



Asian Outdoors Newsletter Summer 2010

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Dear AO members,

Oh what a summer we have had for those of us who participated! It was filled with fun and exciting activities and events. With all the articles I received, I could not wait to share them with you.

Our last summer activity was the nine hour drive to Maine's Acadia National Park. What a way to cap off the summer (read about our trip in this article)!

I enjoy AO activities by themselves, but it's the people who make the difference. I want to share an email excerpt with you from a participant regarding one of our activities. He notes, "I firmly believe that we touch each other's life, a little bit, for the better... As in life, it's not where you go or what you have; it's the person that you are with that counts much more." Roger that.

Karen Chan, Co-Editor
Kimberly Chan, Co-Editor

AO Member Profile: This month, we feature Benjamin Chau. Here is his story.

Benjamin Chau

I've been an AO member for over 15 years. My introduction to AO was through a joint AO/NAAAP Block Island event, for which I got a carpool with Bell Yee. NAAAP was the Asian professionals networking organization that I was an active member of – writing, producing, directing, and acting in a series of annual shows for them.

My passion for many years had been acting and writing, which I currently still do – writing short pieces to be performed with Pan Asian Repertory. Through my acting training, I learned that, theoretically, an actor can play any role – from the spectrum of Nelson Mandela to Hitler. Reason being that each of us human beings has the capacity to be selflessly caring or sadistically cruel. Think to yourself of instances in your own life when you've been each – perhaps not to the extremes, but you get my point. Ever since, I have found this thesis to be a valuable prism through which to understand what happens all around and within ourselves. It's easy to analyze



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Benjamin Chau continue...

situations by looking at it through the human element.

There were a number of things I appreciated right off the bat about AO. AO acts as a facilitator of events – charging only for necessary fees for the given activity, whereas other groups pad their fees in order to support their pet projects. Also, at an AO gathering, I didn't feel the pressure to sell my resume in order to impress others. I appreciated the sense of camaraderie and community I felt from the club and its members.

In my years with AO, I've appreciated the opportunities to gain invaluable experience in organizing events as well as my tenure as editor of the newsletter. Our current editor, Karen, may not say it, but I will – it is not an easy job, you have to deal with some real characters.

Back in the day (15 years ago), when the internet and email were just starting out and very few people had cellphones, NAAAP was the major club for Asian Americans wanting to network in the New York area. AO was just starting to get on some of our radars. Many of the new members were drawn to the appeal of the nature-oriented activities, which served as a balance to the same-old city-type events that "everyone else was throwing". Within a short five-year period, AO's popularity grew exponentially – volunteers, activities, and attendees hit a critical mass, AO was the "It" club. One year, the annual holiday dinner party (that I organized with Anne Lim) had over 180 attendees and the annual picnic had over 250 attendees.

But, as with all successes, there were conflicts and growing pains. Many of the "pre-popular era" organizers resented the Johnny-come-latelys, complained about the increased work of organizing additional activities to meet the new demand, and pined for the simpler times. As you may have guessed, some conflicts were not resolved positively. In a relatively short period of time, AO lost the life-blood of its popularity – lots of organizers/volunteers. What took over a decade to slowly but persistently build was drained "overnight".

Nowadays, AO no longer has to "Xerox" copies of the newsletter and collate those pages



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Benjamin Chau continue...

with pages of flyers of upcoming events, staple, label, and lick-stamp each bundle. We now have email, and the internet – Facebook, Evite, Meetup.com, twitter, smartphones, I-Pads, and more technology to come. With Meetup.com, anyone can start up a group in minutes for, say, people who like spicy food and bowling, or whatever. Ultimately, the “success” of any group, including AO, lies in its ability to connect with its volunteers (life-blood) as well as its members.

North County Trailway Bike Trip

Artie Pilson

It was a perfect day for biking, comfortable and overcast without the threat of rain. This event in Northern Westchester almost did not take place because of a Brooklyn marathon. That’s right, Brooklyn! You see, only 2 people registered for this outing and both were carpooling from Brooklyn.

