

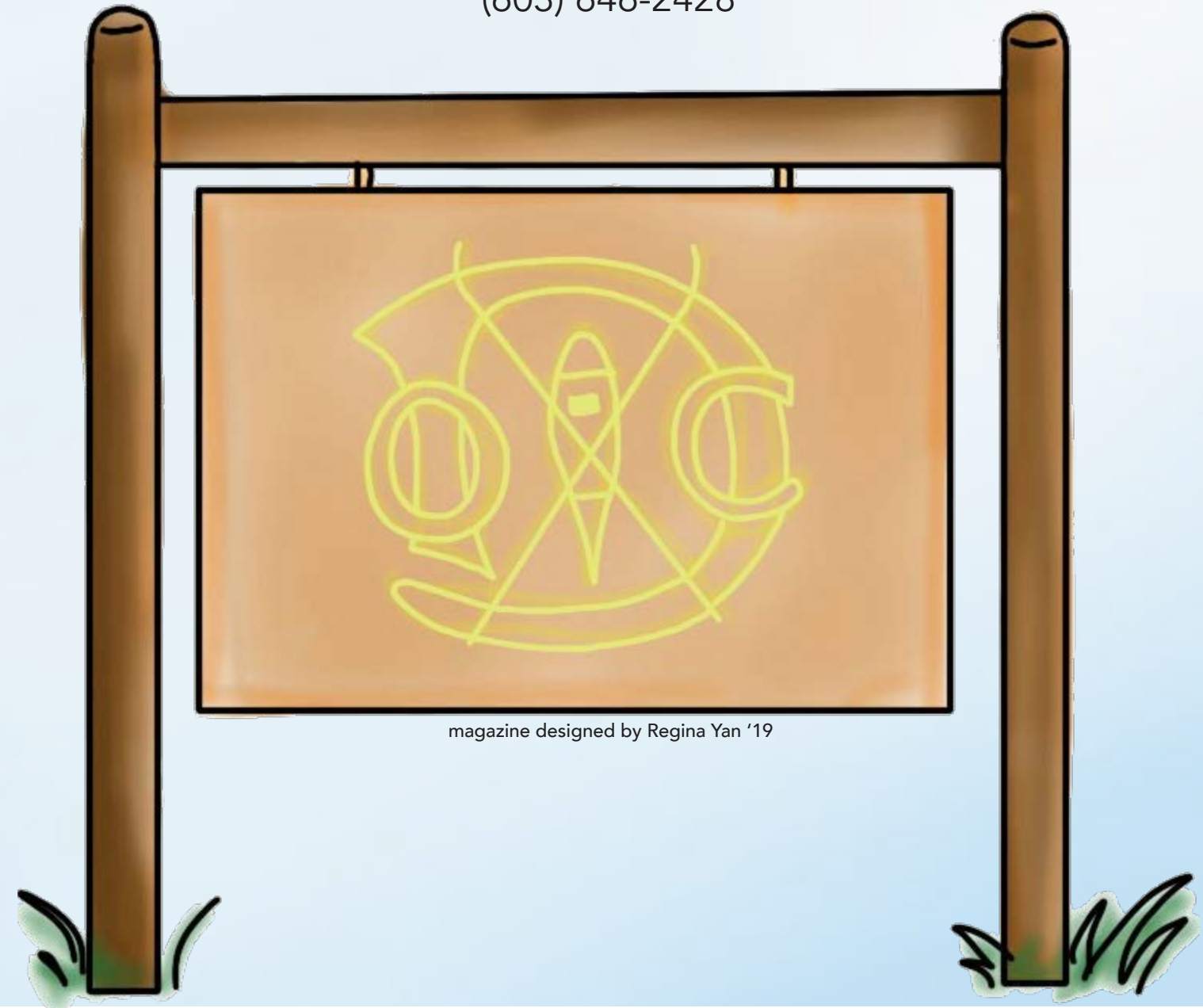


WOODSMOKE

Dartmouth Outing Club 2015 - 2016

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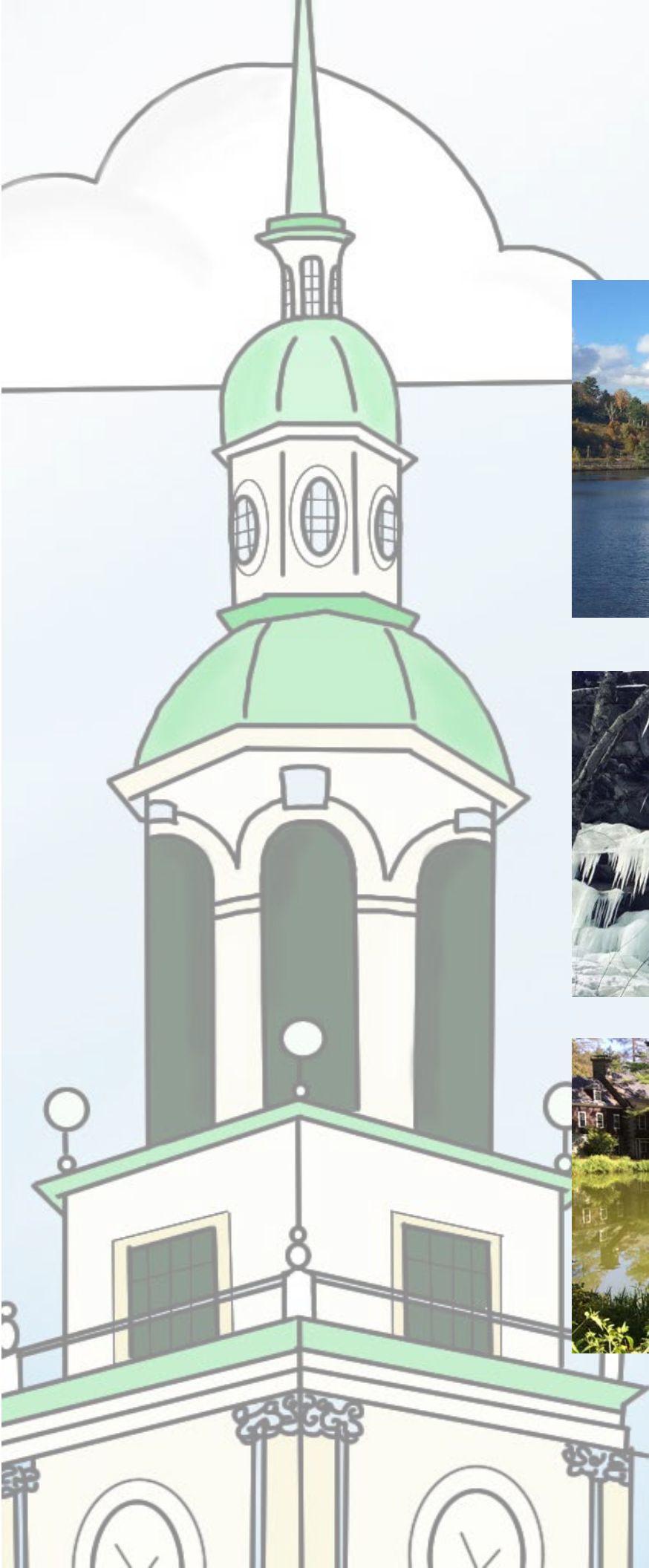


