Yosemite Trip Summary

Saturday, June 4

Russ and Jeremy were able to leave for San Francisco at their scheduled departure. Everyone else was scheduled to leave roughly one hour later. However, our flight was delayed by two hours due to inclement weather in San Francisco. Once on the flight, Eric talked most of the way with a guy named Jamal who was traveling to California for an internship. He was rooming with a complete stranger (female) once he arrived, and his arrangements were made via Craigslist ads. This was a test of faith for Eric as their discussion turned to religion. Eric doubted his faith, and felt his belief was challenged by his higher education. The Treadwell's sat behind a group of unaccompanied minors. At one point in the flight, a 30 toddler in a diaper was dancing in the seat behind us when a girl in front of us spilled her water and attempted to clean it up with a single napkin. At the same time, Mark was holding a lady's baby behind us while she used the restroom, and Eric was engaging an Asian women with poor English in a conversation he later admitted that he understood very few of her words. A dog barked intermittently, and seeing it run up and down the aisle was the one thing missing at the eventful moment. Once arriving in California, we met Russ and Jeremy. Russ's bag did not make it on their flight. He checked his baggage claim ticket and it was for someone else. As he told us the story, a lady in front of us from our flight overhead and recognized the name as her daughter. Somehow the bags were swapped and Russ' did make it on our flight. This was a very close call. Fox Rent A Car did not have the three intermediate cars that we had reserved. After 1.5 hours of hostile "negotiations" and delays, we were given two Jeep Wranglers and a compact car (Blue Ford Fiesta). Jeremy, Justin, and I took the Fiesta. Blake, Ben, Eric, and Mr. Bobby took the red Jeep Wrangler. Russ, Matt, and Mark took the white Jeep Wrangler. We grabbed a quick bite at McDonald's before heading to the park. Justin, Jeremy, and I created the term igneous convection with the intent of confusing Mark and others. We arrived between 9 and 10 PM under rain showers. The backpacker's campground was fairly empty. The group unloaded and headed to the campsite while Russ, Mr. Bobby, and I parked the cars before walking back to camp.

Sunday, June 5

After raining all night, we awoke to partly cloudy skies and no rain. Mark, Matt, and Justin left camp very early to find a dryer for Mark's gear. His gear was soaked due to the setup of his tarp/footprint during the night. We made use of the unusually clean pit toilets at the campsite before venturing to the general store. After a quick walkthrough of the general store, we went to the wilderness office for our permits and bear canisters. The female park ranger informed us of general rules and safety guidelines. She also warned against attempting Cloud's Rest without ice axes and crampons. We barely made it to the breakfast buffet. Justin and Mark were actually late, but they eventually allowed them in. We grabbed a few items from the outfitter (stove fuel, etc.) before heading to Glacier Point. The weather was partly to mostly cloudy, but we had great views at Glacier Point. There was plenty of snow on the ground on the Glacier Point road and near the point. We made good time on the trail and spotted a brown bear before reaching our first trail junction. We all took a break at Illilouette Falls. The falls were difficult to see, but we made the most of what viewpoints we could reach. The climb after Illilouette Falls was very steep, but the group made respectable time with various stops. The views of the valley all along

the Panorama Trail were spectacular. We had great views of Yosemite, Vernal, and Nevada Falls along with impressive views of the "backside" of Half Dome. We reached the trail junction that would take us toward Mount Star King by mid afternoon. Russ and I commented on God's magnificence by reflecting on the words of "How Great Thou Art". The line "When I, in awesome wonder, consider all, thy works, thy hands, have made" was particularly appropriate. We passed the second trail junction and took the route toward Mount Star King. I spotted what appeared to be campsite roughly 50 yards from the trail. Though by my calculation we were not yet the required two miles from the Panorama trail, we decided to setup camp since it had been previously used. This concluded our 5-6 mile hike for the day. There was a fire ring surrounded by very large rocks great for sitting, cooking, and packing gear. Justin started our fire while Ben and Russ gathered bottles to filter water. I began cooking dinner while the rest setup tents. From camp, we had a view of a wet weather waterfall cascading down the valley wall in the distance. We had a great night relaxing after the day's hike. As evening approached, we discovered our bear canisters would not hold all of our items. Ben and I stored the rest in a tight crack in a rock 20 yards from the campfire. Though the forecast called for rain throughout the day, we had not experienced any significant showers the entire day. As we all headed to bed, Ben and I noticed flashes of lightning in the distance. Thunderstorms were the single biggest safety concern. However, we watched the storm travel north along a line parallel to our camp. The lightning filled the sky, but it never approached close enough for concern. God is good. Throughout the night, I fought drips caused from the rain/sleet mix they fell most of the night.