An hour after she set out to pick up Choya, Jean returned home because of severe traffic caused by closed streets and diverted traffic in the borough of Brooklyn. However, after speaking with Choya by phone, Jean got back behind the wheel of her van and eventually made her way up to Westchester, bikes and Choya in tow.

So, rather than breakfast to begin our outing, lunch was in order. After lunch, we geared up for what turned out to be a 20 mile ride along a paved, tree-covered trail that took us through scenic territory. We stopped for a moment to enjoy the view from a wooden plank pedestrian expansion bridge overlooking the beautiful Croton Reservoir. En route back to our starting point, we rested at a picnic table for snacks and conversation.

All in all, this small group of three had a marvelous time while enjoying good outdoor fun and exercise. We made tentative plans to bike again in the fall along the Delaware River on the NJ-PA border.

Whitewater Rafting at Lehigh Gorge

Will L. Fang



6 hours of water journey, 10 exceptional paddlers, 100+ boulder obstacles, one unforgettable 2010 summer adventure equal Asian Outdoors invading White Water Challenger rafting in Lehigh River PA. Excitement has officially taken shape. An enduring passion to get to the finish line that is what drives these energetic and unwavering paddlers. To say the least, this is fun screaming, adrenaline rushing, and a mind stretching experience.

As a first time white water rafter, this is not a physical strength test, but a reflection of life journey. Like life, the raft was not in control of the paddlers, it was maneuvered by rough currents and tides which caused it to collide with waves and rocks. In the worst case, large rocks knocked the paddlers into the water. With a life jacket, the paddlers stayed afloat and swam into other rafts to continue the journey. Like rafting, life is full of shocks and surprises, often times we are in predicament and pain. In both cases of life and rafting, the key is not to panic and fear, leverage any backup and contingency plan, look forward and move on. It is through struggles and challenges; people become strong and achieve triumph. In short, prevailing failures is what made all the difference.

FINGER LAKES CAMPING

Jason Feng



I would like to thank Asian outdoors for organizing such an enjoyable and fun camping trip. Everything was thoroughly planned out and that surely made things a lot easier for everyone.

Camping for me began with meeting Lily and Roger who are very down to earth and personable as well. Due to their personalities, it was surely quite an enjoyable experience to share and learn from.

What made this trip such a success was the fact that everyone pitched in and help with all the tasks that came with camping. From setting up with the tents to cooking to cleaning, everyone did their part. It also helps that members are easy going as well as funny. Thus, these points gave me the sense of belonging and that is what values the most.

Thank you, Don, Mary, Bell, Lily, Roger, Karen, Ken, Kimmie and Mike for the wonderful memories.

Chincoteague Island, Va. 8/7-8/14

Grace Xie

The trip to Chincoteague Island, VA was really, really fun. I think everyone on the trip had a great time going to the beach, fishing, clamming, and crabbing. But, it was especially fun for me because I caught a huge fish. Let's go to Chincoteague Island again next year! Better pack your bug spray!





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Fun Times at Chincoteague Island

Kimberly Chan

I can feel the tug. Slowly, slowly, I don't want to scare it. Inch-long shortenings aren't subtle enough; my prey requires a patient hand willing to reel in the line in *millimeters* per second.

Then, suddenly, the line goes slack, and a groan rises on the banks of the little salt stream. It's gone.

.....

We're not looking for fish; that's far too mundane. We're crabbing, only a half-mile off the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.



So, it turns out that crabs like chicken. While Dad proved to be a master in chicken-wing tying, mom found that her expertise lay in rope-knots. Me? I specialized in scaring crabs away, catching

tiny, useless fish in the too-big net, and staring at the gorgeous white egrets that similarly stared back. After two hours of work, we netted a grand total of... one crab. Impressive, right?

