

June 18, 2013, is definitely one of the unforgettable days of my life. On that day, I was lucky enough to go for a class 4 rapid rafting with my ESP 190 class and UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences' stuffs. For a typical girl who came from a small developing country, Mongolia, a crazy rafting experience was very new to me. I have never done a rafting before. I did not even get to learn how to swim when I was in my country because of Mongolian cold and dry climate. I mean, of course, we have rivers and lakes in Mongolia, but swimming is not a common sport in the country. Thus, I was very nervous, but excited about our rafting trip.

So, right before we took off for our first rafting run from the upper side of the Tuolumne River, Outdoor Adventure's coordinators gave a safety talk about how to handle a situation when your boat flips over or when you fall out of boat. Whatever they were talking sounded just so frightening to me. I was thinking in my head "Oh man, I hope that is not going to happen to us today." But, it happened! Just like what I have not wished for! We were on the boat about to start our adventurous trip on the Tuolumne River. Casey was our guide person. He started off pretty well, but we lost control when we stuck on one of the big rocks on the very first rapid. Strong water pushed the boat we were on and flipped the boat in a split second.

Little did I know that I was in the water – breathless. What is going on? What should I do now? The water was way too strong and I had no control over my body whatsoever. I was trying to hold on from rocks that I bumped into, but those rocks were helpless yet brutal. At that very moment, I literally thought that I was going to die. I am sure it is not a big deal for other people who have prior experience with rafting. But for me it was way too much. You know what was in my mind at that very moment?! I was thinking, "No, I have just graduated from my college a couple of days ago. If I die now, all my hard works would be wasted. What a crucial joke!" Now, I think it was really funny! Furthermore, I really appreciated that people including Dr. Joshua, Dr. Sarah, Carson, and Rob understood my fear of water and supported me very well throughout the entire trip.

The day after the crazy rafting adventure, we just relaxed by the Clavey River and hiked for a couple of hours along the river. Meantime, all the students were working on their videos and trying to get some nice footage for their final movie projects. We also exchanged our knowledge of what we know about the plants, trees, birds, fish, and invertebrates that we saw in the field while we were hiking. Sarah, Josh, and Carson were talking about how the Clavey River formed and explaining where all the big boulders, and cobbles came from by using a pizza metaphor. I was so happy to go with such experts. I have learned a lot and opened my eyes to see nature from a very different perspective. I also practiced my swimming as much as I could just because I knew that we were going to another rafting adventure on the next day. I have to be ready!

The next day, I woke up with the sound of river flows right next to our campsite. The sun was shining brightly and it was a gorgeous morning in the mainstream of the Tuolumne River. I told myself that it would be an amazing day and prayed that we would be safe when we go rafting again. I guess God answered my prayer! I enjoyed the rafting very much on our last day of the trip. No one fell out of boat, and we all peddled together and successfully made it through those big rapids on our way down the River. We enjoyed beautiful nature, strong yet stunning river, and we also saw some bold eagles while we were rafting. Finally, I got home with full of memories. I saw my bruises from the rafting accident and told myself, "Boy, that was a great trip!"