

Woodsmoke



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Woodsmoke Magazine

The DOC's Own Publication

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Cover: Owen Cadwalader '07 on the Weissshorn, Switzerland. Photo by Andrew Flynn '07.



From the Editor


Marianne Eppig '08

Dartmouth is one of the few colleges in the nation where undergraduates can procrastinate by hiking (or skiing) a mountain, kayaking white water, or climbing a rock face, and are actually encouraged to do so. It's a wonderful place for those who take advantage of the Green's gorgeous surroundings. The stories in this publication are testament to the incredible adventures that Dartmouth students create, the fellowships they forge during these quests, and the life lessons they learn in the process. While some of these adventures take place close to Hanover, many of them begin in landscapes so divergent from our Appalachia that it's clear they take place more than halfway around the globe.

The DOC funds some of these amazing adventures, near and far, through the celebrated Wolfgang Schlitz Fund. Anyone can apply for financial aid for a planned excursion; this prospect makes the DOC one of the best outing clubs in the nation.

Take this incredible opportunity if you have an idea for a unique expedition or just a spirit that hears the call of the Great Outdoors and hopes to answer it!

Obviously, you don't need to go all the way around the world to find adventure. It could find you anywhere: on a run or when you look into the opening of a trail, curious as to what might be waiting inside. Sometimes the escape you seek is right here, next to campus, on a giant rock or on a seemingly quiet river. And here in the mountains there are many people willing to come out and play along in your journey. The people you meet and the friendships you build during these "trips" are always longer lasting than the pursuits themselves. Probably most importantly, the person you become during and after the serenity, the challenge, the experience of the Outdoors will stay with you forever.

The world is waiting for you. Go out and discover your adventure. 

Letter from the Prez

Phil Bracikowski '08, DOC President

The Dartmouth Out O' Doors is a special place. If you are one of the thousands who calls Robo home—the top of Balch Hill, the summit of Moosilauke, the Connecticut River, the rocks and crags of the ubiquitous granite, and the forests of the Grant, if you call these places home—then you share this special sense of place. While recently warming myself in front of the fire inside the nearly completed Harris II Cabin, watching the embers fight against the cold and early evenings of mid-fall, I couldn't help but think of how the DOC has changed since the last Woodsmoke was published. We have nurtured and graduated two classes of climbers, kayakers, farmers, skiers, hikers, and friends of the outdoors—and two more bright-eyed and excited classes of underclassmen have stepped into their place. The College Grant Bicentennial has come and gone. The new Velvet Rocks Shelter was dedicated to Will Brown. The Ski Team was the NCAA Champion last winter. Another Spring Woodsmen's Weekend has been hosted at Dartmouth. The pace of change only seems to increase, higher and higher.

Even this fall has seen its share of change, good change. DOC Trips saw a record participation rate in the class of '11. Fall Weekend saw over 200 people take part, venturing into the wilderness for all manner of trips. So many people, in fact, came to the Lodge for music and dinner that two sittings were required. Harris Inauguration happened to much fanfare, despite its continued progress towards completion. Harris Cabin's reconstruction is the largest building project the DOC has undertaken since the construction of Moosilauke Ravine Lodge. There have been over a hundred students and alumni volunteers who have helped in this endeavor.

Harris has been an amazing experience for the entire DOC. In no other event or project have I seen the members of the many varied DOC clubs come together as one club.

As you can see, the DOC has swirled and twirled and scattered to all sorts of places, achieving greater and greater heights. But just like smoke rising from the embers of a fire, we have all come from the same single burning desire to be in the wild and call the outdoors home. 🐾



Spring Trip – Ben Koons '08 being ridiculous.



Grant Crew 2007 – Emily Harding-Theobald '08.



Spring Trip – Alex Steinberg '07 preparing for a flip. Photos by Phil Bracikowski '08.



Attempt on the Dent du Gent: Chamonix, France

At 3:30 am, we woke at the Torino hut after a long slog across the Valle Blanche and began to race. On the Mount Blanc Massif, cable cars transport climbers virtually to the base of climbs. It makes the mountain crowded, but it allows more people to appreciate the majesty of it. A difference of five minutes in the morning can mean the difference in being first on a route and last in an ant line, which ultimately means the difference between summitting and needing to turn back halfway through.

We gulped our breakfast down, roped up and trudged by headlamp to the base of the Dent du Gent. We passed several groups as we climbed the increasing snow gradient. I patted Andrew and myself on the back. Nearing the base of the Dent du Gent, we came to a massive vertical granite tooth rising out of the snow where the slope steepens and if you fall, you fall a long way. There were some fixed ropes in all the wrong places that gave a false sense of security.

Although exposed to the air all around us, we were still in the race. We finished at the top (which was really the base) in first place. We won. Ha. But, at the base there was a 700 foot drop down to the valley floor and we hadn't even begun to climb. I got a little dizzy. Furthermore, the entire climb was shaded in the morning darkness and the wind had sucked the warmth out of us. We balked, relinquishing our spot in line, and moved into the sun in hopes of becoming less miserable.

In the sunlight, our eyes warmed to the art nouveaux scrolled cornices of the Roquefort ridge begging Andrew to walk over them. They were not begging me. I could see a 70-degree short snow headwall in the distance that I did not want to move up. I shuffled slowly along the ridge, and

Learning in the Alps

Owen Cadwalader '07

“In sport climbing you try to fall,
In trad climbing you try not to fall,
In alpine climbing you don't fall.”

—Andrew Flynn '07

This was my first introduction to the world of Alpine climbing. I was comfortable with falling all the time at Rumney. I always knew that if a move was too hard I could just sag back onto the last bolt. In sport climbing, you are connected to the rock by a 3/8 inch bolt, and I am convinced that it is safer than walking down the sidewalk. The idea of needing not to fall was exciting and frightening, and I saw it as a real adventure. It sounded like I could handle it while sitting in our wood paneled hostel in the Chamonix valley...



Roquefort Ridge

only because of Andrew's encouragement. Both sides of the snow ridge dropped down over 1,000 feet to the glacial crevasses below, and depth perception was difficult with the scale of that relief. If someone were to fall off a ridge, the safety plan for all alpine climbers is for the faller's climbing partner (who is roped to the faller) to jump off the opposite side of the ridge. Ah, yeah. As I looked ahead at the waving snow cornices, I saw the slip and slide headwall. I could see my future: misjudging one snow step and going for the longest and last ride of my life, all the way down to the glacier below which would swallow me up, and spit me out the bottom of its terminal moraine 20,000 years later. I didn't like that image. I told Andrew that we must turn around. Not wanting to push me too much on my first real alpine climb, he agreed.

In the Valley

We came back down to the valley and ate fajitas in Chamonix, France. Over a few glasses of beer, I thought about my failed first attempt at mountaineering. I had spent the last seven years of my life rowing, conditioning my mind and body to deal with physical pain. But in rowing there is no danger of ending your life, and very little danger of injury. I like my life. For me, the mental aspect of mountaineering was and is more difficult, much

more difficult than the mental game of rowing. You must have faith in yourself and your partner to know that you are not going to make a mistake under any conditions. And there are always those what-ifs. Physically, the climbing was a piece of pie. The climbing was fun, but consequential.

I couldn't get over the lack of anchoring ourselves to the rock at all times. Andrew explained that while alpine climbing, "Speed is safety in the mountains." He said that you need to move fast enough so that you are not on the mountain in the afternoon, when the sun begins to melt and loosen the frozen rock. To climb fast we climb simultaneously, roped together using the ridge as our protection. The lack of fixed protection to the rock was something I needed to get used to.

Changing my crampons helped me get over this fear. I had stupidly bought a pair of lightweight crampons which had prongs about half the length of real mountaineering crampons. This was one case in which my gear really did make a difference. The first time I was on a snow slope with the right crampons, I felt secure and knew that the crevasse 700 feet below wouldn't swallow me because I was just not going to fall.

Attempts on the Zinalrothorn and the Obergabelhorn: Zermatt, Switzerland

We traveled to Zermatt, Switzerland in an attempt to get away from the crowds. We used our legs to get to the hut, which meant there would be fewer people because not many use their legs to get to this hut. We walked down the street from our hostel, took a left, and started hiking up to the Rothorn hut in preparation to climb the Zinalrothorn and the Obergabelhorn. What great names. It was such



View from Zinalrothorn

a treat to walk out our door and immediately meet the trailhead. There was no need for driving like we do in the States. Village streets turn into trails, which turn into rock, which turn into snow ridges, and finally alpine summits. You just have to keep going.

While climbing the Zinalrothorn, we only saw three other parties. I controlled my fear on the way up. The summit was satisfying because of that, but the wind battered us and we quickly descended. On the way down my ice axe was in the way. It poked me while I climbed, and never worked the way it was supposed to in the snow. I almost fell flat on my face from tripping on the tip. The frustration brought the fear back. It was only later that I realized that the ice axe was fine, it was just that I had forgotten to eat anything for the last six hours. Lesson learned: eat or the little discomforts become large. Back at the hut, the weather turned sour so we slept and headed back to the valley forgetting about the Obergabelhorn.

The Weisshorn and No Huts

The apex of our trip came several days later when we climbed Weisshorn, the tallest mountain in that local region of the Alps.

The Weisshorn is known for having snow that melts early. Most parties start at 2 am or before, which is only slightly earlier than a normal alpine start but enough to make the difference that made us decide not to sleep the night before. We hiked to the Weisshorn hut. Inside we removed our layers and my mouth dripped from the smell of the beef stew cooking. Andrew stopped my hand as I reached for my wallet to pay for a dinner. I frowned. Our trip had gone a little over budget and we were trying to save a few dollars. Outside we ate our meal as the sun fell. We waited until midnight for the snow to harden. My butt froze to the ground despite the layer of climbing rope I sat on.

Midnight was exciting because we got to start climbing. Only minutes after we roped up, I was sweating through all of my layers. It was a welcome change. The first part of the route was an unhappy slog up a moderately steep snow slope. We were looking for a large cairn and I couldn't stop thinking, "Hello, my name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die." We never found the cairn but we turned left anyway and began the climb.

The gravel was loose in between steps of vertical rock, and the vertical bits were chaussey. We climbed quickly to avoid pulling rock down on each other. It was still dark as we zigzagged to the rocky ridge where wind and water had torn away all the less resistant rock, leaving only the harder rock that's far more pleasant to climb on. We climbed together over the rock ridge for an hour or so and onto the higher snow ridge until we saw a white hump ahead of us. We knew that it had to be the summit. About this time, Andrew had to stop for his fourth poop of the trip. I thought this was hilarious and took a picture. Andrew did not share my feelings. We reached the white hump and

the snow flattened; some of the mist rose to reveal another white hump 500 meters ahead of us. This was the second in a series of many false summits.

