

50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION

# DEEP SPRINGS COLLEGE

Alumni  
Newsletter

Spring  
2016

# HOWDY!

Welcome to the Deep Springs Alumni Newsletter Spring 2016 edition. The very first DS Newsletter was published fifty years ago exactly, and I'm proud to carry on this wonderful tradition. In these pages, you'll find news, opinions and even fiction from the valley. We share these articles and photos with you as an expression of friendship and community, from all the inhabitants of the valley. We hope you'll do the same, by sharing your stories and comments with us.

Be well.

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R.I.P COMCOM, FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

## The Valley's Newest Addition!

Upon staying at Deep Springs for most of the winter break, and taking care of a friend's dogs, I realized that animals highlight a side of life which is easy to overlook. I often get caught up asking what

everything means, interpreting action and circumstance to the point of existential vertigo. But around animals, and especially dogs, I'm reminded that there is joy in simply experiencing life, and dignity in allowing oneself to fully inhabit life in a particular time and place. All this inspired me to adopt a dog of my own. His name is Charlie, and he's an energetic and loving four-year-old Border Collie/Australian Shepherd mix, whose favorite activities include chasing a laser pointer across a field at breakneck speed, sticking his head out of car windows, and curling up with someone after a long day.



—Caleb Stevens DS15



# Academic Update

Social Sciences Professor **Jennifer Smith** is teaching a course in Ethnography this semester. Her students will be studying this standard method of social science research, as well as reading notable ethnographic texts as examples. Each student will research and write a twenty-page ethnography of some aspect of life at Deep Springs as a final project.

**Ross Peterson** has returned to Deep Springs to teach a class on the History of the Civil Rights movement. The class will cover mainstream figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, as well as lesser known figures who did the hard work of breaking down segregation within their fields. Readings include many first-person accounts of that era, as well as Ta-Nehisi Coates' new book *Between the World and I*.

Dean **Amity Wilczek** likes to say that, despite common assumptions, students at Deep Springs are being taught modern languages. In this case, however, the language in question is R, a programming language especially useful in statistical computation. Students will be applying their newfound linguistic abilities in Amity's class on Quantitative Reasoning, also known as 'Stats for Scientists'.

**Michele Lanan**, the Herbert Reich Chair of the Natural Sciences, is teaching two classes this spring. In Natural History of the Valley, she will be leading a group of students around our beautiful natural landscape, and studying the history of the place and the people who have lived in it. For more, see Carter's article on Page 9.

Michele is also teaching Cognitive Science, in which students will examine the working of minds by studying

their own. Each student has a project in which they attempt to learn a new skill, while keeping a journal of their learning process and how it affects their conscious life. Some examples of projects include learning Arabic, studying yoga, and quitting smoking. In addition, students read a variety of texts as an introduction to contemporary cognitive science.

**David McNeill**, the Robert Aird Chair of the Humanities, has his students searching for insight both in Ancient Greece and 18th Century Germany. He is leading one of his classes through a close reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a dense yet rewarding project. Students in the class will attest to the difficulty of the text, nigh-impenetrable even in its original German.

In David's other class, Sophocles, he and his students are going on a journey through history, searching for answers to questions like, "What makes good tragedy?" and "What is the human condition?" They have begun by reading the Theban Plays: *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*,

and will supplement these texts with literary criticism of the plays from critics such as Aristotle, Hegel, Freud, and Nietzsche.

Visiting Professor in the Humanities **Steve Berg** continues along the trajectory of his class from last semester, following it up with a careful study of Early Modern Political Philosophy. He and his students are reading works by Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Spinoza, and tackling questions at the foundation of modernity.

**Padraic MacLeish DS99** is teaching the perennial favorite, Auto Mechanics, once more this spring. In this class, students learn the basic functions of all the major systems in a motor vehicle, as well as the basics of diagnosis and repair of engine trouble.

Rifle Safety is currently the most popular class at Deep Springs, and it's not even for credit! Taught by Padraic and **Noah Beyeler DS03**, the course goes over the essentials of gun safety and etiquette, including range time with live ammo.



Jenny's ethnography class prepares for the day's discussion

# Updates from the Farm & Ranch

## *Deep Springs Goes Organic*

by Ben Munger, Farm Manager



**Farm Team (Jack Spira DS15 and Laughlin McKinnon DS13) fixing gopher traps by the shop.**

Both the Farm and Ranch are in the process of being certified organic with California Certified Organic Farms (CCOF). The process allows a two year transitional status to sell organic beef and hay by the 2016 2017 season. The college is committed to maintaining National Organic Program standards within the beef and hay enterprises, but will not be certified for small animals or the garden. The logic is that the small animal products from the farm and vegetables and fruit from the garden consumed on campus are for an internal market and don't necessarily need extra costs of organic certification. The beef and hay sold externally for organic prices should increase income from the Ranch and Farm enterprises.

The costs associated with Organic Certification include one-time and yearly dues to CCOF. The one-time fee is a registration fee for the initial setup of the contract. Additionally, organic fertilizer costs are higher than those for conventional fertilizers and are applied in the same way with a broadcast spreader or manure spreader. The

production of raw manure from Deep Springs corrals will continue to be a component of our fertility plan as will grazing the first and fourth cuttings of the hay fields. Building organic matter and activating the soil biota will help produce excellent hay and healthy animals.

Crop rotation is another important part of our fertility plan. Alfalfa fields need to be rested with grains—both wheat, barley, oat mixtures and sudan grass. We will be replanting Field 4 with Sudangrass and North Field with a 3 way grain this Spring. North Field will be kept in grains, but will be interseeded with diverse legumes and brassicas over the next few years with the plan of creating permanent pasture. Soil health is dependent on crop rotation and a diversity of root depths within the soil profile. Our goal is to diversify and rotate hay crops over the next several years to continue to improve soils.

