

THE BARB-ERIC HORDE INVADES APPALACHIA

ASP Trip to Logan-Man, West Virginia
July 17-25, 2010

SUNDAY, JULY 17

At 7 am the day began with a rendezvous at the church. The trip officially started with our prayer and the "before" picture in front of the cross. We began our 14-hour drive at 7:30, and after some technical difficulties and run-away vans we were on our way. We christened our van with a name. Kelley, with an ASP all-time best, named the vehicle "Barb-Eric," a name that uses our leaders names and has a bit of a barbaric edge that strikes fear into the hearts of the other groups.



It should be noted that our first official trip picture of Barbara in action included the Hand of God in the van window. It's good to know that God is with us--especially at 60 mph. It's also interesting to note that although Barbara wears a watch, the good Lord doesn't (look closely).

The weather for the first leg of our trip was spectacular. And hot. Fortunately, we only ventured outside during our three stops, so we were chillin' nicely in our packed vans.



We arrived at Wilson College in Chambersburg, PA about 5:40pm and went straight to dinner which was waiting for us. According to Barbara, the meal was heavy on carbs and fat--according to the

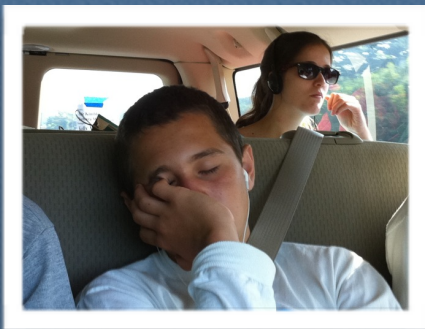
rest of us, we we were more than happy to consume oven roasted potatoes, fried chicken, green beans, salad, fried tofu?, and copious amounts of ice cream.

Following dinner we dropped our gear in our rather sweltering dorm rooms, desperately searched for fans, and then played an amazing game of whiffle ball in a nearby field (no injuries!). After showering the blackish soil from our ankles, we then had a short service filled with song, gratitudes, and bread and wine in which we "communicated each other." After Ben Sugg asked when he "would be aroused" the next morning, we figured it would be time to call it a day around 11pm.

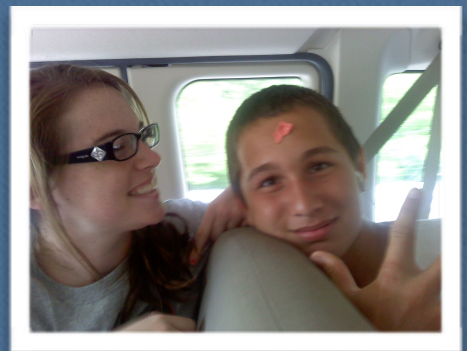
SUNDAY, JULY 18

Alarm clocks starting buzzing annoyingly at the borderline inhumane time of 5:30am, with the goal of a 6am departure. That was the goal, anyway. The reality was more like 6:20am, since Kelley and Taylor managed to sleep through all door poundings, alarums, and other methods of rousal.

Fortunately, despite the early wakening, everyone (except the faithful drivers and their trusty copilots) were able to snooze before our first stop 150 miles later. As we pulled into a Sheetz in Morgantown, West Virginia, the hardy group of Missioners suddenly awakened with cries of "Sheeeeeeeetz." Moments later, the Sheetz hit the fan as our descending horde of 33-strong



inundated the gas/convenience store like a plague of locusts. Made-to-order sandwiches and high fructose corn syrup beverages flew out of Sheetz and into our waiting stomachs within



a moment's time. Even crutch-toting Bret got whacked with his Sheetz Schmelt by an over-exuberant (and overwhelmed) cook, causing his buddy Matt Clopeck to mutter subtly, "Holy Scheetz!". Twenty-five frenetic minutes later, we departed, fully-fueled and ready to take on the rest of West Virginia.



We arrived at Man High School, the Home of the Hillbillies (I'm not making that up) around 3pm, after a lunch stop in Charleston, where we had French crepes at a Greek restaurant (I'm not making that up either). It was a muggy 91-degrees when we arrived at the high school, so we quickly moved our stuff into the air-conditioned classrooms and set up camp for the

week. It didn't take long to blow up the air mattresses, mark our territories, and then head to the gym for some hoops, 4-square, and frisbee.