After an hour of climbing in a cloud, I said to Andrew, “You know no one would know if we just turned around.” My words were hollow because we both knew that neither of us was going to let the other do that. We overtook another short rocky ridge and could see the real summit. The rest of the Alps covered below us. I was miserable. The wind was howling and battered our faces with ice, my hands were cold, and the sweat on my back dried with a burn. At the summit, wind channeled ice and snow right to our faces. Andrew got up to take pictures, but I buried my head in my collar and tried to eat a frozen granola bar. It was hard. Getting off of the summit was a better feeling. But then the reality set in that we had to climb down the entire route, and we recoiled into ourselves and began to march.

We paused at the hut, smiled at one another, and headed to the valley for sleep.

The Doldenhorn: Kandersteg, Switzerland

One train ride and we arrived in Kandersteg, Switzerland where Andrew had honed his mountaineering skills guiding for international scouts. The mountains are smaller here, which means they were even less crowded. Our goal was to take down Andrew’s nemesis: the Doldenhorn. Three years ago, Andrew spent fourteen hours reaching the summit and then had to stay the night on the summit. The scout center almost had to call a helicopter and they still joke with him about it. Revenge was needed.

We rode a chair lift up and then hiked past a beryl green glacial lake in the bright sun. The hut was magnificent and had the best food of the trip by far, and



Top of the Doldenhorn

the bunks had down comforters. There even was a wood fired hot tub. The sunset was a sunset. Tranquil.

We raced ourselves up the mountain. I began to feel like I knew what I was doing. I was comfortable. We traversed a steep snow ridge to the snow summit. The sun shined, the wind was calm, and we arrived on the summit 4 hours and 45 minutes after we started. The descent route, glacial lake, and town were below us. No more unknown, we made it. Vengeance.

As I hiked down with a smile on my face, I was thinking about the summit of the Weisshorn and the ice lacerating my face. I almost wanted that discomfort back. 🐉



Andrew Flynn '07 and Owen Cadwalader '07

Flirting with the Power of Mountains

Ben Peters '10

Drip-drop, drip-drop, drip-drop. I woke up at 5 am this morning to the sound of rain softly pitter-pattering on our green tarp. It had stopped by about 6:30 when we got up, but the sound echoed in my head, perpetuating a sense of foreboding that clung to me throughout breakfast. Still, the sun was shining and the air was clear, if more humid than usual, as we set off down the trail up the long, arduous, 3,500 foot climb to Mather Pass.

The climb started easily enough, rolling over a series of wooded undulations on the canyon floor. As we plodded on, though, it grew steeper, winding its way up tight switchbacks skirting the sides of seemingly impassible cliffs, rising out of the valley as the sun rose into the blue sky, broken only by mountains and the occasional cloud. By the time the trail left most of the tree cover behind, my shirt was soaked with sweat, and I could faintly smell the now-familiar odor of wet Ibex wool at the edges of my nostrils. I didn't really care though; by this point I had long since passed through the cleanliness level most people call "dirty".

I took a break by the side of the first Palisade Lake, cradled at 10,500 feet by peaks scraping the sky almost 4,000 feet above. I took off my boots as I looked out across the water and waited for Tim. We almost never hike together during the day. It's not that we don't enjoy each other's company; rather we hike at very different paces, and with breaks, snacks, and evenings to talk and socialize, we don't feel like we're missing anything by with-

drawing into our own worlds defined by the steps of our feet. Hiking alone like this gives me a chance to think, to disconnect my mind from the day-to-day routine and stress of the world and let it wander at will. There are times when I feel like I've left my body completely on autopilot as it attends to the mindless task of placing one foot in front of the other, leaving my mind free. It doesn't even matter where my mind goes at times like these – it ranges without constraints from my choice of major to observations of the weather. Whatever the subject is, I feel like I've tapped into some source of insight that doesn't exist off the trail. It's a fragile, beautiful thing, a delicate ice sculpture that threatens to shatter if I touch it or even try to examine it too closely.

I saw a small, Tim-shaped speck moving below somewhere, or at least I thought I did. The terrain here is broken, cut by glaciers and streams into channels of rock, with patches of hardy trees and grass clinging tenaciously to life, no doubt dreading the onset of winter. I moved my eye over where I knew the trail traversed this wild plain, and I saw the speck again. Definitely Tim. I watched him walk for a little while; his long-limbed, slightly goofy stride was unmistakable. Soon bored, my eyes followed the cliffs upward towards the lofty mountain peaks. An involuntary chill ran through me at the sight of dark clouds, their swollen bellies flowing slowly over the ridge and obscuring distant ridges. The very idea of clouds seemed foreign, coming as they did after a week and a half of cloudless sunny weather. It was hard to get too worried though, sitting by the edge of a blue-green glacial lake with the sun beating warmly down on my bare feet.

There are other times hiking when I don't leave my body on autopilot. Some-

times the mountains can heighten all the senses and jolt my body into a level of self-awareness that I rarely see in other spheres of life. Walking above Palisade Lakes I felt this state of mind take hold. My breathing was steady and deep, though it strained a little to get enough oxygen in the high altitude air. I imagined my heart beating powerfully, the oxygen flowing through my body to my leg muscles where it was greedily snapped up and converted into movement. I looked at every rock I passed over, an endless montage of jagged edges and mineral deposits. The pass looming above stubbornly refused to appear any closer, despite switchback after switchback. The only signs of overall progress were the progressively better views back down the long glacial valley and the occasional glimpses of tiny patches of glacier hiding at the bottom of long rocky couloirs.

The top of the pass surprised me. Each new switchback on the way up seemed to boost my energy a bit, even as the sweat dripped down my face and soaked my shirt. Still, I was almost unprepared for the final stretch to the pass itself. The trail was cut into the side of the mountain, roughly following a contour line on an uphill tack. There was a corner, and suddenly the mountain wasn't in front of me. Instead, the ridge dropped off steeply into a wide high-altitude plain dotted with streamlets and small glacial lakes. From this vantage point I could see the depth profile of the lake bottom, the green of the shallow areas gradually changing over to the dark blue of deeper ones. Miles away, down the gradually sloping valley, speckled pockets of trees started appearing with greater and greater frequency until they blocked out all signs



Ben Peters '10 in Mather Pass. Photo by Tim Bolger '10

of the yellow mountain grass and scattered rocks. And far away, the opposite edge of the valley climbed above the forest again to another series of sharp peaks, the next line of defense in the range's relentless march south. It was a commanding view, a view that took a few minutes to fully sink in, especially coming so abruptly around a curve in the trail.

By the time Tim made it up to the ridge I had put on my red fleece. The first few minutes of standing at the top of the ridge were liberating: top-of-the-world feel, a stiff mountain wind blowing across my heated skin, and no pack on my back. But the air was cold and the wind has a nasty habit of sucking away any residual heat, so before I knew it I was shivering. I put on my fleece just in time to see Tim come around the corner, his tired face instantly melting into a sunny smile when he saw the view in front of us. We high-fived, exuberantly reveling in this opportunity to explore the High Sierras.

"What time is it?" Tim hadn't brought his watch on this trip because he wanted to lose track of that vestige of civilization, but he used my watch constantly.

"A little before 12... 11:47"

"Let's eat lunch up here! The view's amazing!"

"Ya..." I looked north, where a few valleys away the mountains were fading under a black mass of cloud. "We should be quick about it."

We had peanut butter and jelly wraps for lunch and I was excited. From the comfort of an armchair back home, peanut butter doesn't sound particularly amazing, but thanks to poor food planning, I had been carrying an unopened can of peanut butter for over a week at this point and over the past few days every time I saw it, my mouth had wa-

tered a bit. That's one thing the trail does to you; I have never been as hungry as I am on a long backpacking trip. At this point, twelve days in, the peanut butter tasted as good as a gourmet steak back home. I even took a few spoonfuls without the wrap and let the taste hover in my mouth.

"This is (mgfhh) f***ing amazing!" My supreme happiness with the meal was directly proportional to my inability to say a full continuous sentence.

"MMM!" Tim's mouth was full too. Across the valley the mountaintops were buried in clouds, their lower flanks cloaked in almost dusk-like light.

The storm seemed too surreal to be true until it came upon us. It crossed the valley we had so recently hiked up with breath-taking, yet stately, speed. We were barely ten steps down from the pass when a massive peal of thunder sounded so close that we felt it more than heard it. All traces of the sun were gone now, and the wind was suddenly a vengeful monster, raking the ridge with a brutal ferocity.

"HAIL!" Tim shouted, as he almost broke into a run. He was right; I felt a stinging cold sensation on my arm. At the same time a new sound assaulted our ears: a soft series of noises best described as "thwaps", gradually increasing in frequency.

The next few minutes were confused. They exist in my memory more as a series of images than a real coherent story. There were the loud peals of thunder, accompanied by searing flashes of bright lightening and rolling shockwaves of air, too close for comfort. There was the pain of hundreds or thousands of hail pellets hitting my bare arms and soaking through my pants, and the sensation of my hands going numb as the supply

Sugarin'

Anonymous

of warm blood from my core cooled off in my arms before reaching them. The surge of adrenaline and a few twinges of fear imprinted themselves on my memory as I felt the intense desire to get off the ridge, down to the forest several miles away. At some point there was the realization that it was going to get cold – real, fingers-numb, losing-motor-skills cold – if I didn't get some more clothes on quickly. My eyes scanned ahead down the trail, intermittently lit in the harsh, almost unnatural, flashes of lightning, and saw a large boulder a few switchbacks below. My body, rather than my mind, seemed to make the decision, and I found myself walking straight down the mountain, cutting off a long switchback in favor of the steep, gravelly scree field. It was poor etiquette, but I quickly found myself in the relative shelter of the boulder, where I slung my pack around in front and pulled out my shell.

The storm lasted a while; it didn't really stop raining until we finally made it, soaking and cold, to the shelter of the pine forest growing in the basin. Behind us, the high mountain ridge stood, victoriously tinted white in newly fallen hail, reminding us of the power we had just flirted with. Over the next few days we learned to live with very different weather from the non-stop sun of the first ten days, but it was this first hailstorm that really stuck in my mind. Any brush with something so powerful, so beyond the control of humans, leaves a lasting impression on me. That evening, sitting in my down coat outside our thin tarp, perched in a little glade on the edge of tree line, I got a glimpse of perspective, an image of just how tiny we were in this land of giants. I fell asleep to the sound of light rain, drumming on the tarp and inside my head. 🍄

I'll be honest: I'm something of an imposter. I'm not a Yankee and I'm not a New Englander. I can't ski, canoe, or chop wood, I own no flannel, and I haven't read Thoreau. I do have a sweet tooth and I like trees, though, and these were qualifications enough.

They must have been at the point of total desperation by the time I offered my help, because they soon asked me to run the entire maple syrup operation at the organic farm. Impulsively, I said sure, but I soon began to regret my choice – sugaring, it seemed, was complicated, outdoorsy work. I walked away from a tour of the sugarbush with blisters from my boots and the fear that my arms were nowhere near strong enough to carry ten gallons of sap across a snowy hillside.

