DEEP SPRINGS COLLEGE

NEWSLETTER #97
FALL 2019

Table of Contents

Letter from Next DS President Sue Darlington

To the Deep Springs Community,

I am pleased and honored to be writing to the Deep Springs community for the first time since I was appointed to become the next president. Taking over from David Neidorf is a daunting task. I appreciate all he has done for the community and his willingness to share his insights as I prepare to join the community next fall. My learning curve will be steep, no doubt, but I have confidence that you will share your thoughts, guidance, and suggestions as we move forward.

As I write, I am looking out across my front yard at the freshly fallen snow blanketing everything. Next winter, my view will be different – no deciduous forests, white pines, or white tail deer tracks. Instead, I'll be watching jack rabbits and coyotes as the sunrise illuminates the open sky and mountains across the valley. I could be wistful about missing Massachusetts but any sense of remorse fades as I think about moving to Deep Springs. I'm excited to listen to L.L. Nunn's "voice of the desert," which I'm sure has as much to teach me as the woods and meadows of New England. Even more, I look forward to engaging with the Deep Springs community, learning from the students, staff, faculty, and board and hearing the experiences and wisdom of alums.

Deep Springs intrigued me from the first I heard of it. The ways in which the three pillars of academics, labor, and self-governance work together to educate the whole student fits my ideal of how people learn. As I visited the campus and met with members of community, I began to see these principles in action. Following Anousha as she fed the animals and discussed her ethical concerns about raising chickens, sitting with some of the second years to discuss how self-governance plays out with specific issues, and debating the curriculum with Jonathan over lunch all highlighted the intricacies of how the pillars intersect and evolve with each group of students.

I've been asked to lead Deep Springs into its second century. Coming from the relatively young, experimental institution of Hampshire College, I've thought a lot about the urgency of a liberal arts education for today's society. It's crucial to emphasize the critical thinking, diverse knowledge, and skills that students develop through the liberal arts. While Hampshire continually rethinks its approach to providing these foundations, somehow L. L. Nunn established a means of doing just this a hundred years ago. My challenge – and that of the entire community – is finding ways of maintaining Nunn's principles while evolving to meet the changing needs for the twenty-first century.

I am confident together we can do this. Nunn provided us with an excellent blueprint for a relevant education to prepare students for "a life of leadership and service to humanity." As the campus settles into being coed, we can all do the work needed to carry Nunn's mission forward in innovative ways as well as holding onto those that have proven successful so far. I'm humbled by the support the community has shown me already, from the board to the campus community to the alums who have reached out to share encouragement and ideas. The moment I knew I had landed in the right place was when I received a short video from the Student Body, sitting in the main room and calling, almost in unison, "Congratulations Sue! Welcome to the community." How could I not feel excited about all that Deep Springs is and will be and grateful to be a part of its future? I look forward to getting to know you all.

Sue Darlington
January 19, 2020

SB President's Letter

Terms 1 and 2 have been both beautiful and challenging in many different ways. Settling the first years in and going through our initiation traditions, I remember briefly reflecting on my first few days at Deep Springs, and remembering my own second years doing the same things I was doing now. I had no idea how much work they were doing behind the scenes, and now that I was in their shoes, I had the distinct feeling that it was all just a big circle — is this what it feels like to have kids?

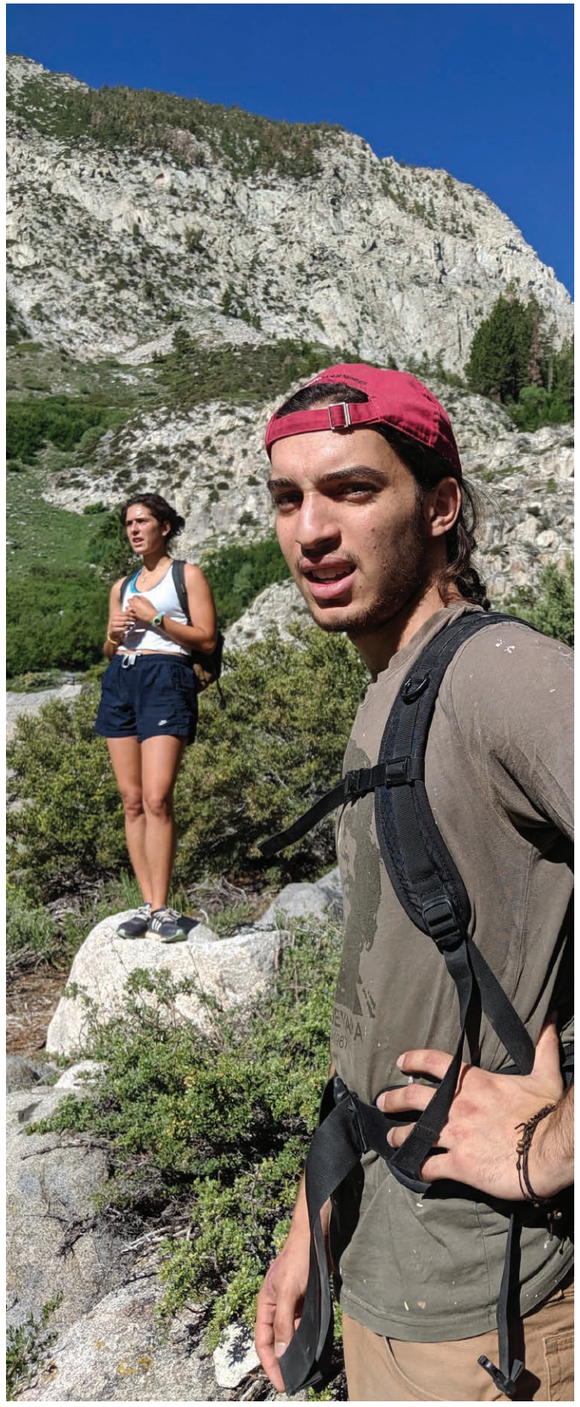
The new first years of DS19 have taken charge of the political process remarkably quickly. Already, we've come to a healthy, conscious agreement about a culture of criticism in the SB, and we'll soon be discussing a motion that will require isolation breaches to be passed for leaving the valley during breaks. First year students have also shown great enthusiasm for the positions they've been elected to — Julien Ricou, our new archivist, has carefully undertaken a much-needed updating of the bylaws; the first years on BookCom have done a great job of cataloguing and putting up for sale the unwanted books that have accumulated in the dorms over the years.

Our Summer Seminar was a rich and thought-provoking one, with conversations ranging from ideas of justice and femininity in *The Oresteia* to the powerful effects of pronoun usage on identity in Claudia Rankine's lyric poem *Citizen*. Abram Kaplan DS05, one of the Summer Seminar instructors, jokingly split the Term I second years into two remarkably accurate groups — the book-carrying men and the knife-wielding women; case in point, Trinity Andrews DS18 has admirably ensured our first years got a good example of what labor should look like in her role as Labor Commissioner, while Levi Freedman DS18 consistently brought focus into our seminar discussions with his insightful contributions.

Likely my strongest memory of these few terms is of the garden party at the end of Term I. With an almost complete community turnout, a press-your-own-cider station, a wide array of costumes and live guitar music provided by Jonathan Goodman DS18 and yours truly, the atmosphere we created that starlit night as a community was unparalleled.

Here's to hoping the rest of the year provides us with just as many good times to enjoy and hard questions to ponder!

Sammy Mohamed Bennis DS18
Student Body President Terms 1-2



Fall Courses

Brains and Minds - Frances Chen
Throughout the course, students critically evaluate and debate evidence regarding how hormones and biology (in combination with cultural beliefs and structural factors) give rise to our subjective human experiences.

The Mathematizing Of Motion: Aristotle to Galileo - Brother Kenneth Cardwell
This basic physics course concentrates on the second of Galileo's *Two New Sciences*, the science of regularly accelerated motion. Its historical approach allows students to understand both free fall and Galileo's breakthrough. Students are encouraged to pick up from Euclid's *Elements* enough competence to follow Galileo's proofs.

Modernism Through Modern Art - Justin Kim
This course examines the phenomenon known as Modernism through the lens of modern art – not merely as a series of movements in the evolution of cultural history, but also as a fundamental shift in a humanist understanding of the world and our relationship to it.

The American Presidency - Aaron Greenberg
This course explores the relationship between the Presidency and other institutions in the federal government, the President as a leader in the party system, as policy entrepreneur, and negotiator. This course assesses scholarly debate about the nature of the Presidency and how Presidents achieve their objectives, lead political coalitions, and durably transform governing institutions. Throughout, the course seeks to attend to the way the executive branch has changed over time.

Conservative Thought in America - Aaron Greenberg
This course explores conservative political thought in America. Conservative intellectuals see their doctrine as coherent, distinctive, and compelling, influenced by thinkers like Edmund Burke, Benjamin Disraeli, Michael Oakeshott, and F.A. Hayek. The seminar seeks to attend to the relationship between conservatism as a constellation of ideas and as a living, breathing political movement with policy goals, successes, and failures.

Plutarch's *Lives* - Sarah Stickney
This close-reading course approaches Plutarch from as many of his many facets as possible. The goal of the course is for students to use his work to examine history and what the past might mean to the present, consider him from a literary point of view, asking how it's possible to render the portrait of a human being in words, and think about what greatness in a man or in a life means and how it happens. And more!

Plants and People - Amity Wilczek
This course focuses on the basics of plant form, structure and function in the context of their use in human society. Students pay special attention to current and historical land use in our local area, including cultivation and collection practices of the Paiute as well as the sustainability of modern alfalfa and pasture operations.

Culinary Arts: The Personal and the Practical (Term 2 only) - Gabe Sanders
This course aims to help students to become both more competent and confident in cooking, and also learn some new ways of thinking about food. Students are introduced to a wide range of techniques for preparing food, and given space to discover their own tastes and "voices" as cooks. This course seeks to challenge students to consider the general and specific acts involved in cooking in new ways.

Modern and Contemporary Novels of Early Adult Life - David Neidorf
In this course students read and discuss (paper-writing being a continuation of discussion) novels about people who are trying to find their way in life without the anchoring authority of a fixed social structure, respectable or plausible group identities, traditions, or life-path expectations.