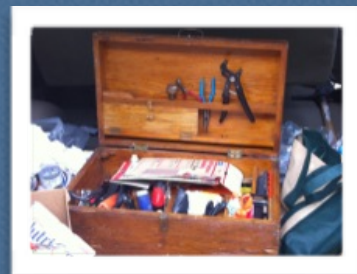


Two advance scouts visited our work sites on Sunday evening to scope out the homes and meet the families. Our team's scouts, Barbara and Greg, returned an hour later to let us know we had some serious mountains to move (or keep from moving) via railroad ties, rebar, and a lot of muscle. In other words, we had to build a retaining wall to keep a home safe from a collapsing mountainside. Sounds like a job for Barb-Eric!

We retired at 10:30 after a long day of travel and got ready to work for the following day.

MONDAY, JULY 19

Monday in ASP-land is known as Mosey Monday, since it takes everyone a while to acclimate to the morning



routine (7am wake-up, 7:15am devotionals, followed by breakfast, making lunch, doing chores, van-loading, and find the way to the work site). We reached our site at 9:30am (which is quite good for the first day), helped by the fact that it was only a few minutes away.



We shared our worksite with another St. Elizabeth's work team (the Crusaders, led by Ben Perry and Debbie Flagg) who initially worked under the house replacing beams and floor joists. Our team had the job of completing a retaining wall behind the house, which first meant re-working some shortcuts the previous team had made. It basically took us all day to correct their mistakes, but we started to turn the corner toward progress by day's end.

During the day, we had an opportunity to meet the family as well as their pets. When we first arrived, the father Jason



explained that one of their two kittens, Rascal, was a cross between a bobcat (shown on left) and a domestic cat.

Rascal is pictured on the right. Just as our brains were struggling to grasp that concept, Rascal proceeded to



leap 4 feet from the gas grill onto Eric's shoulder, travel halfway down his back, then up onto his head before it leaped off his shoulder onto the ground. After those acrobatics, we learned to respect the animals!

The 3-year old who lived at the cutie who became quite attached Eric snapped a few pictures of kitten, Marshall. But instead of across the screen to advance to to put his thumb through the say, it took a bit of cajoling to



house, Michael, was a real to my I-Phone when him and the other sliding his finger the next slide, he tried screen. So needless to separate him from the

I-Phone!

TUESDAY, JULY 20

We got off to a good start today with a visit to the local Pic Pac for some Gatorades and snacks. We arrived on site at 9:30 and chatted a bit with Jason who complimented us on being so industrious and cordial. He said the last group who was there (from South Carolina) was all business and made no time for chit-chat. He was especially impressed with how hard the "ladies" worked (Barbara, Debbie, Annika, Kelley, Sara, and Emily)!

We picked up where we left off on Monday and dragged



six more ties up from the pile in front of the house and began the building process. The highlight of the day--and the exhaustion of the day--was sledgehammering steel rebar into the railroad ties to hold them in place. This was very satisfying when completed, but utterly exhausting in getting there. Often, three of us needed to take turns pounding 1 sixteen-inch piece

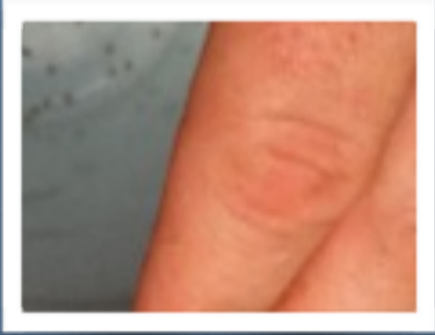
of rebar before we finally got it flush with the creosote-soaked oak.

We had a nice lunch on the porch of the grandparent's house, during which Michael entertained us, Jason told us how he broke his back when a 55-gallon drum rolled on him when unloading it from a truck, and his wife Stacy shared with us that she participated in local theatre. The Grandfather Bill also



stopped by and we broke bread via PB&Js and ham & cheese.

Kelley and Michael hit it off today. Jason told her that little Michael was trying to get her attention all Monday but she was working too hard to notice him. Michael showed Kelley all of his toys, trying to show off, and they spent lunch sitting next to each other. During lunch, Michael managed to hug Kelley numerous times, they are sure a cute couple!!



The afternoon was highlighted by Jason's discovery of a ridiculously large spider and hundreds of baby soon-to-be-ridiculously-large spiders. Jason was thrilled when Big Ben whipped out his blow torch to take care of those pesky critters. In fact, Jason disappeared into his house with the blow torch in hand, returning 10 minutes later with a huge grin, claiming that he "just fired up a few hundred spiders inside the

house." We took his word for it.... Jason then gave Ben the ultimate privilege of incinerating the Mother spider while we all gathered around and discovered what cooked Big Mother spider smells like.



