



The Adventures of Tyler Socash

Twenty-eight-year-old **Tyler Socash** '09, '15W (MS), is living his dream.

On June 24, Socash left his job as an admissions counselor at the University. The next day, he flew to the Pacific Northwest where he began hiking the 2,633-mile Pacific Crest Trail from Canada to Mexico. When he finishes that trek, he plans to fly to New Zealand to hike the 1,864-mile Te Araroa (also known as the Long Pathway). After that, he will fly back to the United States to hike the 2,185-mile Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine.

His goal is to do what no one else has done before: hike the three trails in one year—a total of nearly 7,000 miles.

Socash's adventure was prompted by a financial decision. "I thought I needed to finally buy a car to get back and forth from an internship while I was finishing up my master's in school counseling at the Warner School," Socash says. He was just about to

buy a \$24,000 bright orange 2015 Subaru Crosstrek when something compelled him to research the trails, which he had previously thought about hiking, and see how much it would cost to hike them all sequentially.

Ironically, the total cost of all three treks was about the same as that new Subaru. Socash put aside his thoughts for his tangerine dream car and opted for a long, wooded adventure on the shoe leather express instead.

Born in Old Forge, New York, a small town nestled just inside the Adirondack Park, which spans an astounding six million acres in New York state, Socash spent a lot of time exploring the woods and waterways of the North Country as a kid. Things have not changed much for him as an adult.

In the last eight years, Socash has climbed the challenging, rock-hopping Adirondack "46" (the 46 highest mountains in New York) five times. He has hiked the length of the 133-mile Northville-Placid Trail, which some call the "Appalachian Trail of the Adirondacks." He has competed in the annual, three-day, 90-mile canoe race from Old Forge to Saranac Lake. He has backpacked a 50-mile adventure around Cranberry Lake in the Adirondacks. He

UR FRIENDS: Jamie Rindfuss '13, Bridget Kruszka '13, Socash, and Paul Kintner '12 hiked together for three days at the start of the Pacific Crest Trail. Rindfuss, Kruszka, and Kintner connected with Socash again 16 days into his trek.



ITINERARY: In June, Socash began what he hopes will be a yearlong adventure hiking three of the world's most demanding and storied trails for a total of nearly 7,000 miles. Beginning with the Pacific Crest Trail, Socash traversed Washington and Oregon, making it to California in early August.

has hiked all the mountains in New York with fire towers on them, too—29 in all.

Socash has also climbed to the highest point in seven U.S. states. And he's on a quest to explore every U.S. National Park. So far, he has made it to 12.

"Tyler's positive outlook on life and his vast array of outdoor experiences will serve him well on this adventure," says Seth Jones, the Adirondack Mountain Club's education programs coordinator and one of

Socash's hiking partners over the last few years. "I have no doubt that he will complete the whole thing and will be smiling nearly every step of the way."

As an undergraduate who majored in neuroscience, Socash did just about everything he could squeeze into his schedule. He was involved in five intramural clubs and participated in varsity tennis, cross country, and track. He was also a residential advisor and a teaching assistant, started the Fill Fauver school-spirit initiative (which evolved into UR BlueCrew), and was president of the Students' Association in his senior year. He also earned the Seth H. and Harriet Terry Prize for his commitment to student life.

After graduation, Socash wasn't quite sure what direction to take. So, he did what young men often do in such a situation: he called his mom. "She asked me what I was passionate about," he recalls. "I immediately responded, 'Hiking!' And she simply said, 'Do that.'"

During the next two years, Socash worked as a wilderness trip leader with the Adirondack Mountain Club, which meant living in a tent for months at a time. At the end of his second year as a guide, a friend suggested he talk to his alma mater about joining its admissions department. A few weeks later, Socash met with Jonathan Burdick, the University's dean of admissions and financial aid. He joined the department a month later.