Weed pressure will continue to be an ongoing issue within hay fields and along fence lines and access roads. This is where the students come in. Since

they are the ones on the ground moving irrigation pipe they are usually the first to find Dodder infestations in the fields. We will remove most of the Dodder by hand or fire. Other weeds like Curly Dock are removed by mattock and pulaski. Annuals like Iranian Mustard are chopped out or disced or harrowed out of field edges. Timing is everything with weeds and their control requires constant vigilance.

We will be selling organic beef on the hoof and hay later this season and hopefully realizing a greater price in the market. While it may take time to find the right markets for our products we're committed to the process of improving soils, hay crops, and maintaining healthy animals. The important part is the educational benefits realized by the students participating on the ranch and farm. We have managed to incorporate both organic and nonorganic systems working closely. This reflects the reality of agriculture today and gives the students valuable experience to discern any differences.



# Reflections on Painting

by Martin Dolsky DS15

It was a warm summer night, a couple of weeks after my arrival to the valley, and I was sitting on the roof of the student dorm, looking up at the brightest stars I'd ever seen. I was not alone. In fact, I was in the middle of a Student Body meeting, selecting classes for the next two terms with my fellow comrades. When it came to the two classes offered by Justin Kim, our soon-to-be painting teacher, I remained silent. "I came here to study philosophy, not paint!" I thought to myself. I let the others decide and didn't even consider taking Justin's class. When the evening was over, I was as satisfied as I could be. I was taking Aristotle, Dante and War & Peace!

I was forced to reconsider. Only a couple of days later, Jacob, another first year student coming from RISD, had a serious talk with me. Excuses about my lack of skill were thrown out the window and I was made to realize that education wasn't only about reading books and writing about them. I gave painting a second chance and it paid back generously.

On the first day of class I walked into our painting studio and was given a piece of paper. "Find the most comfortable position for you," Justin said. "Position your left hand so that you can hold it still for the next 10 minutes, grab a pencil and draw your hand as well as you can."

That was it. "Okay," I thought and used my hand for the first time to create something on a piece of paper. It turned out horrific. And then again. And again. And again. The first weeks were tough. I, and probably most of my classmates, were overwhelmed by pretty much everything we were asked to do. When I began to make sense of

proportions, contours came. When I began to make sense of contours, first three acrylic colors came. And then the whole range. And then we had to mix them to create new colors. And then we had to start using a range of brushes... The input of new challenges was simply never-ending and nobody was allowed to take a breather. Keeping up with all the new information required total dedication both in class and outside of it. Many a time I found myself leaving the studio with a slight headache and exhausted. Neither Dante nor



Aristotle ever had the same impact. I learned a lesson. Painting can be taken as seriously as any other class; all it requires is a change of attitude.

In no way could I say painting was a piece of cake, but it was worth it. As I finally became a little more comfortable and got a grasp of what it entailed, homework was more than just long hours of hard work; it was also fun. I began to see myself better as I was trying to create something "beautiful" with a bunch of brushes and paint. It was thrilling to see what

my mind (or something bigger using my mind as a means) wanted to create and recreate. At the same time, it was perhaps even more thrilling in a different kind of way to see my actual body—namely hands—trying to follow what the mind ordered them to do. Sometimes, the difference between the intention and the result was stunning. Sometimes, the intention only became obvious after seeing the result. Either way, the experience made me take painting more and more seriously and the chunk of time I was dedicating to painting quickly exceeded my other two classes. My improvement was evident but never satisfactory, which only increased my drive to keep working harder. Eventually, I realized that the seven weeks I was given to work on my independent project allowed me to merely begin. To begin seeing myself in my work and to begin my hopefully life-long interaction not only with painting but with the larger world of art.

Now, seven weeks after we all finished our last painting, what I don't see is perfection. Instead, I see lots of works in progress, decent starting points that tell us how far we've come since the early hot September and how much there is still to explore. They are paintings that speak to who we were as a class, the journey we embarked on, and how much potential there is even in the least gifted hands. I also realized that anything that helps one understand the world around him can be an academic pursuit, no matter how trivial it might seem at first. In the case of painting, I have never learned harder and my eyes have never been opened wider.



The isolation policy as formulated by Nunn was relatively simple. During term, no student was to leave, and no student was to have a visitor. Enforcing isolation was easy. There wouldn't be many efforts to enter or leave the Valley because of the physical difficulty of the task, and any efforts that did arise could simply be voted down. Now protecting isolation is a more difficult task, but to see why requires a broader casting of what isolation means.

Isolation, more than simply entering and leaving the Valley, is a state of being within the Valley; a state of being where engagement with the outside world is so limited that, even if students are concerned or thinking about life outside of the Valley, contending with those concerns and thoughts has to be done inside the Valley.

This state of being, and not the physical isolation of the Valley, is what is now threatened by the presence of the internet and specifically its increased ease of use. The internet subverts this inward focus in several ways. One is simply the amount of time students spend on the internet: time that isn't spent engaging with other students, the physical space of the Valley, or the work of this place. The other is the way that relationships from outside the Valley replace those that would

have been formed inside of it. If the role of friendship is filled by a friend from outside Deep Springs, it becomes significantly less pressing to form friendships within the Valley. Doing the work to create friendship here is hard, and it's easier to simply rely on preexisting friends. I believe this to be the causal mechanism why, according to David Neidorf's observation, students have complained more about feeling lonely the more that quality of the internet has improved.

But why should isolation be protected? This is the major question the Student Body needs to address in their attempt to face the challenges to isolation posed by the internet. I think there are several answers to this question. The state of being I mentioned before points to one answer. The more isolated we are, the more we have to confront the challenges that Deep Springs poses to us, and to form the relationships we need to both overcome those challenges and give each other the support that we need when, at some point or another, we inevitably fail.