But it is beautiful out there. Sunlight filtering through leafless branches and hitting snow is like nothing else. In the course of an hour, Farm Manager Scott explained to me the historical use of white pines, the dietary preferences of



Maple sugar collection bucket in the Dartmouth Organic Farm sugar stand

the porcupine, and the attributes of a good sugar maple. I saw beech leaves, orange-brown and translucent, dangling from trees that, I was told, were extending their range northward but were still southerners at heart. Chickadees whistled manically in the willows. You could almost hear the trees yawning and stretching their limbs.

I received guidance from a textbook which was a funny little tome entitled *Backyard Sugarin'* that emphasized economics over aesthetics, from Noel Perrin, and from John Elder who had built his own sugar shack and was so proud that he wrote a book about it. But sugaring is the sort of activity that you can't really understand the nuances of until you do it yourself. So one afternoon Scott and I headed out in snowshoes, towing a sled, ten buckets, spouts, rings, a hand-crank auger, and a hammer. The sap was not running quickly that first day, but to the uninitiated it seems like a miracle when liquid drips from a hole you've just drilled into a trunk that, apart from being upright, looks all but dead. For the first time I heard the hollow plunk of sap hitting a bucket bottom; it's an unmistakable, unforgettable sound.

Sugaring – make that sugarin' – turned out to be an activity that couldn't get much simpler. The process, in its entirety, consists of: 1) making a hole in a tree; 2) collecting the sap that drips out; and 3) boiling the sap. Even squirrels, who will nick maples to lap up the sap that dribbles out, have mastered most of it. It's a process that humans figured out thousands of years ago (evidence shows that the pursuit of this sweet syrup spans cultures and ages), and it's a process that for thousands of years has largely stayed the same. We were boil-

ing our sap in a metal pan on top of a funky, rusted firebox that had spent a former life as an oil barrel. Granted, enterprising sugarers elsewhere have decided to suck the sap out of the maples with vacuums, to move it not with elbow grease but with plastic tubing, and to boil it down with fire burning oil or natural gas. But the time spent in those snowy woods – time spent warming hands against the fire, slipping on tree roots, lopping off kindling with a maul, fussing with the burning logs to get a beautiful, noisy, rolling boil – was authentic enough for me.

Noel, John, and *Backyard Sugarin'* will tell you that sugaring draws the sociability out of even the most taciturn New Englander. I did receive a number of visitors that spring, but the days that truly stood out were the ones without visitors and without sap runs, days when I wandered through the woods following deer trails, or when I lay in the open to watch the V's of geese wind their northward way up the river valley, or when I sang off-key to myself and the trees. Don't get me wrong – I enjoyed every minute of conversation around the sugaring station. It's just that humans can be complicated, touchy organisms, and interactions with the trees seem to take less emotional energy. In the leafless woods, I was isolated and didn't feel lonely at all; the steady percussion from the sap buckets was a reminder that I was surrounded by company.

All of the sugaring literature concludes with a thorough going-over of costs, returns, and profits, but since I'm not a real Yankee, I won't pretend that it was the lucrative prospects of sugaring that hooked me.

That year, we took down the buckets and removed the taps as the buds were breaking and the maples bloomed. 🐿

Ballad of the Smarts Privy Carry

Phil Wagner '09

Based on true events, with apologies to Robert Service.

*There are strange things done 'neath the AT sun
By the DOC's trailworking corps,
And the wooded trails have their secret tales
That would make your shoulders sore.
Those hikers so rough have done bizarre stuff,
But the craziest task they did start
Was the carrying of lumber, prodigious in number,
Up the mountain known as Smarts.*

*Now, the Mountain of Smarts severely departs
From your typical rolling hill,
Its sides are so steep that Fifty hikers weep,
And a great number become ill.
So oft was it hiked, on Trips and the like,
That the privy there saw a large showing;
And with each hiker's addition the privy's condition,
Decayed, 'til it was overflowing.*

*To combat this crisis required all the devices
That Cabin and Trail could command;
A Chubber named Tom, with tremendous aplomb,
Sought to answer this mission's demands.
This man was quite skilled, he his promise fulfilled,
And a consummate shed he designed;
A palatial shack, an architectural snack
This privy would be most refined.*

*Yet this outhouse's weight was inordinately great,
Every piece of its frame was tremendous;
Though CnT tried to haul, they soon slowed to a crawl
For the obstacles were so horrendous.
So the pieces they left, to lay utterly bereft
On the side of the mountain of Smarts;
And these pieces of lumber, during winter's long slumber
At length began to lose heart.*

*Yet they needn't have feared, for a man with a beard
That next fall did conceive of a scheme.
A new operation, to effect the salvation
Of that lumber so cruelly demeaned.
Luke and Phil sounded a call throughout Robinson Hall,
That was heard at both Moore and the Hop,
"Let us not shrink with fear, but yet persevere
And carry that thing to the top!"*

*All the DOC heard these inspiring words,
But only the stoutest of heart
Possessed the conviction to make their conscription
And go forth to the mountain of Smarts.
Thirteen they were, these brave connoisseurs
Of manual labor and toil;
A group so obsessed, they resolved not to rest,
And their task no weather would spoil.*

*The forecast they checked, but none could expect
That the weather could be so abhorrent;
The heavens they scowled, and the winds they howled,*



*And the rain gushed forth in a torrent.
The mighty floods and immeasurable mud
Made it hard even to walk, much less haul
Those ponderous boards that lay in a horde;
Their quantity simply appalled.*

*All morning they toiled, those hikers so loyal,
With ponderous planks on their backs;
All afternoon too, although ere long they knew
That the odds tall against them were stacked.
And yet they perceived that they had achieved
The transport of so many planks;
And as the pile dwindled, a small hope was kindled,
In spite the weather so rank.*

*And at the hour of three, the joyful decree
Was heard, "It's finished, we're done!"
Yes, every last part of the Privy of Smarts
Reached the top; the battle was won.*

*So when next you're there and you sit on that chair
You would do well to take time and think
Of the Herculean labor it required of your neighbors
(And it might take your mind off the stink).
There are strange things done 'neath the AT sun
By the DOC's trailworking corps,
And the wooded trails have their secret tales
That would make your shoulders sore.
Those hikers so rough have done bizarre stuff,
But the craziest task they did start
Was the carrying of lumber, prodigious in number,
Up the mountain known as Smarts.* 🐾

The Noatak

A Schlitz Adventure

Margi Dashevsky '10

The steady drone of the float plane's engine reverberated inside my skull as I pressed my forehead hard against the window, straining to take in as much as I could of the vast landscape streaking by below. Flying high above the central Brooks Range in northern Alaska, we came at last to a broad valley ringed by rugged peaks and began our descent to the headwaters of the Noatak River. Noatak, which means "gateway to the interior" was the name given to the river by the Inupiat people whose ancestors had traveled through this valley for thousands of years. Like these ancient people and the wildlife that continues to inhabit the valley, we too planned to follow the passage-way carved through the mountains by the Noatak over the ages.

My mom and I waved goodbye when the plane took off, and once the throb of the engine had gradually faded away and the tiny speck had disappeared above the horizon, silence settled once more over the valley. Surrounded by our pile of gear—all that would sustain us for the coming weeks—we could sense the miles upon miles of vast wilderness that now engulfed us. We stood in awe and disbelief as the realities of what lay ahead began to seep in.

We were embarking on a journey that would follow the teal-grey waters of the Noatak River through what is arguably the largest undeveloped river drainage remaining on the entire North American continent. We planned to paddle our canoe westward through the Brooks Range and along the DeLong mountains until we reached the only year-round human settlement in the valley, the village

of Noatak. Three hundred miles of pristine wilderness protected by national park boundaries lay between us and that village. Such vast stretches of wilderness were unknown to me, and I longed to join this river, to know it intimately, to be wholly part of this landscape.

We were a mother and a daughter, not on a quest to identify a rare species of lichen or bring home a trophy moose, but rather to realize a mutual dream. Since nothing, other than my father's intense anxieties, had presented itself as an obstacle to our wild scheme, we jumped at this rare opportunity. It was a chance to get to know one of Alaska's great rivers, to fall into a rhythm that can only be found after weeks in the wilderness, and we treasured the ability to share the time and experience with each other.

For two and a half weeks—eighteen nightless Alaskan summer days—we followed the meandering waters of the Noatak. Paddling our orange, inflatable canoe around each bend, we navigated between shoals, submerged logs, and occasional rapids. Stopping to stretch our legs for a midday break or setting out after dinner for an evening hike, we explored the riverbanks, tundra meadows, lakes, and ridges that were all part of the valley that sheltered us. While camped on gravel and silt bars at night, when the sun would dip briefly behind the mountains, we charted our journey on topographic maps. Though created using modern technology, the maps' labeled features still bore their traditional Inupiat names, names that had been passed down, surviving through the ages like the land they belong to. Our favorite, by far, was a little creek with a name so long it hardly fit on the map. Nigikpalvgururavrak became an entertaining tongue twister as we traced our progress around each bend, mile after mile, map after map.

As the days went by, my mom and I not only became comfortable with the river, learning to read the surface of the water and to anticipate its currents, but we also fell into a rhythm with each other. In the beginning, we had to make a deliberate effort to synchronize our strokes in order to paddle efficiently. After several days on the river, the timing entered into our subconscious and by the end of the trip we had developed a connection that allowed the unison of motion to happen of its own accord. We were swept along in the ceaseless current, and as we found our rhythm, the river became a part of us.

Though a full week could pass without seeing another human's footprint, no matter how utterly alone we may have felt, we were never truly by ourselves. The occasional hum of an airplane far overhead would remind us that we were not the only ones experiencing the splendor of the val-

ley. And no matter how desolate the vast arctic landscape might have seemed at first glance, our valley was home to many life forms, large and small, easily overlooked by those who have not learned to see them.

We shared the valley, often unknowingly, with a multitude of other beings. Plants were always underfoot, intricate and stunning if one bent down close enough to see. But the mobile creatures, those not firmly rooted to the soil, were much more elusive and rare to glimpse. Signs of their presence were everywhere, giving clues about who else lived and had lived in the valley: bits of hair caught in the willows, weathered antlers, and narrow trails etched into the landscape over the centuries by each set of hooves. It was clear that caribou sometimes frequent the valley in great numbers, but we had yet to see more than a few distant individuals.



Paddling the Noatak River

The fine glacial silt lining of the river also kept a detailed, though ephemeral, log of everyone who had been by. Each time we came ashore we would tie up our boat and then stroll down the beach, taking note of who else had walked this same shoreline. Caribou, moose, fox, wolf, and bear could all be found on nearly every bank, and nothing could send the now familiar tingle up and down my spine like the sight of a fresh set of grizzly tracks.