Horsemanship - Tim Gipson
This course instructs students (which this year includes a number of faculty members) in the elementals of respectful and safe working relationships with horses.

Auto Mechanics - Padraic MacLeish
Director of Operations Padraic MacLeish is once again teaching his introduction to the anatomy and physiology of motor vehicles.

Independent Study in Translation - Sarah Stickney
Jonathan Goodman DS18

Independent Study in Horseshoeing - Tim Gipson
Anousha Peters DS18 and Trinity Andrews DS18

Visiting Professor Brother Kenneth Cardwell

Padraic MacLeish DS99

Deep Springs is very fortunate to have former Dean Brother Kenneth Cardwell on campus for the fall semester. He previously taught at the College from 2010 through 2014 before returning to St Mary's College in Moraga, California. Brother Kenneth is a longtime member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, or Christian Brothers. This Catholic organization is dedicated to teaching as a means of providing upward mobility for the poor and underprivileged, but Brother Kenneth points out that "education as a way of life saves the soul of the teacher" as well. Teaching is work which is good for the soul of the teacher as well as the well-being of the student because a good teacher must subordinate his or her desires to the needs of the student.

Brother Kenneth spent thirty years teaching at St Mary's, most recently in the Great Books program. Before that, he taught Palestinian students in Bethlehem and American high schoolers in Los Angeles. Since his retirement in May he has devoted his energies to the study of papyri in UC Berkeley's library. As a rhetorician, he is trying to establish the meaning behind a particular early Christian method of writing the name of Jesus. The library has a tremendous collection of papyrus documents and fragments which can be examined digitally or even in person.

At Deep Springs, Brother Kenneth can often be found in and around his house tinkering, repairing, and improving things when he's not out hiking with staff, students, or other community members. Elias MacLeish (son of Garden Manager Shelby and Director of Operations Padraic MacLeish) is particularly excited to have a hiking partner with a passion for mining history and geology to share in his explorations of the valley. The students of Deep Springs are enjoying his course on "The Mathematizing of Motion", studying the basic underpinnings of physics through original works by Aristotle and Euclid.

In Memoriam, Duane Whittier

John Dewis DS94

Duane Whittier in Memoriam and with gratitude for his love of philosophy and his support of Deep Springs

Duane was not a Deep Springs alum. In fact, he only spent one weekend in the Valley in his entire life, and it was back in 1996 to visit his old friend Jack Newell DS56 who was College President at the time. Duane and his wife Joan fell in love with Deep Springs during this visit, but no one was aware when or for how long Duane planned to leave half of his estate to the College. It is a reminder for us in the Valley to think expansively about the impact of this place on many lives in many seasons. People are gripped by Deep Springs, remember it, and are forever changed by it.

I have to believe, in doing research on Duane for this article, that Duane thought the discipline of philosophy enjoyed a special life here at Deep Springs. Philosophy sometimes gets a bad rap for being esoteric, abstruse, ivory-tower, or fuddy-duddy. For Duane, philosophy was a passion that longed for the light of daily conversation, and his own passion for teaching was to fulfil this longing.

Duane observed that philosophical assumptions are already at work in our lives, informing and contorting our fleeting opinions and cherished positions. Philosophical understanding can help educate these positions and raise the level of awareness and analysis for entire communities.

He was fond of the Socratic salvo: "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." Instead of ever trying to convince his students of any particular position, including today's divisive liberal or conservative ideologies, Duane got them to work on their thoughts — and thought it best that we keep working on them. Students famously had no idea what Duane actually thought about anything, he was so in love with adopting a contrarian view to see where it might lead conversation.

He also thought there was a genuine "quality of life" argument to be made for the study of philosophy, along the lines of what the stoic Boethius argues in his "Consolations of Philosophy" written from a prison cell in Rome in 524, awaiting trial and execution for treason. Duane said, "Philosophy teaches you how to be happy in a shitty world.'

Duane and Jack Newell arrived at University of New Hampshire the same year. There were three couples around who spent weekends together as young academics in the northeast woods. They had matching VW Bugs and matching canoes, too: red, white, and blue.

I got Jack and Linda Newell on the phone to talk a bit about their memories of Duane, who died this year, and his wife Joan, who died in 2017. Jack tells me, "They were bananas about the whole thing and could not get over it. We took them up Wyman in the Ford Explorer and I'm certain that you (John Dewis DS94) and Mihir (Kshirsagar DS95) were the cowboys that fall moving cattle down Wyman. It was like a scene lifted from a movie, and Joan hopped out of the car and started taking pictures and exclaiming "real cowboys!"

Joan and Duane were both educators and thorough believers in the ideals of liberal education. Linda tells me that the whole idea of a community where you live out and test the ideals you encounter in the classroom resonated deeply with them. "When we went to the BH Duane didn't sit with us," Linda says, "and just only wanted to sit at tables with all students and to ask them what were their opinions on this and that." I asked Linda if there was anything she could remember of the kinds of Boarding House conversations that Duane provoked or loved. Her answer: "No! We were never at the table!" Duane spent much of his time that weekend in and around the BH, the "agora" for any Socratic gadfly. It's appropriate that his bequest arrives at a time when we are rebuilding the Boarding House to dignify and secure this high-traffic high-chatter jewel of the main circle.

Jack tells me that Duane also became a student of Nunn via the "Gray Book." His vision for a liberal and philosophical education was to let all the conflicting views in the door, and then as an adult or a teacher sometimes just get out of the way and let them duke it out.

Joan and Duane are both remembered as great conversationalists, and Joan especially as the greater extrovert of the two. It has also been remarked that for a good listener and delightful debater, once Duane had the floor, he had it.

It will come as no surprise that Duane did not identify with any particular school of philosophy and was not friendly to academic distinctions like "analytical" or "historical" that took people away from public-spirited debate or from the hope that philosophy might inform our best collective decisions. He is quoted elsewhere on philosophy's role in the liberal arts: "Philosophy is not a subject matter. In fact, we stick our noses into everybody's business. Philosophy of science, ethics, philosophy of religion, philosophy in the arts, philosophy in history. I mean, what is it that philosophers don't stick their noses into?"

And he was on the cynical side about the direction of the most meaningful experiences in the liberal arts, which he saw as in retreat. One of the reasons he felt a mission to

keep on teaching for so long (58 years, all at UNH) was because not many taught the way he did. The "professionalization" of philosophy dividing itself into smaller and smaller units without the larger view bothered him. If no one could read or understand your dissertation apart from the ten people who shared your sliver of the discipline, for example, then your value to the broader scope was in question. If you engaged people with issues on their mind or on the front page of the *New York Times*, on the other hand, you had a chance of realizing, as Socratic questioning went on, that we are all part of a much larger conversation with a rich history of analysis and contest about things that matter. Duane would roll out any number of classical philosophers to help make the point.

One of the most exciting things I learned about Duane and Joan, especially in light of their generous gift to the College, is that they never owned a home. They once bought some land on the outskirts of town but could never motivate themselves to do anything with it. Instead they lived for their entire fifty years together in a farmhouse apartment full of antiques and children's books (Joan taught elementary school). They rented the same tiny room in the old farmhouse their entire lives, and they never could think to change or upgrade.

After Joan died in 2017, Duane virtually lived in his office, and if he didn't actually sleep there he was always there or in the classroom, taking every meal in the dining hall on campus, where the whole staff knew him and loved him and could set their watches to his arrival. Jack remembers Duane as "a strikingly handsome man, always trim and sturdy but not exactly what you'd call outdoorsy; he might not have ever exercised except canoeing and was sinewy in his build and charismatic in his bearing. He looked like a Deep Springer."

Thank you Duane and Joan for your generosity, your lives of teaching, and for helping secure Deep Springs in our second century, and for helping us think strategically and carefully about the future of excellent (true) liberal arts education with a commitment to (true) philosophical wrangling, and to Jack and Linda for sharing your reminiscences with us, which contributed to this article, along with a tribute which appeared in UNH's *Main Street Magazine*.

Below: The all-Californian Term 2 GL crew — Trinity DS18, Ziani DS19, Amin DS19, and Ginger DS18.

David Schuman Remembered

The most important thing I learned from David and Sharon Schuman didn't happen in class. They modeled a marriage of equals, and this was something I had not yet seen in my 1960s upbringing. When I met my brilliant, accomplished, independent wife, I wasn't intimidated because I had seen how such a marriage could work.

David was also a great teacher. I remember how he personalized "Tintern Abbey" for us. "Notice how Wordsworth is taking solace from Nature," he said. "Your time here at Deep Springs may be when you are most intimately immersed in the natural world. You can draw on this experience of nature for the rest of your life."
Paul Michelsen DS74

• •

I remember David leading us through the "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," revealing the power of Elliot's written word and challenging us to consider the power of our own words. I'll "wreck" the poem a bit as my tribute:

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky…
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.
There will be time, there will be time…
Time for you and time for me, while
In the room we come and go

Talking of David Schuman's glow.
Brian Logsdon DS74

• •

In the Spring of 1977, I had the singular good fortune of taking David's intensive T.S. Eliot seminar at Deep Springs. I was his only student. It was not a lark being David's only student and studying Eliot. He expected his class of one always to be prepared and ready to answer questions — a lot of questions, a river of questions, most incapable of being answered easily, or even at Deep Springs. They were challenges to think, in all settings, and for a lifetime, in order to force oneself to become a better person.

A lifetime later, David, I thank you.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih
Tom Hutchins DS75

• •

David and Sharon arrived at a particularly difficult time in the College's history. An assortment of things went awry, and the place nearly exploded. But after a few harrowing months in 1975, they helped us forge connections to a new faculty that brought the place back to an even keel. Nothing about this was easy.

I arrived as a mostly clueless ingenue from a privileged suburb, and the Schumans taught me far more than literature. They applied gentle but persistent pressure on me to do better, and that lesson — to teach slowly but firmly — is an ongoing influence on the way I teach today.
Paul Starrs '75

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He delighted in the intersection of the idea and the person who had it. I remember David talking about a Gerald Manley Hopkins poem that gives the word "buckle" about 17 different meanings, He remembered with pleasure the unusual reactions to that he had received from a student who was native Hawaiian. It enhanced David's appreciation of life when ideas and people came together.