magazine designed by Regina Yan '19

**...AND THE GRANITE
OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
IN THEIR MUSCLES
AND THEIR BRAINS**

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SCENES AROUND THE GREEN



FROM THE DESK OF **THE PRESIDENT**

As the snowmelt leaves from an unusually warm winter, and as students return to campus for their spring term, stories of adventures in the out-of-doors buzz around the DOC. The Dartmouth Outing Club ran a record 10 break trips, spanning the continent from Quebec, to North Carolina, to the Grand Canyon. Students learned a lot from the dusty trails, the snowy mountains, and the rushing rivers. Hundreds of students learned to build their confidence, work through group conflict, and open up emotionally with their peers. Dozens of student leaders gained important experience by guiding these trips. These experiences will last a lifetime. Yet, while the DOC is active during our school breaks, it is only the tip of the iceberg.

As the class of 2019 joins our ranks, the DOC grows to a record size, with over 2000 members for the first time in its history. Yet, as a club we are continuing to strive to be better. The DOC has been actively reflecting on how we can make our club a more inclusive place, and making sure we are welcoming to everyone who wants to join. A generous grant from the President's office has allowed us to provide financial aid for all outdoors activities meaning that money is never an obstacle to people getting outside. These efforts are paying off. The weekly dinner feeds that each sub-club has are filled with lively chatter, and Robinson Hall is bustling with students preparing for trips, doing homework, and planning new adventures.

The DOC continues to be a leader on campus, epitomizing experiential education, leadership development opportunities, and a healthy community space. Trip participants learn everything from knot tying to self-determination. Aspiring leaders gain experience organizing trips, and managing a group. And contra-dances, lodge dinners, and paintballing trips prove that social events can be fun, healthy, and accessible to everyone.

As the club grows, we welcome a new

staff member to our Outdoor Programs Office. Morgan Haas joined us and has brought a fresh energy to mentoring students, and making the many processes we have in place more efficient. In addition, we welcome a new sub-club to our ranks. 'Women in the Wilderness' has been re-founded as a way to encourage women across campus to get involved in the outdoors.

As we move forward into the warm and sunny Hanover Summer, I am excited to watch students get outdoors through the DOC. Whether sleeping in a DOC Cabin, paddling on the Connecticut River, or hiking in the White Mountains, the outdoors continues to be a cornerstone of the Dartmouth experience for students, and I am excited to help this legacy continue. I hope that the stories you are about to read inspire you, motivate you, and remind you about how special the outdoors and the DOC are.

Yours in the Out-of-Doors,
Alex Lochoff '17
Dartmouth Outing Club President



"I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY. THE COMPLETE LACK OF CROWDS, THE ABSENCE OF A 30-DAY CAMPING LIMIT, AND THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS FIRST ASCENT POTENTIAL MAKE COCHAMO TRULY SPECIAL."

THE YOSEMITE OF SOUTH AMERICA

The Yosemite of South America. This unofficial motto for Cochamo Valley, a climbing area in southern Chile, echoed in my head as I got onto the plane at Logan. I had seen Yosemite for the first time this past summer, and I couldn't fathom anything comparing to the perfectly clean, soaring granite cliffs that greet visitors entering "The Valley." With limited international attention, very little online beta, and a much shorter history than the famed cliffs of Yosemite, I wondered just what I would find in Cochamo.

The idea for a Patagonia climbing trip first came to be almost a year earlier when I was applying for the Buenos Aires LSA. When else in my life was I going to have a month long chunk of free time paired with an excuse to fly to Argentina? I bought the tickets, got in touch with a strong climber and friend of many Dartmouth climbers, Jordan Moore, and agreed to meet him in Bariloche on the first of December.

When we met up, we decided it would be wise to start at an area just outside of Bariloche called the Frey. We hoped that this area, a paradise of seemingly endless alpine spires, would

help us prepare for the big walls of Cochamo. It is hard to do the Frey justice with words, but the best I've heard it described as if someone took the dribble castles that kids make on the beach and transported them to a huge alpine cirque. In every direction, 100–500-foot spires made of perfect alpine granite jut up, begging to be climbed. In five days of climbing we sampled quite a few of the spires, but by far my favorite was Torre Principal. Sitting dead center in the ridgeline and rising above all the surrounding mountains, Torre Principal is the obvious objective. The narrow summit offered views for hundreds of miles around.

After a successful week in the Frey, we decided we were ready for Cochamo Valley. One lost sausage to a Chilean border control dog and one lost packet of cookies to a hostel owner's dog later, we arrived in the small town of Cochamo with close to 100 kg of food and gear. With the help of a friendly supermarket owner, we managed to procure a horse to help carry food in, and we started into the jungle. The supermarket owner, we managed to procure a

horse to help carry food in, and we started into the jungle. The 10 km hike in sets the tone for Cochamo. Thick jungle and mud filled trenches made for slow progress, and after the first few kilometers, I gave up trying to keep my feet dry. After around four hours, we were greeted with our first view of the cliffs.