Over time I learned to pick out subtleties in the landscape that I might previously have disregarded. Small movements on the nearby bank might turn out to be a ground squirrel peering at me quizzically on its hind legs, slight variations in color on the hillside across the river might be end up being caribou munching on lichen, and even the tiny white specks on a far mountain slope could materialize into dhal sheep when examined through binoculars. Searching, hoping for a fellow inhabitant of the valley to reveal itself, I would scan over the surrounding landscape, as if my gaze were a comb that might snag on any movement or abnormalities worthy of a second look. My eyes were always alert, tuned in for something in particular—for that tell-tale gold, a glint of sun reflected off the long, blonde hairs on the back of a grizzly.

One evening, we clambered up a nearby ridge that had been periodically speckled

with traversing caribou all afternoon. As the late evening light grew flat, we watched scattered bands of caribou steadily move across the steep tundra slopes. Graceful creatures with bodies perfectly engineered to bound across the tundra, they seemed to glide effortlessly over difficult terrain that had taken us half an hour to negotiate. They flowed steadily across the landscape, all part of a mass migration, from the Arctic Coastal Plain over to their wintering ground on the southern side of the mountains. They too used the valley as a passageway on their journey, drawn by an undeniable force in the same direction, always westward.

Walking back to camp we came upon a circle of stones that ringed a deep hole in the tundra. Examining the lichen covered rock, it was clear that many years had passed since they had been set into place by skilled hands. We wondered how many seasons had come and gone since the hunter had walked this same ridge and shared this same valley with the caribou that had provided him the meat he then stored here in the ground. Seeing this remnant of the past reminded us that ancient people had once survived in this same arctic landscape without the manufactured boat, stove, and other equipment upon which we now find ourselves so dependent.

We continued westward, swept along in the river's current, moving alongside the caribou. Over the following days we encountered band after band, and at times whole expanses of tundra would be dotted with hundreds of their moving bodies. Each one was individual, yet they all moved together at a continual, steady pace. Stretches that had been blanketed by caribou one day could be vacant the next, emptied of the life that had filled it just hours before.

This intense but shifting use of the land is what allows these great numbers



Grizzly bear. Photo by Tim Bolger '10

Fishin' in the Bob

Josh Hurd '08

of caribou to subsist on such fragile, arctic vegetation. The months, and sometimes years, before the caribou will return to the same area allow for the necessary recuperation that keeps them from destroying the very land upon which they depend. The human feet that walked these ridges hundreds and thousands of years ago also understood the necessity of such shifting use. Yet something changed when people started settling down, leaving behind the wisdom of their nomadic, subsistence lifestyle. Somewhere along the way, in society's incessant rush towards what we consider modernization and progress, that knowledge was lost and we fell out of rhythm with the land.

Twenty miles upstream from the village of Noatak, we knew it was our last night on the river when we selected the tent site on a silty cut bank. From our sleeping bags we could look out over a stretch of cobbled gravel that separated us from the river, whose waters slipped silently by without us in the dusky night. Beyond the far, forested shore rose the mountains we had known, now hazy in the distance. Like the caribou, there one day and gone the next, we had followed the Noatak valley westward, a route that persists through the ebb and flow of time for generation after generation. 🐾



*Descent down to the White River
on the Bob Marshall*

Fly-fishing is about far more than just the fish—far more than just the act of fishing itself, for that matter. Fly-fishing is about you, the river, the fish, and any combination of the three. Because there is never just one you; because the river is always more than just the water flowing through it; because fish are conniving little devils that can be more intelligent than we usually give them credit for. All these nuances intermingles to create an overall experience far greater than the sum of its parts.

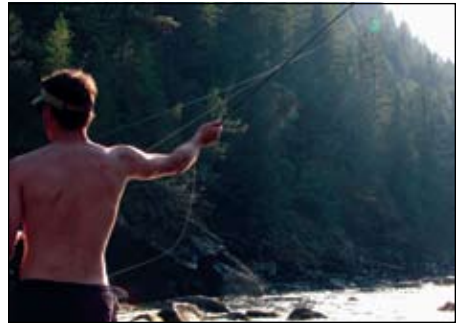
Take, for instance, a particularly amazing day this past summer. I was backpacking in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area with Ben, a good friend from back home. The Bob, as locals call it, is a 1,009,356-acre piece of the quintessential Western American Wilderness located in Montana. Ben and I were on a five-day, sixty-mile backpacking trip through the heart of the Bob. On this particular day we were hiking up and over the continental divide to gain access to the White River. The White River, you guessed it, is home to some amazing fishing. Not your garden variety “it was a productive day on the river” type of amazing fishing, but rather the “My God, so this is what it is like to truly be alive” type of amazing fishing.

We finally worked our way from the mountain pass down to the river. It seemed to take forever, but eventually we made it down and set up camp at the confluence of the White and one of its tributaries. Ben decided to take a nap, but I eagerly got out my rod and started to fish. A convenient little hole presented itself about 200 feet from camp. I put on

an elk-hair caddis, my tried and true fly for an unfamiliar river, and made my first cast. A few seconds later I got my first fish: a beautiful 13-inch Westslope Cutthroat Trout. Westslope Cutthroat is an amazing species. They don't grow all that large, maxing out at around 18 inches, but they do grow strong. The species is specially adapted to live in the colder waters of mountain streams, and is easily killed by polluted waters and high sediment loads. Fortunately, the entire watershed of the White River, along with many other rivers in the Bob, is protected under Federal Wilderness designation, assuring clear and clean water for my fish and me.

I fished throughout the afternoon, moving slowly up the river, one cast at a time. I was one with my rod as I stalked the fish, moving like a sleuth along the bank so as not to give away my presence. While I did not have the highest of success rates in actually getting fish on the line, the fish that I did catch were native and healthy and full of vigor. They fought like the dickens and were no doubt happy to have me remove the hook from their mouths and release them.

Around nine o'clock that evening, with only a wee bit of usable daylight left, I decided to change my fly and have one last go at it all before I retired for the night. I sat down on a rock on the east bank of the river, cut off my old fly and started to tie on a new one, when I heard the snap of a branch across the river. I looked up to see what caused me to screw up my knot, and out meandered a medium-sized grizzly bear on the opposite bank of the river. Now, at this point the bear was about 30 feet from me, camp (and my pepper-spray) was 100 yards downriver, and the closest trailhead was 20 miles away, with the nearest town an hour's drive beyond



Josh Hurd '08 — fishin'

that. The bear had yet to notice me, but aware that trying to scare it away would only draw attention to me (and my fishy smelling hands), I decided to do the only rational thing: sit quietly and watch the bear. So watch it I did. The bear went down to the bank, sniffed around, found the closest chokecherry bush, and started to munch away. After it had its fill at the first bush, it moved on to the second, and then the third. The griz slowly worked its way up the riverbank, one bush at a time. After about fifteen minutes it either had its fill of berries or had ran out of edible bushes, and returned to the woods. It never noticed me the entire time, and I was left in awe at its departure. I sat there thinking about the bear, and this rare opportunity to witness the natural world in its authentic state. I slowly returned to myself, finished tying on the fly, and made another cast into the river.

Fly-fishing is about far more than just the fish. My experience in the Bob this past summer sure drove that one home for me. It really can't be defined, nor should it be. The feeling that I get from a great day on the river can only be experienced. A great day of fishing is the blessing of skill, grace, and good fortune, combined with a willingness to let the great wonder of the natural world fill your heart. Ahh, what a great thing this fly-fishing is. 🐟

The Long Trail North

Andrew McCauley '09

So in the summer of 2005, with friends leaving for college, and no decent hours from my retail job anyway, I decided to preempt my DOC trip with a hike along 90 miles of Vermont's Long Trail. Hiking from Middlebury Gap to Johnson along the spine of Vermont with a good friend from high school convinced me that five days was too short a time to enjoy the Green Mountains. On the one year anniversary of our original hike, Peter Shellito '09, Parker Reed '09 and I left Williamstown and headed North, into Vermont and on to Canada.

The Long Trail runs for 270 miles from the Massachusetts border to the Canadian border, along the Green Mountain Ridge and over all five 4,000-foot peaks in Vermont. The trail inspired the Appalachian Trail and is the oldest established long distance through-hiking trail in the country. Maintained by the Green Mountain Club, it is lined by shelters and campsites at regular intervals for its entire length and includes a number of gorgeous views, ponds, and rainstorms. Armed only with our wits, enthusiasm, freeze-dried food and duct tape (which would run out in a matter of days) we set out north during the afternoon of August 21, 2006, packs laden with the last iodine-free water we would be enjoying for some time.

The first days on the trail greeted us with beautiful weather, interesting company, and a number of savage blisters. Over the first six days on the trail we covered the one hundred and ten miles to Rutland, where we were making our first stop to restock on food and duct tape. Duct tape had become increasingly critical on the trail



The ravages of hiking.

after Parker removed the majority of skin from his heel on day one and found non-stick gauze and duct tape the most effective dressing. Our days were getting longer as we moved north and the weight of our packs dropped as we ate all of our food. We discovered about thirty six hours into the trail that we simply did not bring enough food and decided the best solution was to pick up the pace so as to hit our location for re-stocking earlier.

The Stratton Pond Shelter offered the only good bathing opportunity of the beginning of the trip, and a lovely sunset view. We arrived at the luxurious "Back Home Again Café" and hiker hostel on the evening of August 26th in Rutland. The hostel is run by The Community in Rutland, a part of the Twelve Tribes Communities, that also runs a small juice bar and café on the lower floor, which offers some really great smoothies. We paid for our beds by doing some dishes while listening to some great stories from people in the community, which made for a great break from the trail.

After picking up our mail drop at the Long Trail Inn, we kept traveling north in our first day of rain. That morning, we passed the junction where the Long Trail splits away from the Appalachian Trail, and from here on out, we faced much less traffic on the trail. By this point, we had

become adjusted to the lifestyle of the trail: going to bed after 8:30 was a late night and we woke just after the sun rose. We were also figuring out better food strategies. Instead of wasting time with complicated foods like packets of tuna or cheese we were eating high calorie spreads like Nutella and peanut butter as well as solid chocolate bars regularly. By the end of the trail our daily caloric intake had probably doubled from our first days on the trail, but we were still settling for less than our bodies craved. The section of trail north of Middlebury gap, including the Appalachian Gap, Camel's Hump, Mt. Mansfield and a night in "Stark's Nest" at the top of Mad River Glen was the most beautiful of the entire trip. Camel's Hump has one of the most interesting approach hikes on the trail, including a lovely lunch spot several miles out with views of much of the range to the North. The opportunity to look back on progress made from the day's hiking is extremely satisfying.

We made one last stop to re-stock in Johnson, one hundred and twenty miles and six days past Rutland. With the help of the lovely Christine Paquin '09, we were able to wash clothes, get a warm meal and a cold shower before pushing on to the end of the trail. At this point, I would describe our need to shower as urgent, and our clothes as a biological hazard. Days of hiking and sweating in the same clothes with no real bathing had left a protective layer of grime over our entire bodies, rendering bug spray unnecessary. Additionally, Parker's heel regained some structural integrity at the same rate that Peter's boots lost it. While it is advisable to hike in nicely broken in boots whenever possible, there comes a time for all boots to be retired, and Peter's had passed that point many miles earlier. Gore-tex waterproofing is irrelevant when there is a growing hole in the boot that absorbs water but does not let it out.