If you joined the long-term faculty of a place as obscure as Deep Springs was in the 1970s, it meant that you had basically abandoned academia as a career path. After a couple of years, the Schumans must have made a conscious decision that David was not going to spend his life as an English professor. They gave themselves utterly to the love of teaching and literature then, for the time that they could spare. We were so lucky to be their audience.
Migue Dozier DS74

• •

David and Sharon were my first college teachers, and their seminar "The Idea of Community and Authority" opened a world that shaped the rest of my life. I was earnest and naive. David respected my earnestness and was gracious about my naivete. Every week I would go to the Schumans' house to receive their critique of my writing. David was rigorous and pointed, but kind. He challenged my views, but always with respect. He was generous with his time. He modeled integrity, wisdom, and how to live in a community. He was the kind of teacher I most needed at that time in my life.
Loren Ihle DS76

• •

David was continually calling bullshit or pretense in a way that taught me taste and judgment without ever undermining my fragile teen-age confidence. But my favorite memory of him is when he played a trick on us.

David had a perfect theory of Hamlet that was not true. He argued in class that Hamlet was a horror story, not a tragedy. He said that the ghost of Hamlet's father was an evil spirit who poisoned Hamlet and convinced him to commit crimes and destroy the kingdom. We had all just read the play and were freshly dipped in the catechism of Bardolatry. Shakespeare was the greatest, and Hamlet was his greatest play, so if you wanted to be smart, you had to ritually express how deep it was. And Hamlet was the boy hero intellectual we all aspired to be.

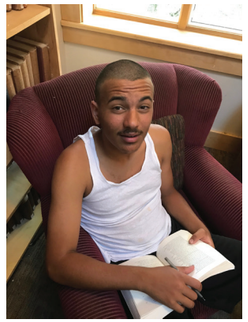
We came at David with our best shots, and he batted us away like ping-pong balls. There was not a word in that play he didn't know. There wasn't an objection to this theory he hadn't thought of and countered. He smiled

Continued on Page 12

Class of 2019 Bios

As Homeric Ephitets

Sean Coomey DS19



Amin Stambuli: from California, is the proud owner of the fourth best mustache on campus, collector of esoteric words, courageous in his refutation of style and of showers, slain in his renowned Crocs and wife-beater by the daughters of Hypothermia.

Chen Li: from warm and balmy China, great preserver of fruits, sufficient baker of breads and desserts, patron of great music, overthrower of capitalism, lover of movies, local Telluride fanboy, slain by a slippery BH floor.

Deeva Gupta: from the Shire, woman of great energy, devotee of Luna the dog, gatherer of people for soccer, of the unending giggles, country music enthusiast, nemesis to Nietzsche, slain by her own slave morality.

Francesca Reilly: from New Jersey, the almost New York, dedicated provider of justice and cheese, bringer of guests, creator of godly foods, daughter of Hestia, slain by accidentally turning left when she meant right.

Connie Jiang: from Pennsylvania, land of many friends, collector and loser of knives, courageous in slumber, thrifty in her consumption of all parts of the animal, renowned hitter of piano keys, blessed of Apollo, slain by a dispirited meat grinder.

Julia Farner: from California, of the hippies, most chill, friend to Mercurius (the cat), daughter of music, talented in many domains, often found in sweats, better Amin than Amin, slain by an ungodly black widow spider.

Julian Ricou: from Pennsylvania, but he'll tell you France, grower of neck beard, man of great silence, distrustful of society, champion of isolation, last living Sasquatch, slain by his refusal to partake in modern healthcare implements.

Kerinna Good: from Virginia, land of country roads, great maker of yogurt, com- mendable consumer of leftovers, devoted farm-teamer, creative chef dé whey, most sane and most plaid, slain by food poisoning.

Michael Nyakundi: from Kenya, future Harvard graduate, lawyer, doctor, PhD recipient, president of Kenya, then king of yet-to-be-formed republic of Nyakundi, joyous eater of all things sweet, patron of forgiveness, slain by an untimely coup.

Milo Vella: from California, greater wanderer, scholar of agriculture, harvester of rye, unshackled by the constraints of time, known by many as the Corny Loim, slain by an angry uncle for being late to his mother's funeral.

Sam Clark: from Kentucky, land of tradition, talented tinker of machines, dashing in socks and sandals, neglected grandson of Hephaestus, great legislator of isolation, slain by his unique ability to feel your pain.

Sean Coomey: from Canada, land of the great cold, in soccer he is the wall, originator of phrases, almost has beginner French mastered, great biographer, average secretary, slain by a lack of animal protein and vitamin B12.

Xing Hao Wang: from Singapore, fluent in many languages, exceptional at milking, above average in total hours of sleep, commander of armies, man of reason, dashing in camo, slain by an unwitting dairy cow.

Ziani Paiz: from California, mother of Luna, wise with loose tobacco and a pipe, shortest member of the SB but grand in spirit, dedicated member of fire team, of the sore hands, slain by an unfortunate chemical burn.

SB Wishlist

- Electric guitar, Spanish guitar
- Soccer balls
- Banannagrams, puzzles
- Thermos flasks
- Print subscriptions to the New York Times and National Geographic

Interview with Visiting Professor Frances Chen

Chen Li DS19

First, could you tell me about the work you do as an academic psychologist?

When many people first hear that I'm a psychologist, they assume that I'm a therapist. Although I really admire therapists, clinical psychologists, and psychiatrists, that's not what I do! I sometimes liken myself to a biologist, except that instead of studying a species of plant or insect or bird, I study humans. I collect and interpret data to understand and predict how humans think, feel, and behave under specific conditions.

In one of my ongoing research projects, I am investigating how hormones influence our moods. More specifically, I'm looking at whether taking hormonal contraceptives (like "the pill", which contains synthetic hormones) affects teenage girls' emotions, responses to stress, and their long-term mental health.

I'm also interested in what information about a person is communicated through their body odor. Some of my recent work suggests that the scent of our loved ones—even if we're not consciously aware that we're smelling them—can reduce our stress and improve our sleep, just as their physical presence would. I'm also interested in what impressions people form of other people's personalities based on smelling them. Humans readily judge traits like social dominance through visual and auditory cues (square jaws, deep voices)—but what about through olfactory cues? Those are just a couple of the questions that I'm interested in right now.

As a psychologist, what is your understanding of and interest in philosophy?

This question makes me feel some imposter syndrome. I've only taken one philosophy class in my life and it was over 15 years ago, so I don't think I have a particularly nuanced understanding of philosophy. That said, I think that philosophers and psychologists have traditionally been interested in some of the same broad questions: What does it mean to be "conscious"? Does free will exist? What can we truly understand about the contents of another person's mind? What thoughts and behaviors contribute to a good and moral life? What societal structures and principles foster healthy relationships and individual well-being?

Most people would say psychology and philosophy are two different subjects using different methods of inquiry. Do you think they could complement each other in any way?

Psychology and philosophy do strike me as complementary, although I would also agree that the methods used in the two fields are different. Many philosophical questions can be productively addressed through logic or dialectic methods. Psychology complements these approaches by applying the scientific method—namely, the collection of data to test particular hypotheses, and argumentation based on empirically-gathered evidence—to address the same questions.

Can you think of an example of psychology and philosophy being in conflict or contention with each other?

This goes beyond just philosophy, but people sometimes advocate for societal change based on ideas that sound logical and principled in the abstract, yet overlook human psychology. For example, take the argument that our loyalties to people who happen to share our DNA are, in a moral sense, arbitrary. Based on an extreme form of that argument, I've heard it argued that we could reduce nepotism and intergroup conflict by designing a society in which babies are raised communally, rather than by their biological parents. That kind of society may sound utopian to some people in the abstract. But human infants, like most young mammals, thrive emotionally and socially if they are able to form a secure attachment to a specific, stable caregiver. Decades of research on the outcomes of babies raised under different conditions (such as in orphanages) suggests that a rotating cast of temporary adult caregivers is not as conducive to an infant's health and well-being.

I am not arguing that we should feel bound by our evolved tendencies or by "human nature," but rather that our idealistic efforts at improving society and individual well-being may fail or even backfire—harming those whose lives we would seek to improve—if we ignore general psychological principles that describe common patterns in how people tend to think, feel, and behave.

Have you come across any interesting philosophical questions in the work you do? If so, how did you tackle it?

I think that my exposure to philosophy, as limited as it has been, has provided important components of the framework through which I approach questions of ethics and morality. And I'd like to think that my training in psychology helps me to adhere to the broad principles that I've decided—at least theoretically—that I'd like to live by. Deciding that one wants to be helpful to strangers in need, or to be a leader who is open to critique, is a good start. But psychology helps provide a plan of action. Knowing about the bystander effect helps me overcome my hesitance to take action during ambiguous situations in crowds. Knowing about conditions that increase or decrease obedience to authority (for example, from Milgram's classic experiments) has made me more conscious of fostering, as the leader of a group, conditions that make it more likely for others to speak up if they are uncomfortable with something.

David Schuman Cont.

the whole time. It was a game for him, and we were hopelessly outmatched. After class let out, I caught up with him and asked him whether he thought his theory was true. He smiled impishly and said, "Who can say what is true in literature?"

Michael Pollak DS76

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I was doing something in the college office, and I picked up the phone when a friend of Dave's called from Chicago. We had a crude intercom system then, but I asked the caller to hang on and left on foot to look for Dave. I found him sitting on the stone step at the foot of the walk leading to the duplex faculty cottage, playing his banjo. I think I said nothing, standing there expectantly, but leaving it to his discretion. Somehow I couldn't bring myself to interrupt him.

Did Dave have any idea at that moment that he would switch to a law career? Or was he not thinking that far ahead? He was barely 30, not much older than we were. Was he just enjoying a break after getting his Ph.D. while he was at Deep Springs? I don't know, but he was clearly in the moment while playing his banjo.

David worked his way to the end of the piece, finishing with a small flourish, and it was only then that I told him he had a call and jogged back to the office with him. I suspect that some awkward moments ensued when Dave picked up the phone, found that his very patient friend was in fact still waiting for him, and did his best to explain the delay in a way which did not completely absolve me of being the idiot I was. I remember his raised eyebrow as he met my gaze across the office and then looked back down, focusing on his friend's voice, with half a grin on his face. He did not rub my nose in it. I am forever thankful.

