN TABLET.

MET A LOCAL HIKING CLUB TODAY. ABOUT 10-12 HIKERS, MORE A DAY WALKER THAN SO. THEY SEEMED TO HAVE A PARTIAL FOR THE OUTDOORS & STUDIED FLOWERS INTENTLY. I SHOWED MY JOURNAL.

During my hikes, I don't care if the pages of my journal become dirty with grime - and they sometimes do. As long as the ink doesn't smear into an illegible mess, I don't care if the book gets a little wet, either. If I come home with a clean book, it wouldn't represent my journey!


HAD TROUBLE SLEEPING LAST NIGHT. TOSSED & TURNED. FINALLY SLEPT WELL IN MORNING AFTER SUN RISE. HEARD A FEMALE VOICE DOWN BY THE WATER CACHE. GOT UP TO MEET MARLY HARBEL!

JULY 3RD-4TH - LAKEVIEW MOTEL

ENJOYED TWO COMFORTABLE DAYS IN TOWN, NEAR LAKE ISABELLA. THE FIRST NIGHT WAS AN UNEXPECTED GIFT FROM MOM & DAD, WHO WERE ON THEIR WAY TO JOIN ME, BUT NOT UNTIL LATE IN THE MORNING OF JULY 4TH. MOTEL WAS SMALL BUT WELL KEPT. DANNERS BOB & LYNN WERE EXTREMELY KIND, DRIVING ME INTO TOWN FOR DINNER & A STAKE, WHICH THEY PUMPED UP WITH MOM & DAD ARRIVED. THEY STAYED IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR.

ALTHOUGH THE ROOM WAS MORE COMFORTABLE THAN ANYTHING ON THE TRAIL, I DID NOT SLEEP WELL. DIDN'T FIGURE OUT HOW TO TURN ON FULL EXTENT OF A/C UNTIL 07:14. BEU EYES. WAKE UP AT 4:30 AM ON 07:14 AND WATCHED THE CLOSING CERE OF BENJAMIN BUTTAN ON IPHONE.

JULY 5TH - "THE DEVIL'S SADDLE" (MILE #666)



I ENDED ONE OF THE MOST AMAZING DAYS ON THE TREK AT MILE #666.5. NAMING THIS CAMP SITE WAS EASY. I WAS ABLE TO MAKE A LOT OF MILES TODAY THROUGH SOME STUNNING WEATHER. THE SUNSET WAS SPECTACULAR: PURPLES, BLUES, PINKS... I SAT DOWN TO JUST WATCH IT (AND PHOTOGRAPH IT). HIKED THE FINAL COUPLE OF MILES UPHILL TO THE SADDLE AT DUSK. ARRIVED AT 9:38 PM. REALIZED AFTER SETTING UP CAMP THAT I LOST MY SPOT! WASTED LEFT IT IN LAKE ISABELLA. PUT RAINFALL ON TENT NEAR WATCHING STARS DISAPPEAR. ATE A HANDFUL OF BEEF JERKY FOR DINNER.

IN THE MORNING, BEN COVERED TENT. LAID IT OUT TO AIR DRY IT.

JULY 6TH - FOX MILL SPRING

ANOTHER LONG DAY OF HIKING W/ MOMENTS OF RAIN. ARRIVED INTO CAMP AT 9:40 PM. IN TENT BY 10 PM. HUNG FOOD BAG & BAG OF WET CLOTHES IN TREE. NOT FOR BEARS OR DEER BUT TO PROTECT FROM RODENTS. RUBS OF A BUILDING HERE. MANY ARTIFACTS. WAKE UP TO SOUND OF THUMP BIRD OTTLES. LAID OUT DAMP CLOTHES TO DRY. STILL A BIT WET WHEN I PUT THEM ON.

JULY 7TH-8TH - KENNEDY MEADOWS

I ARRIVED INTO KENNEDY MEADOWS AT NIGHT. HIKERS IN "TOWN" ARE WATCHING "TRAFIC THUNDER" ON AN OUTDOOR PROJECTION. MANY FRIENDS HERE! SUPERCLAW, ALL OR NOTHING, DETOUR, KITCHEN SINK, MAMMALIA & MNT HOD HOD. I SET UP MY TENT (AFTER WATCHING LAST HALF HOUR OF FILM) OVER AT AN OLD ABANDONED OUTDOOR THEATER NEAR THE MARKET. I CAMP THERE FOR TWO DAYS.