But in all seriousness, it was the *experience* of it. In addition to crabbing (a mild failure), we went clamming (an inspiring success story of 15 clams), and I tried my hand at fishing for the first time in ten years. (Considering that I've only got seventeen years to my name, that's mighty impressive.) In fact, I told everyone to call me The Fishing Queen, but then Roger was The Fishing King, and I had to change my mind about *that* particular title.



Really, the trip to Chincoteague was probably one of the best I've ever had. There was something for everyone in my family, including beaches for my mom, horses for me, and seafood for my dad. Seeing all of the ponies rekindled a love of equines in me, and, while my parents



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aren't too pleased with the renewed chorus of "Can I have a horsie, please please please?" it feels great to be so passionate about something again!

This year was a blast, and next year's going to be even better!



2010 ASIAN OUTDOORS CAMPING

Don Chen

This year the club scheduled three camping outings.

The first one was scheduled for June 4 and 5 in Lake Waramaug State Park in CT. The week before, Bell and I went to check out this place as we have never been there. The layout of the campsites look good, but we cancelled the outing the following week. That week calls for rain and strong wind. There was very little rain up there, but the wind caused nearby Hartford, CT to loss 250,000 homes without power. Had we been there, our tents would not stand a chance of being intact.

The second outing was to the Finger Lakes in New York on July 15 thru 17 at the usually camp of Robert H Treman State Park. The main attraction is the many waterfalls. Unlike in the previous years, this time the waterfalls were not as impressive due to a lack of rainfall. We still had a good time walking thru the waterfalls of Watkins Glen and some dip their feet in the pool caused by the waterfall at Taughannock Falls. This time we did something different. We decided to trek over 200 miles round trip westward to Letchworth State Park also known as the Grand Canyon of the East. Here we have 17 mile stretch of the Genesee River roars through the park's gorge with three major waterfalls and cliffs as high as 600 feet. Surprising, the waterfalls had a lot of water to pretty impressive. At the gorge, we saw a lot of turkey vultures flying around.

The last camping outing was to Wildwood State Park out in Long Island in Wading



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River. The most impressive item about this trip is that there were **NO mosquitoes** or any flying insects other than some yellow jacks. We met a family that has been coming to this park for five years in a row because of no mosquitoes. I try some surf fishing, but the water was too murky for the fish to find my bait and others went to the beach. We decided to take a trip out to Orient Point State Park which is the northern tip of Long Island. As we drove along 25A, we passed a number of farm stands with fresh vegetable and blackberry in season. At the park, we notice that they do rent kayaks to paddle in a large pond that is protected from wind and current and saw a number of kayakers. As we left from the campsites, some went to Tanger Outlet that is only 6 miles away. Next year, we are thinking of coming back to this one.

Acadia National Park, 9/16 – 9/19

Karen Chan

North Face jackets, 60% off! Now that I got your attention, this trip had it all – ocean, mountains, lakes, beaches and outlets. No, not water outlets but discount store outlets. The quiet Bar Harbor town offers a variety of shops and restaurants for those who prefer shopping. But the outlet at Freeport, Maine which anchors LLBean flagship store is a bargain hunter's paradise. During the time we were there, stores were slashing prices 50% off sale price plus an additional

10%. We were only limited by our pocketbook...



And yes, Acadia National Park was magnificent. Its natural beauty was breathtaking and ranger-lead activities were plentiful. We hiked a little, biked a little, ate some really good popovers at the Jordan Pond House, and took a lot of pictures. We watched the sunrise and the sunset on Cadillac Mountain and were in awe to know that during a certain season, it is the first ray of sunlight to hit the continental USA.

Trips are made memorable by its participants and this one definitely had a story to tell. But I promised Jenne I won't be sharing anything more with you!



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BAPTISM BY WATER

June Fu

I was born in a locale of an Asian metropolis with a homonym of river in its name, I grew up on the Great Lakes, and now I live on an exotic island – la isla Manhattan. With all that water around you would think that I would be a better swimmer than I actually am. This nonetheless has never deterred me from participating in activities of high drowning risk; I'm almost blindly driven to them (luckily, Bell Yee, who did drive, is not blind).