Monday, June 6

We awoke to a winter wonderland. There was roughly one inch of snow on the crowd, and trees were decorated with white powdery snow. We later discovered that the valley and Little Yosemite Valley (my original choice for one night of camping) had received rain and no snow. Though the forecast called for rain, we never experienced any precipitation for the rest of the trip. The snow would melt quickly, but it was an incredibly beautiful surprise. We spent quite a while quenching our fire using "bodily fluid", snow, and water. Our hike moved very quickly from the campsite to Nevada Fall. The lead group stopped at a clearing believing it to be the trail, but we redirected before they ventured any farther. The trail literally became a creek in spots with heavy snow melt and drainage from the evening precipitation. Several of us took a brief break just above Nevada Falls to remove rain gear. There was an extended break at Nevada Falls for snacks and rest. The weather had become partly cloudy to mostly sunny. The group stopped at the Nevada Falls pit toilet. We met a group of ladies of said the Half Dome trip was not advisable at this time and would definitely not consider it with the cables down unless you had rope and harnesses. The group split to allow some to use the toilet and others to head to setup camp. I started in the lead, but waited at the trail intersection near camp. Blake led a group to select a campsite while I waited. We made it to camp at Little Yosemite Valley (4-5 miles from our previous campsite) which was far from full. Our campsite was situated between the water source and community campfire which was not far from the well maintained pit toilets. Ben, Eric, Mark, Matt, Justin, Jeremy, and I quickly setup camp and repacked for an attempt at Half Dome (roughly 3-3.5 miles away). The wolf pack led the way while Ben, Eric, and I discussed what to do if we made it to the cables. I felt conflicted about attempting the climb while the cables were down. I knew others had done it, but the risk was significant and Mr. Bobby discouraged it. I prayed that the decision would be clear. The gang made incredibly time. We met a group of well prepared men with climbing gear who said the snow prevented

them from reaching the cables. They assured us that it was not safe to venture to the cables. I thought this was the clear direction from God. Eric decided to turn around before reaching the Half Dome Trail. We posed for a picture before heading toward Half Dome. Significant snow remained along the trail as we approached the subdome. Though snow depth was difficult to judge, I would estimate depths of 6-8 feet in some areas. As we neared the subdome, Ben and I were leading the group when we met a group of four. The group consisted of two guys that I would rate as wilderness ready and good physical condition and two girls in blue jeans that I would not pick as wilderness ready. I asked how much farther could we go before having to turn around. One guy said that we could go as far as we wanted. He also said that there was a point just ahead where you could obviously tell people had stopped and turned around, but there was a set of four footprints that ventured on and made it to the cables. This group of four had made it to the cables. I thought surely we could make it if they made it. We quickly found the "turnaround point". We looked around and found the set of four footprints and followed them. This group had obviously been hear before because the path was not obvious at all. However, roughly ten yards along their path revealed solid stone steps and clear passage most of the way to the cables. At this point, Jeremy's feet were numb. He had hiked in "toe shoes", and the exposure to snow had numbed his feet. He decided to stay and wait while we headed farther. I believe this was wise on his part. Though he would had survived a fall at that point, there were points just beyond where a fall would have been deadly. The scenery quickly changed. In one word: Epic. We were in the clouds hiking across steep snow fields following a faint set of footprints. It felt like we were on expedition climbing Everest. By God's grace, we made it to the cables. While I sat typing this summary at Phifer, I wondered if the four before us were angels. I know it seems far fetched, but I can not deny that feeling. My feelings of disappointment about the cables being down were eclipsed by the incredible experience of being in that place alone with four friends. I long for that same experience again, but I admit that it will likely never happen again. Before we started the climb, we heard a loud noise like thunder. If it was thunder, we would need to leave asap since were climbing on a giant lightning rod. We waited a second clap of thunder never came. We wondered if it had in fact been a small rock fall or avalanche. Justin began climbing. I was very concerned. I followed until we reach a ledge where we all could rest. Justin ventured farther. I followed. He soon reached a point that was too slick to pass. We ventured back to the ledge for a photo or two before heading back down. This was one of the greatest wilderness experiences to date. We slowly venture down the rock and snow fields to where Jeremy waited. I felt convicted to share with the wolf pack about my faith and desire for them to share in the faith and for it to be the leading force in their lives. God is good. I began to worry about those back at camp. Would Mr. Bobby be disappointed in our attempt? Did they need the permit that I accidentally kept in my pack? Would they feel left out? Ben sprinted back. I walked with Matt and Mark. Jeremy and Justin took up the rear. Matt and Mark waited at the trail intersection and I headed toward camp. All were in good spirits at camp. They had started the community campfire and were entertained a three Englishmen at the campfire. One was a jockey. Another was his brother, and the third I believe worked with the jockey. They had planned to hike from Lake Tahoe to Yosemite, but they changed plans. They however were carrying all of their "stuff" wherever they went including the backcountry of Yosemite. That evening an older couple sat around the fire with us and I pointed out our previous campsite on map since they were headed that way the following day. A guy in another couple had lived in Athens, GA. Two other guys were there with there family. The older of the two recommended I visit Joshua Tree (which Justin, Matt, and Mark had already recommended).