What a view it was. Simply put, Cochamo is massive. A shorter Cochamo climb might be "only" 1,000 ft, and the largest wall, The Monster, has routes as long as 4,300 ft. Needless to say, Jordan and I were definitely feeling rather small by the time we had set up base camp. Due to the length of approaches, we took the standard approach of setting up an advanced camp in one of the hanging valleys closer to the climbs. Our first climb was Al Centro y Adentro, an amazing 1,500 ft 5.11 that a certain famous soloist dubbed "The Astroman of South America." The climb had everything: techy slab, bombay off-width chimneying, and a perfect stemming dihedral pitch. Twelve pitches of pure heaven later, and we were treated to yet another amazing Patagonia vista.

Over the next three weeks we took advantage of what good weather we got and completed four more climbs, getting turned away twice on a fifth. In these weeks, we battled the rope troll (that pesky little guy who lives on the cliff and likes to tie knots in your rope as you pull rapels), mastered tree-a-ferrata (the act of climbing vertical mud and bushes), and repeatedly rediscovered just how much fun it is to bushwhack through jungle while wearing a haul bag.

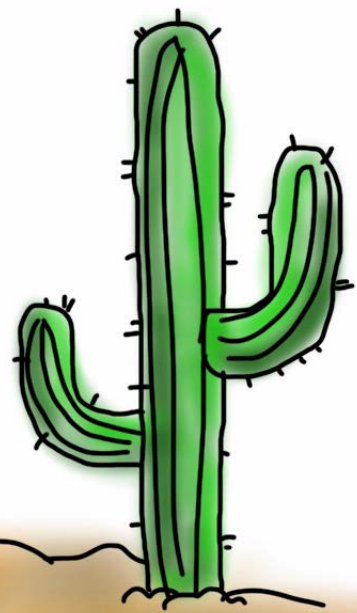
So just how does Cochamo compare to Yosemite Valley? The approaches are just a little bit longer, the granite just a little bit dirtier. But I wouldn't have it any other way. The complete lack of crowds, the absence of a 30-day camping limit, and the seemingly endless first ascent potential (seriously, the amount of untouched granite is absurd) make Cochamo truly special. For every ounce of energy I put into climbing at Cochamo, I was rewarded with endless adventure, friendship, and yes, even the occasional splitter pitch.

~DAVID BAIN '17



Top: Benson poses with fellow trip members in the Mazatzal Mountains.

Bottom: The trip takes a break from hiking to enjoy the Arizona scenery



GETTING SOME MUD ON MY BOOTS

I am an African American man from Florida. I come from a family that doesn't go on vacation, and if we did, the mountains would never be on our list of destinations. So when I was assigned to a Hiking 3 First Year Trip, I had no idea what I was in for. I showed up on Robo lawn wearing boots that I had broken in at the beachfront store that I worked in all summer. Neither the boots nor their owner were ready for three days of intense hiking and their first 4000-footer. So after a trip that included rain, rock scrambles, stomach distress, and stressful descents, I shoved my boots in my closet and lied down to rest my sore feet, hips, and shoulders. The thought of ever hiking again was such a joke that when my trippee asked me to go a Cabin and Trail meeting, I laughed uproariously before deciding to humor her with my attendance.

Given my past experience, I cannot tell you what compelled me to apply for the Cabin and Trail winter break backpacking trip, nor can I tell you what compelled them to accept me when in the application I said my motivation for applying was "to get some mud on my boots." Regardless of the build-up, a few weeks later I found myself camping at the base of the Mazatzal Mountains, preparing myself for a seven-day trip that would be one of my first hiking experiences.

The other members of my trip were impressive in their own right. One leader was a '14 who had taken a gap year to hike in Nepal, completed The Fifty with ease, and was a Wilderness First Responder. He was partnered with a bold and driven '17, who talked about hiking in the Cascade Range near her house and didn't even consider summiting the 7,000 foot Mazatzals to be a challenge. My trippees were no less impressive. An eloquent and intellectual '15 who had just returned from hiking on an FSP in South Africa and seemed to have knowledge about every person and every facet of this trip. A brilliant engineer

'16 from Alaska who had hiked, skied, and conquered every outdoor challenge imaginable in America's Last Frontier. A passionate '16 who was about to embark on a thrilling off-term in rural Peru and was a leader on campus in every sphere she touched. So when sunrise came to our campground and the morning sun touched on me, a '17 who was still mentally weary from the term and was in no physical shape to even consider backpacking -- well, you could say that I was terrified.

The next seven days were ones that I will cherish for the rest of my life. They were not easy, restive, or casual, but still days that I will cherish. I got to know the people on my trip better than most people at Dartmouth. When you are hiking, it is easy to get past the basic questions (what is your major, where are you from, and how are your classes). You soon get onto stories of discovering your sexuality, childhood gang violence, mental health, why Dartmouth may have been a mistake, why Dartmouth is the dream you and your family never could have imagined possible, and the reason why you will never stop hiking. Things didn't always go according to plan. Nights were way too cold and my stomach far too restless. We ended up evacuating a mountain range due to unexpected cold and snow via a path covered in frozen waterfalls and cliffs with 500-foot drops. Ascents were challenging, food was new and different, and legs were weary.

But regardless of any challenges, sights were breathtaking, conversation was insightful, and happiness came from simple and beautiful things. From this trip, I met my roommates for the next year and my new best friends. I found a community at Dartmouth, and I fell in love with hiking. One year later I am still hiking, still terrified, and still just trying to get some mud on my boots.

~JALEN BENSON '17

LIFE LESSONS

from Life Stories

I closed my eyes, preparing myself for the story that was about to unfold in front of my tripees' eyes. I knew two of them well, and I considered them to be close friends. Three of them were barely acquaintances, people I said hi to on the street. The last I had met the day before and was only just learning how to correctly pronounce his name.

