

## Refuting Certain Errors

*being a rebuttal and correction of certain inaccuracies published by UrbanAdventure.org*

A certain Jason Chapman runs one of the largest internet websites on urban exploration. Writing as “Panic!”, Chapman’s “UrbanAdventure.org” is a huge, sprawling mess of a website. A resident of Australia, his site concentrates heavily on the sights - exploration style, of course - of that country, but also delves farther afield, thanks to a handful of “World Trips” he’s taken.

His abruptly and melodramatically terminated 2004 trip saw him visit the Twin Cities, and being the diligent little explorer that he is, he created a page of his activities here... or, at least, those he’ll admit to.

The world really doesn’t need another webpage about the Kittsondale drains, complete with about-average photographs. Thankfully (arguably), his page on the Cities contains other information. Regrettably, most of it is - to be charitable - inaccurate.

As, for reasons good or bad, Chapman’s is one of the more popular and visible UE websites, and his writings are not just an introduction for many to UE in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, but often their only exposure to the same, after receiving several questions about the webpage from a college student writing a paper on UE, we have taken it upon ourselves to correct Mr. Chapman’s inaccuracies.

Firstly, the page in question - titled, confusingly, “001 - UrbanAdventure.org - World Trip 2002 - The abandoned and disused subways of Charleroi Belgium”, is at <http://www.urbanadventure.org/main/2004trip/twincities/twincities.htm> . As of January 2006, it begins:

*The twin cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul are a center of urban exploring activity. The area also has a bit of a reputation for Urban Exploration infighting and turmoil. Over the past year three teenagers were killed while caving in the area. Some urban explorers were almost asphyxiated while exploring a tunnel a couple of years ago. One regular Urban Explorer gathered a considerable amount of gunpowder from the storage caves under the city which he then stored in his garage. Recently some of the Urban Explorers caused over \$400 in damage to doorways in the Saint Paul Labyrinth tunnels. Then in September some of the Explorers in the city began to ostracize on of their members, going as far as to create a petition to encourage other explorers not to associate with him because of differences in opinion. I have to admit I found that ironic, as that particular explorer had been very critical of me due to*

*the differences of opinion between me and some other explorers. If it were not for the politics and poor ethics of some (but not all) of the explorers in the Twin Cities, the place would be an explorers haven.*

It's hard to argue or find fault with the first sentence; the Twin Cities are, indeed, a center of urban exploring activity, with two- to three-score active explorers in the immediate vicinity. Allegations of infighting and turmoil - or, rather, a *reputation* for infighting and turmoil - are subjective, but arguably true. Most of what follows is factually incorrect, and we fail to see its relevance to Chapman's 2004 visit to the Cities.

Yes, three teenagers died in a cave in Saint Paul. They did so not over a year, but in a single incident, in April, 2004. They were not "caving", they were - quite stupidly - exploring a series of caves filled with smoke and carbon-monoxide, and asphyxiated. They had no connection to urban exploration or any active urban explorers.

The nearly-asphyxiated urban explorers were in fact the infamous *Max Action* and friends, who had an unpleasant encounter with methane in a poorly-ventilated sanitary sewer in December of 2001, as detailed at <http://www.actionsquad.org/stahl.htm> . Trying to exaggerate Max and company's admittedly unwise actions by dismissing a cramped, humid, river-of-waste sewer as a "tunnel" seems disingenuous.

To refer to Girard Goder, AKA "*The Fonz*", as a "regular Urban Explorer" without sarcasm is something of an affront to truth and honesty. Goder's short-lived presence on an online UE forum seem to have been his only real involvement in urban exploration. It would be more accurate to refer to Goder - a member of the Minnesota Speleological Society, and now a paranormal investigator - as a spelunker. The brewery cave in question seems to be the closest he ever came to anything UE-related. Photos of his gunpowder are available on the TCUEC site: <http://www.tcuec.com/20051102.pdf> .

The co-ed group of individuals who did several hundred dollars worth of damage to the steam tunnels under the University of Minnesota campus - not the Labyrinth of utility tunnels of Action Squad fame, several miles away - have, as far as we're aware, never been caught, so characterizing them as urban explorers seems, at best, premature. Tentative identification of several members as belonging to a hacking group very loosely and ephemerally involved in UE seems insufficient grounds to make authoritative categorizations.

The September 2004 petition among Minnesota's urban explorers had nothing whatsoever to do with ostracization; rather, it was, in effect, a "vote of no confidence", asking that the party - a moderator of a popular forum - have

that privilege revoked. With the support of perhaps a fifth of the community, if that, it was unsuccessful.

Being criticized for “politics” is in itself ironic, coming from a person who's been at the heart of more squabbles, disputes, controversies, and public conflicts of personality than can reasonably be listed. While, from all available information Chapman's snide remark about the ethics of Twin Cities explorers is itself unmitigated hypocrisy, it is not, by reasonable standards, unfounded. His preceding examples are of extraordinary weakness, but anyone familiar with the people who participate in exploration-related activities in the Cities - we hesitate to call them all Explorers - is doubtless aware of the widespread misconduct by the ethically-challenged. Controlling the damage these idiots do is one of the functions undertaken by the *TCUEC* and it's members. Anyone can call themselves an urban explorer, but that doesn't make them one, anymore than calling Jason Chapman accurate and honest makes it true. For every Jason Chapman, or Girard Goder, or pyromaniacal seminary student lacking in common sense, there are a dozen low-key, intelligent men and women exploring the haven that is the Cities, responsibly, ethically, and undetected.

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