I learned of the occasion via a friend of a friend of a friend of a friend whom I have never met, as is typical of social networking in the 21st century, and without much thinking, replied "Yes!" to it. From a seat on a train going to that dubious region we Manhattanites call "upstate," I've often watched the kayakers along the Hudson and naïvely reacted, "that looks fun" completely without regard to consequences (which could get a swimmer like me into a bit of trouble now and then). ...I really had no idea what I was getting myself into.

Work blah blah that preoccupied New Yorkers are always getting entangled with wiped it from my thoughts until the night before. Then "oh, crap!" as I was leaving the blah blah place on Friday afternoon, "I don't know the first thing about kayaking." Then I performed what was perhaps my crowning glory feat of 21st century social networking – I Facebooked a Friend who IM'd me an hourlong personal training from Switzerland complete with visual aids courtesy of YouTube. As for modern technology, I felt pretty rocking, as for kayaking, what's the stage after "oh crap?" Sometimes it is better not to know anything. What I never revealed to my compatriots that day was that beforehand my stomach churned all night and my head spun glorious excuses to get out of it.

Lucky for fate, I woke up too early on a Saturday to think much of anything and automatoned myself to the meeting point. We talked and laughed the whole ride up, was there even time to be scared? - I learned Karen Chan and Roger Chu in one car were a deadly combination, their banter an inescapable force pushing a whole carful of people to laughter. As we arrived at Freeport harbour, the experienced gave all sorts of tips, the only one of which I remembered was that we stick together no matter what – and I think that's what I liked most about Asian Outdoors. No one got left behind, which meant me that first time around. They proved this immediately as they patiently waited for the rental place to locate a remedial kayak for me, and while Roger carefully guided Angie Yong, in the same boat as me figuratively, scared.



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BAPTISM BY WATER continue...

By the second water activity, I was gung-ho, white water rafting in Lehigh, PA, my naïve enthusiasm leading the way again. I had heard that white water rafting was possible somewhere on the east coast and this was my chance. I did have one prior experience, in Taiwan, where fabulous stories of death and broken limbs were all the rage – I had to try it! There were more of us on this second expedition, two boatsful. Karen, Roger, and Roger's cool wife Lily grabbed me up for their raft. And a group of even newer friends were on the other. The three-hour tour stretched into night – not uncomfortably so though, except for the soreness of our rear ends for the long time sitting. We definitely got our money's worth on that trip. As for the group, I felt pulled even closer as they clued me in on the historical gossip of AO (don't worry, I don't remember anything exceptionally bad said about anyone).

Fun? – heck yeah! I got to accomplish two activities I had been wanting to do. I discovered a mysterious upper arm strength for rowing I never knew I had. It was wonderful to get out of the city – with kayaking we looked at beautiful houses on the shores and chose the boats we aspired to own, in Lehigh we immersed ourselves into the even more beautiful wilderness and the wild waters were refreshing even when splashed by forces other than nature.

And I happened upon a great group of people, far cooler than I had expected – I met Karen's daughter on the second trip, how cool can a mom be whose teenage daughter still does things with her and how cool a daughter who has so much of her mom's positive energy and sweetness. And there's a kind of camaraderie in hanging out with fellow Asians that just immediately leads you to a level of comfort that's hard to explain, a group of Asians who like to do the things I like to do, and don't have hang ups about looks or age or level of skill. Not to mention that we're of the same colour, sporting similar sunburns; my legs achieved a shade best described as "neapolitan," a layered look similar to the ice cream.

What I got myself into was pretty good. I now have Roger, who regales me with daily emails of humour and inspiration (and whose colourful stories of water disasters were oddly reassuring for this beginner) and Yuming Chen who debunks them, Karen whose enthusiasm keeps me in the loop and her propensity for good conversation assures me that maybe someday my follies might become the fodder of AO gossip, too – I can only hope?!, and Bell's seamless organization pulling it all together. My first forays into AO were more than I hoped for, fun activities and great company, nothing less and so much more.