



John Muir Charter School
Pomona CCC

GRIT

Volume1 Issue 7

May2009

California Conservation Corps—Pomona Satellite

JUAN MERCADO HEADS TO CAMARILLO TO ASSUME CON. SUP. DUTIES

Carolynn Aguayo



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He has mowed lawns, been a box boy at a liquor store, he's even been a stunt man for the Miami Vice show at Universal Studios. Most remember him better for his work as a C-1 for crew 2 at the Pomona Satellite.

Juan Mercado started his journey at the California Conservation Corps in 1996. Before he joined the CCC, Juan was actually unemployed. Mr. Mercado was visiting an uncle in El Centro, CA and they both went to the EDD office. There was a poster for the California Conservation Corps; Juan saw the poster and was intrigued. Shortly, Juan applied and joined the Pomona Center. He trained for 3 months in Pomona. He then went to the San Fernando Satellite, which no longer exists due to one of the many budget cuts that the CCC has endured; Juan, however, needed more of a challenge. He decided to transfer to the La Cima Fire Center. He stayed there for over a year working on statewide fires. After his work at La Cima, Juan transferred to the Los Angeles Center as a red hat. He became a red hat after being in the CCC for a year and four months. Juan, also known as John Market (the English version of his name) was awarded with an opportunity to become a C-1. Juan had been a red hat for only 8 months.

Juan's career as a C-1 began at the Sequoia Center under Con. Sup. Juan Salazar. There Mr. Mercado was in charge of a regular grade crew (like the ones we have here at our Pomona Satellite) for 7 years. During his last 4 years at Sequoia, Juan ran a Type II fire crew with the Sequoia National Forest Partnership. His work there included a lot of work in forest conservation. Due to budget cuts, the Sequoia Center was closed down. Juan then took a job as a zone recruiter. He was in charge of the Bay area recruiters. He was a recruiter for 1 year. As a recruiter, Juan enjoyed having contact with corpsmembers, it was a different experience for him getting to know the background of individual corpsmembers. After that year, Juan joined the Camarillo Center as a C-1. He worked in the fisheries program in Santa Barbara, CA. He worked to help protect the steel head, which is a species of salmonid (which include salmon and trout) that has declined in numbers due to human and natural causes. After his time in Camarillo, Juan Mercado quit the CCC. Yes, he has quit the CCC before!

Lindsay School District was the next place of employment for Juan Mercado. While he was working for the school district, Juan continued doing work for the CCC. Few have such dedication for the California Conservation Corps. Juan worked as a consultant with CCC sponsors. As usual, the sponsors looked for him and not vice versa.

Due to a sudden illness that his wife endured, Juan decided to take a year off of work. Juan then moved to L.A. Fortunately, his wife began to get better quickly. Instead of a year off, Juan only took about 3 to 4 months off. Then came the part where we all come in to the picture. Juan became a C-1 at the Pomona Satellite Center under Scot Schmier and Jennifer Dulay. He worked at the Pomona Satellite Center for over 2 years. His work with Pomona included countless spikes in San Diego, Saddleback Butte, and the Cleveland National Forest. Juan is now returning to Camarillo as a Conservation Supervisor.

I asked Juan how he felt about leaving the Pomona Center. He began with a big sigh and spoke simply. He said, "It is very hard to say goodbye. You build close relationships, especially with the corpsmembers. Because of spikes and fires you get to know their personalities." He said that it is especially difficult to say goodbye to his crew. He had one single crew for around 8 months. He lived with them during many spikes . *Cont. Pg. 3*

Contributors

John Berge; Advisor

Carol Aguayo; Features

James Burthe; Gamer Review/Commentary

Colton Kegeler; Report From Backcountry

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JUAN MERCADO-cont.

He got to know them as more than corps members, he got to know them as people and they got to know him as well. Juan said that this is a bitter sweet moment in his life. While he is sad to say goodbye to Pomona, he is also happy to be moving forward in his career. Juan feels that as he continues to promote he will be positioned to add increasing value to an outstanding and respected program. He said, "I want to keep enjoying what I do. I have heart for this program. I plan to stay as long as I can to see what other doors may open. Maybe director..." I definitely think that goal is attainable".

Juan is not the only one who has emotions attached to his leaving Pomona. Fellow staff members had a few words to say.

Jennifer Dulay, Pomona Satellite Con. Sup. has mixed emotions about Juan's departure. "I'm glad he's stepping up/promoting, but it's hard to see him go." As far as projects go, she said, Juan set the bar high at Pomona. "He will be hard to replace. Juan really put the Pomona Satellite on the map. He will be missed by many."

Helene Salanoa, C-1 of crew 1 said she is really, really sad to see him leave. To Helene, Juan is not a coworker. Instead, he is like a brother to her. Helene said, "I learned so much from him. I started challenging myself when he started challenging me. He opened my eyes to new possibilities." She said that Juan Mercado is "rare to come by." She said, "Juan and I have a lot of good memories together. He has helped me out a lot. Not many have his kind of heart. I'm not going to have that person that I shared my triumphs and struggles with. Juan showed me what I'm capable of achieving."