Another answer is one that most of the Student Body thinks of as being an argument against isolation, which is that it's hard. Without pushing students and confronting them with hardships, it's impossible for Deep Springs to complete its mission. There's something special

about a hardship like isolation which, because of the Student Body's ability to enforce or not enforce the isolation policy, is self-imposed. Unlike the challenges of the three pillars, we can choose not to confront isolation, which makes the choice to do so even more meaningful. Breaking our habits of internet use and communication with the outside world is an especially difficult task, but that difficulty has its own reward.

The final reason I see isolation as a valuable part of the Deep Springs experience is because of Nunn's vision. While I have my problems with some of Nunn's ideas, like the elitism in the Grey Book and Deep Springs being all-male, the fact is that Nunn had a brilliant educational mind and I believe deeply in the model of education that he created at Deep Springs. Nunn viewed isolation as being an essential part of the educational program, and the Student Body owes it both to itself, the institution, and the tradition of this school to at least try to fully engage with isolation, a task which hasn't been undertaken in my year and a half here. It may be that Nunn was wrong about isolation, and that it is not an important part of the Deep Springs project, but there's no way to know without experimenting.





# ISOLATION

by Jesus Munoz DS15

Our valley feels endless, and it's difficult not to feel overwhelmed by its beauty. The quietness of our surroundings leaves many in awe; it's surreal. Beyond the pedagogical isolation there is a physical one in the Deep Springs Valley, and it's difficult to imagine what life at Deep Springs would look like if there wasn't one. Certainly, isolation teaches many students endurance, patience, and perseverance because it confines them psychologically amidst an endless valley and a diminute community. Deep Springs can feel overwhelmed at times by isolation; however, there isn't much they can do to overcome it but to face it fully, allowing them to commit themselves entirely to the Deep Springs project.

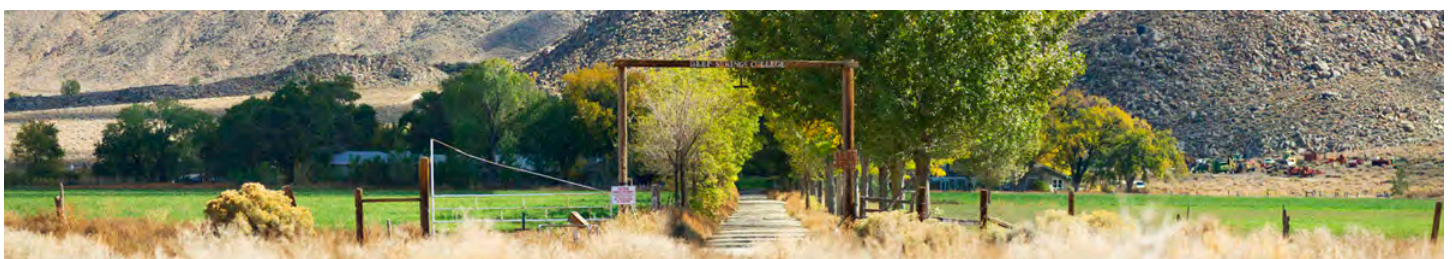
As part of this commitment, Deep Springs make more intentional relationships with each other—no matter how different their backgrounds might be. DS15 is one of the most diverse student bodies in the history of this place, and I can feel how isolation helps at breaking cultural barriers between students; it fosters a deeper

brotherhood within the SB, as many have to put aside cultural differences in order to fully experience this brotherhood. While isolation creates stronger bonds between students of many backgrounds, it can also indirectly put limitations on how minority students express themselves culturally. This can be particularly challenging for those who are unfamiliar with the cultural tendencies that take shape at Deep Springs when it unconsciously assimilates the dominant middle-class cultural backgrounds shared by the majority of community members.

I think the Student Body is aware of this, and we are currently evaluating how we can create spaces where students can express their culture to the community. For example, last semester the SB hosted an event where students of color shared their experiences of living in communities in which they had no cultural ties. Students are also regularly discussing what it means to be living in a diverse community in one-to-one conversation and SB meetings.

I see isolation as a unique tool that connects students in deeper intellectual and spiritual bonds. Isolation requires students to leave many of the things they loved in the places they come from behind for two years. However, this can be more pronounced for students who already feel comparatively isolated as minorities when they move away from their own cultural milieu. These students might not see ways in which they can contribute to some of the aspects of Deep Springs that fall outside of their cultural experience.

I believe Deep Springs' unique isolation policy and tight-knit community have the potential to reverse many of the problems inherently tied to culturally diverse communities. Here at Deep Springs, students care about their peers because we are all we have in this valley, and that's why we are looking for new ways to create spaces in which students can come together and learn from each other's backgrounds. This, too, is just beautiful.



# An Interview with Ross Peterson

*“I honestly think L.L. Nunn would be amazed.”*

Conducted by Ethan Reichsman DS14

*You’ve been at Deep Springs many times and in many different roles. How does it feel to be back?*

It’s actually been really really good. I was honestly a little leery about coming back as a teacher because I know the intensity of the teaching process here at Deep Springs and I’d been basically out of this kind of teaching since I’d left. But it’s been unbelievably enriching to be here again. It seems like a great group of students and staff—there’s so much getting done. It’s just great to be a part of it.

*What (if anything) is different, and why?*

I’d say the similarities outweigh the differences. However, there’s less of an edge. I don’t know if it’s with the students or with the class, but people do what their jobs are and don’t spend a lot of time worrying about what’s out of their control. That’s been very comfortable. When I’ve been here before it’s almost been inevitable that you get drawn into disputes, and I think people have been good about seeing the bigger picture. The molehills haven’t been mountains.