It took a while to get refocused after that display, but we managed to rally and finish strong. An afternoon downpour was actually quite refreshing from the 90-degree heat, but it created dangerously slippery footing for the remainder of the day. Plus, it created some terrifically muddy clothes, gloves, ear lobes, and hair. . . We intentionally left a few minutes early to ensure we got home in time to take much needed showers!

WEDNESDAY, JULY

21

We got a later start on Wednesday because we



stopped by the local hardware store to pick up some drill bits. Since folks move at a different pace in Appalachia, it took about 15 minutes to get help finding the right bit and then chatting with the store owner about his trip to Boston during a hardware convention last year. Ironically (or amazingly), the highlight of the trip was his stop at the Episcopal Cathedral on the Boston Common. Go figure!



Jason greeted us first thing this morning with a touching sentiment about how grateful he was that we were helping restore his family's house. He was clearly emotional and his wife Stacy had to read the final few statements he'd written. We were all quite moved by his comments and they served as inspiration for us all.

We needed some insight from the ASP staffers on a wall issue, so we spent the morning hauling gravel up to the site to backfill the part of the wall we had completed, definitely the lowlight of the work so far. We breezed through "hug break" at 11:11am but had a nice lunch that got everyone fired up for the afternoon. By that time, we had our answer on the wall and started hauling beam, drilling holes, sawing ties, and pounding rebar. With



some supplemental help from José, James, and Annika from The Crusaders (and the new drill bits), we made terrific progress by day's end. We

definitely ended the work day better than we started, with the promise of great things tomorrow.

SOME OF OUR INTREPID ADULT LEADERS!



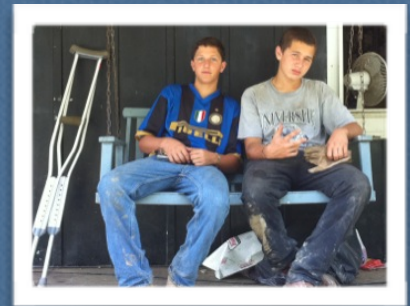
THURSDAY, JULY

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We started this morning with a terrific Devo from Kelley, Ryan, and Taylor about strengths and weaknesses from Paul's

Second Letter to the

Corinthians. Our Thursday chore was breakfast dishes clean-up which typically means getting a late start but since we had no materials to pick up, we were out at the Hedrick's house just after 9am. Although we had aspirations of greatness for the morning, we were quickly humbled by a dulled chainsaw (operator) and



a mound of stinky trash we were asked to use to backfill the wall. Some of the crew were dragging, Barbara among them, and when Kelley left us to help the Crusaders with some interior work, we were down a few folks. But once again, the afternoon saw a surge in productivity and we wrapped up at 3:30pm with the end in sight. Two more tiers of railroad ties to go!

When we left the Hedrick's house that afternoon, we had Jason, Stacy, and Michael with us to travel to Chief Logan State Park for the ASP picnic with all the volunteers and the families whose homes we were working on. The park has a large swimming pool, complete with a ridiculously fast water slide and 2 diving boards. No lifeguard staffed the slide, so it was pretty crazy. They

must not have many lawyers in West Virginia (they also don't have a seat belt or helmet law either) ... It's definitely a bit looser in The Mountain State!

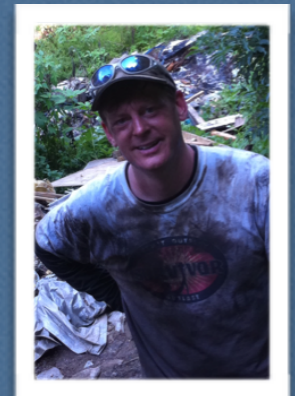
We then attended the cookout portion of the picnic where we had hamburgers, hot dogs, and sloppy joes. We stuffed our bellies, then played frisbee until dark. Kelley twisted her knee flying off the swing (twice), so hopefully she'll be ready for the final push tomorrow.

When we dropped the Hedricks off at the end of the day, it was clear they'd had a terrific day. And so did we! But, Man, were we tired!

FRIDAY, JULY 23

Last work day and the team was dragging but motivated. Sam was in the van early, having pounded out all the sandwiches, iced up the cooler, and filled the water bottles. He was en fuego.

We made a few stops on the way to the Hedricks, including one to get a new chainsaw blade. This paid off almost immediately, with our first chainsaw cut taking 60 seconds vs. 10 minutes (by the end of the day, it was up to 5 minutes). We quickly set to work since we had to put up the final two rows of railroad ties, but it was obvious that the Hedricks wanted to chat a bit since they were a wee wistful about our imminent departure.



