

Why? Because it's there. George Mallory coined this phrase when asked why he wanted to climb mount Everest, as it was a seemingly impossible feat. I always found myself borrowing his famous words as I tried to explain my love for hiking and being in the woods to my friends at home. They would return from summers on the Cape or all expenses paid tropical paradises, while I spent my time off slogging through mud, catching fish, and playing in rivers.

I was raised off mountains. They called my name like no other. From the age of two I was summiting on my dad's back, eventually graduating to walking up on my own at age five. My years elevated along with the mountains. My parents raised me in nature. I have visited the Adirondack Park since a year old, a place none of my school friends even knew existed. At age eight, I was climbing the high peaks. I would proudly return home, bragging to my friends at school, but to them it would mean nothing more than a walk in the woods. For me it was different. As my body gained strength, I could hike five, ten, fifteen miles. I came to be one with my surroundings. Scrambling on rocks and trekking through mud for twelve hours gave me time to think and a reason to be alive.

Spending such long days in the woods, looking back on a mountain I just summited, gave me a new perspective on the world, as if looking into the past, a world humans never touched. My parents raised me to love nature in a way that none of my friends did. I never cared about getting dirty and was never scared of the solitude. While my friends feared getting lost in the wilderness, I welcomed the challenge. I have faced twenty mile days and fourteen hour hikes, but have never been scared off. I accept each new mountain as a way to push myself harder physically and mentally. As my muscles have grown, so has my view of the world. I have been so lucky to see much more than my friends because my parents pushed me to love the wild and the solitude it brings instead of fear it.

I realize I am extremely privileged to have grown up with exposure to natural places. In my parks, recreation, and tourism classes at UVM, this idea has been discussed a lot. Wilderness is something that unfortunately not all people have equal access to. If you have never grown up going into nature, then why should you care about it? My dream is to operate my own guiding company because I want to give people a reason to care about their earth and a way to find their place in this world. Outdoor recreation has allowed me to explore beautiful places and has given me the time to explore who I am and what matters most to me. Ryan's Core Values resonate with me because when I am in nature, I am able to better reflect on how I want to live my life each day. Core values are ways to say, "today wasn't my best day, but tomorrow I will keep trying", and I think that is a great way to see the world. Core values help you take charge of your life and the way you want to shape others.

Living a life literally rooted by nature has driven me to understand my role on this earth. I realize how much I want to save nature and promote the value of the outdoors to others. In my hometown, I feel controlled and in a funk. When I'm in the woods or out moving around, I feel free and truly like myself. I owe everything I am to my parents; without my upbringing, I would be so unaware of the beauty all around me and the opportunities this planet has to offer. I do not dream of a rich life, working a normal 9-5 job, living in a beautiful house. I dream of a life

bringing my love of this Earth to everyone around me. I do not dream of a traditional life, but a meaningful and joyful one filled with beautiful places rather than things, and I am so blessed to have parents that support this dream. Many parents would look at their child and see them as making a mistake when purposely going into a low paying field, but my parents have been nothing but supportive. They put their unwavering support into me, even telling me they would love to work for me someday. I am incredibly blessed to go along my journey with them by my side.

I am an extremely motivated person when it comes to my future. I have almost completed hiking all 46 of the high peaks in the Adirondacks, I have gotten my Wilderness First Responder and EMT course certifications, and I am graduating a whole semester early from college because I am eager to start my way to my career. Last summer I had my job lined up to work as a whitewater rafting guide, but it all fell through because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, I did not let it get me down. I made the best of my time in Burlington working as an Americorps member on a trail crew. I am unbelievably excited to start my journey as a whitewater rafting guide this summer, but due to the pandemic, my chances of finding a subletter for my apartment in Burlington this summer have proven to be difficult. If I were to pay for rent in Burlington and the Adirondacks for the summer, I would be putting all of my earnings to my living expenses. This scholarship would help me pay for my rent so that I can start on my journey to my dream job and be able to go on this solo adventure.

Everything I am is rooted to this earth, and I will do everything I can to share its wonder with others. Why? Because it's here.