*What do you think caused this cultural shift?*

I feel the shift, but it’s hard to put your finger on exactly. The relationship between staff and students is as great as I’ve seen it in years. Labor’s a big part of what students do and it seems to be a very good working relationship, where people aren’t constantly frightened they might make a mistake.

*How long have you been involved with the college?*

The first time I taught here was Terms Four and Five in 1996. From then until I became president, I never went two years without teaching here. I knew every class during that time. After having spent my whole career in really large public universities, I came to believe that this place really works, when you see how students respond while they’re here and what they go

on to do. It’s not a radical place—it’s worked for 100 years. I especially like how students take ownership over admissions and evaluations. What I’ve seen over the twenty years is that students now do this more and probably do it better. One of the things I’ve seen about Deep Springs is that everyone learns, from staff to faculty to students. It’s a really enriched learning environment and I mean outside of the classroom as well as inside.

This class is also as diverse as I’ve seen it, and that helps you learn about the variety of experiences. It also opens up doors for people—now you can go to the Czech Republic and stay with **Martin [Dolsky DS15]**.

*You’re teaching a class on the History of the Civil Rights Movement. Why did you choose to teach this class here and now?*

In all honesty it’s because of the events in the last couple years—nationally, the various confrontations between young African-Americans or young Latinos and police that led to all kinds of things—riots, demonstrations. It brought to my mind that for minorities history can be a roller coaster ride of ups and downs, and every once in awhile you have to step back and make sure the constitution is being applied for all people. I just thought it would be a good idea for me and the students to step back and look at what Dr. King and others were talking about.

*You’re also teaching Public Speaking this semester. Why do you think this class is part of the Deep Springs curriculum?*

When I’m on a treadmill in Utah in the winter, I have mental exercises I do and one is going through all the people in all the classes I’ve seen at Deep Springs. And you know what I remember about almost every single one? A speech. Some were great, some were really bad, and some were really off the wall. That helps me remember them. They usually don’t like to be

reminded. Like if I went to **Nathan Leamy [DS02]** and said, remember that speech you gave where you just stood up and performed the entirety of Cat in the Hat, including jumping over the couch?

I just have always liked it. That’s why I assigned “sense of place”, so I could get to know the students and their backgrounds. The other thing I believe: in the world of communication today, where people do so much with their thumbs and not with their mouths, it’s a really good exercise to do a speech with an introduction, conclusion, and major points.

Public Speaking gives people an opportunity to laugh and smile a little bit. It’s not that every speech does that, but I think that’s important. It’s very important in this day and age for people to express themselves verbally. Even if it’s an impromptu thing like an interview, you learn to be concise, not off topic. Public speaking is a good tool for students to come out of here with.

*Is there anything else you’d like to share with the friends and alumni of Deep Springs?*

After all these years of being in and out, as everyone should know, Deep Springs has a magnetic pull. I’m sure Kay likes Deep Springs more than I do, because it’s isolated and there are no phones or TV. I think there’s a great magnetic pull to the isolation of the valley and the opportunity to spend time in solitude and just put the whole world in perspective. I honestly think L.L. Nunn would be amazed, for one thing, just that it’s still here. I remember **Robert Sproull [DS35]** as a Withrow Speaker; he came in the 30s when Deep Springs was hanging on by fingertips. He said “We’ve all been shaped by this place and we have to preserve it.” I’d just like alumni to know that the 28 students here are worth it. They’re a heck of an investment.



# Natural History of the Valley

by Carter Wilkinson DS15

Wallace Stegner begins his essay, *The Sense of Place*, with the line “If you don’t know where you are...you don’t know who you are.” In the essay, Stegner invites us to consider the idea that place is essential to identity. He invites us to see how what it means to be a “Deep Springer” is naturally bound up with striving to understand how this place (the valley and college) has come to be what it is.

This valley has a fascinating and complicated geologic history. It is home to hundreds of species of plants, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects, and arachnids, and has a complicated history of Native American settlement, Anglo colonization, mining, and ranching, before our dear Lucien Lucius Nunn ever purchased the ranch and began this grand experiment. Thinking of time in these terms is, more or less, what the Scottish geologist James Hutton called “deep time.”

Thinking about how this valley came to be and who/what its inhabitants have been, helps us think critically about the context in which we are living here. It also provides context for the institutional history of the College and how that history is present or absent in the workings of the College today.

For example, as we legislate and deliberate in SB, we do so within a certain tension. This tension necessarily arises as personal values derived from our lives outside the valley come into

conflict with the institutional values inherited from the Grey Book and past SBs. We ought to consider how a given political moment for the SB is rooted in the ideological and institutional history of the College, which is situated in a broader deep history.

past throughout the valley, if one knows how and where to look.

Along these lines, Michele is offering a course this semester titled *The Natural History of Deep Springs*. The course aims to teach students about the deep time of the valley,

the surrounding region, its ecology, and the history of indigenous people, settlers, mining, and ranching. The course also aims - using natural history texts, scientific writing, selected readings in conservation literature, and personal works by amateur naturalists - to provide students with a framework for becoming amateur naturalists and deep historians themselves.

Students will spend time in class discussing readings, and venture out on one outing per week to different sites of interest around the valley, carrying the readings into concrete application and understanding in actual “places.” The class will also visit Paiute village and cultural sites, the remnants of surrounding mining towns and settlements, significant geologic sites, and areas with prolific flora and fauna. The course is writing-intensive and designed to help students

grow as observers of the natural world. We are excited that Michele is teaching this course and excited about the ways it will inform how we contemplate Deep Springs as “place” and the way we reckon with the question of what it means to be a “Deep Springer.”