*Peter Shellito '09, Parker Reed '09, and Andrew McCauley '09
on Vermont's Long Trail*

Excited to finally finish the trail, we left Johnson three days from Canada with plentiful rations and clean clothes. We did the last fifty odd miles in two and a half days of generally overcast drizzle. Our time on the summit of Jay Peak was short lived as high winds and thick cloud cover made the peak very inhospitable. The arrival at the Canadian border, while lacking in fanfare, was very exciting, and meant we had only a few miles before our return to civilization, clean clothes and indoor plumbing. 🐾

Sweet Misadventures on the Pacific Crest Trail

Lina Stepick '10

“I mean, it’s pretty wonderful to wake up to the mountains all around you,” my Dimensions host told me the spring of ’06. “Sweet! ...Where?” I replied, searching the hills that surround Dartmouth for a single glacier. I should explain. I’m from Miami. My only wilderness experience had been on a ridiculous Student Conservation Association (SCA) five-week backcountry trail crew in the North Cascades of Washington, the most beautiful backcountry in the world (at least far sweeter than paved-over-Everglades Miami). After my psycho hiking DOC trip, I gained great respect for those mountainous hills and even more respect for those who hike them. I spent my freshman year heaving myself over the granite, but I still pined for the fjords/crazy mountains of the Pacific Northwest.

Winter term I applied for the sweet Wolfgang Schlitz fund through Cabin and Trail for money to do a trip on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) in August of 2007. The DOC officers and staff were extremely helpful and I felt prepared for a trip far more challenging than my city girl self could have imagined a year before. I figured I could share this growth with future city-turned-Dartmouth DOC members. I had no idea how much I would actually grow and learn. Due to unfortunate family and health circumstances I had to postpone the trip a bit and accordingly change the route. My hiking partner, Nikos, and I decided to go ahead and take on the second most challenging section of the PCT.

Our misadventure began with a thirteen and a half hour greyhound trip—complete with crazy characters—up to Stevens Pass, Washington where there is a drop-off only stop. The bus was late and we found the trailhead and hiked in to the first campsite in near-dark. The next day



we met Jerkyguy who informed us that we “must be going pretty damn slow”. No one had to tell us that averaging 10-12 miles on the PCT is pretty slow, but we still haven’t been able to figure out if he really meant to hike 30 miles a day or if he was just mean to anyone who looked happy.

That day we came to our planned campsite early, but made a really foolish error. We had planned to camp at Glasses Lake, but found that, instead of being located right near the trail or campsite, the lake was over 800 feet down a steep, rocky gully. Already extremely low on water we foolishly decided to continue on. Once we had summited the next peak we realized that we’d let dehydration get out of hand. The next sure water source was a few miles away and we decided to set up camp. In the morning Nikos woke me saying, “Lina, I think there’s a bear outside.” Although dehydrated and groggy, I was, of course, terrified. And annoyed. He looked outside and asked “Lina, are there wallabies in the Cascades??”

“Nikos, I don’t think there are wallabies in this hemisphere.” After putting in his contacts he reassured me that dehydration had not made him entirely hallucinatory. “It was a deer!” We quickly broke camp and headed down the mountain, finding a trickling stream in a couple of miles.

After surviving the foolishness of dehydration, the day passed beautifully uneventfully. The next day, however, we continued with our misadventures. After a steep ascent we met a jolly, grey-haired thru-hiker who gave us advice for which we would be very grateful later. Unfortunately, at the time we had no idea what he was talking about.

Again we came upon our planned campsite early in the day and found a sign marking a detour that gave too few precious little details about campsites or water or terrain. The sign was posted in 2003 and we had checked the trail conditions and had found nothing about a detour with bridges out. After much deliberation,



we opted to stay the course and take the PCT over the unknown, much more difficult detour route. In the evening a heavy fog came over the trail and we quickened our pace, fearing a full white-out. We finally reached White Pass and as we looked for a campsite, a wind picked up. As we set up the tent I added layers, but I couldn't shake a chill. I put on dry clothes and more layers and curled up in my sleeping bag, but had been too foolish for a minute too long and it was a frighteningly long time before I lost that fierce chill. I learned in Wilderness First Aid how to treat hypothermia, but unfortunately when you take in a lot of liquids you also have to go out in the cold storm to pee.

The next few days were the highlight of the trip with ridiculously sweet 360 degree views of seemingly endless glacier-topped peaks. Then we started to lose the trail. At first it was just kind of bushy, but we noted some encouraging footprints in the muddy ground. Then there were massive blow-downs every few feet and finally a note on a waterbar letting us know that a horse bridge was out and there was a log crossing 100 yards upstream. The "log crossing" was several blow-downs overlapping precariously across a 100-foot wide section of rushing rapids. We foolishly forged on. After the scariest crossing of life, we continued for a day and half until we decided it would be unwise to continue without anything marking the trail save pink blaze tape haphazardly tied to random trees.

Having turned back, we were crossing a smaller current with a real log crossing when a helicopter flew right over our

heads and disappeared! Was someone hurt? A fire? A search party?? Ten minutes later it lifted off less than 100 yards away from us. Were we so oblivious and someone right there had been hurt?? Then a big forest ranger bounded over the shaky boulders to say hello. He told us that he was out scouting the trail and was sure surprised to see us there. In about a week a professional trail crew would be bringing in dynamite and rock drills to rebuild the bridges and the whole trail we had foolishly tried to continue on. He also let us know that three bigger rivers further ahead also lacked bridges and we were wise to turn around before we reached them and ran out of supplies. After that we simply retraced our steps, choosing our campsites carefully and being more careful about water and coldness.

I'm psyched to share my misadventures with equally naïve city dwellers. Hopefully we'll be able to use all the great risk management the DOC has let me learn. I'm still not too sure about these hills, but they'll do until I can get back to the bigger mountains. 🐾



Lina Stepick '10 and hiking partner Nikos

For some sweet climbing reports, take a look at posts by Jeff Woodward '06:

<http://cascadeclimbers.com/forum/ubbthreads.php?ubb=showflat&Number=719109>

<http://cascadeclimbers.com/forum/ubbthreads.php?ubb=showflat&Number=713120>

Dartmouth Moutaineering Club



Remy Denton '08 at the top of Crimson Chrysalis at Red Rocks. Photo by Owen Cadwalder '07.



Andrew Palmer '10 on Crimson Chrysalis at Red Rocks. Photo by Owen Cadwalder '07.



Remy Denton '08 on Crimson Chrysalis at Red Rocks. Photo by Owen Cadwalder '07.



Jake Feintzeig '09 and Ben Chapman '09 at Gunks. Photo by John Joline '70.



Photo by Margi Dashevsky '10.



Photo by Margi Dashevsky '10.

Chubbers in Africa



South Africa. Photo courtesy Josh Hurd '08.



Grasshopper on straw in Africa. Photo courtesy Claire Wagner '10.



Mopti. Photo courtesy Claire Wagner '10.



African terrain. Photo courtesy Claire Wagner '10.

Ledyard Canoe Club



At the Sun Kosi take out in Nepal. Photo courtesy Elizabeth Embick '08 (pictured far right).



At the take out of the Seti River in Nepal. Photo courtesy Elizabeth Embick '08.

Kayaking the Zambezi

A Schlitz and DKAF Adventure

Alfie Umbhau '08

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking: If you look out the left window you’ll catch a glimpse of Vic Falls.”

The nasal crackle of the pilot’s announcement rouses me from my book. I’m not usually the type to spend the whole flight with my forehead pressed to the plane window, but this time I can’t resist. They call it Mosi-Oa-Tunya—Smoke that Thunders—and from 1200 meters up, I can almost hear it. I’m on my way to Zambia, with DKAF funds in my pocket, and tomorrow morning I’ll be sitting in my kayak under those thundering falls.

A little background: the Zambezi River is the Holy of kayaking Holies. With 18-foot waves, a put-in below one of the seven natural wonders of the world, and the only standing tubing river wave in the world, the river is a creature of infinite variety.

Yesterday my guide Sam and I planned the day, deciding to start below the most intimidating rapids. This means I started my day with a brisk 600-foot downhill hike into the gorge to rapid 11—the tubing wave. You can’t see it in the kayaking videos, but from above it’s uncomfortably obvious that the wave feeds right into a pretty nasty hole. I’m not too worried; Sam makes it look smooth. Inspired, I follow him in.

Needless to say, I take a pretty beating. In fact, all I really remember from that first day on the river is watching the sky trade places with the rocks. Big water, if you cut your teeth on New England’s brooks, is more or less a whole new sport. The Zambezi is 90 feet deep in places, I’m told, and it gets amusement from sucking you down a whirlpool when you’re fiddling with your

camera in what you erroneously thought was an eddy. Not quite what I was expecting, but hey, I’m here to learn.

The day ends on a calmer note. My anxiety during the morning’s hike down kept me from noticing how spectacular the canyon trail is, but now I soak it in: 2,000 vertical feet on a ladder made out of Mopani branches that, thankfully, turn out to be much sturdier than they look. Scotch, our driver, waits at the top with the Land Rover and a cooler of Mosi-Oa-Tunya beer. The day proves to be a fitting precursor to the coming week—surprise beat-downs and unanticipated experiences as I gradually came to accept how little I’d known and anticipated about Africa and its rivers.

Monday—The Barreling Wave

As we drive out to the river the second morning, the rundown buildings are replaced with thatch huts in a matter of kilometers. From what our porter, Makumo, tells me, the social stratification is reflected in the physical layout: the first group of huts has a community building, and the last has a chieftain’s hut surrounded by those of his wives.

Before descending to the river, Makumo, perhaps recognizing my apprehension, produces a small cow bone carving and offers it to me, explaining that it is Nyami-Nyami, the Tongan river god believed to reside in the waters of the Zambezi. For 40,000 Kwacha, he says, I’ll be granted safe passage down the day’s treacherous rapids. I begin to laugh but reconsider: this is the man that is about to carry my kayak down 2,000 feet.

We hike down and put in at rapid #7—Gulliver’s Travels. The first two rapids are a joy, but we take out to scout above #9, “Commercial Suicide”. Ten years of kayaking experience just fade away as I look down at the river—I catch myself giving

my new cow-bone guardian a doubtful glance and a rub for luck. Sam tells me the move is to surf across and over the diagonal onto the green tongue, which will carry me between the holes and through the crashing wave, but all I see is a 15-foot tall hole on the right and a 20 foot long one on the left. My gut feeling is that even the Nyami-Nyami isn't going to get me through this one.

We skip down to the tubing wave. I'm learning to "lift" over foot-tall boils and "ride" the whirlpools, so I've got my hopes up for the tube surf. Things go well, and I can't help but think: thousands of kayakers are roaming the globe right now, searching for the perfect river, and I am the only one in the whole world sitting in the middle of a barreling wave.