I think his corpsmembers are the ones that will struggle the most from Juan's departure from Pomona. I got the chance to interview two of the corpsmembers that were on his

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Juan Mercado

crew for almost a year.

Albert Traslavina has been in the CCC and in Juan's crew for nearly a year. Albert's emotions toward Juan leaving are very clear. Albert said, "Honestly, I'm mad. I enjoyed working with Juan. I considered him a father. He has taught me more than my actual father." Albert said that it will be strange in the center without Juan. He said that from the very first time that he heard about Juan's crew while he was in C.O.M.E.T. he wanted to be on Juan's crew. "I'm sad to see him leave. I am going to miss out on a lot of opportunities. I love Juan like a father. It is hard to see him go."

Manuel Salazar has also been in the CCC for almost a year, but was originally in crew 1 (Helene Salanoa's crew). He joined Juan's crew (crew 2) when the Cleveland National Forest P-line spike started back in September. Manny said that when he first heard the news about Juan leaving Pomona he was devastated. Manny feels that we are losing a great leader and a lot of good project work. "I agree with Albert. Juan taught me more than

my own father," he said. "I am going to miss his good qualities. Juan understands that as corpsmembers we are still learning and that we learn through our mistakes. I appreciate all that Juan did for me." Manny has two last words for Juan, "Thank you."

Juan's last words as C-1 at and for the Pomona Satellite are as follows: "I really want to thank the staff and the corpsmembers for all of your support. Thank you for all of your hard work, especially the corpsmembers. A big part of commitment for me is trust. Thank you for your trust. This opportunity has given me the chance to expand myself with other projects and will help me think outside the box. Most importantly to the corpsmembers, never stop challenging yourselves."

"To my crew: So many places we've been and lived. For example, the P-line project. That project really got us close due to situations in which we all had to depend on each other. This was a life changing project. I enjoyed being with you guys. Those are memories that will last forever."

Juan, you will be missed and never forgotten. From all of us at Pomona, thank you for all of your hard work and dedication. Pomona will not be the same without you. Thanks to you many doors have opened for great project work. We all appreciate your presence at this Pomona Satellite Center.

~Carolynn Aguayo

. The CCC's Salmon Restoration Program along the North Coast is the largest restoration effort of its kind in the country. The program was developed in partnership with the Department of Fish and Game in 1980; since that time, corpsmembers have restored or enhanced nearly 1,800 miles of streams and fish habitat. (CCC Website)

Writers Block

I was going to be ten years old in a few weeks and I was thinking about what I wanted for my birthday. There weren't many times when I could actually verbalize a birthday gift request to my mother and father. This year, for some reason was different, the family had money! All I really wanted was a pair of black Engineer boots, the shiny black ones with the buckles and beefy heels, and solid rounded toes, like the ones James Dean wore in Rebel Without a Cause. The teenager Ray, in the adjoining duplex in Inglewood had a pair. He also wore a leather jacket. I wanted to be just like Ray, the "bad boy" neighbor. He had a '49 Ford, leather jacket, the boots, and a greasy-haired ducktail. I told my dad and he knew for weeks leading up to my birthday that I wanted the boots. I didn't hold out hope for the jacket but I was surprised. We just had a family party and I didn't get the boots, I got a book;

"The Tales of Tom Sawyer" or something similar; I felt like crying. Dad told me he had to go somewhere and asked me to go with him. So, I climbed into the front seat of the big old Buick and off we went. Dad took us downtown and we walked into the Buster Brown shoe store. Right there on the shelf was a pair of Engineer boots that were shiny-black as they stood out from the rest of the offerings. Dad said; "are those the ones?" I screamed affirmatively and the clerk had me stand on the sliding shoe-size thing. He then went to the back of the store and brought out a big cardboard box – there they were! My Engineer boots; they looked good under my rolled up Sears-Roebuck Huskies! I wanted to wear them immediately and my dad told the guy to just put my old Red-Ball Jets in the box. We walked to the cash register and my dad takes a package of Horseshoe Taps off a rack by the register. Man, my day could not have gotten better than that! At that moment, I felt such a connection to my dad. Life was good

We went to the car and dad opens the trunk and takes out the hammer

He tells me to take off the boots, which I do reluctantly. He takes the Horseshoe Taps out of a flimsy plastic wrap and places one on the heel of a boot. He takes a nail out and pounds it into the tap. He fills each tap hole with a nail and the tap is now on the boot. He does the same with the other and tells me to put on the boots and walk down the sidewalk. Those boots looked and sounded so cool!

We then drive down the street to the Sears store. We walk inside and go to the kids section and over to a rack of jackets. My eye catches a blue



and crème-colored varsity-like jacket with the leather sleeves. I put it on and now I felt complete. We walk to the register, dad hands the lady some money and I walk out to the Buick with dad - feeling about ten feet tall. That was a birthday dream come true and one I will never forget. Thanks Dad!