While we all sat around the fire, the ranger told us that a bear and cub was spotted near the pit toilets, but we never saw them. Later she returned and asked, "Is anyone friends with Jeremy from Alabama?" We all gasped fearing he had fallen into the river, improperly used the pit toilets, or committed some other violation. Actually, she had spoken to him while he was filtering water alone, and he told her about our bear sighting the previous day. Justin then showed her a picture, and the two rangers were able to identify the bear. It was a bear that was captured due to disturbing vehicles. The bear was released and our sighting showed it was behaving as a wild bear should. The night was dry but seemed colder.

Tuesday, June 7

We woke to partly to mostly sunny skies. Half Dome was visible in all of its glory. We started our hike out near sunrise. Mr. Bobby and I headed out early and waited at the Nevada Falls pit toilet. Once the rest arrived, we headed toward the valley floor via the Mist Trail. We wore our rain gear as we past near Nevada Falls. Justin and Matt stopped at the brink of Vernal Falls to carve "Wolf Pack" in a down dead log. The trail by Vernal was very wet, very much deserving the name of Mist Trail. The sun shining through the mist was breathtaking. Russ struggled with keeping his pants up and not slacking. The Following Mr. Bobby's example, I ran a good portion of the trail downstream of Vernal to relieve stress on my knees. The group made it to the valley in good time (roughly 4-5 miles from Little Yosemite Valley). I rinsed off in the Merced River while I waiting for the rest of the group. Russ, Jeremy, and I took up the rear. Jeremy stopped to change shoes, and we eventually went looking for him after waiting at the car for several minutes. He had not quite made it to the turn, but we feared he had unknowingly passed it. Russ, Mr. Bobby, Blake, and I left in the Fiesta to retrieve the Jeeps at Glacier Point while the rest of the group took showers, packed, returned the bear canisters, and visited the park. Once retrieving the Jeeps, we began searching for gas. My original plan was to drive out of the way to Wawona, but El Portal would be a shorter detour. However, El Portal was farther to get gas. We got to the Glacier Point road junction. There was a road construction sign toward Wawona. We decided to try El Portal. I coasted in neutral most of the way down toward the valley. We made it to the gas at El Portal. I spoke with a park ranger and local about what grove of Sequoias to visit. The local said the Mariposa Grove was best and ensured me the drive to San Francisco would not including backtracking through the park. We returned to the valley. Justin met us to show the massive plates of food in devoured at the breakfast buffet. Blake, Mr. Bobby, Russ, and I gathered our clean clothes, and headed for the showers. They were charging five dollars, but the employee did not have change for a twenty when I arrived. She offered me a free shower even though Blake and Russ had just paid five dollars each right in front of me. Mr. Bobby paid for me when he arrived. After showering, I ordered a personal pizza and began packing luggage. After the rest finished lunch we packed the vehicles to head to Yosemite Falls. Per Blake's request, we circled by the Awahnee Hotel. After leaving the hotel, I turned into the general store parking lot. The Jeeps did not see me, and kept going towards Yosemite Falls. Unfortunately they did not know that I was behind them until later. It actually all worked out because we were able to get a closer parking spot. Eric, Russ, Blake, Ben, and I headed to the falls while Daddy looked for a parking spot after dropping us off. He got to the falls as we were leaving and walked back with us. We passed the Spider Cave, but did not venture close to it. After leaving the falls, we picked up the Wolf Pack who went to Camp Four to climb a route. The entire gang then rode to the Mariposa Grove. We posed for pictures at a large tree near the trailhead. Jeremy let a loud one rip right as the picture was snapped. Mark was left behind in the