**Students (from top to bottom, Tom Sullivan DS15 Matthew Zianni DS14, Carter Wilkinson DS15, Hamza Hassan DS14) on a Natural History field trip to view the Death Valley bloom.**

In my view, one of the beautiful aspects of being a student at Deep Springs is the way that deep time and the history of the College are immediately accessible and visible in the natural landscape, photographs, the archives, and old structures of decades

# The Deep Springs Novella

## Chapter II: Gods

by Jack Spira DS15

In the last edition of the newsletter, we shared an excerpt from the novel that the Student Body was writing. We're still writing it. It arose out of Jack Spira's DS'15 historian project, which dictates that each student contribute a chapter to a novel written collectively by the SB. With over twenty chapters completed, it has developed into an epic with Deep Springs as a bastion of hope defending itself from the terrors of a post-apocalyptic world. Here is another excerpt, edited for length and content.



My job is cleaning up messes. It's dirty work, but somebody has to do it.

I was seated at my post when I heard a vehicle approaching. I stood up to open the viewing slot and, sure enough, it was one of our Posturbans. Sliding the guard shut again, I moved for the gates, one hand on the iron crossbar, the other raised in a clenched fist to signal hold. I waited for the taps, then sighed with relief as I unbarred the gate. Friends here, no followers. I don't know why I was concerned. For a novice squad, Tom's crew had shown serious promise and had a golden track record to back it up. He made an admirable foreman. With the gates now wide open, the Posturban rolled in and Tom shouted his update out the window before speeding past: war party.

After closing the gates again, I replaced the crossbar and turned to look down the drive, standing motionless as I watched the frantic scramble. Six bell rings sounded out a highway trap. I had no idea how many vehicles would be in the convoy, but it didn't matter; my job would be the same. I strode down the drive, across the main circle, past the main building and up to the war shed as everyone ran about their tasks, preparing for war. Matt came hustling out of the shed with an armful of blunderbusses as I approached, his bare torso glistening under the sun. "Good luck out there," I called out after him, eliciting only a grunt. Turning, I entered the shed, facing the far wall on which my Lightning was waiting for me.

Grayson had brought the M24 back with him—along with most of our original munitions—upon his return from Tennessee. He inherited it from some Blackwater friend of his dad's, who had died on another continent, well before the darkness. I grabbed it by the forestock and headed for the door.

I ambled my way up the path into the foothills, eventually turning onto the slope to pick my way along the boulders. On

summitting the hill, I sat down among the cigarette butts (how Tenzin managed to grow tobacco in this climate, I knew not) facing away from the Valley, back against a rock, and proceeded to perform my weapon check.

Olympus was situated about 150 yards south of the Upper Reservoir and fifteen yards above it, with a perfect line of sight down the drive and over the wall to the highway. A locked container the size of a mini-fridge lay recessed into the ground to my left, holding a few jugs of water, a preserved side of beef, a revolver, a bowie knife, a copy of Glück's *The Wild Iris*, and (my own addition) the complete works of Shakespeare. To my right sat Pandora's Box. Crank, whir, boom. Good riddance, Deep Springs.

We had wired the entire compound with a hundred tons of dynamite, discovered by Carter in a long-abandoned mine down the Valley, and ran the detonator up to Olympus. But the nuclear option confused me. It assumed a sense of righteousness, pronounced only ourselves worthy of this sacred purpose, demanded that our plenty never be allowed to fall into other hands. Nevertheless, it had been decided, and the orders were mine to follow: if all else failed, open the Box. But only when all else failed.

Utter demolition aside, Zeus's job was a fairly straightforward one. Should our war party falter, I was tasked with protecting my comrades and preventing access to the compound, delivering late-avenging devastation from above. On a good day, I wouldn't fire a single round. Last time, I had fired four. Last time was a bad day.

Finished with inspecting the Lightning, I looked over my shoulder to the North. No vehicles in sight yet, but a dust cloud trailing out of Gilbert Pass. I'd had a few minutes to spare. Tom the Elder had left his journal up here, though to call it a journal would be generous. It was more a collection of messily jotted thoughts on the

back of whatever scrap paper he could find. The following Zeus had bound them with additional paper and continued recording our history. I picked it out from where it had been wedged into a crack and opened to the inscription on the first page:

"Play your game, and play it better."

Tom's god was Methuselah, that tree older than time itself. Who knew if it still stood, in that grove of the ancients, or if it had burned with everything else. Shut up here, it was easy enough to believe we were the only thing that had survived, that had remained unchanged—after all, wasn't this why we returned?—though this was a lie; these Deep Springs were not the same.

In what god, then, did I believe?

I believed in Hamlet the Dane. Not a rogue and peasant slave, but a princely one, who lived in tragedy for tragedy surrounded him. He was mad, mad as the coyote for the moon, though a madness not of indulgence but of torment. Certainly not a conventional god by any means, but to me he felt more... fitting. Yes, the father dead, murdered, the whisper of his ghost. Not survival above all else, no, but catharsis. An end to the heartache. Release.

Aaron's voice crackled out of the radio on my hip, "Jack, do we have eyes?" I closed the journal over the pencil and tucked it back into the rock, turning over onto my elbows with the Lightning in hand, barrel poking out from between two boulders. I checked the wind speed on an instrument mounted above me and scoped in the spot where the drive meets the highway, then pulled the radio to my mouth.

"Yessir."

I followed the black vans in my scope as they approached Wyman Creek. God of hospitality, my ass. I glanced at the Box beside me and felt a sudden, compelling urge to open it. Release. Not today. I looked back into my scope. They were upon us.

Such is the story of Zeus, who strikes from above.





# In Memoriam

We learned recently that **Ron Alexander DS64** died in Reno, Nevada on January 9, 2016 after a brief illness and bout with pneumonia. He was 68 years old. Originally from Portland, Oregon, Ron was predeceased by his parents Benjamin & Lydia, and his brother, Kenneth.