But I was about to share my story, all 20 years of it. As a self-identified cry-talker, I knew I would cry (I was right), but I was willing to be vulnerable in front of these people, though I hardly knew most of them at all. I spoke for almost an hour, highlighting several life moments, discussing my changing worldviews, and describing my family and loved ones. A camping light hung in the tent, so I could make out my tripees' faces around me, but I avoided eye contact as I told them my story.

Something about the Utah air made me willing to reveal my life, thoughts, and feelings, despite having only spent a day with my companions. This was not surprising to me; as one of the leaders of the trip, I had decided that

one way to improve our group dynamic and facilitate friendships was for each of us to take an hour or so to tell the story of our life. I went first, as I had done this activity before with a group during First Year Trips, and we heard two life stories on the following three nights of the trip.

These life stories allowed for each of us to talk openly in a way that, while somewhat contrived, brought each of us to impart parts of ourselves that may not have come up in natural conversation. The nature of our trip allowed the conversations to continue into the next day, creating a starting point that opened up discussions on the trail that we might not have otherwise had.

And it's true that these stories ultimately brought us closer. Gathering seven people in a 3.5-person tent in the cold, desert night to sit for three hours truly can bring together a group in ways I had not seen before. I've witnessed many groups spend days and weeks together exploring the natural world, but I had not seen such a diverse group connect as quickly as this one. I suppose all we needed was a little understanding of one another to break through



photo courtesy of Victoria Nelson

our differences and form true friendships.

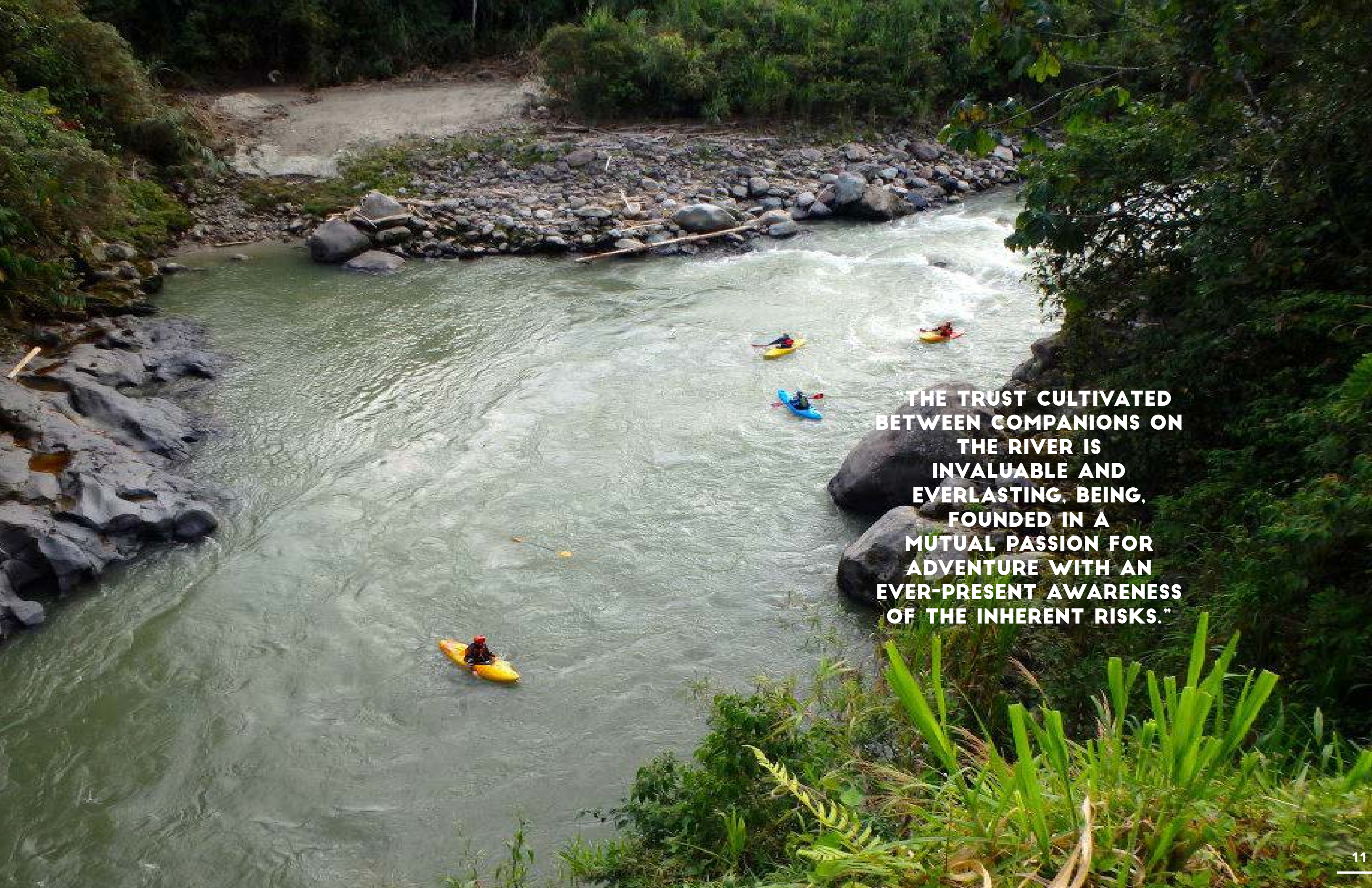
The wilderness always seems to provide the perfect setting for conversations like life stories. Perhaps there is something about the open air that makes open conversation seem so natural. I have spent the past nine years going on extended wilderness trips, and it is not uncommon to find myself forming tight knit relationships over the course of a few days that would have taken weeks, months, and years to establish in the frontcountry. Maybe it's the proximity. Maybe it's the endless hours spent together, forced to find conversation to avoid losing myself in my own head.