Jacob Dickinson DS76

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Like a lot of Deep Springers, my family had no idea what I was doing when I applied to Deep Springs, and they didn't take the process seriously. Then suddenly, I was planning to go and my father, who had spent his life teaching political science, was caught off guard. David and Sharon were planning a visit to Chicago, and they offered to stop at our home to reassure him. To me, it was a dramatic moment. A nearly imaginary place in the desert was about to enter the real world.

David was sitting on our living room floor with a tiny Rebecca. My father was being circumspect, or maybe condescending, but he was paying some attention. David mentioned a Deep Springs alumnus named Harvey Mansfield. I had never heard of him, but my father had read and admired Harvey's work. My father said, 'Oh, I know his son.' And David scrunched his eyes a bit and said, 'No, I don't think so.' It suddenly put the school on the map for my father, and it marked David in my life.

It has always seemed to me that my classmates and I started producing children long before our non-Deep Springs agemates did. I have always suspected that we were encouraged by the idyllic confluence of family, community, and intellectual life that permeated Deep Springs in those years. David and Sharon were so central to that. They modeled an egalitarian, child-raising relationship.

As a professor myself, I channel David whenever I put my pen on a student's paper. He made me take myself seriously. I tried to act as if I didn't really care about his criticisms, but he called me on my youthful foolishness and found quality in things that I doubted. Today, I can't teach two classes in a row without recalling how David conveyed Eliot's observation that meaning is the meat a burglar throws to the dog as he robs the house. And I try to emulate his genuine appreciation for the community of scholars that he so loved being a part of.

Peter Rosenblum DS77

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We set up a ping-pong table on the front porch of the main building, and sometimes late at night, we'd play a game or two. Or more. I remember the night David appeared in his pajamas, which was startling. He asked us if we wouldn't mind giving it a rest soon. He was so polite. Years later, I taught at Deep Springs with young kids of my own, just as he had when I was a student. Sometimes I was also irritated by loud nocturnal student shenanigans. I tried to emulate his unwavering civility.

Deep Springs suffered from dysfunctional leadership during my student days. There were many contentious meetings peppered with angry outbursts and foolish assertions, and decisions were made that harmed people. So often, David was the adult in the room who provided an anchor of maturity that was sorely lacking. He always carried a clipboard to these meetings. I don't know why that detail has stuck with me, but perhaps it represents his unflappability, his adherence to reason, and his subtle sense of humor. His was a clipboard to rally around.

Jack Murphy DS77

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I was a capable but undermotivated student. David's challenges, made with obvious support, concrete suggestions, and good humor, made me want to do better. In the classroom, he and Sharon used banter and interrupted each other in a friendly, good-natured way that made the lessons more memorable and relevant. I remember him pronouncing that a thesaurus is a useless and even damaging crutch, and demanding that we never use one. Sharon immediately objected, but before she could make her point, David interrupted again. "If you happened to have a tilted bookcase, perhaps on an uneven floor,

Comtiued on Page 24

Interview with Visiting Professor Aaron Greenberg

Chen Li DS19

What was your introduction to political philosophy?

My interest in political theory started with my interest in philosophy. I had a sense, entering college, that philosophy was the master discipline. It addressed the big puzzles: how we should live, what we should do, and why we should care about these questions in the first place. I loved ethics. I read the *Nicomachean Ethics* freshman year and I was hooked. Aristotle's system was intuitive, comprehensive, and, I thought, quite compelling. I spent much of the rest of my time in college trying to figure out why I was so drawn to that book and, of course, trying to understand it. In the process, I came to absorb many of the approaches – and tendencies – of philosophy as it's practiced in the English-speaking academy. There were things I valued about it, and I'm very grateful for my philosophical education. Philosophy taught me to read, interpret, and argue slowly, deeply, and carefully.

By the time I graduated from college, though, I realized that the questions I most cared about began where philosophy ended. In part this came from being exposed to anthropology during a term abroad in South Africa. I was dazzled by what theoretically informed and sophisticated social science could do.

I found that political theory was far less concerned with genre than academic philosophy: political theorists aren't usually in the business of policing what is or isn't political theory. There are certainly academic conventions and disciplinary expectations, but political theorists tend to read a wider range of texts than philosophers: manifestos, pamphlets, high and low art, activist memoirs, and the work of popular intellectuals. As a result, political theorists are fairly ecumenical, open to conversations with other fields in the humanities and social sciences. So, officially, my training is in political theory, which I see as somewhat different from political philosophy. But I'm more inclined to see myself as interested in and studying politics. Unlike scholars who run experiments, surveys or regressions, however, my "data" are in the history of social and political thought – how observers and participants registered the dynamics of their own time, identified enduring or particular problems, and sought to address them.

Who is your favorite political philosopher?

I wrote my dissertation about someone who most political philosophers wouldn't put in the canon: the mid-century American theologian and intellectual Reinhold Niebuhr. But I think he's got much to offer contemporary political theory. Niebuhr spent a good deal of his life trying to figure out how to hold together two ideas. First, that people are deeply, inherently fallible, and second, that it is nevertheless possible and necessary for a flawed public to try to repair a world that is very broken. Niebuhr believed that politics amplifies human faults – pride, impatience, self-absorption – and that politics is different from ordinary interpersonal life. So, an appeal to moral or filial obligation might persuade friends to do something they weren't already planning to do, but it's going to fall flat when trying to resolve a political conflict. That's for a few reasons. We think and act differenty when something political is at stake because political life involves more than just us as individuals. There's also almost always some group or identity that we are tied to and invested in.

Niebuhr sees politics as being about the arrangement and organization of power, not the honest exchange of reasons or ideas, and so it takes power, not just strong arguments, to create political change. We should want to change things to reduce harm and suffering: he sees the concentration of power as domination, oppression, and exclusion – injustice. Although he didn't have an optimistic appraisal of human capacities, he thought that competitive government was the best way to ensure that political power and other important resources were fairly distributed and dispersed. His writings about how to do this most effectively, through confrontational but strategic nonviolence, were influential for people like Martin Luther King, and other activists of the era.

Niebuhr was an important figure in twentieth century Protestant thought, and he described his own work as "Christian realism." But I think it's possible to interpret him more secularly, as an astute political psychologist and theorist of democracy. Is Niebuhr my favorite political philosopher? I'm not sure. But I do think more academics and students should be reading him.

How does the study of political philosophy shape your understanding of the world?

As I mentioned, I spent much of my time in graduate school in the labor movement and as an elected representative. Through this I got a practical education in politics: the structural competition between the legislative and executive branches; the communication breakdowns, value differences, or interest differences that lead to conflicts; the role of rhetoric, charisma, and leadership in getting any significant initiative or collective action project off the ground; the difference between making a good argument and demonstrating or deploying organized power; and then, of course, something that should be familiar to Deep Springs students – the challenges of getting to consensus, or something like it, on matters that people care about. I'm grateful that I was getting an academic political education alongside these experiences.

Continued on Page 21

Deep Springs in Philosophy

Eliot Michaelson DS99

Sean Coomey DS19

To begin with, could you tell me a bit about your current relationship with Philosophy?

With respect to my current work, it's mostly on the philosophy of language. More specifically, I tend to think about what linguistic meaning is, how words get their meanings, and how they can be used to mean things in context. I've thought about this most with respect to names and indexicals like 'I' or 'that', but the hope is that the lessons generalize. A lot of what I've been trying to do is basically to unwind a whole bunch of idealizations that other philosophers have made when theorizing about meaning: e.g. only speakers can mean things, and only when they're being cooperative. I think that's all bunk, basically, but the real challenge is to provide a reasonable alternative. That's a lot of what I'm working on at the moment and expect to be for a while yet.

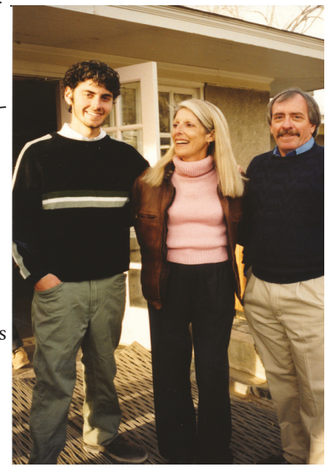
I'm curious as to what attracted you to study the philosophy of language to begin with? Why do you think it's important?

My interest in the philosophy of language really just came from having some rather good teachers. The first of those was Josef Stern at UChicago, where I went after Deep Springs. I'd taken several history of philosophy courses from Josef and liked him as a teacher. I think that's mainly why I signed up for his language course, not out of much of any antecedent interest. I was pretty into Wittgenstein at that point though, so maybe I thought philosophy of language sounded interesting in virtue of its having been something Wittgenstein had worked on. I can't recall for certain. Anyway, I got the lowest grade of my time at Chicago in that course, but I also loved it. Josef actually refused to write me a letter for graduate school due to my performance in that course, something which he has more recently told me he regretted. To be honest though, I doubt he should regret it; I'm pretty sure I wrote some downright terrible papers for that course. I found it deeply confusing, but not because the writing was particularly opaque or anything like that. The subject matter was just really hard for me to wrap my head around, and I hadn't run into that feeling too often in my life to that point. I liked it.

Here's a more direct plug for my sub-field: human beings are social creatures in some fairly deep sense. Language is part of what allows us to maintain that sociality, to coordinate our projects and thinking with each other, to demonstrate our personal style to each other, to alter the moral landscape by promising, forgiving, consenting, and making other sorts of commitments to each other, and to maintain a wide range of norms, institutions, etc. Quite possibly, our thinking is in some fairly deep sense shaped by the very languages we use. Basically, I'm interested in trying to better understand these various things, in addition to how our language is changing with the advent of machine speakers, and what the possibility of such speakers reveals about how we should have been thinking about language all along. All of these strike me as intrinsically interesting projects, though some will also overlap with various more practical projects we might be interested in: like better grasping the variety of ways that we can use language badly, not just to misinform each other, but to mislead each other about the sorts of evidence that are available for the claims we make, or to undermine our collective trust in institutions and experts. And then, of course, we might ask how best to respond to these various issues. All that said, even if there was no practical upshot to the project of trying to better understand meaning, communication, and thinking in language, I'd still be plenty interested in it, and I'd still find it a worthwhile endeavor.