Ron came to Deep Springs in the summer of 1964, a time when the college was just entering its 'modern' era following the travails of the 1950s and the reorganization of the administration at the guidance of **Bob Aird DS21**. Ron is remembered by his classmate and former TDS Chair Michael Stryker as *"unfaintly decent, humble, and humane, virtues not always shared by the rest of us in his class. Over the years he gave a great deal to Deep Springs, despite struggles with his illness that would have paralyzed many. His was, as far as I knew it, a life of service."*

Ron spent three years in the Student Body; he recalled Dave Mossner DS'63 and Randall Reid DS'49 (who was Director at the time) as being among his greatest influences. He served as SB President and is remembered for having a quiet reserved manner paired with insightful irony that he wielded to help anchor divided student factions during a turbulent time.

After Deep Springs, he received a scholarship to study abroad. He pursued a career in broadcasting, working as a technician and video editor for several stations in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and, ultimately, in Bishop, where he became a mainstay for Sierra Wave Media. He settled in the Eastern Sierra for good in 2002; it was a place he felt most at home and he often reminded friends that "Inyo" translates to mean "Dwelling Place of the Great Spirit". His favorite pastimes included hiking with "Togiak", his beloved Samoyed dog, listening to classical music, and editing/producing short documentary

videos. He also volunteered regularly as an administrative assistant in the local office of California Indian Legal Services.

During the past twenty years, Ron served as a diligent observer for alumni gatherings at Deep Springs. He was ever-present in the background to capture most proceedings on camera (and frequently share his wry humor and pointed observations, as well). With countless volunteer hours of video recording, editing, and collating at his own expense, he assembled a record of alumni stories and reflections from scores of gatherings, creating a testimonial archive for the entire college community. He was already planning for the Centennial Celebration in 2017. His presence will be sorely missed, then and beyond.

In one of his letters to the office, Ron wrote: *"But fortunately the valley never changes – the same mountains, ridges, rocks and shadows always greet me with a welcoming feeling of being at home again every time I return to their enveloping embrace."*

**Ken Pursley DS57** died tragically on Oct. 21, 2015 when his boat capsized on a fishing excursion in an upper tributary of the Amazon River. He was 75. Originally from Idaho, Ken lived in Boise with his wife Betsy. The summer after his junior year in high school, Ken came directly to Deep Springs and stayed for two years before transferring to Cornell to complete his Bachelor's degree in Political Science. Ken is remembered fondly by his DS classmates and also recalled for being particularly vocal among the students in alerting the Board to the destructive behavior of the Director in the late 1950s.

Ken went on to take his law degree from University of Chicago and spent seven years there with the firm Hopkins,

Sutter, Owen, Mulroy, Wenty & Davis before moving back to Idaho in 1970 to practice in Boise. He was a firm believer in the virtues of good government and made a bid for a Congressional seat in the 1976 election (which he lost by a slim margin). In 1977, he co-founded the law firm Givens Pursley, where he was the managing director for the next 28 years, building it into one of the largest firms in the state.

His law colleagues recall him as being intellectually curious, fair-minded, and caring deeply about his employees. He became a leading attorney in business and real estate law and was regarded as a mentor by many younger partners through the years. He also made significant contributions to Idaho legislation including the 1975 Sunshine Law requiring disclosures of political contributions and lobbying activity.

Ken was appointed to the Boise Greenbelt Committee in 1971 and became instrumental in crafting legal paths for public control over the city's riverbank. He was a co-founder of the Idaho Conservation League in 1973, served on the board of the Nature Conservancy, and was appointed to the Foothills Conservation Advisory Committee in 2001. He truly followed the principles of a life of service and leadership.

After retiring from law practice, he started a real estate firm, investing in multiple local developments in the Boise area. Ken enjoyed the great outdoors throughout his life. He was also an avid fly-fisherman – 'talented but not flashy' according to his friends. His enjoyment of the sport motivated him to be co-owner of a fly-fishing outfitter shop, and he travelled to far-flung locations, both in the U.S. and abroad in pursuit of interesting adventures, often together with Betsy. He died doing what he loved.

# Alumni News

**Abiola Akinyemi DS05** recently moved to Toronto, Canada and says, "If any of you guys venture out here, you have a place to stay."

**Michael Birnbaum DS04** and his wife Kristine had a baby in October, their first. Hugo Zemgus Berzins Birnbaum was born in Brussels and will spend his first years in chilly Russia, where Michael is working as the Washington Post's Moscow bureau chief.

**Sergei Garrison DS07** is currently an Infantry Officer in the U.S. Army. He will be promoted to Captain in March. He is currently serving as an Executive Officer in a Stryker Infantry Company at Ft. Carson, CO, and will be until July, at which point he will move to Ft. Huachuca, AZ for the Captain's Career Course. That course will serve as his transition from Infantry to Military Intelligence. He will finish up that course in February of next year. After that, he's not sure where he'll be headed.

**Max Hare DS05** kind of has a dog. His girlfriend has a dog.

**Jacob Hundt DS98** has been particularly active for the past year, as a founding member of the new Thoreau College in Viroqua, Wisconsin. The college – brainchild of Jacob and a group of education colleagues – is meant to be a small, intensive residential liberal arts college, with an emphasis on vocation and personal purpose for the individual. Jacob and his colleagues are preparing for their first residential program in summer, 2016. Since 2004 he has worked as a Waldorf teacher and guidance counselor at the Youth Initiative High School and was a founding board member and instructor for the Driftless Folk School.