But I think it's more than that. I believe that extended tripping pushes us to find within ourselves our strongest sense of awareness, empa-

thy, and compassion. It brings out the best in us. Without these traits, the proximity and endless hours would become toxic. Instead, they become rewarding, facilitating closer and more unique friendships than one could find anywhere else.

Last winter, I traveled to the Escalante National Monument in Utah with six diverse human beings. We came from different corners of campus, the country, and the world with stories that greatly contrasted one another. The DOC and C&T brought our narratives together for seven days last December. And now, despite our differences, our stories will forever include each other.

~VICTORIA NELSON '17



**“THE TRUST CULTIVATED
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THE RIVER IS
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A Whitewater Paradise

The Ledyard Canoe Club adventured to the Napo Province of Ecuador for two weeks of paddling this fall-winter interim. Esteban Castaño '14, and Jonathan King '15, organized the trip, which involved a combination of twelve current students and recent alums. Funding for the trip came from the Davis G. Kirby '32 Adventure Fund.

The crew based its adventure in the small mountain town of El Chaco in the Quijos River Valley, two hours east of the capital, Quito. The weather around El Chaco is eerily comfortable nearly every day, all day long—a result of the region being both equatorial and over 6,000 feet above sea level. The temperature in the Quijos River Valley hovers in the 70s most days, and the thermometer barely drops each night—a perpetual call for t-shirts and shorts. One must be vigilant, however, for the equatorial sun shows no mercy; sunscreen is a must even on the cloudiest of days.

All 12 Ledyardites lived with a single Ecuadorian family in El Chaco. The family welcomed everyone to Ecuador and into their home with unwavering patience and infinite generosity. The family became good friends with the entire Ledyard crew—meals were shared, boating supplies were borrowed and swapped, and many stories (sometimes in broken yet valiant Spanish and English) were exchanged.

The crew took one rest day in the middle of the trip. The host family invited everyone to the

family *finca* or farm, and no one could refuse such a unique cultural opportunity. Ledyard joined the family at the finca for an entire afternoon preparing *una cena grande*—catching, gutting, and wrapping tilapia in giant banana leaves for fire roasting; killing, de-feathering, and preparing two field-raised chickens for a soup; and cutting and juicing sugarcane stalks for a refreshing, sweet drink served with a pinch of *limón*. The crew spotted exotic birds, petted the vacas, and nibbled cautiously, curiously on leaves from the (in) famous coca plant. The family encouraged everyone to enjoy a day *para descansando*, for resting.

The group paddled every other day of the trip. One day of boating, in particular, sticks in my mind—the day that the entire group paddled the El Chaco Canyon section of the Quijos River, a section that comprises formidable, high-volume class III/IV whitewater. As the crew dispersed along the rocky, scree-covered bank of the largest rapid in the section, ominously dubbed El Torro, the Bull, I thought about what brought us here to this *lugare extranga*, strange place. The river, like all water, speaks a universal language, and this language we understand. The river—the whitewater—brought us here, clearly, but I pondered about what specific tools enabled us to make this trip a reality. Two specific tools that every river demands came to mind: intuition and trust.



First, the river demands intuition—from personal experience, trial and error, learning from mistakes, and time on the water paddling. Intuition on a body of moving water is a powerful tool. Computational fluid dynamics attempt to formalize this intuition in the ambitious and ongoing effort to predict the behavior of a moving fluid. The power of modern computing cannot entirely meet this challenge; even a simple rifle pushes the limits of the most complex computational models, let alone a turbulent water feature or larger system. The mathematics are simply too complicated. Control the water? No. Understand the water, learn, and then predict its behavior and discern a path through it—this is the aim. When paddling, one must leave the pencil and paper, the schoolbooks, the models at home; on the water, human intuition prevails.

Second, the river demands trust in one's companions for leadership, mentorship, support, and camaraderie on the water. One learns from following the more experienced. To follow another on the river, particularly in a place of great tumult, is a gesture of utmost confidence and commitment. The trust cultivated between companions on the river is invaluable and everlasting, being founded in a mutual passion for adventure with an ever-present awareness of the inherent risks. Few friendships are ever founded upon such a deeply rooted foundation.

Intuition and trust—these tools enable us to venture to Ecuador, into El Chaco Canyon, and cast watchful, alert eyes over El Torro, keen to discern a path through its bellowing currents. Some choose a line along river right for the entirety of the rapid. Others choose a line along river left with a sharp move to right near the bottom boulder. Others still choose to walk—always a respected decision. Some lead, and all others learn from following, so in turn, the followers may one day lead. All put their skills to the test, follow their intuitions, trust their fellow paddlers, and accept the inherent risks. No one paddles alone. To many, the word “interim” implies rest and recuperation after ten weeks of fast-paced life at Dartmouth College, a respite in preparation for the looming blitzkrieg of academics, socializing, and growth promised by the term to come. The Ledyard Canoe Club remains restless, eager to push personal physical and psychological boundaries, to hone an intuitive understanding of one of the most complex systems on Earth, and to foster meaningful paddling companions and lifelong friendships.

Ecuador, cheers to a successful, memorable adventure. *Regresaremos pronto.*

~SAM STREETER '15





HIGHWAY Hypnosis OF THE Ocean



Photos courtesy of Lily Xu



This past winter, I traveled to the Everglades with a group of nine other members of the Ledyard Canoe Club, where we spent eight days paddling five canoes across open waters and eight nights camping on islands.

I had never been as far south as Florida, and the only extensive outdoors experience I had prior to this trip was my First-Year Trip. With that in mind, I could hardly believe how quickly my definition of “normal” adapted to this new environment. My once-erratic sleep schedule easily fell into step with the rhythm of the sun; my skin exfoliated from the millions of grains of sand instead of from a wash cloth; my eyes relished the extended hiatus from glowing screens and densely printed text.

The experience felt so wholly “normal” that by the third day, the landscape began to feel like home. During long stretches of paddling, I experienced what I termed the “highway hypnosis of the ocean.” My body mechanically went through the motions of arching forward, cutting the water with my paddle, and repeating. My gaze was directed toward our destination, but my eyes were out of focus. I found myself having to remind myself to sit back and process my surroundings.