parking area. Russ, Eric, Ben, Blake, Mr. Bobby, and I made the 0.8 trek to the Grizzly Giant. The tree was significantly larger than most others in the grove. One limb was 7-8 feet in diameter. We grabbed a few snacks at the gift shop and headed to the hotel. Jeremy, Justin, and I led the way. Russ drove more cautiously on the curvy, mountain roads. There was a very close call with a park shuttle bus and the Fiesta. The road was so narrow that we passed within a few feet of each other. Jeremy, Justin, and I discussed random topics including a cure for cancer based on an all fruit and vegetable diet. Justin recommended In and Out Burger for dinner. We found one on the way. The meal was great, and the restaurant was similar to a Johnny Rockets. Jeremy pointed out a girl with a "nice butt" to Mr. Bobby who did a slow motion 360 to "check her out". The Wolf Pack found this to be hilarious, and Justin later commented that it "definitely was not a rookie move." The Wolf Pack sat inside and the rest outside. We were approached by a girl needing money. She claimed she was left by her ex-boyfriend and had no cash for a cab. We made good time to the hotel and settle in for the night. While getting extra towels and pillows, the person at the front desk recommend to Mr. Bobby and me to leave five hours before our flight even though we were 30-40 minutes from the airport. We decided to skip the Golden Gate Bridge and REI and planned to leave four hours early. I slept with the Wolf Pack and there was a stark contrast between the two groups. The Treadwell/Cummings room was very mild. Everyone was packing and preparing for the next day. In the Wolf Pack room, Jeremy decided to pin Mark to the bed while only wearing his boxers. It did not take long for all to be sound asleep.

Wednesday, June 8

We awoke naturally at 6:30AM, ate breakfast, packed the cars, and left for the airport by 8:30AM. We took the San Mateo Bridge and experienced very little traffic. We stopped for gas a few guys bought additional things for breakfast. We returned the car. I stopped to report our bad experience at the check in. We made it to our gate with roughly 1.5-2 hours to spare. We grabbed a bite for lunch (it was my first pastrami sandwich). I collected money from most everyone. On the flight back, Russ asked the flight attendants to ask us if we knew "a Jeremy from Alabama", but overall the flight was much less eventful than the first. The only excitement occurred when the lady next to me spilled her drink. The stewardess promptly changed the seat cushion and the lady cleaned up in the restroom. Keri, Jenna, and Kristen met us at the airport. The Treadwell gang stopped at Chik Fil A before heading home.

This trip was a true test of faith. I had fasted for two weeks prior to this trip as I began to realize that the Half Dome cables would not likely be up by the time of our trip. My disappointment unfortunately turned to worry as I watched the forecast deteriorate from warm (60s) sunny temperatures to rainy/stormy cool temperatures (low 30s to mid 50s). However, the rain only came while we slept in the protection of our tents. The temperatures were perfect for hiking. The snow that prevented the Half Dome Cables from being up actually kept the crowds away. No one made it higher than us that day, and the five of us had one of the most iconic wilderness spots in the country all to ourselves. We will probably never have a similar opportunity ever again.