As a conservationist who calls himself a "living Lorax," Socash

is committed to using this experience to show others the beauty of the woods and the value of protecting open spaces. "I'm youthful, I'm dedicated, and I'm backpacking for a year," he says. "I hope there's something about this trip that inspires others to get out and explore the world or to pursue whatever it is they are passionate about." [®]

—KRISTINE THOMPSON

Tyler Socash chronicles his adventure at tylerhikes.blogspot.com and on Instagram, @tylerhikes.



SPECTACULAR: Socash takes a photo at a precipice overlooking Spectacle Lake in Washington State's Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

Globalism, in Stories

Ten days after graduating from Rochester, **Lenore Myka** '94 was on a plane headed to Bucharest, Romania, as a Peace Corps volunteer. Though the Peace Corps was 33 years old at the time, to Romanians it was nearly as fresh-faced as its youngest volunteers. It had been there just three years. Two years before that, the nation had watched with solemn satisfaction as a firing squad sealed the fate of its longtime dictator. Myka was entering a world that was ambiguous and uncertain—to Romanians, and to the international workers and volunteers who'd flocked there to serve them.

Myka, who teaches writing at Boston University, draws from her Peace Corps experience in a collection of short stories to be released this September. The 11 stories that make up *King of the Gypsies* (BkMK Press, University of Missouri–Kansas City) explore what she calls “the mechanics of cross-cultural interaction.” The context for that interaction is global transformation.

“I think it’s really hard to work in organizations overseas,” she says. “It’s also very seductive. You do tend to live a much better

quality of life than you would in your native country.”

During Myka’s time in Bucharest, the Romanian capital was experiencing a swift infusion of capital. High-end restaurants, hotels, and boutiques lined the streets, while only a few Romanians—but nearly every Western aid worker—had the means to patronize them. Myka encountered her fair share of children like her invented character, Irina [see excerpt, page 49].

“They were really, really bold, as Irina is,” Myka says. “But they always impressed me because they were such survivors. They knew how to coax people into helping them out.” The Peace Corps cautioned its volunteers to keep them at a distance, which was not easy for Myka. “You had to create an armor against their experiences,” she says. “In ‘Rol Doboș,’ I imagined what might have happened if I hadn’t done that.”

Myka wrote quite a bit at Rochester. She was a student of novelist Joanna Scott, the Roswell Smith Burrows Professor of English, who has offered praise for Myka’s new collection. She describes the stories as reflections on “the condition of foreignness.”

“Whether the condition of foreignness is perceived as threatening or exhilarating, oppressive or liberating, it becomes motivation in this collection to think sensitively, boldly, and creatively about identity,” Scott writes.

Author Lorraine López, whose 2010 book *Homicide Survivors Picnic and Other Short Stories* was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Prize, praises Myka for her depictions of social class and poverty among women and girls. Asked by *Vela* magazine for some of the best women writers on social class, Lopez named six women including Myka. Myka produced “unforgettably powerful stories,” Lopez wrote, adding, “I am moved by the way the stories drive home the hard truth that the feminization of poverty has a global impact that is quite different than what is experienced in this country.”

Myka’s first published collection had a long gestation period. “When I attempted to write about Romania before, I had much more of an agenda,” Myka says. “It really took me a good decade before I could start writing about Romania without feeling that it was really precious and sentimental.”

Since completing *King of the Gypsies*, Myka has started writing stories set closer to home. The theme of cross-cultural encounters animates those as well. She says, “It’s all very compelling and ripe creative territory.” **R** —KAREN MCCALLY '02 (PHD)



ROMANIAN REFLECTIONS: In her new collection of stories, author Myka draws upon her Peace Corps experience in early postcommunist Romania.



EXCERPT

Trafficked in Bucharest

Irina is 13 years old, but she looks younger than that. She tries to keep it that way. Lured into a brothel in Bucharest in the early years of postcommunist Romania, she escaped. Found by her captors in an orphanage, she escaped again. Now she survives by begging on the streets of the capital, seeking just enough to eat to keep herself going. Just enough to maintain the childlike appearance that might help win the sympathy of the Western aid workers who've poured into the Romanian capital.