Looking out towards the horizon, I saw an expanse of blue, as the glistening water transitioned almost seamlessly into the clear sky. It took a second to register in my mind exactly what I was looking at: the ocean rolling out into the horizon, with water literally spanning as far as the eye could see—and further. My mind quickly flooded with the realization that if we stopped paddling, we could easily be swept away, with no hope of getting back. Only then did I become fully aware of the sheer volume of water that surrounded us. We were ten

relatively small people who had faith that the curved metal contraptions that held us, our gear, and our food would not fail and cast us into the waters. Glancing the other way, I recognized that the closest land mass was at least a half mile away. For a second, I almost questioned our collective sanity.

Looking out at the islands around us, I saw views that I had been convinced existed solely in the fictional, idealized world of movies. There were large stretches of sand, topped with collections of trees so perfectly arranged that they ought to be featured on postcards. Ospreys and egrets flying overhead seemed to come straight

Looking out at the islands around us, I saw views that I had been convinced existed solely in the fictional, idealized world of movies.

out of the opening scene of a film, ready to introduce a story about castaways. During rare but coveted moments, we would spot a dolphin fin arch above the surface of the water.

Looking around at the other members of the trip, I was overcome by a sense of companionship.

Somehow I had found myself with nine people—many of whom I didn’t know at all a mere week ago—floating together in the middle of the Everglades. For eight days, we relied on each other for navigation, nourishment, comfort, and entertainment. Together we endured the agony of sunburns and bug bites and shared the delight of campfires and sunsets. I could hardly envision a better bonding experience. When I returned home, I quickly transitioned back to my former “normal.” For the first time in over a week, I stepped into a shower, ate perishable food, and slept in a bed, complete with pillow and blankets. The experiences I gained from the trip were quickly filed into the archives of my memory, but I know it’s a file I’ll frequently go back to revisit.

~LILY XU '18

The Power of Powder

I've always been one for chairlifts. They whisk you up to high heights and give you the satisfaction of being on top of the world for a ticket price of \$50. Groomed trails give you a definitive feeling of safety, following the path that has literally been made for you. Last year I traded this comfort for blisters and exhausting treks on the Winter Sports Club spring break backcountry skiing trip to Little Cottonwood Canyon in the Wasatch Mountains. I learned, however, an indelible lesson: earning your turns and making your own trails far surpasses the ease of a chairlift and groomers. For those new to alpine touring (AT) skiing, imagine cross-country skiing uphill with a grippy fur coat on the bottom of the skis. Skinning up the mountain was exhausting and slightly uncomfortable, but just like hiking, our satisfaction when we reached the top was worth it -- and we had the skiing to look forward to. Red Pine Canyon in Little Cottonwood Canyon was our ski mountain in a snow globe. No one was around, but fresh powder was everywhere. The ridge was around 10,000 feet high and enclosed a frozen lake. I grew up skiing on the East coast, so this was Narnia to me. We had this wonderful playground to ourselves for seven days.

The best set of ski days came when it started snowing... and didn't stop for two days. We stuck to the tree-filled faces of the canyon, and I experienced some of the best powder of my life. Each time we got to the top of our line, we quickly changed our AT skis into skiing mode. We sought the best powder, floating between trees and shredding the open faces.

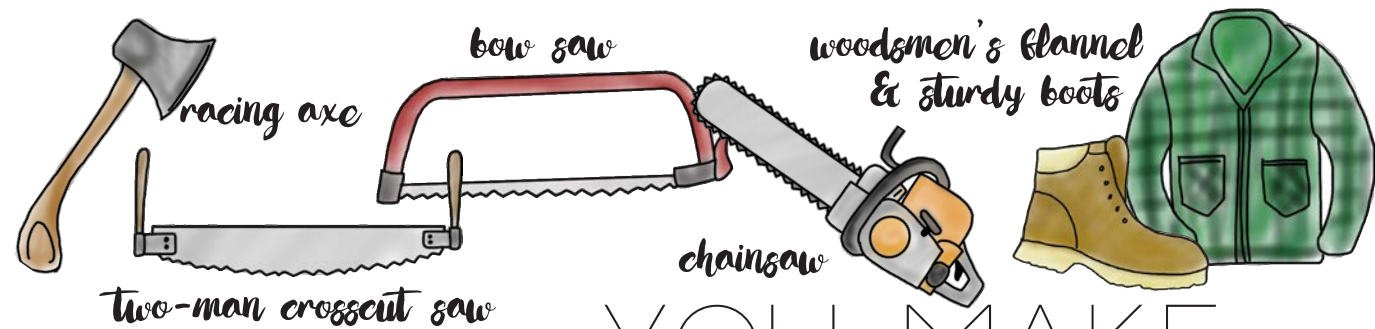
It is now necessary for me to talk about the wonders of winter camping. The first

downside is that unfortunate feeling of needing to pee in the middle of the night. I never wanted to get out of my warm sleeping bag to face the howling night wind. The cold was the biggest factor. I constantly worried for my toes, and I saw food not as nourishment, but instead as a source of heat for my body.

However, as soon as the sun rose over the ridge in the morning, the valley instantly heated up. The days were warm; it was either sunny or snowing buckets. I also never had to worry about the lack of showering facilities because I wore so many layers that no one could smell me anyway. Winter camping taught me to respect Nature in its wildest forms, especially when new snow prevented me from leaving the tent or when I woke up to find a section of the ridge had sloughed during the night. The Winter Sports Club spring break trip tested me in new and challenging ways. It was physically and mentally exhausting, but it gave me an incredible sense of accomplishment and joy to be sharing this experience with six other people just as passionate about skiing as I am.

I would wake up each morning tired, cold, and unwilling to get out of my tent. But as soon as I got my frozen ski boots on and unzipped the tent entrance, I would feel an overwhelming sense of possibility. We decided what paths to take each day, what new slopes to explore. And during a time at college when nothing felt certain, the spring break trip helped me find solid ground. Better than ground, I found powder—and lots of it.