And then the river flips me upside down and breaks my helmet, reminding me to pay attention. Sometimes while kayaking it's best not to think too much and just to focus on the water in front of you.

Sam drops in behind me; apparently he wanted to be the only kayaker in the world throwing an air screw to a pan-am to a helix in the middle of a barreling wave. As if it weren't enough, he brings out his surfboard—it's been tagging along behind his boat—and puts on a California-esque performance. He's planning to open a surf school here next year.

Back at the hostel, I decide to cook up some BBQ for my companions. There's a semi-permanent crew of Irish med students here, ever ready to party and, when necessary, to take care of the occasional water-logged kayaker. While I get most of the necessary components of the BBQ from a local market, street vendors, and my companions, charcoal proves to be a bit trickier. I do eventually find some; the gate guard has a second job making and selling his own wood coal. For the price of one



Alfie Umbhau '08 by the Zambezi River

Mosi—the local beer/currency—he breaks me a few pieces from his burlap sack, puts them in a tin bucket, and helps me light the fire, melting one flaming plastic grocery bag after another over it until it lights. I can't imagine why I'd had the impression that developing nations tend to live all naturally. I give the plastic a few minutes to burn off before kebabbing some steak and sausage. Satisfied, the sixteen of us spend the evening teaching old-school dance moves to a bemused crowd of locals at the dance hall. I discovered the two-dollar, 80-proof root of my companions' drinking problem earlier in the night.

Wednesday—#9

I've fallen in with SafPar (Safari Par Excellence) rafting as a safety boater for the day. They are unaware that until this morning I'd had my own safety boater. I help the day's clients gear up, and we head down. There are three rapids above, right under the falls, but they're only accessible if it's low water and if you're a pro kayaker. Two



Alfie's guide Sam tearing up the Gnar

have been run; Steve Fisher rappelled in with his boat a couple of years back to attempt the third, but decided it would be safer and wiser to climb several hundred feet back out. I'm happy where I am—sitting in my kayak as bungee jumpers fall down towards me, coming into view through the mist of the falls and a lasting rainbow.

One rapid down, a guide points out a croc on the side of the river. I don't stick around long enough to get a closer look. The crocs get larger, I noticed, the farther you float from Vic Falls. This is because they occasionally follow prey out into the current and get swept downstream; year by year they eddy hop from rapid #1 on down. I asked how the crocs get back up to give birth to the little ones back at #1. It turns out that they don't—they're born at the top of the Mosi-Oa-Tunya and fall off. As a matter of fact, all kinds of crocs fall off the falls, but the big ones don't make it. Personally, I'm a little more scared of the tiny ones that were tough enough to survive the 108 meter fall and the two subsequent class 5+ rapids.

After the croc, the second river denizen I meet is a swimmer with a burlap sack in tow. Apparently the elections are coming up in Zimbabwe and there's a newly introduced commodities price cap on that side of the border. That explains the people swimming across the river with bags of beer to try and turn a profit.

As I move upstream, the canyon constricts, with basalt walls just 20 meters apart towering up to 600m. The rapids have names such as "Land of the Giants" and "Devil's Toilet Bowl", which don't really take on meaning until you find yourself five feet under, getting a swirlie from one very large fifth-grade bully. Things are going well.

Five hours later we stop in the middle of the road on the way back from the river because three elephants are blocking the road and are clearly unperturbed by our presence. Outweighed, we decide not to disturb them. Unfortunately, they start walking towards us, and we start reversing—and get a flat. To me "the African experience" will always mean sitting in the road with a car jack, playing chicken with an elephant.

Friday—Shore Leave

I've finally decided to put aside my reservations and meet with Gift Lwembe, an acquaintance I made while trying to smuggle my kayaking gear out of the customs office. Gift runs the Girls and Women's Living Standards project—or so his name card asserts—and offered to take me around the villages.

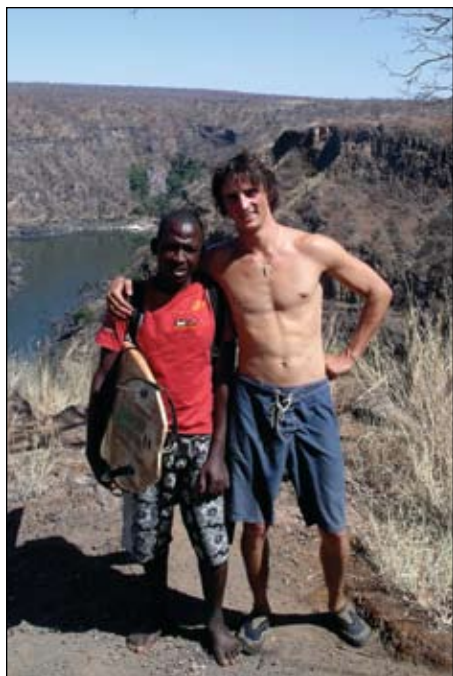
My cynical half knows this is probably a bad idea (according to the hostel receptionist, I'm not supposed to be wandering the streets alone, let alone driving off with strangers). Nevertheless, my desire to take pictures of myself with local children in quaint settings—I kid, I mean connect more deeply with the local culture—gets the better of me. I'm sure Mr. Lwembe wants to gain something out of this, but I decide it's probably a donation rather than a kidnapping ransom. I make sure there's no misunderstanding between us—college kayakers are not to be confused with the rich philanthropists, as they can barely afford hostel rooms—but

he's unconcerned. Mildly reassured, I arrange to meet him at the local bakery after dinner. I'm expecting to take a ride on one of the local minibuses—fifteen people and a few damp burlap bags in a VW—but his friend pulls up in a dark beamer, tinted windows and all. Gift makes a call on his cell and we're off. My inner cynic is having a nervous breakdown.

Twenty minutes later, guilt replaces my anxiety. He introduces me to the village headmen, and I receive an anthropology lesson. I'm only half listening, though; malnourished children in rags run happily around us. Some of what he says gets through: there's no food, the kids aren't going to school, HIV is rampant, and the nearest well is an hour's walk away. There's no electricity, even though there's a 20-meter uninhabited zone in the middle of the village where the power lines pass through. All this, though, I more or less expected, even anticipated; if he'd just stopped there I'd have gone home ready to start a Tucker project. Instead, I learn that schooling is available for 9,000 kwacha a term (the cost of my breakfast), condoms are free to any who care to use them, and the only business in the village that seems to be flourishing is the bar. The NGO aid packages, bearing food and greetings from Uncle Sam and his international counterparts, go to good use, but half the people can't read the notes that say "from the United States." Gifts from the Nyami-Nyami, I imagine. Everyone smiles at me expectantly.

Perhaps too often, Americans go to a place like Africa with the intent of changing or improving it. For better or worse, I went as a kayaker, and had no such intentions; mine was a mission of appreciation and wide-eyed observation. It's easy to pack for Africa with images of poverty and hardship already in one's mind. Africa won't disappoint, either; there's no de-

nying that it has plenty of both. Nevertheless, it has a lot of surprises in store for the traveler willing to look beyond this. I've learned that trying to reconcile the world in front of you with the magazine stories is nothing but trouble: missed acquaintances and unnecessary barreling-wave smack-downs. Yes, I see great hardship, but I also see generosity, curiosity, and joy. It has taken me the better part of my time in Africa to drop my preconceived ideas and stop trying to get the whole continent to make sense; it's an overwhelming nation of dream-like proportions. I resign myself to being mildly confused most of the time and entirely befuddled some of the time as I spend my week here, and I'm pretty much ok with that. My mental snapshots of Africa will always be a bit chaotic and scattered—misfiled in the archives of my memory. I wouldn't have it any other way. 🐘



Alfie's guide Sam and a local Zambezi man

Trips

John Shellito '07, 2007 Trips Director

As ever, Trips 2007 was a zany outdoor romp, designed to welcome the 11s to campus with style, warmth, and fun. I am still convinced that the whole shebang is really fueled by the nervous excitement and energy of the 11s, as they leave home for the freedom of college in the wilderness of New Hampshire. Yikes. Even now, I remember alternating between “I’m so glad to be done with high school” and “I can’t wait to go back for break”... almost on a week by week basis freshman fall.

Being an '07 geezer, I can say with relative certainty that Trips never get old. It has already been months since that strange time when people ran around with crazy hair and awful clothing, making everyone think that college really was out of this world. Of course by now I hope the 11s are learning some ways in which college isn't all that strange. There are still many fun times to be had, goals to be set, passions to be expressed, traditions to be respected, assumptions to be challenged, adventures to be dreamed up, and perhaps most noticeably, class work to be done. Winter is here, the leaves are gone, and I wear long underwear to class. But the questions that remain for me are: “How do Trips fit in with the rest of Dartmouth?” and “What makes the DOC so special?”

If college is all about learning how to be an adult, going outdoors has been about learning how to be a kid again for me. As the adult responsibilities pile up, I start to dream of adventure and larger than life experiences. The rope swing and the polar bear swim are two exercises in suspending disbelief right on campus. Beyond Hanover, the mountains and rivers continually exceed imagination and call to be explored.

Do you remember what a table used to look like from below? Franconia ridge is a great place for feeling small. I always tend to forget how much I miss being outside, until I'm out there, watching the sunset, pitching a tent, or making my way up a mountain.

In addition to adventure, the DOC has enabled me to challenge myself. Mind you, I won't tempt fate and Doc Benton with a night hike up Moosilauke anytime soon, but I will continue to explore in other ways. The lodge is a lesson in rustic hospitality. Splitting wood is a lesson in wedge physics. Telling stories around the fire at the end of a long day of work is a lesson in community, understanding, and public speech. For me, the DOC is one of the best parts of Dartmouth and one of the best places for learning.

My own first year trip involved many surprises and happy memories, including a (fairly heavy) traffic cone that had to be carried over Franconia ridge, a visit from Bernie Waugh with his fiddle, an amazing Lodj speech by Chelsea Voake, and a surprise watermelon on top of Mt. Lafayette (thanks to my trip leader's not-so-light pack). During my trip I met several people who are still my close friends, and I met one trippee who would become my roommate for the following three years. All this I will never forget. But Trips are a beginning more than they are an end, and my trip was the beginning of my desire to share the outdoors with other Dartmouth students.

I will end with some of my favorite Trips stories from this year: Gilman's Island run by three trip leader trainer TELETUBBIES. 'Nuff said. — Paddling the war canoe through the pouring rain. — The flatwater kayaking trip singing a thank you to Brian Kunz after he dropped them off (in the rain). — More rain (needed after several key streams had dried up in August) — Do I need to men-

tion the H and Lodj shows? — The fishing trip ACTUALLY catching multiple fish in the Grant. This is the first time for this in anyone's recent memory (!). — Eric Trautmann leading a trip in a suit and tie, with a briefcase that miraculously changed contents at every stop. — A raid by the Persian horde on the Spartan trippees of I- and J-225 at Thermopylae (the Skiway).