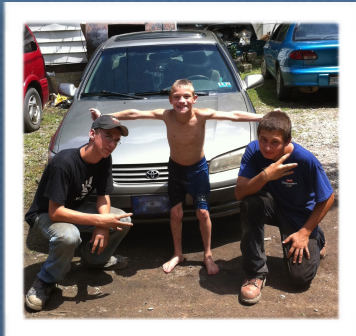
The goals for the day were to finish building the wall and to the extent possible backfill it with the debris from the large trash heap beside the house. By 11:11am (hug break), we hadn't made great progress primarily because we were all tired, and the 100-degree heat sapped our

energy as much as the physical labor. Kids took turns working inside with Ben and Debbie and working outside with Barbara and Eric. In some ways we were like the Red Sox DL list. With Kelley with her hurt knee from the night before, Bret on crutches because of a hip fracture he sustained the previous week playing soccer, Sam with blood sugar issues, and all of us sweating buckets, we were definitely challenged.

Barbara persisted in her task of filling 5-gallon buckets from the garbage dump to the amazement of the kids who continued to tell her how proud they were of her. She thinks they were simply grateful not to have that job. The dump was something of an archeological dig. It contained everything you would expect and some things that might surprise you--beat up cookpots, broken china and glassware, food wrappings, soda cans, plastic milk jugs and juice bottles, soiled diapers, old dry wall and particle board from the demolition, an old pair of shoes, and the like. What might surprise you included large spiders, one of which was a mother tarantula with a zillion babies on her back, or a salamander, or a black racer snake. The find that blew Barbara away was three small green plants growing underneath a tarp well below the surface that had been covered with dirt. How could three green



plants live buried under the trash where there was little or no light?



We hoisted a few more ties just before lunch with the help of John Newton and James Wagner, and that gave us some momentum heading into the afternoon.



Lunch was highlighted by a visit from Kenny, the 9-year old neighbor boy with the gravelly voice and greyhound-like physique. When he came over to visit, we offered him a sandwich and he asked if we should pray. As we were still processing that question, Kenny bowed his head and led us in a short,

but beautiful prayer. It was quite surprising and very heartfelt. That will stick with us for a long time.

We then walked over to Kenny's house and he showed us some dives into his inflatable pool, his brother's supposedly souped-up Toyota Camry, and his new tires. We took a few more pictures (Sammy was particularly fond of Kenny), and then headed back to work.

Thankfully, we had a bit more shade in the afternoon and made some terrific progress. After lunch Barbara and Emily Perry took a break from trash detail to cut lengths of rebar with a Sawzall. (The railroad ties are joined together with 16" of 1/2" rebar driven into one tie and then into the tie below it).

At

about 5 minutes before 5pm, we hoisted the last beam into place. Of course, as often happens on ASP, the beam was 5 inches too long. So Eric bowed his head, prayed for God's blessing, and then gave a shout out to the Chainsaw gods to get it started. After several tries, a few choice epithets, and some divine intervention, the saw started and he lopped off the offending piece. Kelley, Annika, and Greg all took turns driving in the rebar,



but we left the last inch or so for Jason to drive in (bad back and all). After a few misses (and some good-natured kidding from his stepdad-in-law), he triumphantly pounded in the final rebar and let out a "Whoop!" It was a great way to culminate all of our efforts!

During the day Stacy took cuttings from a different selection of Rose of Sharon bushes so that Barbara could root them and add them to her garden. (The homeowner whose house she worked on in 2008 did the same thing.) She put the cuttings in a #10 can with some muddy clay and set them aside in the shade until the end of the day so that they would not fry in the van.

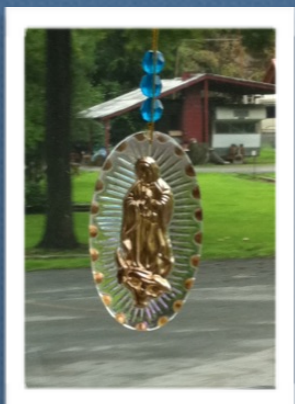


For the last hour or so, we packed up, took some pictures, and said our good-byes. Michael took Kelley off privately near the wall and he asked her to be his girlfriend. Kelley said "yes" and Michael gave Kelley a big wet one on her cheek. It was hard for Michael to

say goodbye to her. It was tough to leave, and Stacy was particularly down



about our departure. But we gave a bunch of hugs, shed a few tears, and then loaded our sweaty selves into our van to get back for some much-needed showers and dinner. With all the emotions of the good-byes Barbara walked away without the Rose of Sharon cuttings.