By Lenore Myka '94

She can smell their fur coats that carry the scent of chicken fat and rosemary, perfume and cologne. Saliva pools up in the caverns of her mouth. A few yards behind her, the guests of the Intercontinental Hotel push through the revolving doors of the front entrance, releasing blasts of hot air and piano music, the jingle of keys, laughter.

Irina's American is late.

She swallows hard. In front of her, great piles of snow have covered the cracked cement park, hiding its crumbling stairs and shrubs that in the summertime catch loose pages of newspapers and food wrappers in lifeless branches. It is below freezing and there is more snow than Irina has ever seen. The wind blows it up and over curbs and collapsing benches, against the walls of

Excerpt from "Rol Doboş" in King of the Gypsies: Stories (BkMk Press, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2015), the debut collection of short fiction by Lenore Myka '94. Reprinted with permission.

buildings so that it creates tunnels of light down narrow back streets. Irina watches cars and people navigate the brown rivers of icy slush in Piața Universității; a hunched figure dusts snow off the row of wooden memorial crosses displayed in the center of Magheru Boulevard, uncovering the date scratched onto all of them: December 22, 1989. It was only five years ago but feels to Irina like a century; she had been eight then.

A gust of wind dips up and under her knotted skirts, nips at her legs. She pulls her coat to her still-childlike chest, adjusts the string she uses to keep it closed; sucks on the tips of her bare, throbbing fingers. If she weren't afraid of the consequences, she'd curse her American. At least she has her boots. She'd discovered them only this morning. They are several sizes too big, the soles are worn flat, but the wool lining is still good and saves her small feet.

Irina has developed a routine over the past few months, as much as she has ever had one since escaping the brothel. In the early morning hours, after the last metro stop has closed and she has nowhere to keep warm, she kills time by moving. She searches dumpsters and sneaks into yards where someone might store

sacks of potatoes and onions, jars of canned pickles and peppers, or might hang laundry outside in the cold air, as stiff as salted animal hides. Five times a week, en route to work, the woman pauses in the middle of her commute to take Irina to a café. Even now, with her face directly in the sharp wind, Irina can taste the cup of hot cocoa and the slice of doboş—the only thing she ever orders—and hear the heavy tongue of her American negotiating in Romanian for extra whipped cream.

Across the street, the church bell tower chimes nine o'clock. Irina squints into the gray winter light and listens to the slightly off-key bells that seem not to pay tribute to the heavens but to warble helplessly after them, reminding her of the mutterings of dying pigeons that line the city's building ledges and scramble under park benches, pecking at each other's eyes, fighting over a breadcrumb. It's been over an hour. Irina's stomach grumbles. She sucks harder on her fingers but they continue to throb. A sound like heaving emanates from above. The sky finally relents; once again it begins to snow...

"Kel-ly!"

Irina sings out the name, as if her American might materialize out of the morning rush hour, coming to her like a well-trained dog. "Where are you, Kelly?"

It is not her American's real name but one Irina has given her, something she stole from a television show all the kids had watched at an orphanage where Irina lived for a short time. Her sisters hid her there but it didn't last; eventually she was discovered and brought back to the brothel. Kelly Beverly Hills. The name comes from Irina's favorite character on that television show, a girl with blond hair just like her American's and the same smile, too—straight white teeth so large they fill up her face.

Snow has begun to collect on Irina's head, the moisture seeping through her scarf, frigid water sinking into her scalp. She shivers more now, her teeth rattling when she relaxes her jaw. Recently her American has come later and later, and each time Irina resists thinking what this might mean. What if Kelly doesn't come at all today? The thought makes her want to scream and rage about the street, knocking over magazine displays, smashing the spotless windows of expensive restaurants, perfumeries, electronics stores that fill up the blocks of the boulevard. Instead, Irina works her stiff fingers over her scarf, trying to pull it more tightly to her throat...