~KATHERINE BRADLEY '17



WOOD YOU MAKE THE CUT?

The DOC attracts a strange lot, but no club has quite the same quirkiness as the Woodsmen's Team. Like the rest of the DOC, we enjoy the outdoors, but our mindset is distinctively unique: we like destroying it. The canoeist and kayakers in Ledyard seek to ride Nature's waterways. Chubbers in Cabin and Trail seek to climb her peaks and peer off into distant lands. The woodsman or woman simply seeks to cut a tree down and make the wood smaller.

Linked into the nature of our activity is a sense of change. The hiker, if she is careful, can walk up the mountain a hundred times and no one will see any difference in the mountain. A woodsman walks into the forest once and it has been permanently altered. There is a sense of finality that comes along with this change. Once a cut has been finished, there is no going back. One can't un-burn a log, nor can they stand a tree up after it has been brought down. From this permanent change a pride in our accomplishment is derived, for once a chop is finished you can hold in your hands tangible evidence that your actions have affected this world. From this description one could imagine the whole team of Woodsmen tromping off into the woods to change and destroy as much as possible, but this image is not true. We are strangely anachronistic about our whole process of logging. The ski team would gladly buy a new model of ski boot that helped them ski faster; a chubber from Cabin and Trail would

be more than cheerful to get the latest and greatest backpacking technology.

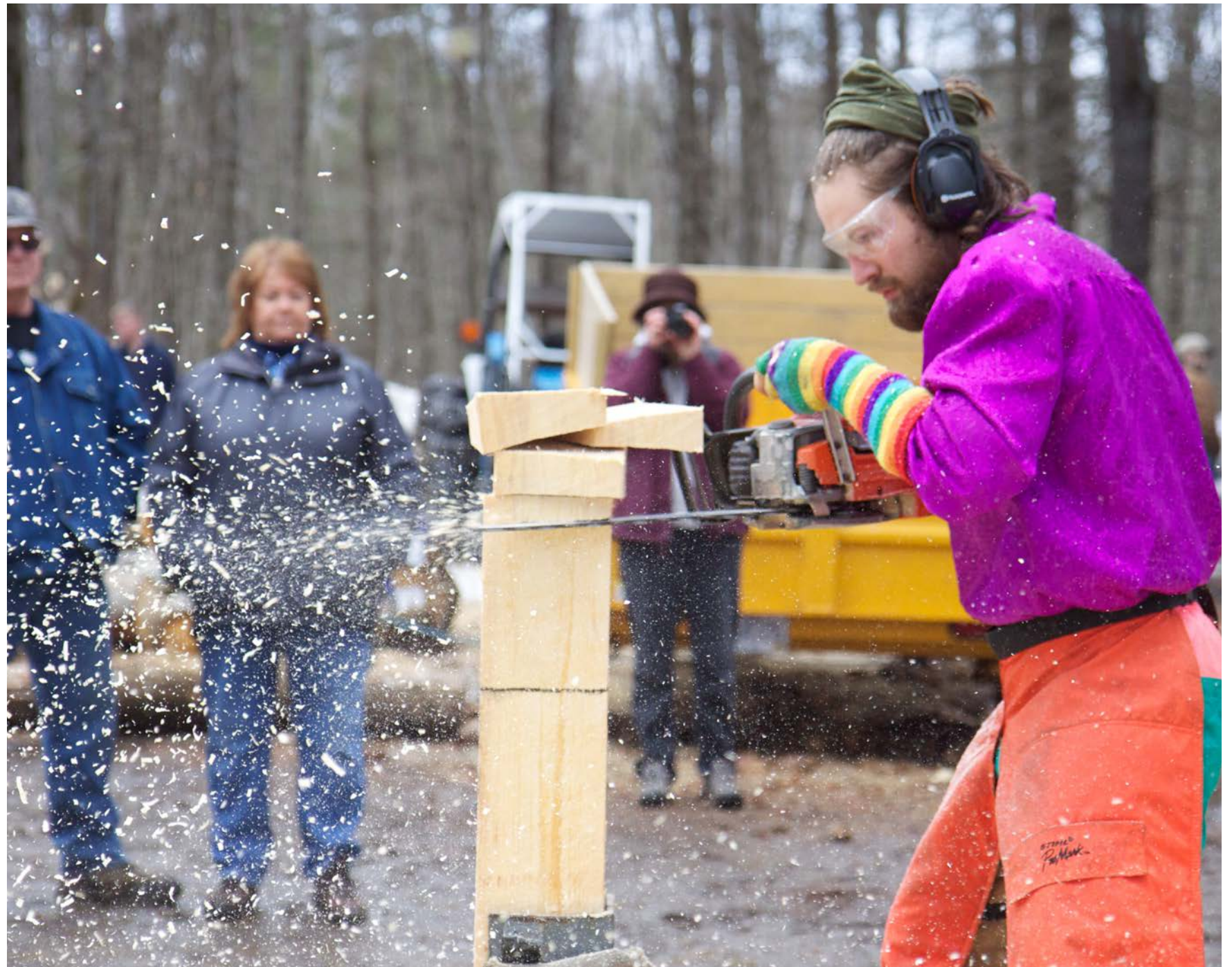
But ask a woodsman to fell a tree, he will walk right past the automated tree feller, right past the chainsaw, and pick up an axe. We purposely handicap ourselves to limit our impact and to create a more intimate process. The whine of a chainsaw holds its own beauty, but nothing compares to the rhythmic thumping of an axe against a great pine. We log not with the destruction of trees as our goal but rather to create a relationship with the forests. We realize only through a tree's death can we hack, saw, and burn it. Yet during the process of destroying a tree, we learn the layout of the fibers, the location of the knots, and any blight or diseases hidden within. We know the tree much better than if we had left it standing.

