

RIVER RAT 2019

LEDYARD CANOE CLUB



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dear Ledyardites and friends of Ledyard,

Welcome to the 2018-19 River Rat! Read on to hear about Ledyard's adventures from this past year—stories range from annual staples such as Spring Trip, Ecuador, Riverfest, and Everglades to exploratory missions in Costa Rica, Alaska, and Northern Quebec. Whether whitewater or flatwater, Class V or class II, safety meetings on the river or council meetings in Robo basement, Ledyard has continued to foster countless beautiful moments.

Next year (2020) is Ledyard's 100th birthday! We have been gearing up all year long, and plan to have a series of events and trips to celebrate Ledyard's past, present, and future. We hope for generations of Ledyard alumni to connect and re-connect while sharing river trips of old and experiencing new ones together. Highlights will include a kickoff event on Gilman Island (September 20th-22nd, 2019), a 3rd Explorers Symposium (April 23rd-26th, 2020), and student-alumni trips (tentatively: Spring Trip in mid-March 2020 and Trip to the Sea in early May 2020). In order to stay current on all things Ledyard, join our new Ledyard-Alum listserv! Please contact alumni liaison Michael.Baicker@gmail.com to be added.

In other exciting news, temporary renovations have officially begun on Ledyard's clubhouse. Construction began in April 2019 and will likely be finished by the end of this spring. These renovations will not replace a new long-term clubhouse, but rather will give Ledyard a short-term common space, kitchen, and bathroom on the first floor. Ledyard will have a space to cook feeds, store gear, host councils, display historical items, and, most importantly, hang out. Do not fear that this will compromise our ability to push for a new clubhouse building altogether—we are still striving for fundraising and College support. If anything, using Ledyard as our primary space once again will highlight the strength of our community and the need for a permanent solution.

We are endlessly grateful to everyone reading this for the support that makes this community possible. Without you, we couldn't go on the amazing trips that bond us as Ledyardites forever.

See you on water!

Cheers,
Jordan Sandford '19
LCC President



President Jordan Sandford '19 and Vice President Katie Bogart '20 in Ecuador



Day in the life of Grant Croo

GRANT CROO

AUGUST 2018

Photos by Alex Petros '19

Sheppard Somers '19

Grant Croo is magic. The Second College Grant is an extraordinary place, rarely encountered by students at Dartmouth. I personally had never been to the Grant before Grant Croo this past fall, the thought crossed my mind that perhaps I wish I had visited more frequently, but the completeness of my experience there does not leave room for regret or second guessing. My time in the Grant was one of the happiest weeks of my life.

The experience started with a couple hectic days of preparation on campus, but soon we were all in the grant fixing kayaks, finding our bathing spot in the Dead Diamond River, hanging hammocks, capturing mice, and learning the various tasks we would complete to ensure Trippees would have an amazing experience. Despite the hard work that went into each day, the simple existence in the midst of nature with a group of caring and care-free peers, allowed for incredible peace and reflection, along with pure joy. Grant Croo made me feel like a child again. Happy to splash in the river, tell silly stories to new Trippees, kayak through the gorge, and explore the large expanse of the Grant.

I was unable to stay for the entirety of Grant Croo and left staring into a draining UGA training, but I have realized that pure joy stands alone as an experience. Cut short or prolonged forever, the simple, joyous experience of Grant Croo will stay with me forever and I hope the friendships I created there will last as long as the memories.

Sheppard Somers '19 doing a professional hair dye job on Ali Hunter '19



Coby Gibson '21 excelling in both fashion and sports

Eden Price '21

"The best day on Grant Croo was the day that I got to give fake birth to my beautiful watermelon child with my fake fiancé by my side. It was early on in Grant Croo and someone had the brilliant raid idea of tricking trippees into thinking that they had just witnessed a proposal. Shep and I waited in a canoe for about an hour, and once we saw the other Croolings near the riverbank, we paddled up. I had stuffed a balled up sweatshirt under my shirt because I was "pregnant," and we pulled up our canoe next to the trippees. We situated ourselves a little ways off, but close enough so that they could see us having a picnic. Shep then proposed to me and it was absolutely magical; all the trippees were clapping and cheering. What we didn't know was that once they got on the water with their trip leaders, all they could talk about was the engagement. Later in the day, we got back in our canoe just near their first day campsite and again paddled up to them. This time I carried a lovely watermelon underneath my shirt and as we pulled up, I began to do the worst imitation of going into labor ever. I don't think the trippees were very surprised that fruit came out of my shirt instead of a baby because of the poor acting skills, but it was fun regardless. Raids like this, followed by getting to know the trippees was one of the things that made being in the Grant so special.