**Will Hunt DS13** is hard at work in Sitka, Alaska. He is taking a gap year between Deep Springs and his final two years of college to work on an initiative to found a new, coeducational college built on the Deep Springs model. Outer Coast College will have 40 students and will incorporate significant labor



and self-governance programs alongside a rigorous liberal arts curriculum (though labor at Outer Coast will be ichthyoid rather than bovine in bent). Outer Coast College will open its doors in Fall 2018 at the earliest. Will encourages any interested Deep Springs alumni to contact him at [willvhunt@gmail.com](mailto:willvhunt@gmail.com) for more information about Outer Coast College, and to check out the new Outer Coast College website at [www.OuterCoast.org](http://www.OuterCoast.org).

**Chris Jennings DS00** has authored a new book, *Paradise Now / The History of American Utopianism* which was published in January by Penguin Random House Books. The book tells the story of five interrelated utopian movements in an America still taking shape before the Civil War, beginning

with Shaker movement in upstate New York in the 18th Century. The book was excerpted in the recent edition of *The New Republic* and has received favorable reviews in the national press. Chris lives and writes in the SF Bay Area.

**Lawrence Lee DS05** will be interning this summer at a Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in Amman, Jordan that conducts reconstructive surgery for war-wounded civilians from Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. In particular, he will be working on describing the epidemiology of antimicrobial resistant infections with which patients arrive to the hospital.

**Dong Li DS06** is currently a German Chancellor Fellow with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, working on projects to bring diverse literary communities in the US, Germany and China closer. In the fall, he will be a literature fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, working on his poetry. If anyone's passing through Leipzig or Stuttgart, he would be happy to meet. Additionally, if anyone has leads on any literary communities that need more attention and that crave for collaboration, please send them his way. As Dong says, "The wandering continues and I hope for a return or a visit soon to mighty America."

**Oliver Morrison DS00** spent a year and a half earning a Masters at CUNY Graduate School of Journalism. Since then, he has done some freelance work, including some articles in the Atlantic, and is now a full time reporter with the Wichita Eagle in Kansas.

**Josh Nuni DS05** will graduate from Yale Law School in May.

*Continued on next page*



**Noah Rosenblum DS03** is finishing his J.D. at Yale Law School, where he sees **Josh Nuni** everyday in the hallway, and **Andy Whinery DS06**, twice a week in Administrative Law. In May he'll give up the apartment he's been sharing with **Tom Miller DS04**, to move back to New York City to work for a firm for the summer before returning to Columbia and his dissertation research. He'll spend 2017-2018 as a clerk on the New York Court of Appeals.

After 19 years, **Adam Schwartz DS87** has left his position as staff attorney with the Illinois ACLU and transplanted from Chicago to Palo Alto, where his wife Sarah is now teaching in the Graduate School of Education at Stanford. Adam has taken on new work as a senior staff attorney with the Electronic Frontier Foundation ([www.eff.org](http://www.eff.org)). Based in San Francisco, the EFF was established in 1990 and is the leading non-profit working on behalf of civil liberties in the digital world. They are active in defending privacy, protecting against illegal surveillance, and advocating for free speech and open access to technology. They also provide educational analysis to policymakers and the media.

**Johan Ugander DS02** joined Stanford this past fall as an Assistant Professor of Management Science and Engineering within the School of Engineering. He now lives in San Francisco with his wife Stephanie Safdi. Last summer he and Stephanie completed a 30-day excursion into the Brooks Range to climb in the remote Arrigetch Peaks. The trip was a long-time dream inspired by stories from Robley Williams Jr, who climbed in the Arrigetch in the 60s and taught at Deep Springs in the 00s. The trip was supported in part by a grant from the American Alpine Club, and a trip report appearing in the 2016 American Alpine Journal includes modern photographs replicating vintage photographs by Robley, documenting glacial recession in the region since the 1960s.

# Plan for a New Century

by Ethan Reichsman DS14



Deep Springs is an institution with a mission. But how do all the parts of the college relate to and contribute to that mission? Beyond regular day-to-day operations, how can the college, with limited resources, focus on the most essential projects to enhance its ability to fulfill that mission?

These are the questions that **Padraic MacLeish DS99** has been asking us for the past year, as part of the strategic planning process he is leading. In mid-2015, he held meetings to clarify what the various areas of the college (the BH, farm and ranch, etc.) provide for the college community. Any community member was invited to share keywords or concepts (such as, for the farm and ranch: 'Sustainability' or 'Working with Animals'). Through incremental meetings during the fall, Padraic then distilled these brainstorming sessions into working mission statements with the help and input of students, staff and Trustees.

Now that we know what we are aiming for, the community is working to find ways to improve these areas. During this term, we have held meetings to identify projects we think are worthy expenditures of time and money. Two large projects - remodeling the BH and moving towards organic certification (see Ben's article) - have already been identified, and planning work has begun. Additionally, the college is looking at creating plans for increasing diversity, new faculty housing, and organizing a self-governance self-study, an important part of accreditation.

Once projects are prioritized, what remains is to crunch the numbers, and execute the plans. This strategic plan covers the next 5-10 year horizon (the last was initiated in 2009). "Trying to plan more than 10 years ahead is very

difficult; so much can change," Padraic says. "But the planning process takes time, so it doesn't make sense to do it every 2-3 years."

While Padraic has been spearheading this effort, the community has been invited at every step of the way. Student participation has "been really great," Padraic notes. "Considering the existing time commitments that members of the Student Body face, their level of involvement has been tremendous."

Having a strategic plan in place is not only a good idea, Padraic says, "it's also an important component of communicating our mission and commitment to outside groups like our accreditation committee or potential donors." With input and support from students, staff, faculty and the Board, Padraic expects to have an updated strategic plan that will take us to the centennial and beyond.