Isn't epic what we're going for? You only live once, after all... 🍷



The Raiders

By Dave Norman

So this one time I almost died raiding Mt. Moosilauke. It's just one of those things, one of those things you do when you're young and draw energy from the night like flowers draw water—a feeling I've never forgotten. We were in college, which is to say that we thought ourselves grown up and toasted that with cheap beer I can't believe we ever drank. The mark of immaturity is thinking you're grown up, at least as much as the mark of maturity is being disabused of any mystique the term ever held. It was inordinately silly, and indulgent, and perilous, and what I'd give to do it again...

The night was clear, in a way you can only understand in the mountains—when you come along a pass and see lights as diamond chips floating on ink and know that they are streetlamps twenty, thirty miles away. Such views are rare; such crisp, clear, early autumn nights were like air to the drowning, and we drowned in them for four years. Rarest of all are those who take time to appreciate the moments before they're past—that's why we have memory, to savor the moments we rushed. I would do it again, and drive a little more slowly into the White Mountains.

I was finishing my studies at Dartmouth, and had stretched it out just long enough that I finished around the time the new freshmen were arriving. The college's Outing Club welcomes them with a week of hiking and camping in the mountains around campus, where they trek the Whites and stay in cabins or kayak the Connecticut River and sleep on the shore. And there was raiding—the upperclassmen paid nighttime visits to the groups, unexpected (though anticipated, at least,

by the upperclassmen guides), announcing themselves in any manner of fashions.

There are impromptu musicals, pirate raids, dancing aliens ... the sorts of silly things that grow from bumps in the night into Dorothy and the Tin Man prancing through a campsite singing about a yellow brick road. It takes the new students' fears of the frightening things in the dark (many students are from glowing cities) and gives them comic faces until everyone laughs a little too much and shares a late night snack. It's how they meet upperclassmen, and what they talk about over breakfast. "He really had the accent down," "I couldn't believe it, a pith helmet? Who has a..." "Man, I was just about to jump up and—" "Sure you were!"

Sitting here now, wrapped in a warm blanket with a fire crackling near the feet of my rocking chair, I can once again feel my hand riding the slipstream as I traced Highway 112 through the Whites in a borrowed car bound for glory. In the back we had a referee outfit, ninja suit, business formal attire, torch, kerosene, extra water, sleeping bags, a pack of glow sticks, and a large air cannon. The cab was crowded with myself in German camouflage and a rock climbing helmet, John Paul in a black ninja raid suit, Susan in bellbottoms and a paisley shirt with tassels, and extra hiking gear. On her lap she cradled a plastic box of oven-warm brownies and chocolate popcorn balls. Raids have three parts: the initial surprise, the performance, and the food the raiders bring for the group. Over candy or the like, you meet new friends and ask "where ya from?" It helps ease their nerves a bit.

Our night had started inauspiciously with a firecracker raid against a group near campus, where they were neither scared by the sudden noises, nor overjoyed to see us when JP and Susan jumped out of the bushes. They made awkward small talk,

and wandered off into the night while I crouched near the campsite with more firecrackers and no opportunity to use them. We had left the food in the car, fearing that we lacked enough for four sequential raids, and knowing well that this group would be raided again that night. I take responsibility for that raid fizzling, though crawling for two hundred yards across a moonlit pasture was great exercise.

“... and then you fire the cannon, and I’ll walk around with the torch,” John Paul said. The plan was dynamic, to accommodate a large degree of improvisation and adaptation. The plans of mice and men gang aft agley, after all, and at that, our plan was definitely not among the best ever laid. We pulled off the highway an hour and a half from campus, turning left onto a dirt road and past a wooden sign welcoming us to the White Mountains National Forest. The pull-off was just up the road, and we were on the trail within minutes—

JP with his torch reeking of kerosene, me with the glowsticks and the cannon, Susan with more firecrackers, and food.

This group was huddled in a three-sided shelter along the Appalachian Trail, near where it starts up the steep grade over Mt. Moosilauke. They were sleeping peacefully when our group came out of the darkness. JP tended two strings of firecrackers in tin cans (to amplify the sound) placed in front of the shelter; the torch was propped against a tree safely away from the log shelter; the food placed out of sight behind a wall, and Susan and I cracked glowsticks to fire out of the cannon—like fireworks, glowing bars of light streaking up through the heavens in a Technicolor explosion of sparks that absolutely could not start a forest fire (for that, JP had the torch).

The glowsticks crackled, and they snapped, like they should—but they didn’t glow. We snapped, crackled, and popped



Photo by Dave Norman

them and tried charging them with headlamps, hoping the light would somehow be trapped in the chemicals . . . to no avail. “Pack it with dirt,” I said, “it’ll at least make a whoomp!” I snapped my fingers, and JP lit the firecrackers—papapapow! “Air raid!” I screamed. Someone else screamed. I fired the cannon, whoomp! and JP lit the torch. “Take that torch,” a surprisingly old voice bellowed from the shelter, “and shove it up your ass!”

That wasn’t the normal reaction; that wasn’t the way raids usually went, and in a minute our friend Brett stepped into the glowing halo around the torch. “Um, guys,” he said, “we forgot to warn the thru-hiker in our shelter that this might happen.”

“Oh...” we said, deflated. The stranger was not expecting a ninja, a Village Person, and a German soldier to wake him with firecrackers, a cannon, and a flaming torch.

“We brought food!” Susan chirped, trying to resurrect a levity that was never there. Two freshmen ambled out of the shadows, an untold number turning over in their sleeping bags and slipping peacefully back towards sleep.

JP swung his torch, drops of kerosene flinging and lighting and burning through the night like tiny meteors. There was really no way to put it out, he realized, now that it was blazing too brightly to ignore. The freshmen soon tired of small talk and popcorn balls and even Brett left us standing, alone, in the forest with a flaming torch that JP had no intention of shoving up his ass. The mood was heavy, and we walked back to the car, sullen. “Oh for two,” he said, plunging the torch into a creek by the road.

Our next raid was half a mile away, in a cabin called, for unclear reasons, “Great Bear”. There were great moose in those mountains, but great bears? Great Bears? Maybe the alum who built it liked Chicago sports teams, we really didn’t know. “We

have nowhere to go but up,” Susan said, or something like it, as we marched our brownies across a field near the cabin. She was right. Things improved, but life comes in waves, and that you hit bottom once is no insurance against doing so again. I flirted with glory, JP flirted with Susan, and we flirted with the idea of doing a Wizard of Oz raid—we were following a yellow brick road to certain destruction, after all; it fit. But we didn’t look the part, and our other costumes—including togas, which regrettably went unused the entire night—lie abandoned in the car. “It’s dark, they won’t know,” Susan reassured.

The cabin is a few dozen yards into the trees, surrounded by hemlocks and birches on all sides, with a pleasant clearing in front. Built on a slope, the ground drops away from the floor so you access the wrap-around porch from the rear, where we linked arms three raiders abreast... which made storming through the door difficult. But we managed.

“We’re off to see the wizard!” we screamed into the darkness, “The wonderful Wizard of Oz!” “Why?” “Because, because, because, because, because of the wonderful things he does!” For some reason they didn’t start screaming until we finished the interminable repetitions of “because,” as if they needed the first stanza for the shock of a spontaneous musical in a remote cabin on distant mountain to sink in. Our song degenerated into a parody of a farce: Monty Python’s Argument Clinic recreated (poorly) in context. Someone shouted approval, and there was a catcall from the loft.

They passed the popcorn balls around, sticky fingers stealing second and third snacks in the darkness. We introduced ourselves, learned their names, and spent a few glorious minutes on the mountainside. “Thanks guys,” someone said with a true

Cheshire grin. We chanted successful raid! successful raid! on our way out the door.

Back on the road, JP directed me towards the fourth and final raid of the night—up Beaver Brook trail “somewhere” on the far side of the mountain, another forty-five minutes’ drive farther still from campus.

“Have you ever been up that trail?” I asked, because I had not. Susan had not, either.

“I’ve been down it to the shelter,” JP said, “from the summit, but, um, never up it. No.” We discussed plans, and agreed to take only the brownies, water, and flashlights, and leave the planning for the trail. I parked with no particular care, diagonally across a handicapped space and a “no parking” area aiming the headlights so they shone on a trail map posted under a small overhang, next to a sign that said “Fee Area, Pay for Parking.” We bounded out of the car and searched for the trailhead, circling the entire parking area, coming back upon our car, to ultimately find our path just beyond the passenger door. An inauspicious beginning...

It was just before one o’clock in the morning, three raids down and one mountain to go; it would be quick, up and down and back home to welcoming beds. The trail was flat and spanned two small creeks with two long bridges built of heavy timbers and thick brown bolts. There is little undergrowth in the Whites, so we followed white blazes on hemlock trees. Then, white blazes on boulders. Then the blazes became superfluous, as there was only one—well defined in the moonlight—way to scramble up the boulders along a gurgling brook. “Yeah guys,” JP said, “this is the shortest distance to the summit. Just over two miles.”

I grabbed a metal bar stuck fast into a boulder and used it to hoist myself up the rocks—they were wet with dew and slick

with moss. Someone had carved much of this trail out of granite using dynamite and drills, rebar and wood. There were steel rails in places where one really appreciates them, and wooden steps fastened to the rock with rebar driven deep into stone. If this trail gets to the summit in just over two miles, and my favorite trail on the other side gains just as much altitude over the course of about four miles... then this trail should be roughly twice as steep. And slippery. And dark.

“Wah!” thump! someone yelled and fell hard on the rocks. That someone was me. I was the only one who fell on the ascent, that increasingly perilous ascent where some stairs shift sideways around boulders rather than straight up. I shone my flashlight down on the brook, the light flickering off steep granite sides that sloped down to the frisky water. It splashed around rocks and seemed to have a rollicking good time, and I stopped long enough to wonder if water enjoys playing in creeks—it sure looks like it.

JP passed his water around, and I drank for all of us, having left mine in the car. “It’s not too far,” we thought, confusing hope with fact and having no real idea at all how far the freshmen were camped from the car; my water was with my sleeping bag, on top of our togas, locked in a car parked three-ways-illegally in the middle of nowhere. All college stories should start like this.

A few more slips, a few more falls—all mine, as JP and Susan snickered to each other, and I laughed with them from the shadows at their feet—and a couple dozen yards higher, I stopped again. “Just how far do you think it is, really?” I asked JP. When he hiked down, during daytime months earlier, it was “about half a mile.” And the distance to the summit was “a bit over two miles,” putting the shelter “right

around” about “a mile and a half.” Up, he forgot to say; up.

“A mile and a half, alright; so how far have we come?”

It was dark; I could feel the blankness of their stares.

“Alright then...” We hiked on, in silence, my flashlight dying with a silent wheeze and then it was out. The moon was bright, so much that it cast my shadow across the field on our first raid, so much that we hadn’t used lights until this raid, so much, in fact, that we doused the other lights and found we were better off. The trail continued upwards, mocking us, reminding me that nature is far more powerful than man. Lest I forget, I kept slipping and sometimes falling and pouring two ounces of sweat into my cotton camouflage for every ounce I drank. The exertion kept us warm, and our breaths did not show in the air, though the temperature—I learned the next week—dipped into the forties.