Irina glimpses her American's shoes... Several yards ahead of her, a beacon of color flashing, then obscured behind a tangle of gray, black and brown pant legs. Irina leaps up onto the curb, speeding now, not bothering to avoid puddles and slush, running into briefcases and book bags, knocking the straps off shoulders, ignoring the comments thrown her way. She nearly passes her American by, shoving into her, hearing the faint oof! the woman makes. Irina skids to a halt. Wheels around. Finally.

"Kel-ly Be-ver-ly He-ills!"

The woman is not surprised to see her and—Irina cannot be sure—may not be pleased. "How are you, Irina?"

Irina throws herself upon the woman, clasping her around her waist, pressing her face into the American's side. With her nose pushed against wool, she inhales slowly, the scent filling her head, making her unsteady on her feet. Irina wants to burrow past the layers of clothing so that she might find the spot underneath where it is dark, silent, hidden. She wriggles her aching fingers through the folds of the woman's coat, trying to find a way inside. The woman accepts her embrace, even returns it, but the coat is buttoned up, impossible to penetrate. **R**

In the News



ROCKET SCIENCE: Cassada will investigate asteroids, and Mars.

He's an Astronaut!

Josh Cassada '00 (PhD) is one of NASA's newest astronauts. In July, he completed a two-year training program along with seven others selected in 2013 from among more than 6,000 applicants, the second-largest applicant pool in NASA's history. A former naval aviator, a physicist, and previously the cofounder and chief technology officer for Quantum Opus, Cassada received technical space system training, robotics instruction, and specialized hardware instruction at space centers around the world. In the coming years, he and the seven other newly minted astronauts aim to be part of the first human mission to an asteroid, as well as to Mars. NASA now employs about 45 astronauts.

Champion Doctor

Bojan Zoric '98 was a leading scorer and an Academic All-American when he played on the Yellowjackets men's soccer team. Now he's a physician for some of the world's greatest soccer athletes: the 2015 World Cup-winning United States Women's National Team.

The championship game was "exactly the type of game I like to see," Zoric told Dennis O'Donnell, director of athletic communications at Rochester, in July. "No one needed me." By which he meant, of course, there were no injuries during the game.

Zoric has been on the team's medical staff since 2008 and also served the team during their gold medal performance at the 2012 Olympic Games in London. He grew up playing soccer, first in Croatia and then in Sweden, where his family moved when he was six. He came to the United States for college because it allowed him to pursue both higher education and soccer. In addition to serving the team, Zoric is part of a group orthopaedics and sports medicine practice, Sports Medicine North, in Peabody, Massachusetts.

Celebrating the Dalai Lama in Song

To celebrate the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday last July, Michael Wohl '88 announced the completion of *Songs for Tibet II*, a follow-up to the 2008 recording *Songs for Tibet*, produced by the Art of Peace Foundation, which Wohl founded and directs. Wohl, who is also associate director of social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship-in-residence at the University's Center for Entrepreneurship, wrote in the *Huffington Post* that the follow-up recording is intended to support Tibetans' "desires for fundamental freedoms of expression." Like the first *Songs for Tibet*, *Songs for Tibet II* features a star lineup, with 16 songs from such artists as Kate Bush, Elbow, Lorde, Of Monsters and Men, Sting, and Peter Gabriel. **R**

Hail, Fellows

Among the hallmarks of a university's renown is how many of its students and recent graduates become winners in a handful of prestigious international scholarship and fellowship competitions for postgraduate study.

Traditionally, the most competitive awards fund study in the United Kingdom. This year, three recent alumni—**Jyothi Purushotham '13**, **Jakob Seidlitz '13**, and **Anjalene Whittier '14**—won such awards. Each will be pursuing advanced study in some aspect of health and medicine this fall at either Oxford or Cambridge.

Rochester students and alumni have had increasing success in these competitions in recent years, according to Belinda Redden, the director of fellowships for the College, who advises applicants. "I'm not surprised by this year's results," she says, noting that three Rochester candidates won the highly coveted Fulbright student grant to the UK in 2011. "I saw our previous success as a harbinger of things to come."

