

Tim Smith of Jack Mountain Bushcraft

By Bonnie Pooley

Tim Smith's business, Jack Mountain Bushcraft, offers spring, summer, and fall trips from his base located on the banks of the Aroostook River in Masardis, Maine. Although Tim offers a wide variety of trips, his greatest love is running semester courses and longer total immersion courses for college students. In these courses he teaches all of the bushcraft skills needed for survival in the wilderness. These skills, practiced daily, become an integral part of each student's life in the wild. Summed up in a single word, Tim's educational philosophy is "Can."

As an educator with a B.A. degree from Union College and a Master of Education degree from North Texas State University, Tim strongly believes in the power of the wilderness as teacher. He thinks that his own role as a teacher is "to create situations where learning can take place." The testimonials on his website www.jackmtn.com describe the many life-changing experiences which young people have had in nature's classroom. As one student wrote, "The necessities that I had come to take for granted, warmth for example, were things I had to generate for myself. I have become both more confident and more humble."

Tim believes that "knowledge is power," whether in the outdoors or any other setting. He goes on to say that "knowledge is constructed, not received. It is built incrementally over time." When a person sees a film or hears a lecture about traditional skills, such as pack basket construction or canoe poling, he may grasp the concept, but only by actually doing it will he become a master of the skill. In Tim's programs, "you're an active part of the natural world, not an observer." Students use friction sticks for fire, build their own shelters, and construct the paddles for their canoes.

When asked why he became a Master Maine Guide, Tim has two answers. First, he loves being able to make a living in the outdoors, or, as he puts it, "kicking around in the Maine woods." Second, he says that the "Real World" is not

necessarily the world of skyscrapers, pavement, and three-piece suits, as others may define it, but instead the world of trees, mountains, lakes, and streams. By taking people into this more natural, better balanced world, Tim can impel them toward moments of real growth and broader perspective.

They can then return to their daily lives in "civilization" where their new insights can remind them of what is truly important in life.

Tim has a clear sense of the heritage of Maine Guides, their reputation for over a century as embodiments of the pinnacle of skill as woodsmen and women. In the coming years, Tim hopes to contribute to the continued strengthening of the reputation of Maine Guides. The skilled woodsmen and women in our Maine forests have been among the best trained, most experienced in the country, and Tim wants to see national recognition for the title and skills of the Maine Guide.

A man of many and diverse talents, Tim represents the best qualities of the new generation of Maine Guides. Not only is he a Master Maine Guide, a licensed hunter, trapper, and fisherman, but he is also a naturalist, an excellent photographer, a media consultant, writer, and teacher. If you want to share some armchair adventures

and philosophy, spend an evening watching Tim's numerous short films on YouTube. Just google Jack Mountain Bushcraft, sit back, and enjoy.



Tim knows how to eat well in the field using Genair's latest.



Bonnie Pooley, MWGO member and Maine Guide, is newly retired after 38 years as an English teacher. Following ten years of leading summer trips for *Outward Bound*, she now runs, in partnership with Mac Davis, a small guiding business called *Maine Explorations*. She has also been a member of the *Mahoosuc Land Trust* board for 20 years, presently serving as secretary.