Evening Gathering was delayed because some vans were late arriving to the high school. The EG session featured 81 folks recounting their "God Moment." Eric mentioned his Chainsaw Experience, Barbara shared her amazing growing plant discovery (a reminder that God brings things to life in even the most apparently desolate places), Bret's was when he shuffled under Jason's car and got a lesson in front-end mechanics, Greg and Kelley's were when Jason gave his heartfelt thanks to us on Wednesday morning, Sam's was the revelation that Kenny was a cool kid who practiced reading the Bible and led us in that awesome Grace, and Emily ruminated silently to herself. We all sanctified our God Moments by dripping candle wax onto a 4-ft cross and then watched a short video montage of photos taken during the week.



But that wasn't all. Immediately after, six teams competed in a Dodgeball tourney, featuring Suggs-Life consisting of the two Suggs, Kelley, and Eric. After obtaining a bye in the first round, Suggs-Life ran the table and swept the next two games, beating Play to Win from Richmond, VA (who had decimated their previous opponents). Sam Sugg clinched the Championship game with a big catch and soon after hoisted the makeshift trophy up to the sky, screaming "We are the Champions of the World!" or something like that.....

We got to bed late (12:30am), fully exhausted from a long week.



SATURDAY, JULY 24

Barbara was up first at 5:40 to make coffee and drive back to the Hedrick's house to retrieve the Rose of Sharon cuttings. The family was all asleep.

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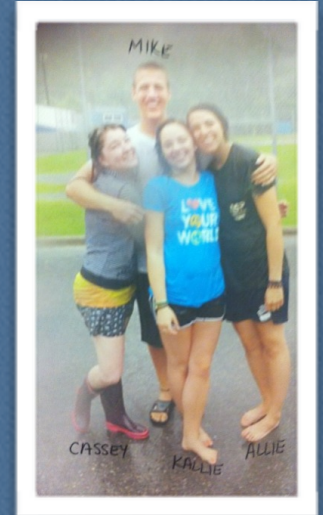
the dog started barking of course but he recognized her and then started whining with eagerness to be petted. No the family was awakened but did not get up.

She got her bushes-to-be and got back to the center at 6:30, just in time to hear all the alarms going off. By the time the others roused themselves, the Virginians were on their way out the door, so we had little interference in completing our morning chores. After packing up,

taking a few last-minute pictures, saying goodbye to the 4 staff members (Mike, Kallie, Cassey, and Allie), we were on the road by 8:30am.



We invaded a McDonalds for brunch and a Sheetz in Frostburg, MD for a late lunch (linner?) as we headed due Northeast. The youths slept most of the morning while the adults tried to shake off their foreshortened sleep from the night before.



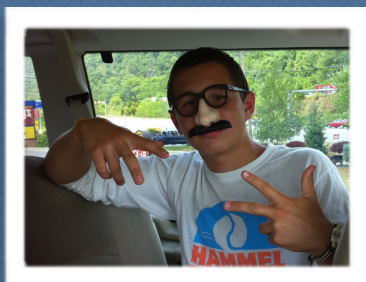
At 5:15pm we made it to Wilson College. It was pretty weird that we had just been there a week ago. At 6:00pm it was time for dinner at the local Italian restaurant (The Italian Village Casual Dining). A horde of 33 descended and it was a great time to reflect on the trip and talk to our new friends. We came back to the dorms at Wilson before 8:00pm and everyone participated in activities before the evening Eucharist. Some played football, frisbee golf (frolf), some played guitar and sang while others ran. It was still in the 90s so outdoor activities were difficult.

The Eucharist was another great time for reflection. We all shared how we felt different from the week before. Getting everyone to quiet down and go to bed was a challenge, but we managed to get lights out by 11:45pm

SUNDAY, JULY 25

We had breakfast at Wilson College at 7:15am and were on the road an hour later. Debbie was the Key Master and ensured we all didn't lose our keys (and our \$50).

On the final leg of the road trip, we did some karaoke (highlighted by Eric's version of Eminem's "Lose Yourself"), played name that song (in which Ben Sugg dominated), and ate up the remaining junk food. We took only two stops during the 8-hour drive, since we were on a mission to get home. We arrived at St. E's around 5pm and were immediately engulfed by energized parents. We grunted mono-syllabically to their questions and made our way into the Multi-Purpose room for some pizza while the parents took a fire hose and copious amounts of Ajax to clean out the engrained mud in the vans.





We took one last picture around the cross, Barbara said some final words, and then we shuffled back to our Massachusetts lives with a new perspective.

WHAT A TRIP!