## Student Body Wishlist:

Soccer Balls

Exotic Fruit

Zebra Seat Covers

Elliptical Trainer

Old VHS tapes and DVDs

Work Boots/Shirts/Gloves

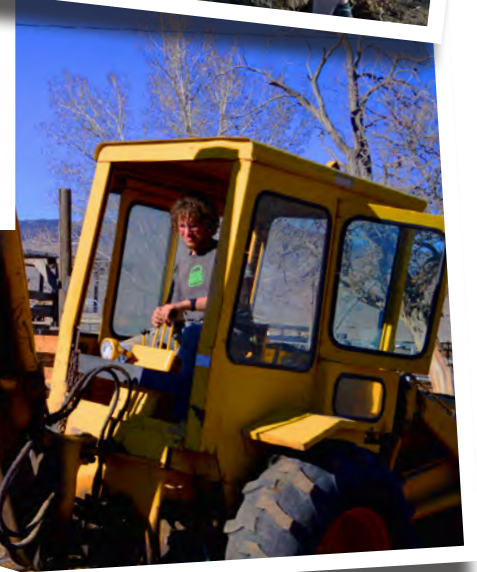
Dress Clothes

Nutella

Root Beer

Dorm Decorations





Clockwise from top left: Dairy Boys **Jesus Munoz DS15** and **Nikolaj Gavrilov DS15** on their way to work. Jr. Pruner **Tom Sullivan DS15** works in the garden with **Elias MacLeish**; Student Cowboy **Matthew Zianni DS14** digs a hole for a new hydrant; **Ethan Reichsman DS14** feeds the bred heifers; **Ikhzaan Saleem DS15** watches **Martin Dolsky DS15** load the dumptruck with dirt as they and **Noah Baylor DS03** move one of the roads on campus; and Sr. Cook **Bryce Snyder DS14** dunks corndogs for the evening meal.



# The State of Labor

by Caleb Stevens DS15

In Term Three, I woke up every morning and checked the weekly labor schedule to see what I was scheduled for on that day. The schedule was subject to change based on student sickness, labor emergencies, or unexpected projects cropping up; surprise and novelty (i.e. you're on breakfast BH!) became normal parts of labor. This term, the labor program has returned to a more consistent routine, but I wonder if we've lost something.

Last term, the Student Body decided to experiment with a new labor structure, one where half the students worked in specialized positions, and the remainder were collectivized into a "communal labor crew." This CLC (sometimes referred to as the "clique" or "communist labor crew") shared responsibility for the garden, Boarding House, farm, grounds, orderly, assistance with Noah's projects, and continuation of the proletariat struggle more generally. We elected a foreman for each area, who provided some continuity and supervision, while other laborers generally rotated into positions for days or weeks at a time.

As a part of this model, we had weekly labor meetings to discuss topics ranging from the everyday ("why do we seem to be laboring more under this new model, and what can be done to bring that down to 20 hours?") to the abstract ("what does ownership mean, and what is the best way to go about cultivating it?"). We democratically made structural and long-term decisions, and spent a significant chunk of every Sunday thinking about labor and how to improve our system. In addition to simulating the bourgeoisie-proletariat divide at Deep Springs, this model seemed to inspire some frustration, and therefore additional discussion and reflection surrounding labor. At term's end, the SB used its democratic powers to return to the

yoke of fixed labor positions and a more authoritarian decision-making process.

As this term's labor commissioner, I have enjoyed seeing students learn in different ways under each model. This term, most students seems to be learning from the process of laboring itself, focusing on improving their skills in a specific area. But last term we realized there is experience to be had in the process of organizing and discussing the labor system itself—a kind of learning which is often isolated in the LC, but can be spread to the SB as a whole. Perhaps this is the kind of experiment the Student Body must engage every few years in order to reaffirm its commitment to the structure of labor at Deep Springs. I found it to be a valuable experience, but have been happy to return to a more conventional model of labor.

On the topic of which, this term's labor lineup includes two student cooks, two bakers, one butcher, four BH members, two mechanic's assistants, a three person farm team, a fence man, one long-term gardener, one pruner, two students working with Noah, two dairy boys, one cowboy, one feed man, one orderly, one publisher, and a four person general labor crew.

Notable happenings of the term include the butchering of one sow and one cow, building more permanent fences around fields three and four, pipe work on the lower ranch and in the garden, the birth of a dairy calf, landscaping behind the dorm, repairs on the Lake Corrals, a successful if eventful calving season, rerouting of a road on campus, and excellent South American cuisine from the kitchen (to name just a few).

## DEEP SPRINGS CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IN 2017

Next year, the college will complete 100 years of educational work and embark on another 100 years to come. In fact, the centennial will begin with the arrival of DS16 students this year – our 100th class.

Naturally, we want to celebrate these milestones, but the celebration wouldn't be the same without the company of so many people in the DS Community who have shared in the past century. We'll be inviting former staff & faculty, and alumni and their families to join us in the Valley to mark the occasion.

## JUNE 30 – JULY 3, 2017 IN DEEP SPRINGS VALLEY

The weekend will include a reunion of alumni across several decades, an open house for visitors to see the college first hand, live performances, photo archives, great food from the Boarding House, seminar discussions, and time for reflection and exploration in the desert.

As anyone familiar with Deep Springs knows, the college is a long way from the nearest airport (Las Vegas) and a very small campus. We'll be doing a lot of extra work to help make guests comfortable. If you're considering attending, we encourage you to start a conversation now with friends to coordinate travel where possible. This weekend will be one to remember. So, save the Dates. Official invitation, schedule and RSVP information will be forthcoming this summer.

DEEP SPRINGS COLLEGE  
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**William Ehlers DS14** and **Caleb Stevens DS15** pose in front of the Sierra Nevada, waiting for a slaughter to begin.