I think it would be best to segue to how your time at Deep Springs influenced your relationship with philosophy. Would you mind telling me about that?

My time at Deep Springs influenced my philosophical thinking in two main ways: first, it was where I took my first few philosophy classes; second, it's where I learned to fail. The first is fairly self-explanatory, except that I should give due credit to the excellent teachers I was lucky enough to have there: Elizabeth Kiss and Jeff Holzgrefe, who taught the summer seminar in my first year, David Arndt, who taught me composition and Heidegger, and Mark Greenberg and Kinch Hoekstra DS82, who taught me a course on ethics and evolution. I cared less for the latter course than the others, which is funny since Mark eventually ended up on my PhD committee. Ah well.



Eliot, Linda, and Jon Michaelson. Photo by Jack Newell

Learning to fail was, in some sense, the more important aspect of my philosophical education at Deep Springs. Philosophy, like most anything worth doing as best I can tell, involves a great deal of failure. It takes some serious chutzpa to think that one might manage to make progress on some topic that has stumped

Continued on Page 21

Tyke Nunez DS99

Sean Coomey DS19

Can you tell me about your current relationship with philosophy?

Right now I'm teaching Introduction to Philosophy, which is on Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Hume, with a unit on each of them. Usually, I do the *Euthyphro* and the *Phædo* by Plato, with Aristotle it's more of a smattering of works mainly on the soul and the categories, I do *The Meditations* with Descartes, and *The Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* with Hume. I'm also teaching Kant's *Practical Philosophy*, which is mainly the groundwork of the *Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

My research, well I have a lot of different papers in the works; they kind of split into two groups, but they're all on Kant. One set is on his philosophy of logic and how he conceives of logic and the other is about his conception of objectivity and how he thinks about the nature of our knowledge of objects and how he thinks that's possible. And the two are connected, so I think you have to understand his conception of logic in order to understand how he's thinking about objectivity.

What do you think the intersection between philosophy and service to humanity is?

One of the things that philosophy does, and one of the things that religion does, is arbitrate value, and it can help us decide what we should value, and how we can structure our lives so that we can live the best lives that we can live. I think that this function is vital to any well functioning society, and I think it's one that philosophy should be involved in. I think that all of the aspects of philosophy are important for that project. Things like direct aid to the poor or political action are tremendously important and a direct service to humanity that have tangible and immediate effects. Philosophy is not that. But I do think that over the long haul it's something that any well-functioning society needs to have. Furthermore, it's something that is far from functioning well in our current society. And the benefits that it yields are so far out that their hard to make out, in a way. Sometimes they come all at once and suddenly and in strange and unexpected ways.

One of the core things that I think philosophy does is that it generates sciences. Before the twentieth century we didn't have computer science, we didn't have a conception of logic that would allow us to build the informational frameworks that were needed for that development. We didn't have linguistics. We didn't have cognitive science. All of these sciences are built on the back of philosophical developments that took place at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those are not social benefits, but they are ways in which philosophy is in the background of huge societal shifts. There are whole branches of knowledge, as recently as in the last hundred years, that would not exist without the work of philosophers. I tend to think of the way that philosophy promotes the end of service to humanity as one that is more indirect and less immediate than many other avenues that one could pursue, but is no less vital for a well functioning society. And I think of it as something that often ends up neglected as a result of being less immediate and more indirect. It kind of reminds me of the *Gray Book*: Nunn sets up Deep Springs, not because science is unimportant, but because there are already so many people on that side of the ship, and he wants to counter balance it.

Tyke Nunez DS99 and Eli Goldman-Armstrong DS99

How do you think that your time at Deep Springs influenced your current relationship with philosophy?

When I got to Deep Springs, I was already pretty sold on philosophy. I spent one summer in high school just reading Plato. I had a job where I didn't really have to do anything but make sure things didn't blow up, and so I spent the summer reading the *Republic* and I was completely hooked. I was really interested in politics and political philosophy as a kid and so I picked up the *Republic* because I had questions about justice and I knew that Plato is an important figure. Then I got to Deep Springs, and, well, I'm dyslexic, and severely so, and I've always struggled a lot with writing and reading; I'm a very slow reader — I still probably read at about a third of a normal pace. When I got to Deep Springs, David Arndt, who taught a composition class, was willing to read and reread drafts of my papers, and give me extensive feedback on them. And it was really in that seminar that I learned how to write. My writing was really poor when I got to Deep Springs, and it was through David's hard work and feedback that I really got up to level that I needed to survive at college. I also remember David Neidorf, at one point, saying that you gotta know how to write because that's the currency of the realm and if you can't write really well, then, forget about it.

That is more of a technical part of it, but the two years that I spent at Deep Springs continue to be the two most formative years of my life as far as figuring out who I wanted to be and what I thought was important and what I thought was not as important. I think that, in a lot of ways, Deep Springs was the place where my character was formed. I came in with something in the direction of what I now am, but it certainly was reforged at Deep Springs.

David Arndt DS84

Sammy Mohamed Bennis DS18

Could you describe your path? How did you get into the study and teaching of philosophy?

My mother was a student of philosophy, who studied with Richard Rorty at Wellesley, and with Stanley Cavell at UC Berkeley. She was never a philosophy professor, but she always tried to live a philosophical life. My father came from a long line of Episcopalian ministers, but at some point he lost faith and left the Church. He passed down to my brothers and me the values of the Christian traditions, but without any explicit spiritual guidance. We were kind of expected to figure things out for ourselves.

I went to a big public high school, where it quickly became clear that if I wanted a real education, I would have to educate myself. I started taking books off my mother's shelves and reading them, and then started buying books at a used bookstore. The first three were the *Discourses* of Epictetus, Kant's *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*. I read them because I was trying to work out my own understanding of what is true and of what really matters. In other words, I first approached philosophy not as an academic subject but as a search for wisdom.

I was such a terrible high school student that I was rejected from every college I applied to except one. The only thing that saved me was the TASP program at Deep Springs in the summer of 1983. I must have done OK in the TASP program, because I was admitted to Deep Springs the next year in the class of 1984.

Do you find that your time at Deep Springs shaped your path in a significant way? If so, how?

At Deep Springs I took courses in philosophy, but I also read a lot of philosophy on my own.

My approach to philosophy was then shaped in part by L. L. Nunn. Nunn was not the most philosophically sophisticated or theoretically articulate person in the world, but I do think he had real insight into the nature of education. Education is commonly divided into two kinds: liberal education, which is supposed to be a pursuit of knowledge for its own sake; and vocational education, which is supposed to be a practical means to other ends. It is sometimes said that Nunnian education is supposed to bring the two kinds of education together: practice is supposed to be guided by theoretical reflection, and theory is supposed to be brought down to earth and grounded in practice. But I think Nunn was on to something subtler: he saw that education at its best has an ethical dimension in the sense that it aims to shape the ethea of students so that they can live good lives. And this required not just bringing together theory and practice, but integrating all the various forms of understanding: wisdom, knowledge, judgement, taste, opinion, technical expertise, and practical know-how. I came out of Deep Springs with a strong sense that philosophy is not just a field of knowledge but a way of life, and that to live philosophically meant to incorporate thoughtful reflection into all aspects of one's life.

From Deep Springs I went to Yale and then to UC Irvine, where I studied with Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, and where I worked for three terms as Derrida's research assistant. But the influence of Deep Springs has never faded; I still have the sense that, no matter how technical philosophy becomes, it should always be grounded in and guided by the question of what is a good life. And we have to answer that question not just with theories, but in the way we actually live.

How do you see your practice as leading a life of service to humanity?

Well, I hope I have done some good through teaching and writing. My professors had a profoundly positive impact on my life (I want especially to single out Sarah Conly, who taught philosophy at Deep Springs in the fall of 1985, and to whom I am deeply grateful) and I hope my teaching has also had some sort of positive impact on my students. As for writing, my own life has been shaped by the books I have read, and I have always aimed to write books that might have a similar influence on others. This fall Cambridge University Press is going to publish a book I wrote on the question of the political. Will the book do any good? I don't know. Books do not directly effect anything, but they may illuminate things in a way that helps make effective action possible.

Do you think more students should study philosophy? Why?

Yes and no. Academic philosophy is not necessarily a good thing. A lot of contemporary philosophy seems shallow, trivial, and profoundly misguided. I would never tell students to read any book or take any course in philosophy. Some are a complete waste of time.

Julie Park and David Arndt DS84
Photo by Jack Newell

Continued on Page 21

Michael S. Brownstein DS98

Milo Vella DS19

What questions of yours did Deep Springs have a hand in shaping?

What are the virtues and vices of spontaneity in our lives? Acting with abandon, without careful reasoning, getting in the "flow" and out of your head--these can lead to some of the best experiences in life. And sometimes, when people do magnificent things, like dash into a burning building to rescue a child or make a masterful no-look pass, they seem to do so without explicitly thinking about what they're doing (and sometimes even doing what they think they shouldn't). At the same time, "just do it" is often terrible advice. People can be at their most biased, prejudiced, selfish, and short-sighted when they act impulsively. It seems to me now that a lot of what I wrestled with at Deep Springs--what I liked and didn't like about trying to learn to be a critical thinker, what I liked and didn't like about labor-- was about these virtues and vices of spontaneity. I'm now working on issues related to tribalism and polarization in politics, and I'm finding similar themes cropping up.

In reading a review of your recent monograph, The Implicit Mind, I came across what I thought was a humorously worded critique, given your time here in the desert. The reviewer claims that you appear to present a conception of accountability for implicit bias conflated with institutional or social responsibilities. Others, the reviewer claims, "have a basic desert sense of responsibility in mind, which is a kind of accountability independent of having responsibilities." What do you think about this? Did the desert tell you anything about responsibility?

