

## Joe Garret

I have never had the pleasure of meeting this week's Featured Mentor, Joe Garret. And yet, his name is one of the most frequently heard when discussing Kodiaks and high adventure. Joe is an advisor who does not just "think outside the box" -- I am not sure he even recognizes that there is a box! The result is an active, exciting Venturing experience for those youth fortunate to be in his Crew, or traveling with him. Dr. Craig Murray, our Web Site Advisor, accompanied Joe on the Salmon River Kodiak this summer and spoke highly of his dedication to the program. One day, I look forward to meeting this amazing mentor.

--Amy

Joe Garret  
By  
Joe Garret

I joined Explorer Post 50 in 1966 because they were going on a 90 mile canoe trip. I had been in a Boy Scout Troop, but for some reason had never gotten started on the advancement trail and was still a Tenderfoot after a year. I quit the troop and didn't get back into Scouting until I was old enough for Explorers. We went on that canoe trip, and then another... and another. By the time I finished high school, I had been on 4 summer trips and one winter trip on the Choctawhatchee River in South Alabama and Northern Florida.



In 1973, after moving from Alabama to Upstate New York, I started a new Explorer Post in Troy, NY. This Post bought a school bus, took SCUBA lessons, and started going to Florida on dive trips every summer. We also spent many weekends climbing in the Adirondacks and made a trip to Colorado to climb Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park.

In 1977, my wife and I moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington. We took a basic climbing course at school and joined the Seattle Mountaineers, taking their mountaineering course. While in school I did an internship with the Chief Seattle Council Exploring Division, and then accepted a job with the Oregon Trail Council in Eugene, OR as Exploring Executive. I attended the University of Oregon in Eugene, working on my Master's Degree in Business Administration while I worked for the Boy Scouts. In 1981, upon completion of graduate school, my wife and I moved back to Seattle. I started a new Explorer Post at our church and took up both climbing and SCUBA diving with our Explorers. We climbed Mt. Rainier, Mt. Hood, Mt. Adams, Mt. Baker, and lots of other peaks many times over. We made a trip to Wyoming and climbed the Middle Teton in 1985. We went SCUBA diving on Vancouver Island in Canada many times and made many, many dives in Puget Sound.

During the late 1980's I got active as a district and council volunteer in Chief Seattle Council, helping to start and build other Explorer Posts in the area, in addition to continuing as Advisor to my own Post. In the early 1990's I served as a District Commissioner, a District Chairman, and several other jobs in the Eastside and the Central Exploring Districts. I also helped with a number of annual Explorer Leadership Conferences. I received the District Award of Merit in 1992 and the Silver Beaver Award in 1993. In 1995 I received the Spurgeon Award for outstanding contributions to Exploring.

In 1998, my Explorer Post became Venturing Crew 582 on August 1. Crew 582, because it was a successful, functioning Crew, was the subject of the November/December, 1999 Scouting Magazine cover article "Ranger's Rock". Many of the photos in that article were used to create the Venturing Handbook, including the cover shot of four Crew 582 members hiking over a foot bridge at Deception Falls in Washington State.

I went back to work for the Boy Scouts in 2001 after a great career selling large scale computers, software and consulting services. I started all over again as a new-hire District Executive in the Mt. Baker Council and was immediately given the staff advisor position for Venturing. I helped start a new Venturing Officers Association, ran a Ranger Quest Venturing Week at Camp Black Mountain, where I was Camp Director, and helped get the first Powder Horn Course in the Pacific Northwest off the ground. Unfortunately, the Council got into financial troubles when they lost their United Way funding and I was laid off in the summer of 2003. I am still a very active volunteer, though, serving as a Venturing Roundtable Commissioner in addition to my job as Crew Advisor.

In 2001, our Crew attended the second ever Nature of Leadership Trek (the original name for Kodiak Treks) which was held on the Yukon River in Central Alaska. The Trek was sponsored by Midnight Sun Council in Fairbanks, AK and involved a 160 mile trip from Eagle, AK near the Canadian border to Circle City, a native village north of Fairbanks. This trip was featured in Scouting Magazine in the May/June, 2002 issue. This, too, was a cover article. Both of these articles can be seen at [www.scoutingmagazine.org](http://www.scoutingmagazine.org) in the archives/back issues section.