Jyothi Purushotham '13

Jyothi Purushotham '13 heads to Oxford in the fall, where she'll pursue a master of science degree in the university's Department of International Health and Tropical Medicine. Her focus will be global health and research practices, and her goal, she says, is to "understand how science and medicine and technology can be used in different settings that aren't a traditional well-equipped hospital."



The Medical Sciences Graduate School Studentship that will fund her research is the second major scholarship Purushotham has received for study abroad. After graduation, the Rochester native headed to India on a Fulbright, where her research focused on delivering eye care to marginalized, rural populations.

Upon returning to Rochester, Purushotham joined a new population health lab at the Medical Center, created through a collaboration of the ophthalmology and psychiatry departments, and the Center for Community Health. There, she helped lead a diabetes education project aimed at equipping low-income Rochester residents who have the illness—especially those who are unable to see a doctor regularly—with tools and guidelines to better manage their condition at home.

Jakob Seidlitz '13

The teenage brain has long been ignored by neuroimaging researchers because it is so fraught with changes. As a result, much is still unknown about the neurological origins of mental illnesses that begin to develop in adolescence.

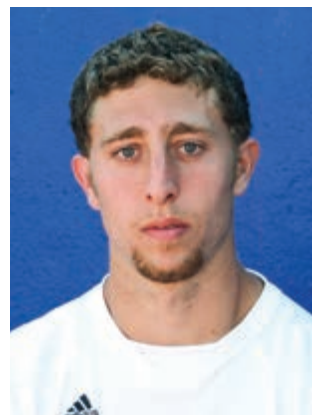
Jakob Seidlitz '13 is tackling the challenges of understanding the adolescent brain by working with researchers at the National Institutes of Health who are pioneering neuroimaging of an often unstable and unpredictable time in human life. He was recently chosen as one of 12 candidates nationwide to pursue

doctoral studies through the National Institutes of Health Oxford-Cambridge Scholars Program. Seidlitz, who will receive his PhD from Cambridge, is the first Rochester student or alumnus ever to win the award.

"The goal of my future research is to understand the trajectory of certain structures in the brain and how they relate to behavior," says Seidlitz, who majored in brain and cognitive sciences. He'll spend two years at the University of Cambridge, and two more at the NIH in Bethesda, Maryland, working with two distinctive data sets to help understand the onset of mood and anxiety disorders and to evaluate treatments.

Seidlitz credits the research experiences he had through his major, as well as a study abroad program at the University College London, for developing his interest in international scientific collaboration. Working with two labs and two data sets for the PhD is "a great way to get a larger-impact PhD, and it's a great way to connect similar science in two places," he says.

He'll also take a translational approach. "My PhD is going to be really clinically focused. I'm a firm believer that if you're not mindful of the clinical implications of some of the processes that you study, it's hard to direct your research."




Anjalene Whittier '14

Anjalene Whittier '14 is a steadfast advocate of disability rights, focused on reducing barriers to care for disabled people and promoting evidence-based intervention for minority youth with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities.

This fall, she heads to Cambridge University, where she'll pursue a PhD in psychiatry on a Gates Cambridge Scholarship. The scholarship, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is among the most prestigious awards for study in the United Kingdom. This year, Whittier was one of 95 scholars selected from a global applicant pool of about 4,000 candidates.

"I will be investigating the intersection of intellectual disability and psychosis," she says. "I hope that my work will allow us to obtain a better understanding of their co-occurrence, and to also promote a high quality of care for those affected by both conditions."

Whittier grew up in Rochester and graduated from the School of the Arts, a specialized middle and high school that's part of the Rochester City School District. After graduation, she studied in Spain with the help of the Joseph P. O'Hern Scholarship for Travel and Study in Europe, funded by Rochester's chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. 



—MAYA DUKMASOVA '12, '13 (T5)