Hmmm, I can't tell if you are making a joke two steps ahead of me or if you are confusing two senses of "desert;" the ecosystem kind and the kind that is about what a person deserves. In his review of my book, Neil Levy is saying that most philosophers think that moral responsibility is about what a person deserves, given some thing they've done. (So, like, if you punch me intentionally, you deserve my anger, but if your fist hits my face accidentally, you don't.) I think, though, that moral responsibility is often indexed to the social roles and responsibilities a person has accepted or holds for some reason or another. (So, if you're on dairy, and you sleep in and fail to milk the cows, it's not exculpating to say that you did it because you don't like cows. The responsibility is yours because it comes with the job.) Now, the more I think about it, the more I think you're probably just two steps ahead of me. So what's a "desert [ecosystem] sense of responsibility?" I have no idea. A sparse one, unencumbered by too many concepts? A lonely one, that doesn't depend on other people's perceptions of you? I guess I think not, since responsibility is like the sine qua non of social life. Ain't no responsibility without other people.

Did the voice of the desert tell you anything else?

To be honest, I'm not much of a "voice of the desert" guy. I loved the desert. I loved hiking in it, riding horses in it, learning about it. The metaphor of its voice never moved me much. If you're lucky enough to walk away from Deep Springs with a clear sense of purpose or mission or belief, awesome. Own it! It's from your and your community's hard work, not some quasi-transcendental spirit.

What do you think self-governance and the intimacy of this community did/do for you?

Boy, it did a number on me. Self-governance, I learned, is HARD. I learned that I couldn't easily (or ever) win arguments, and more importantly, that winning arguments doesn't really matter when it comes to learning how to live with other people. That didn't really stop me from trying, though! I left Deep Springs really needing to recover for a while from trying to work out differences in a small community.

How about committee work? What committee(s) were you on, and did you find that experience to be a strong influence?

I was on RCom my first year, and I was RCom Chair my second year. There were a few very difficult moments. I learned that I had a lot to learn from some elders (mostly Geoff Pope) about how to have difficult conversations. The very fact that RCom exists is a testament to Deep Springs. I haven't yet been part of an organization or department or anything that has such a robust, intense, and useful mechanism for feedback and growth.

Do any specific conversations with your fellow Deep Springers stand out in your memory today?

Too many really to report. Pihos (Michael Pihos DS 98) was my classmate and one of my best friends. He died in September of my second year. The conversations that stand out the most in my memory are almost all about him, about how hard it was to understand what happened to him, how just painful and unintelligible his death was.

Classes?

I think I liked public speaking the best. I don't remember the content of many of my speeches. But I definitely remember the humbling nature of it. I thought I knew what I was doing, learned I had a lot to learn, and am now sort of in awe of the institution of it, especially "post-postmortems." I hope you still do them.

Continued on Page 21

Thomas Miller DS04

Trinity Andrews DS18

What sparked your interest in philosophy?

I was a little surprised when John asked me if I was willing to be interviewed for this newsletter; I'm actually a classicist by training. I guess it was being at Deep Springs that originally got me interested. I studied people like Plato and Hobbes, and became a specialist in ancient philosophy. I spent two years teaching ancient and modern philosophy, and then I walked away to pursue environmental law.

Did your time studying philosophy inform your career change?

I can answer this in two ways. First is the classicist direction. I think there's a continuity between caring about classics and environmental law. In both cases you're preserving old stuff. You're a steward of something beyond human authority to create and control for other humans to find meaning. I think there's a lot of ways to define philosophy. Do we think it's an academic discipline? Is it a human capability that we exercise as we go through our existence? Is it an area of expertise or rare genius? It is similar to religion in that it asks for total commitment. I think the academic expertise direction is perhaps the most limiting way to think about it. People can be philosophers who aren't professors or students of philosophy. I like thinking about it more as something akin to religion. People have religious commitments that aren't their job or profession but are still totalizing. It's hard to know what that means outside the university— I don't have an answer and I think it's something a lot of Deep Springs graduates struggle with.

Transitions are always hard. I'm able to be a student again. It's been liberating and exciting and wonderful. I think it's really important not to lose touch with the humility of being a student. Being a teacher can corrupt that.

Sorry if this is a "gotcha" question, but do you feel compelled to provide a defence of philosophy as a life of service?

That's not a gotcha question at all. We've got to keep each other honest. No one should be immune to having to give an account to a life of service— I don't think philosophers have more of an obligation to do so. Lots of people who study philosophy also teach. Teaching is one of the purest lives of service— you're touching students and giving them something of immense value. But can philosophy as a private, intellectual undertaking be a life of service? I'm not sure. I don't— I think it's good to have people in the world who do that but I'm not sure if it's service; is it still that or is it in tension with a life of service?

Do you have a favorite memory of Deep Springs?

It's hard to select one. In keeping with the theme of the newsletter, I'll say the independent study I did my first year in Homeric Greek with another student. I didn't know Greek so it was more like translating a secret code. I started absolutely from scratch and I would stay up so late at night in Avant Garden— is that still a room? —it was amazing. It was the intellectual analogue of doing a lot of labor that you're incompetent at but putting a lot of effort in anyway. Later on, that's what I did, I taught Ancient Greek and Latin. Studying Greek helped me remember the pleasure and exhilaration of learning something new.

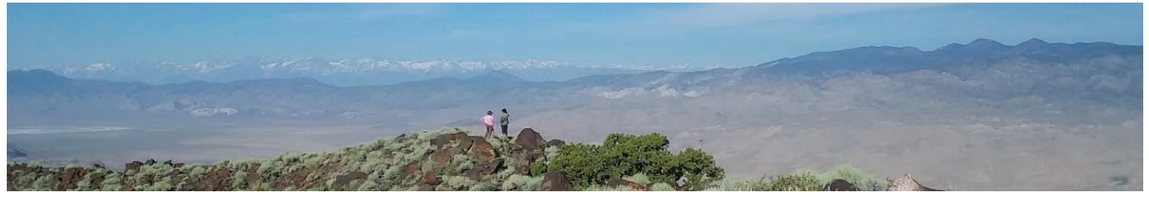
What was your favorite reading or assignment from your time at Deep Springs?

I've got two. One seems to be a Deep Springs favorite, so you can see which one gets mentioned and edit based on that. The first one was reading *Fear and Trembling* by Kierkagaard in Summer Seminar. I was thinking of it recently because you traditionally read about the binding of Isacc on Rosh Hashanah and that's what Fear and Trembling is about. I remember being so fascinated and not understanding it at all. Today, I couldn't tell you its thesis. I remember attempting to understand and being entranced with its beauty.

My other answer is Hiedigger's *Being and Time*. Having taught it, I do think I could say what the point of it is— or at least one take. It stuck with me and challenged me. I do wonder if it's good or bad for DS that so many of us connect with it?

Do you have any advice for Deep Springers?

I'm not old and crotchety enough to give advice! I guess I'd just say not to be cynical about the world when you leave. Don't be too down on the place you end up after you leave. There is a tendency to judge colleges and jobs harshly. Deep Springs is wonderful and the world is wonderful. Try and ask what new thing you can learn from the people you meet. Use wherever you're at as a stepping stone to a life of service rather than looking at what it's not.



David McNeill: *Robert Aird Chair of Humanities*

Sammy Bennis DS18

So, tell me a little about your path, how you got into studying and eventually teaching philosophy.

I was a bit of a derelict in high school—but an intellectual derelict. I flunked out of high school. I didn't go very often, largely because I hated the wealthy suburban culture that I grew up in and that the high school held dear. At the same time reading a wide variety of books on my own—physics, mathematics, and literature were all big intellectual influences on me in my teenage years as I read them independently. I took a gap year because I wanted to figure out just what I wanted to do with my life. At the time, I thought I wanted to be a writer, since the things that moved me most were actually dramas. I was a huge fan of Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams. It seemed to me that that kind of thought, doing that kind of work, would enable me to do what I most cared about, which was trying to understand what it is to be a human being.

While I was working as a waiter during my time off, I discovered St. John's. I had read a lot of old texts on my own already, and it seemed like the place that I wanted to go. After getting there, I remember feeling that this was exactly what I was missing in my high school education: really serious engagement with really serious books. There, I read Plato for the first time. And I realized, "Oh. If I want to understand what it is to be a human being, I need to get as close to doing this as is possible". Since then, I've basically never turned back.

The philosophers that I care about most, the ones I think are the most serious in the philosophical tradition are authors who are, in a sense, literary. I came to understand that philosophers who prompt you to think about reading, about the task of interpretation, are doing so deliberately, in an attempt to reanimate genuine thinking, real questioning of the content of our experience. And it's not just philosophers who adopt that title who do that; many literary figures, like Sophocles, fall into this category.

Given this way of thinking about philosophy, why did you come to teach philosophy at Deep Springs in particular over these last few years? How do you think that pursuit contributes to a life of service, whether for you or for your students?

I tried to bring the way that I approach and engage with philosophy to the British academic system when I was at the University of Exeter. But I was lecturing! One of the things that's central to my approach, and to my work as a whole is what the Greeks call aporia, perplexity. The way that I understand what Plato and Aristotle think about perplexity is that our life is structured around certain fundamental questions. We grow up with, are habituated to, in Aristotle's terms, certain answers to those fundamental questions. The problem is that we never clearly pose those questions to ourselves to begin with. Often, then, the way of thinking that governs our lives is not really our own thinking. Coming to grips with, and being in the grip of those questions is to me the purpose of doing and teaching philosophy. The framework of a lecture class, then, just isn't the best way of doing that! It's not just the difference in the way that students engage with the class, but even you, the lecturer, become accustomed to lecturing, to professing. Philosophy is in a certain way at odds with what it is to profess. What it should be is a life of inquiry.

For myself, I wanted to get back into an environment where I could be talking to small groups of serious students, and getting them to find in these texts, and getting me to find again or anew in these texts, questions which we are all and each individually struggling with, questions which we might not have seen as underlying our experience. Not having a list of the things I wanted to get across at the end of the lecture, but rather being open to whatever reanimation of these questions a seminar might create, is important to me. It's also the case that in general, what makes teaching anything good is how much it matters to the students. Not everyone comes to Deep Springs as interested in the "intellectual" side of a life of service, but you only really come to Deep Springs instead of a more conventional path because there are questions that matter to you deeply.