AT 10 AM, I MEET CHAINSAW

JULY 9TH - "CRAG CREEK CAMP"

I ENTER THE SIERRAS WITH ALL OR NOTHING (LALITA MARVIN), DETOUR (RYAN), & CHAINSAW (JOSHUA COOPER). AFTERNOON SLEPT AT THE KM CAMPGROUND. WE HIKED FOR A FEW HOURS AT OUR OWN PACE. AT ABOUT 7:05, I FOUND HIKERS BUSHWACKER & TRIBE DOTS CAMPING, IN A CLEARING NEAR CAG CREEK. DETOUR HAD ARRIVED NOT LONG BEFORE AND HAD SET UP CAMP. WE HOPED TO HIKE FURTHER TODAY BUT THIS WAS TOO GOOD OF A SPOT WITH NICE COMPANY. WHEN ALL OR NOTHING ARRIVED, I CONVINCED HER TO CAMP HERE AS WELL. SHE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT CHAINSAW, WHO DIDN'T STOP AT THIS SITE.

ME: "WHERE'S CHAINSAW FROM?"

LITA: "TRUCKEE."


ME: "WELL, HE CAME ALL THE WAY HERE FROM TRUCKEE BY HIMSELF TO HIKE THE PCT, HE CAN COME DIE BY HIMSELF." (SOKING)

CHAINSAW WOULD END UP TAKING MOUNTAIN AND JOINING US.

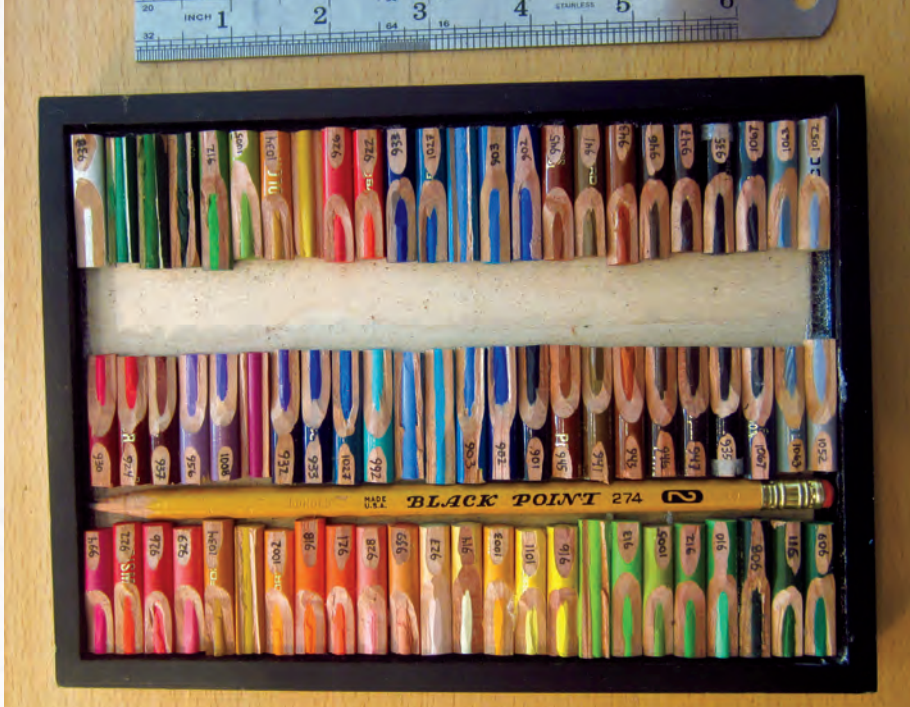
BEAUTIFUL STARRY NIGHT - SO HAPPY TO BE HERE IN THE SIERRAS.

IN MORNING, I WON THE RACE TO PACK. RAN A VICTORY LAP BEHIND LITA. DETOUR PLAYED SONGS ON HIS IPOD THROUGH CHAINSAW'S BATTERY-OPERATED SPEAKERS.

JULY 10TH - "THE GRANITE THRONE"



I have spent time after my PCT journey filling in the blanks and adding more details. I find it crucial to review and recollect a journey after arriving home. Discovering what I've learned from a long journey on the PCT requires time for reflection. I've spent hours at a coffee shop reading my journals and writing more details in an appendix, which is a separate journal from my "on trail" journals.



Don't be afraid to experiment with different ways of keeping a journal, even within one book. Take along a small paint set or colored pencils. I prefer colored pencils, but carrying around a set of 50+ pencils can be cumbersome, taking up a lot of space in my backpack. They're also a pain to keep organized while outdoors. I thought a lot about how to make a watercolor pencil set for the field. Rather than switch to a small watercolor palette setup, which would be a lot lighter, I wanted to modify my pencils in a way that works best for my style of painting. I decided to make my own ultra-light watercolor pencil palette.

I find that using watercolor pencils rather than watercolor pans allows me more control over the amount of color I add to my journals. I also love the simplicity and minimalistic aspect of applying color using just a drop or two of water from a water brush mixed into the tip of a watercolor pencil. Before I implemented this palette, I would rarely apply a watercolor pencil directly to paper, but rather dab a water pen onto the pencil, then onto the page. This palette made it easier to do this. 🍃

I find that using watercolor pencils rather than watercolor pans allows me more control



The author caught in a non-journaling moment.