

Work

Winter 07/08 found me at **Heavenly Ski Resort** as a snowboarding marketing research surveyor. In the Spring I interviewed for an international trip leader position with an established company but didn't get it. So I called my friend Abbi Miller and said, hey, want to take a group of teens to Argentina? Thus was born the **Unschool Adventures** company, through which we planned and executed a **6-week Argentina trip** in Oct/Nov 08. (But I'm fast-forwarding.) Over the summer I was the **head cook** and part-time **director of Deer Crossing Camp**, and then an advisor for two sessions of **Not Back to School Camp** in Oregon and Vermont. During the summer I also put the final touches on the manuscript I wrote over the winter, "**College Without High School**". In November I submitted it to two publishers, and on Jan 1, 2009, signed a contract with **New Society Publishers**, making me a soon-to-be author! (Book release in September 09.) **My goal for 2009 is to be fully self-employed** (with Unschool Adventure trips, book royalties, and web design/tutoring) outside of summer work. The U.S. recession makes this challenging!

Safety Training

In the Spring I recertified my EMT certification and took a Wilderness First Responder course through NOLS (at UC Santa Cruz), effectively making me a "**Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician**" (WEMT)... very fancy.

Philosophy/Politics

If 2008 was the Chinese "Year of the Rat", mine was "**Year of the Rand**". I devoured a ton of Ayn Rand's fiction and non-fiction and seriously considered her entire platform of **rational self-interest** and **laissez-faire capitalism**. This led to a number of spirited debates, to say the least, with friends on both the "left" and "right", and lots of subsequent reflection and learning.

Tango

While in Argentina, my group spent two weeks learning **Argentine Tango** (a close-embrace, unchoreographed dance unlike the ballroom tango in movies) in **Buenos Aires**, culminating with a visit to a real Argentine **milonga** (tango dance hall) until 3am on our last night. **Portland, Oregon**, where I now live, coincidentally has **one of the best Argentine tango scenes in the U.S.**, and I'm continuing to learn the dance with weekly lessons and milonga visits.

Unschooling

My research and writing interests continue to focus on **unschooling**, the version of **homeschooling** that—without discrediting formal learning, classes, teachers, or college—puts the serious responsibility of **self-directed learning** in the student's hands. My experiences working with teen unschoolers (through Not Back to School Camp and Unschool Adventures) continue to tell me that unschooling is a viable and important solution for helping young adults to build strong, independent minds and joyful lives.

Relationships

For a few months in Spring 08 I dated a very nice young woman from **Switzerland** who was studying abroad in California. Unfortunately, she had to go back to Switzerland, which took me a while to realize! Otherwise I've **enjoyed the single life** as usual, which my work & travels continue to demand of me.

Upcoming for 2009

This spring I plan to stay in **Portland** (where I moved in Dec 08 and hope to maintain a permanent mailing address) and work with the home/unschooling communities, which I've already begun as an informal **teen homeschooling mentor**. For June I've tentatively planned a **long-distance bike trip along the Oregon and California coasts** with a friend, and July might find me back at **Deer Crossing Camp** as a guest instructor. In May, August, and September I'll be presenting at **homeschooling conferences** in California and Oregon, which is a big first for me! In August I plan to do a 1-2 week **High Sierra ultralight backpacking trip** between Tahoe and Yosemite, followed by working all four sessions of **Not Back to School Camp**. Unschool Adventures will run its next trip in November: a month-long **novel-writing retreat on the Oregon coast**, and maybe another to **Australia** in January 2010. Perhaps I'll make money from my book and return to **Buenos Aires** in the Spring (the best time to visit) to **learn more tango**. Who knows? Look forward to another update then! Thanks for reading! -Blake