The idea of teaching in that context, where students are thinking about the college experience as something that, ideally, is preparing them for something: a life of service, but also thinking about what a life of service could mean. That's what I had hoped to find at Deep Springs, and that's what I did find. Not always perfectly, of course, but whenever you become too comfortable in any institution, I think you're making a mistake.

Philosophy, and the kind of philosophy I'm interested in in particular, is important to a life of service in general, but especially for your generation. What philosophy should enable one to do is to see what questions are not being asked, what is being assumed, to find a way of taking up a problem anew in a way that's more than just abstract, a way that's motivated by the phenomena of the world. We're at a time when it's astonishingly evident that the answers to a whole series of political, ethical, and technical questions are not working in some very, very fundamental ways. That means that it's not good enough to think harder—one has to think anew. That means that you have to be thinking about fundamental questions, because that's the only way that you can see the possibility of a different paradigm. That means that regardless of what particular way you choose to go about a life of service, it's important to read these ancient philosophers. Whatever you do, you're going to

Continued on Page 23

Gabriel Delgado: *Farm Manager*

Milo Vella DS19

Under the Hawk Tree, September 30, 2019

Gabriel, the theme of this newsletter is philosophy, so I was thinking to start with some big open questions. How does that sound?

Ok.

What are you here for?

[laughs] That's a big open question. I'm here to ensure the future of farming by passing anything that I've learned from my mentors onto you guys. A lot of knowledge in agriculture goes generation to generation, but only to people born into that. And in a lot of those farming families, the next generation tends to not really want to go into farming or into agriculture. Being here provides me with the opportunity to pass this knowledge on without it having to be just because of your family. And it provides you an opportunity to learn this different perspective — how to actually live and work with nature, while creating a product that's beneficial for the land, animals, the economy, and people. I want to ensure that your future and my daughter's future, and her daughter's future is brighter by passing this kind of knowledge to you guys — you know, the seven generations mentality. I don't know everything, but everything that I do know I'm going to try to pass on to you so that you can pass it on without it being… erased [laughs].

What do you see the farming doing for Deep Springs or Deep Springers?

It gives you, the SB, pride in what you do. It gives you more purpose, advancing your education, being not just about the scholarly papers — which are important —

but also applying what you're learning in there. One thing I've told students is, you know why philosophers know how to philosophize? Cause they've lived life. And you guys have not lived life, not all of you, so the farm allows you to come up with your own philosophy, to actually realize, "oh shit, *that's* what they mean by this" because now you're living life, you're learning how to work, you're implementing certain practices. And I'm not big into philosophy, but the more I work, the more I start to think, the more I start to plan things out, the more I start to think on the way the world works, the way nature works, and the way the human condition is. The more I can instill that experience in you, and the pride that you put into the work that you're doing, the more it starts to open you up into that kind of emotion, a kind of compassion. You know, the more work and responsibilities that you put into the farm, the more emotion you're going to give it. You start to think in a broader perspective — you think not just about this farm, but how this little 150 acres connects with the rest of this valley. And I want you guys to understand how that can actually — how it does affect it.

The more responsibilities that you get, the harder you guys work, it will also start to build your confidence. And that's a key thing that I constantly want to instill. Getting you behind a tractor, getting you to do something that you've never done before, putting you in an awkward position, getting you to solve certain types of problems that you weren't able to solve before, it's to build pride in what you do, its to build your confidence, so you can apply it to other aspects of what Deep Springs has to offer... and also just life. I mean, you're not always going to be here, this is just a bubble, this is a sample of the world. We're such a small community, but what happens at Deep Springs reflects a lot of what's happening in the world as well. So if you can apply certain things here, by taking what I teach you, by taking the confidence that you've built up on the farm, taking the pride in the work that you have, and the emotion that you give to this land, and apply it to the other aspects of Deep Springs, and apply it to the world, then I know that in some way I have succeeded.

And it's not always about how much we've grown or how much we've seeded, but it all comes back to how you view the farm, how you view the school. And if it's because of what you've learned on the farm, then I've succeeded.

What ideas or beliefs most significantly impact your interaction with this place?

I think it's more how I am with the desert. I come from the desert, I respect the desert for what it is, and I give and take what I can of myself. It helps me be a member of this community.

Continud on Page 25

Aaron Greenberg Interview Cont.

As a result, I'd say that the problems of politics don't scandalize me. Studying politics – especially old texts – teaches perspective. It teaches you to notice the big stuff, the deep and basically irresolvable questions of how it is we are supposed to organize our common life in a big and complicated society. When I was at a union rally or in City Hall I didn't try to imagine what Aristotle, Machiavelli, or even Niebuhr would say (or do) in my shoes. But I was – and am – somewhat comforted by the fact that despite the historical distance, they were often thinking about similar dilemmas.

Eliot Michaelson Interview Cont.

one's predecessors for somewhere between a hundred and several thousand years, depending on what is thinking about. And yet, that's exactly what I and other philosophers try to do. Sure, it helps that we can see where others have failed, and we can try to extrapolate from their failures some patterns in thinking that seem to be helpful for addressing these topics. But, at the end of the day, even the best of us is bound to fail more often than not in trying to get a grip on whatever it is we're working on. Many of the best philosophers, I think, are interesting precisely because they are able to stay clear-headed about their failures, reflecting on and learning from them before trying again. Of course, it's not like I came to the field able to effortlessly shrug off failure and get back to work. But I'm certain that my time at Deep Springs left me better able to deal with this aspect of doing serious research better than I would have otherwise been. At least when I was there, part of the point of Deep Springs, part of the design, seemed to be to push the students to the point where they were going to screw up something they were invested in. Learning to move on from that was difficult, and it still is, but practice certainly does help.

David Arndt Interview Cont.

I would say two things. First, since everything we do is guided by our understanding of the world and our vision of the good, there is a philosophical dimension to every part of our lives, i.e. there is room to stop and reflect on the limits of our understanding and the point of what we are doing. Second, philosophy means "love of wisdom," and I think wisdom is worth pursuing for its own sake, i.e. it can only help us to better understand the world and do what is good. So I would say that, in school, whatever subject you study, you should also study the philosophy of that subject--it will help you integrate practical know-how and technical expertise with opinion, taste, judgment, knowledge, and wisdom. And after school, you should continue to work out your own thoughts in dialogue with whatever philosophers help to illuminate the world and call you back to what really matters.

Michael Brownstein Interview Cont.

And what about labor experiences?

Labor was my favorite part of Deep Springs. I loved pretty much every aspect of working on the ranch. I miss working with my hands in that way terribly. (That is vague. I miss it - working with my hands - terribly. I don't think I was too terrible at working with my hands. Ask Geoff Pope! (But don't ask about the ill-fated Eggmobile.))

How do you see service these days? What does it look like for you?

I don't see it in my life as much as I'd like to. In some vein, I'll tell a story about my academic career constituting a life of service. There's some truth to it. I work at CUNY, mostly teaching kids who are often first generation college students, so there's real room to feel like I occasionally have a meaningful influence on a young person's life. My work on bias and prejudice -- and the newer stuff I am doing now on tribalism in politics -- are also genuinely aimed at making some kind of dent in the world. But all of that comes out of lots of other, less lofty motives too. In any case, I'm ecumenical abouut what constitutes "service." I'm down with all the ways my classmates have gone on to try to make the world better.

What didn't your experience here change? Did it reinforce anything for you?

I can't answer this question. It changed everything. I can't get myself out of the picture sufficiently to have a sense of what I'd have been like had I not gone to Deep Springs. Ask me again in another 20 years?

DS17: Where are They Now?

Aadit Gupta

I'm currently at Columbia, doing architecture, philosophy, and Swedish. I spent my summer in Washington, DC, on a conservative political-studies fellowship, and traveling through Erdogan's Turkey. To round out that experience I've joined Columbia's chapter of the Leftist Platypus society and plan to do their syllabus over the upcoming year.

I deal with my longing for Deep Springs' landscape in the only way I can: By sticking to the parts of Central Park which have the pines that most resemble pinon.

Asa Ferguson

Asa is attending Columbia University this year. He recently found a $100 bill on the ground!

Austin Smith

I'm at Duke University. Studying and writing and talking with people, mostly. Planning to study Philosophy and Math, but maybe Literature instead.

Brandon Aguilar

Brandon lives and works in Los Angeles.

Elliott Jones

Elliott plans to work in the brief interim between working as Returning Cowboy.

Griffin Mahon

I am majoring in history and economics and volunteering for a local Charlottesville City Council candidate, Michael Payne.

Isaac Morris

Isaac has begun his gap year by traveling through Europe.

Michel Ge

I am working at "Zeal Education Group," as it's translated, which is basically a company that mentors Chinese students who plan on studying abroad and helps them with their application. It's in Ningbo, China. Besides that, I am learning Chinese, reading "The Dream of the Red Chamber" (in English translation, of course, because my Chinese sucks), writing a little, and spending way too much time on the Internet.

Schuyler Curriden

I am studying Politics and Ethics at Bard College Berlin. I live with two sixty year olds, and my singular friend at the university is seventy-- he likes analytic philosophy and chamber music. I often walk around the city, offending Berliners with my egregious Americanity.

Tanner Loper

You are Tanner. You decided it would be a good idea to take a service year instead of going straight to school. Most of your time is spent doing administrative and case work at a 100-bed men's shelter. You spend the rest of your time getting through the reading list that accreted during your time at Deep Springs and teaching parliamentary procedure to your housemates. As you fall asleep each night, you ponder unsuccessfully ways to reconcile Catholicism with the postmodern disposition. The next steps are not certain, though you imagine you might finish your undergrad in Mathematics and Philosophy.

Tanuj Guha

I am studying in Luther College, Iowa.
I am majoring in Math and minoring in Philosophy.

TJ Dulac

After a quiet drive out of the Valley on the night of graduation, I flew to Middlebury College for a 7-week Spanish immersion program. Now, I'm starting my sophomore year at Harvard College, where I've joined the ballroom dance team and plan to study political theory and religion.

Townes Nelson

Townes caught a slight cold in NYC where he attends Columbia College, studying philosophy.

Will Borchard

At the time of writing, Will, (summer cowboy) was in the BH. Later this year, however, Will will be working at the Haley house, a Boston soup-kitchen organization.