Lydia Blanchet '19 and Jordan Sandford '19
in a syrup/mayonnaise war



What happens in the Grant? Generations of Croolings have long sought the answer to this question, and to you, dear River Rat reader, shall I finally spill the beans. First and foremost, we draw names from a hat to weave the complex web of unrequited romantic affection essential to the perpetuation of drama among Grant Croolings sharing remote close quarters for a period of two weeks. Next, we determine enemies by discerning faces and letters from herbal tea remnants at the bottoms of our saucers. Over the course of two weeks, each set of enemies must squabble to the bitter end in a series of epic chicken fights after which the victors are entitled to either their opponent's share of Annie's Mac or the losers ear, which shall be bronzed and turned into a hunting trophy. As the victor of my own chicken fight, I have tacked Eden Price's ear to the blank space above my bed and am single-handedly responsible for her hearing loss. All other acquisitions of property are handled through the ancient tradition of peeing and/or spitting all over the desired object. Claims on Grant Croo 2018 ranged from flair to chicken nuggets and were mostly made by Yefri Figueroa. Over the course of two weeks, Jordan Sanford lost almost all of his worldly possessions in this way. As an additional blow, he was also river panthered 27 times and swam 13 times of his own accord. I'm not saying Jordan was the worst kayaker on Grant Croo, but you, dear reader, may draw your own conclusions.

Grant Croo's hedonistic atmosphere attracted the blood-thirst of ferocious woodland creatures far and wide who would rake their gnarly claws over the windowpanes of any cabin in which they detected life. It was all Grant Croo could do to protect the trippees from the savage animals. Despite our internal divisions, we banded together into unstoppable squadrons of critter-fighting knights, dinosaurs, and turtles by night with the common goal of protecting any and all trippees from the fearsome critter raid. Without any prior training or qualifications, we totally slayed some savage butt and even cultivated some signature moves.

It's fair to say that in addition to answering trippees' questions, Grant Croo held singular power over all intel flowing to and from the Grant. We acted kind of like a conglomerate President of the Grant, a position which arguably wields as much influence over the state of global affairs as the President of the United States of America. We operated out of a secret location that I will reveal to you because you are a devoted River Rat reader and I'll be darned if that doesn't entitle you to top clearance quasi-government secrets. By removing the seventh book from the right on the top shelf of the book case located next to the kitchen door, you will find yourself holding a copy of Stephen King's *The Outsider*. Flip to page ii and you will find yourself at the beginning of the Author's Note. Begin reading. Then take your time and make your way through the whole book because it's pretty good and it's worth the read. Looking for a tasty reading snack? Give Lydia Blanchet a shout—she knows all about the best infected toes to suck on.

Anyways, to get to the secret President of the Grant office just walk into the common room and pull a chair up to the dining room table and feel free to write any outstanding raid ideas on the giant notepads lining the walls. We probably won't do any of them unless they involve a dinosaur head or making Alex Petros smother his face in pesto sauce.

So mystery solved—you're basically a Grant Croolings now, dear River Rat reader. Bask in our glorious secrets if you like, but more importantly, keep them to yourself. The Grant is pretty much a place of absolute freedom from the daily restrictions of laws and commonplace social etiquette, but we do have one rule: What happens in the Grant stays in the Grant.

Got any other inquiries? Direct them to my secretary: Moose #173 p.o. Box that one tree with lichen on it.



Avery Saklad '21, Coby Gibson '21, Jordan Sandford '19, Margaret Hubble '21, Ali Hunter '19, Eden Price '21, Yefri Figueroa '21, Caroline Cutler '19

Top Row: Avery Saklad '21, Alex Petros '19, Jordan Sandford '19, Sheppard Somers '19, Ali Hunter '19, Coby Gibson '21, Caroline Cutler '19, Katie Bogart '20



Bottom Row: Noel Siegart '21, Yefri Figueroa '21, Margaret Hubble '21, Lydia Blanchet '19, Eden Price '21

ALASKA

AUGUST 2018

In August of 2018, Lydia Blanchet '19, Jesse Feldman-Stein '18, Jackson Harris '20, and Isaac Green '17 set out for the Alaskan wilderness. They had received the Chris Vale Expedition Fund and put the \$5,000 towards bush planes that would bring them into Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Isaac left before this portion of the trip, leaving three paddlers to journey into the national park.

"It's basically this enormous, incredibly remote, incredibly pristine chunk of wilderness in Southeast Alaska," Blanchet said.

Monahan's Creek is a class IV+ creek that starts high in the mountains and runs into the Chakina River, a big glacial run. Monahan's Creek had been run only twice before, the first time in 2006. These Ledyardites found out about the creek through a YouTube video from that run. They thought it looked like their ability level, so they started their research.

"It's really wild to think about," Blanchet said of the fact that they were only the third known group to descend Monahan's Creek. So few paddlers go there because it's so remote and hard to get to. "The Chakina, if it were anywhere else in the country, it would be a classic route," she said. "The quality of the

whitewater is amazing, it's just pristine whitewater, incredible scenery."

Blanchet is from Anchorage, Alaska, and the trio started their 2.5-week-long trip at her house. They took day trips around Anchorage and the Kenai peninsula before spending five days in the Valdez area doing big water glacial day runs. These rivers are roadside and accessible, but Blanchet says they're not run very often because of the limited paddling community in Alaska.