GRADUATION SEASON

It is that time of year again, all of that hard work done in the classroom is paying off. Despite the unique circumstances of our students, many will graduate and receive their hard-earned diploma. Our students work a full day in the community, sometimes for multiple days on Spike. They endure the difficulty of emergency situations throughout the state of California as a support resource for flood mitigation and prevention, wildfire support, pest eradication, and various other situations that call for response from our well-trained crews.

Our students engage in the classroom after their full day of work-they may complete their school requirements in their off-time while on emergency duty. Through it all, they have shown a commitment to their future by completing their education.

Congratulations graduates and thanks; CCC/ John Muir Charter School Teachers, Administrators, and Support Staff. Your commitment and dedication to the value of education is evident.



REPORT FROM BACKCOUNTRY—KLAMATH

COLTON KEGELER; POMONA SATELLITE

How would it be if right after getting off a plane in a place you've never been you're integrated into a group of people you have never met before? A group of several different people from all over the country and you're told to mingle? To know that you'll be with close to 20 people for five and a half months that you have no clue what they'll be like? Welcome to my backcountry experience ...I was flown into Arcata airport last Sunday and traveled the land to the California Conservation Corps Fortuna Center. There I met my crew; my family for the next five and a half months. From the start I hit it off well with everyone. I was eager and excited, as well as nervous and scared, all at the same time. I was astounded to find that everyone here with me, although having completely different personalities, are very similar in our beliefs and our wants. I felt like I was going to be out-casted for being different, or having different views from the rest. Boy was I wrong! I have known these people for a week now and I feel closer to them than I do with those I've known for years. I'm forming/shaping the new me and everyone I'm around is helpful and very accepting. We drove from Fortuna to the Happy Camp Ranger District, where we met our sponsors Phil and Steve. From there we went up the road, a little deeper into Klamath, to our first campground, Sulfur Springs. To describe my sightings of this land, this breath-taking beauty; Simple words can't describe unthinkable wonders I couldn't have imagined. Our campground is located right off the crystal clear waters at Elk Creek. The white rapids crash off the green algae-covered rocks, continuously feeding a peaceful sense of serenity to your soul-Constant sound greatly diminishing the dreaded feel of awkward silence; Never does your mind wander to negativity-how could it when something so lovely is caressing your ears, softly, like a mother's hand feeling her baby's face for the first time..... Bliss!!!

Looking to the ground, I view light brown dirt covering the paths surrounded by beautiful, vibrant flowers that show themselves sporadically. The flowers are mostly purple and orange, spreading their delicate petals even while entangled by the mesh of rocks-smothered by moss and leaves of bushes and vines interwoven to perfection. The contrasting feel of the pale and crisp dead leaves complementing each other in its finest form, a beautiful symphony of life and death. I view towering trees engulfing the sun's light, the sun, attempting to glow to the depths of the trees. Saplings are plentiful, infesting the grass competing with elders showing their strength and size, growing from ten to 150 feet. Branches extend from one tree to the next in the hope of spreading out and growing larger than the rest.

There are twenty multi-colored tents inhabiting the campsite, enhanced by at least 100 pieces of clothing, hanging out to dry by the now, elusive rays of the sun. A few of my fellow backcountry group are off in the distance cleaning themselves at a rotten-egg smelling sulfur pit. Some are down at Elk Creek throwing rocks on their dirty clothes to keep them from venturing down the charging rapids. Another comrade is passed out in tranquility, lying on the ground, a hat shading his eyes as he loses himself in the moment. Close by in the kitchen, others are enjoying the simple laughter and companionship of our now, extended family. I am sitting and writing this correspondence, enjoying life and loving this time in my journey, to me, minimalism at its best.

Our first work site is up the Elk Creek Trail, an area that was severely damaged by the Panther Fire some years ago. Our forest surroundings are a jaw-dropping change from witnessing splashes of green to a forest of black stumps and lingering ash; this is death in a way that I have never witnessed. The ground is awash in empty holes where mighty trees once stood in all their glory, whole trees having burned down through to the very roots. Widow-makers abound, these once thriving branches no longer having the strength or life to survive. Once proud trees; monoliths of nature fall sullenly, eaten away by the fire. This walk into the forest was a grand reality check for me. A testament to renewed life were the purple Lupines peeking out of the ground, other green sprouting plants were claiming life in a similar fashion. It was no small relief for me to see and know that even with the overwhelming feeling of demise, life still pushes forward. With my immediate surroundings looking down and distraught, nature is naturally repairing itself-after so much fire damage here, there is a second chance, a beautiful concept that brings a gigantic smile to my face.

Although I have not had an actual work day yet, I already feel a sense of great accomplishment. Not only in the fact that I am out here and determined to finish my five and a half month tour of duty, I will also complete all of the goals I have set for myself. My first weekend here I had an opportunity to do some volunteer work. On Saturday, Americorps held a tree-planting event. I was fortunate to have been able to plant Cedars, Douglas fir, and Oak saplings. About half the time at the volunteer event, I was handling the photography-I planted about forty trees of the approximately one-thousand that were planted that day. It was a valiant effort to repair some of the forest that had been destroyed by the devastating fire. Hopefully we will have more volunteer activities down the road, during our stay here.

Till next time... Colton