At length—at great length, at absurd length, and at that no more than a mile and a half—I saw the siding branch off towards the shelter; a few more yards and we would be upon them, the unconscious freshmen warm in their sleeping bags. So comfortable, so safe—so unsuspecting. What should we do, I asked, without any of the passion from earlier. The words clunked through the air like a night train rattling the tracks.

“We could do animal noises,” Susan suggested; her Oz idea was the only hit of the night, so with her successful raid and my two failures, she was undefeated.

“Um,” JP said, asserting himself against the eddying silence, “yeah. I’ve got nothing.” He looked at his watch—just past two o’clock in the morning. “We really shouldn’t hike down tonight.” We agreed wholeheartedly—going up was treacherous, and not advisable. Going down the slippery rocks in the dark with only two flashlights,

no energy, and wobbly legs would cross the line between silly and stupid. It was decided without need for a vote to sleep the night with the group. Energy sapped, enthusiasm gone, I struck upon another idea, a surefire ticket opposite my earlier clunkers.

“The cuddle raid.”

Cuddle raid?

“Cuddle raid. We’re soaking wet, it’s freezing, we have no sleeping bags, and need to stay warm. They’re not expecting us. We infiltrate their ranks,” I said, my sweat-drenched camouflage flapping heavily as I pantomimed the idea, “and then go to sleep. They wake up in the morning, and voila: there are strangers in their midst...with brownies.” Again, the darkness barely hid their vacant stares.

Alright.

We found the bulk of them encamped outside the shelter, under a white tarp strung between four skinny trees. Water bottles and packs were scattered about, mostly under the tarp, with just enough space to lie down between a sleeping freshman and a row of packs. I quietly rummaged between the packs, finding a rain jacket to use for a blanket, and laid myself upon the ground with my helmet forming something of a pillow that swallowed my head. It got cold; rather, it was cold, and I started feeling it. Fully. Wet cotton clothes, exhaustion, and temperatures in the forties, are not the ideal conditions for a restful night’s sleep on the ground. With the jacket pulled over my face, I quietly absolved myself of sin in at least three religions, and closed my eyes.

JP and Susan lay down behind me, scooting up until they were in the crook of my legs as I tried to sleep on my side. Using my butt as a pillow and another rain jacket for a blanket, they settled in to sleep until dawn. I’m not sure how they slept, as The Shivers set in and I turned

Hummus Dip with Hershey Bar Crudités

The best trail food you have ever had in your entire life.

While the actual execution is quite simple, true enjoyment of this delicacy involves ample preparation ahead of time. First, go backpacking for two weeks in the Utah desert where the major source of protein is a meat stick (it helps if you are a vegetarian). Get very protein deficient, to the point where you would contemplate eating plain tofu by the hunk. On the last day of the trip before beginning the epic drive back to Hanover, pool your leftover food. Find a Special Dark Hershey Bar and some garlic hummus. Break off pieces of the chocolate and use them to scoop out hummus, as if you are feasting on chips and guacamole. I swear that it is the best trail food you have ever had in your entire life.

— Kathleen Onufer '08

into a fair approximation of a “magic fingers” vibrating bed...all the comforts of a cheap motel—bugs, dirt, and vibrating bed—right there trailside. Turns out they didn’t sleep a wink, either—they just laid there trying to stay warm.

Sometime later—days, I’m sure, but it felt much longer—the man next to me stirred. Blinking the way a drunk blinks when staring into a patrolman’s flashlight, he tried to understand why there was a man in a climbing helmet, German fatigues, and a woman’s raincoat convulsing violently inches from his face. “Who the hell are you?” he asked.

“I’m,” chatter chatter, chatter chatter, “good, how’re you?”

“Um, fine. Who are you?”

“Who are you in my campsite?” I asked. The weirdness was palpable; unfortunately, it was a poor insulator.

“Seriously dude, what’s going on?”

“You’re being raided,” Susan said from atop my arse, fully awake. “But it’s too dangerous to go down, so we’re spending the night with you.” Then she woofed.

“Oh,” as if it made perfect sense.

I pulled the raincoat over my head, and a shower of condensation from my breath poured on my face. The shivers strengthened.

Somehow I managed a few minutes of sleep, if that is the right word; “lost consciousness” fits the mood better, but I wonder if that would perhaps be overdramatic. I learned later that folks in wet clothing have died in warmer weather, but lying on the ground amid so many warm, safe, peaceful students subverted mortal fear.

Dawn broke through the trees to my right. Morning came slowly, like consciousness to the soundly sleeping, which we weren’t. One by one by two by three they woke to the commotion of each other, testing the light with bleary eyes and wondering who the hell is that! as they looked at the three of us. “Oh, hi,” JP said to the first pair of eyes he found peeking from a sleeping bag. “We have brownies.”

It was one of those things, one of those things you should never do but having done it you can laugh; having been there, having come through it unscathed, it’s funnier with each passing year. John Paul saw Susan a few more times, under much warmer circumstances, and our raid became a case study in the Outing Club’s risk management training. There really isn’t much of a legend to it, but now I have a story that starts: so this one time, I almost died raiding Mt. Moosilauke... 🐾

Wisdom From Under the Room 13 Table

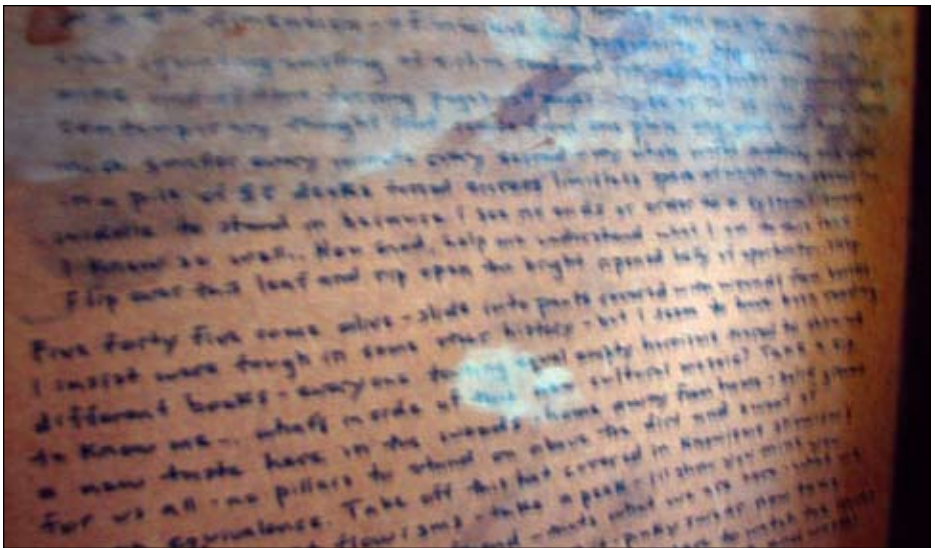
Author Unknown

That's right; we found this written on the underside of the table in Robo, Room 13.

August Time, September Time, turning leaves and me to a new side of a 4th dimension – of intellect and personality. Step into the sun, the eyes squinting and smelling of airline food and fear – of big books – big minds unlike mine and of time turning pages and pages...to be or not be free of the classic contemporary thought that comes from one place one mind and hour so much smaller every minute every second – my whole world. Suddenly one card in a pile of 52 decks tossed across limitless space of which there seems no middle to stand in because I see no ends or order to a system I swore I knew so well... How God, help me understand what I am to this land – Flip over this leaf and rip open the bright ripened belly of opportunity...sleep.


Five forty five come alive – slide into pants covered with wounds from battles I insist were fought in some other history – but I seem to have been reading different books – every one touting equal empty heroisms scared to show me to know me... what's inside of this new cultural mosaic? Take a sip of a new taste here in the woods – home away from home – solid ground for us all – no pillars to stand on above the dirt and sweat of human equivalence. Take off this hat covered in knowisms showisms trying to make it flowisms – take a peek – I'll show you mine you show me yours now relax friend – that's what we are here – what we can be through this – agreed? Shake on it – pinky swear now take care out there, its not always fair – but I'll be here to watch the leaves change color with you and share about the heart-break and wonder of this new dimension.

At the end – don't fuss – just get on the bus – come party party party with a croo you can trust to get you through – get you started on this ship soon departed – break a bottle, cut the mooring, we're all off together. Make waves in the water climb






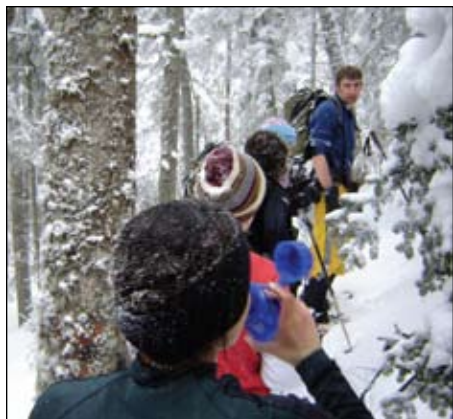
Cabin and Trail Numerology

- 36** Sunrises viewed from the top of summits over the last year.
- 75** Miles of Appalachian Trail maintained by CnT.
- 8** Trails on Moosilauke.
- 1** Resident ghost of Dr. Thomas Benton.
- 1,676,184** Feet of elevation lost and gained on CnT hiking and trail-work trips in the month of October, 2007.
- ∞** Reasons we love Lodge Crew.
- 2.32** Gallons of whole milk to make a standard two pound block of Extra Sharp Cabot Cheddar.
- 6** Sides to the new Harris Cabin.
- 6** Sides to Hexacuba Shelter.
- 5** Sides to Hexacuba's Penta-Privy.
- 27,000** Acres of land in the Second College Grant.
- 1920** Year in which Cabin and Trail was established.
- 2/3** Outing Club membership in 1920, as a portion of the student body.
- 113** Actual room number of "Room 13" Robo. 

mountains forever – We'll break the trail for you new one...

It's not as cold out there as you think they say – as I think – and pray wondering – who are these lords of the lodge of sincerity with colored hair? I love them like brothers and sisters in fewer minutes than I can count on one hand. Yes – you are right – the one, take me with you on this journey – and when we're through I'll sail back for the rest – offer my two hands three bits of advice and not four but infinite kisses on top of their heads for mistakes made along the way that's ok – because hey – we're not so different them and I – hop up – I'll show you all you've been missing and whats to come son.

Now I've seen it, done it, been it, rid on this beast to the end that is not an end for me but another beginning for 1000 leave turning breathing bleeding children to come see to speak – and a chance for me to open the door. So here it is – my request for the title – I'll hold the bridle and ride this bull the 8 seconds and two weeks – dragging young hearts with me like no other cosmic cowboy can. 



Climbing Mount Moosilauke, April 2007

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