When all our wood has been cut and burnt, we sit down and admire all the destruction we have wrought. Nothing is as quite as satisfying as realizing that the pile of ashes in front of you was a tree not that long ago, and you caused it to change. Yet we know our job is not yet done. We gather the ashes, chips, and sawdust and compost them on the forest floor. Then we sit and watch as a new sapling springs forth and smile knowing that in 50 years when the Dartmouth Woodsmen's Team tramples through these woods, they too will get to enjoy the cycle all over again.

~BEN NELSON '17

Left: Dartmouth Woodsmen's Team poses for a photo following a meet at the University of New Hampshire in Fall 2014

Below: Sam Kernan '14 participates in a chainsaw event at the Mud Meet in 2015, hosted by Colby College





From Skyscrapers to Mountain Peaks

While most students were heading someplace warm for spring break, I was packing my bags for a Quebec Mountain Adventure in the Groulx Mountains! What started out as a one-week PE course in snowshoeing, backcountry skiing, and winter camping in Canada turned out to be a life-changing experience that will always be a special part of my first winter memories. I never thought about how much planning goes into preparing for a below-zero-degree adventure. Brian Kunz, Deputy Director of the Outdoor Program Office, had it all planned out. From the mukluks (to save our feet from freezing weather) to the skins for our skis, I knew I was in for a challenge that would help me learn more about myself and my love for nature.

After a nice, 16-hour drive across the Canadian border and through Quebec City, we finally made it to the cabin where we would spend the next few days with Michel Denis, our Canadian guide for the first half of the trip. I cannot believe that he built the cabin out of only a bow-saw and axe; I would have never guessed that such a humble and creative man was on the cover of the National Geographic for his expedition in the Arctic!

We left Michel's cabin to go winter camping, something I never thought possible. Camping in the snow? Please! But I ended up learning great skills. I used a machete to chop down the branches of spruce trees. We used them to floor our tent. I even had the chance to bow-saw trees in half! We had created our own little system, rotating between three jobs: cooking, cleaning, and wood crew.

After a hard day's work of making shel-

ter, we were ready to have dinner. We made bannock—a delicious bread filled with raisins—from scratch. As I snowshoed towards the tent, I spotted little white hare tracks! I glanced above and felt one with the stars. They were so close that you could trace them! I was losing myself in the beauty of Mother Nature when everyone called me to the tent. It was my turn on the cleaning crew—no fun!

On our last day near the Groulx Mountains, we said goodbye to Michel and prepared for our long trip back to Hanover. I promised to write Michel and come back to visit. I knew I would miss being surrounded by the pure white snow. As we load our belongings onto the van, Dr. Richard, a graduate student on our trip, turned to me and commented on my skiing skills: "I am so impressed by how much you have learned in such a short amount of time, Gisele, especially since you have never really skied before and you are from Houston!"

He was right. Here I was in a remote region of Canada, learning how to bushwhack and ski down steep slopes in a matter of days. I truly pushed myself beyond my limits, and I had fun while doing it.

Returning back to civilization was not easy, and I was not sure if I was quite ready yet. I could not believe how much I enjoyed skiing and living in close proximity with people I barely knew without showering! I truly learned to embrace the snow, and I was sad to see it go! But I knew in my heart that it would definitely not be my last Quebec Mountain Adventure!

~GISELE PHALO '17



Top: Phalo holds up her poles as she snowshoes up Mount Harfang.

Left: Deputy Director of Outdoor Programs Brian Kunz and Canadian guide Michel Denis lead Phalo's group on the trip.

RUTH GORGE(OUS)

Natalie Afonina and I made a trip into the central Alaska Range last spring with funding from the Dartmouth Mountaineering Club. We traveled to the Ruth Gorge, a location known for remote, towering walls. These walls are host to many high quality rock and ice climbing routes. We had our eyes set on alpine rock climbing. We met in Anchorage the first week of June. We spent a day or two preparing and organizing gear and soon found ourselves in Talkeetna where we caught a taxi flight into the mountains. That afternoon we were setting up base camp in the middle of the glacier, dwarfed by the mile-tall cliffs surrounding us. Weather was good, and our forecast was promising.

Recent snow in the past week needed a day or two of warm sun to melt off of the routes. Days one and two were spent touring around the glacier to familiarize ourselves with the area as the rock dried. On the third day, we awoke early to clear skies and were soon skiing toward the base of The Stump, one of our objectives. This "small" sub-peak is often overlooked, but the 1800-foot formation is home to some of the best rock in the

Gorge. The lower portion of the route was first climbed in 1981 by Steve Quinlan and the late Mugs Stump (for whom the Sub-peak is named). Finished in 2004 by Chris McNamara and Joseph Puryear, this climb follows a major dihedral system on the south face. They called the route "Goldfinger," due to the color of the rock and the high quality of the climbing.

As the sun began to shine on the surrounding peaks, we arrived at the base of the route. Looking up at the large, intimidating corner system, there was no end in sight. The climbing began with a handful of moderate pitches of beautiful stemming on the most solid granite. Swinging leads, we made good time and found ourselves sitting on the summit in the early afternoon sun. However, the afternoon heat had begun to loosen the snow slopes in the area, and sloughing snow began to periodically roll over the cliffs. We began a hasty descent retracing the route, stalling several times with partially stuck ropes. We made it to the base later in the evening without incident. We skied fast over firmly crusted snow back to our camp, arriving roughly 14 hours after leaving in the morning.

We awoke the next morning to a sea of white, with freshly fallen snow from during the night. Light snow and rain continued over the following week, hindering any further rock climbing. We entertained ourselves with short ski tours on the glacier and lots of reading, making great friends with our neighbors on the glacier.

After too many tent-bound days,

clear skies returned, but we were out of time. Our plane taxi picked us up and returned us to the green of summer. We got to spend a few days enjoying the things around Anchorage before our time expired, and we left Alaska. Overall, it was a fantastic trip, with wonderful company and great climbing.

~**PETER MAMROL '15**



Photos courtesy of Peter Mamrol

**...AND THE GRANITE OF
NEW HAMPSHIRE
IS MADE PART OF THEM
'TIL DEATH**