Zhuo Chen

I'm studying political science at Wesleyan University. I will perform in The Rocky Horror Picture Show later this term and am writing a thesis on global tax governance.

David McNiell Interview Cont.

be looking for a new way to ask fundamental questions, and I don't know of any authors who are better than at forcing us to do that than Plato or Aristotle.

How you would like to see academic philosophy change? In other words, what are some contentions you have with the way that philosophy is practiced today?

What my work is focused on now is the centrality of aporia, perplexity, in the process of thinking. There's a line from Nietzsche's middle period, and I'm going to misquote, where he says approximately that the thing that surprises him the most is that all the people around him are convinced that they know what old Socrates didn't know: what is the good? So the way in which academic philosophy puts more and more pressure on people in the discipline, especially young people, to publish more and more, is making philosophy an extraordinarily conservative discipline. That means that you take some kind of broad framework of thinking as given, then add a little to the existing structures. In the parlance of Thomas Kuhn, it's treating philosophy like a normal science. But philosophy that isn't seeking to ask a fundamental question is at best going to be fine, good, important work. So much of the way the discipline exists now is after the model of the natural sciences, but the natural sciences have an advantage that philosophy doesn't have: even if your way of framing results is later revealed as misconceived, there's important empirical work you can be doing-- showing certain structures in animals, or responses to psychological experiments. Even at worst, the empirical sciences are at least generating data.

Philosophy, though, when it's not doing very technical mathematical work, is talking about some fundamental aspect of what it means to be human. When it doesn't recognize that the very subdisciplines it's modeling itself after are aspects of the question of what it means to be human, when it loses track of the fact that that question is by nature aporetic, by nature something that we have to take up, then philosophy just ends up not being very contentful.

Clockwise from top left: Julien DS19, Sean DS19 and Starbuck in the army tent at Cow Camp; Anousha'18 works the chute; Lukas DS18, Anousha DS18, and Michael DS19, holding Ruger DS18; Kerinna DS19 and Prof. Amity Wilzcek at the Lake.

David Schuman Cont.

you could use a thesaurus to prop up one side," he said. "That would be okay."

David also offered a great example of life balance. He was a committed runner and cyclist. He played in a softball league in Bishop. He pursued his creative writing with fervor and dedication. He was tender and loving to his family. At his urging, I even started playing the banjo. I've spent four decades in academia now, and I have yet to encounter another mensch to match him.

Jay Pulliam DS78

. . . . . .

What remains forever in my mind is that smile. He was so clearly amused, skeptical but interested, and willing to take me seriously for a minute or two before cutting me down to size. He gave us a chance to meet his standards, which was a huge gift. I looked through my basement just now to find a quote from something David wrote on one of my papers. But I couldn't find the files, so all I have left is that smile.

Will Masters DS79

. . . . . .

Although I was at the top of my class in my rural high school, I was incredibly naive and unprepared for college academics, and I struggled to keep up with my classmates. David had an extraordinary way of putting me at ease and encouraging me, even as he bluntly pointed out my failings. He was witty, warm, and tough, all at the same time. I specifically remember his laugh and his sharp sense of humor. He seemed to appreciate my instincts, and under his guidance I learned to enjoy the power of strong, well-crafted ideas, and to recognize laziness of mind, including my own. His essay about Deep Springs, "Education and Solipsism," is one of the very best articulations of what Deep Springs, and education, is for.

David Welle DS80

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My fondest memory of David is a hilarious short story of his that he read at public speaking. It involved Jewish frat brothers lighting their farts on fire. He had so much fun with it, despite often being such a serious guy. I came to Deep Springs not knowing how to write. David and Sharon were the first people to teach me about writing. It was an enormous gift.

Erik Mueggler DS80

Gabriel Degado Interview Cont.

I get a little more compassionate because I come from the desert. Like I have to protect it as much as I can, and I have to show you guys how beautiful it is and what we can actually do to protect it and conserve it and rebuild it to what it once was. And it's such a challenging place to live that when I see you guys struggling in it I love showing you guys its actual beauty. And it's why at the end of the term we all sat around in a circle and we breathe in the earth, we breathe in the desert — my connection with the desert, the land, is something that I love to pass on. Because I think people often forget that we're all so dependent on it, that we have to stop for a minute and just breathe it all in, rejuvenate ourselves.

In a sense, you have already kind of answered this, but when and where do you find beauty here?

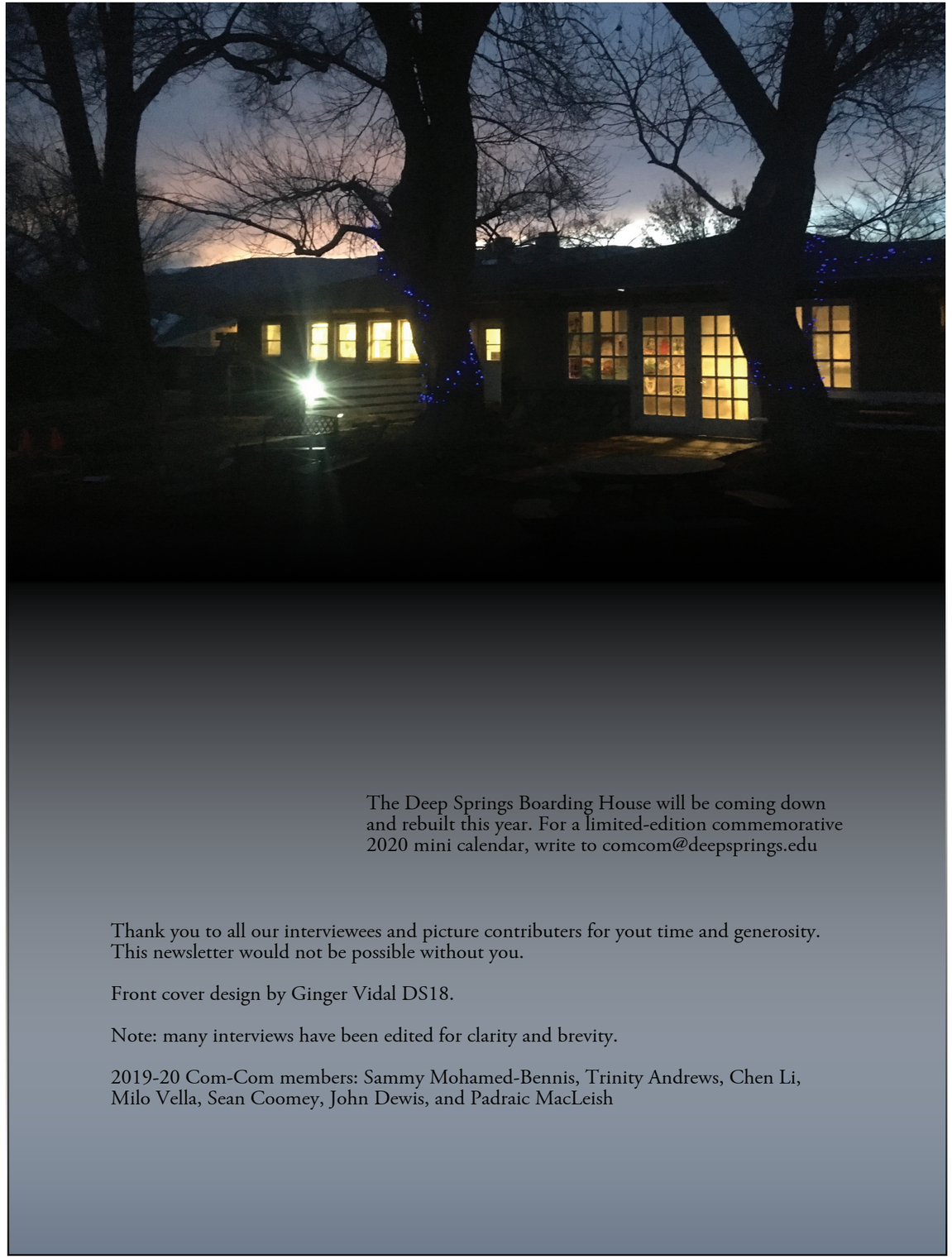
When I look at my daughter [laughs]. And I see in her eyes the same color of these mountains. And I see the future in her. And I see she is definitely a little desert girl. And she is gonna be raised here for a while and she is gonna grow up in this area and just take it in, and that's gonna be a part of her. And to know that me and Jamie have helped create that inside of her, even if someday we'll move, she'll always have a home in this desert. And knowing that she will always be connected to it in one way, and I will always be connected to it, it gives me that sense that whatever we're working towards is worth it.

So I find beauty in all that, and knowing that she will always be connected to it.

Is there anything else you'd like to add to share?

Yeah... I like seeing you guys realize how capable you are. And I told Tamar this a couple terms ago…. God, I just get this high from it. I get this satisfaction when I see you guys do something you didn't realize you could do, and you just did it, and you realize that you just did it. It's just great. And that is something that I think is in all of us and in all of you — you guys are so capable of so much. And I've just given you a little push, and you guys know how to take the leap, actually make the dive out of it, and actually find the joy in all of this. I really appreciate that you guys actually find joy in working on the farm and raising these crops.

And I hope that everyone who comes into the farm, they get a little bit out of it and understand that once you've worked on the farm — even if it was just a minute, even if it was just one bale, even if it was just an hour, if you've stepped on the fields, your footprint is always there — you will always be part of it. All my predecessors are in this field and I highly respect it. Everything that they've done, everything that has been, everything that will be, we're all a part of it and I think that that is something we shouldn't forget. We will always be a part of that. Just like soil building. You don't want to get rid of it, you just build up on top of each other so that it creates this foundation of healthiness.



The Deep Springs Boarding House will be coming down and rebuilt this year. For a limited-edition commemorative 2020 mini calendar, write to comcom@deepsprings.edu

Thank you to all our interviewees and picture contributers for yout time and generosity. This newsletter would not be possible without you.

Front cover design by Ginger Vidal DS18.

Note: many interviews have been edited for clarity and brevity.

2019-20 Com-Com members: Sammy Mohamed-Bennis, Trinity Andrews, Chen Li, Milo Vella, Sean Coomey, John Dewis, and Padraic MacLeish

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