We have also made three trips to Skagway, AK, twice to hike the Chilkoot Pass and once to sea kayak from Skagway to the Klondike Goldrush ghost town of Dyea. We have been on two Philmont backpacking treks and one trip to Florida Sea Base to go SCUBA diving. We have been on a mission trip to Tijuana, Mexico to build houses, and to the Makah Indian Reservation in Washington State to help build handicap ramps and to paint apartments.

We have also made several big road trips in our converted greyhound bus. In 1998, we took 9 days and visited as many National Parks and Monuments as we could from Seattle to Rapid City, South Dakota. We visited Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Devil's Tower, Badlands, and Wind Cave National Parks. We also went to Mt. Rushmore, the Black Hills, the Little Bighorn Battlefield, Wounded Knee, and many other places. On the way home, we retraced the Oregon Trail, camping in original campsites, and climbing Independence Rock in central Wyoming.

Crew 360, which is sponsored by Snohomish United Methodist Church, is my current passion. We have a very strong whitewater rafting program, a great winter sports program, and to top it all off, we reenact the 1st US Regiment of Cavalry in the Washington Civil War Association.

Our whitewater rafting program started after we attended the Yukon River Nature of Leadership Trek. The next year we hosted a trek on Oregon's Deschutes River. We had to buy and borrow our rafts and equipment, but we pulled it off. The next year we ran Idaho's Salmon River. In 2004, I took the training to become a certified whitewater guide and Whitewater Rescue Technician level I. The next year we sent three adults and two youth members through the same training. This year we sent another adult and 4 youth members to the courses. In the meantime, we have accumulated boats and equipment to safely float about 40 people on a river trip. We have recently hosted Kodiak Leadership Treks on Utah's Colorado River and the Salmon River in Idaho.

In July, we hosted two Boy Scout Troops and another Venturing Crew on a God and Country Trek in Oregon. We ran the Deschutes River again while studying for our Youth Religious Awards. This was a very successful program with 18 youth, including 9 Venturers, earning their God and Country Awards. Pastor Mark Williams of Snohomish United Methodist Church came along with his entire family to teach the curriculum. Next year we are planning to run a Kodiak Trek on the Klamath River in Northern California and we have offered to conduct a Confirmation Trip on the Salmon River for the youth of our church.

During the long Pacific Northwest winters, Crew 360 goes snowboarding at Whistler, British Columbia. We usually make three weekend trips up north in January, February, and April. We stay in our converted bus at an RV park, paying about \$5 per person per night for lodging. This cheap lodging, along with the savings of going in a bus, and taking advantage of group discounts, makes this kind of world class skiing at Whistler and Blackcomb Mountains very affordable.

Our participation in Civil War Reenacting began more recently. We tried portraying infantry soldiers for several years and found this to be an exciting and fun way to spend a weekend. Our young women have the choice of serving as soldiers or of dressing up in hoopskirts and portraying women of the mid 1800's. Most of them do both portrayals, switching from soldiers to young women immediately after the battles we participate in for the public. Several families in the Crew have horses, so this year we looked into a cavalry portrayal. As a result many of us have enlisted as cavalry troopers along with our horses. This is completely different kind of civil war reenacting since the horses have to be cared for round the clock. Our campsite becomes a working horse camp complete with all night picket duty, feeding and watering, and grooming of the horses.

This year my daughter Katie and I received the Venturing Leadership Award at a Mt. Baker Council Court of Honor. Katie is the President of our Crew and has staffed a number of Kodiak Treks, worked on staff at Scout Camp, and helped with a variety of Council and District Events since she joined Crew 360 five years ago. She is currently working as a commercial guide on the Deschutes River in Maupin, OR. and will return to school this fall to complete her Associates Degree at Cascadia Community College where she attended classes during her junior and senior years of high school. My son, Tommy, is an Eagle Scout and Venturing Bronze Award recipient who attends Edmonds Community College and is just completing his second summer session at the University of Washington. My younger son Jimmy is a Star Scout in Troop 316, also chartered to Snohomish United Methodist Church. He is Senior Patrol leader and within weeks of making Life Scout.

Why do I do all of this? Because I love it. I get to go on adventures all over North America and I get to help teenagers build a sense of self that they could get no other way. Aside from being a husband and father, this is the most important thing in my life. I have found a way to do something very meaningful for teenagers, for my church and for my community all while having the time of my life!!