"The number of amazing rivers in Alaska that don't get run..." Blanchet trailed off. "Anchorage has a pretty strong paddling community but there aren't that many people in Alaska. Kayaking is such a niche sport as it is."

There were safety concerns with being so far from civilization. The only way to reach Wrangell-St. Elias National Park is by a bush plane—there are no roads. They brought an in-reach device (like a satellite phone) that would be their contact with Wrangell Mountain Air if there was an emergency.

"There was a waterfall in Monahan's creek that looked really clean," Blanchet said. "At the bottom there was this recirculating pool. It's a drop

that, had it been a roadside run, we probably would have run it, but because you're so far out there, and because risk just multiplies exponentially based on how far away you are from help, we decided not to run that. You paddle more conservatively and are more careful in general."

Blanchet remembers a low point in the trip during the third descent at Monahan's Creek. They spent the first day hiking five or six miles over an alpine pass with their kayaks and bushwhacking a slope of willows. Feldman-Stein was carrying the drybag that contained the in-reach device, stove gas, and a lot of food.

"Jackson was walking behind Jesse and came across Jesse's drybag just sitting there and was like 'You might want this,'" Blanchet said. "Jesse was like 'Oh, my God.'"

Blanchet suggested that Feldman-Stein clip it into his boat, but he declined.

"We were all pretty tired at this point," Blanchet said.

They spent another two hours bushwhacking before reaching the bottom, when Feldman-Stein realized he didn't have the drybag.

"At this point, we're all just in a state," Blanchet laughed. "We

ended up going back and, in what is probably the closest thing to a miracle that's ever happened to me, Jackson ended up finding the drybag after probably two and a half hours of trying to retrace our steps through this willow jungle."

The next morning they put on to Monahan's Creek, which is 12 miles of class IV+ drops and class 3 boogie water in between. After 12 miles, it joins with the West fork of the Chakina. The crux of the run is right before the Chakina feeds out into the Chitina River flood plain.

"It's 25 miles of continuous whitewater," Blanchet said. "It was a 12-hour day of pretty continuous paddling."

At a few points, they thought they had reached the most challenging part and got out of their boats to scout ahead.

"The actual crux we just paddled into and were like 'Here we go!'" Blanchet laughed. "I ended up paddling into this massive hole and got trashed a bit, but it was totally fine."

After the steep, rocky gorge

with challenging class V- drops, the Chakina runs into the Chitina, a huge, fast-moving flatwater river.

"It moves at 12-15 miles per hour," Blanchet said. "We ended up paddling 70 miles in eight hours."

Usually, this river would have great views of the Wrangles mountain range, one of the biggest in North America, but the weather throughout the whole trip had been rainy and overcast. These less-than-perfect details didn't stop the trip from being an amazing experience, though.

"Obviously it was really fun for a lot of it but it was also a lot of type 2 fun," Blanchet said. "Getting to the end of the day and just being so tired, forgiving each other for mistakes we had made... we came out of it all closer."

She thought the trio balanced well, each bringing different skills to the table: Feldman-Stein was the strongest paddler and Blanchet had more wilderness experience in general from growing up rafting and backpacking in Alaska.

"It was really cool for me, as

someone who's grown up in Alaska—this is a really special place for me—to get to share it with Jesse and Jackson," Blanchet said. "I felt like I became a lot more confident in my own abilities as an outdoorswoman and outdoor logistics, things that I take for granted, like how to pack food for a camping trip, camp cooking, navigating through off-trail terrain... I think I grew in that sense."

Blanchet not only felt connected to her home after this trip, but also to her mother, who paddled the first descent of Rio Marañon in Peru.

"In that era, there were so few women doing that kind of stuff," Blanchet said. "I'm really proud to be her daughter."

This kind of remote expedition is much different from an annual Ledyard trip with mixed skill levels in which experienced paddlers lead new paddlers.

"The three of us were peers and equals," Blanchet said. "That's really cool when you're working together and putting a lot of trust into one another. For all of us, this was an entirely new experience and probably the biggest trip we've ever done in our lives."



Selections from Jesse Feldman-Stein's Accounts

Chris Vale Fund

The Chris Vale fund was initiated in 2016 as an annual \$5,000 grant for exploratory trips to be awarded each fall. The fund was created in honor of Chris Vale '18 who had perished in a tragic climbing accident between the summer and fall of 2016. Chris was a friend of mine who I had grown close with my sophomore summer, when we frequently mountain biked and kayaked together. Chris was notably inspiring for his ability to come up with great adventures, plan them, and do them. There could not be a better name for this fund, though I don't think anyone can quite plan these trips as thoroughly as Chris would have liked.

Hectic Planning

We had 7 months to plan this trip. Because of the chaos of the dislocation, everything came down to the last minute. We had no clue what rivers to go to. We had no clue how to work with bush plane companies. We had no idea if bush plane companies would take our boats. We had no clue what car I was getting. We had no gear for overnight expeditions. I still had to sell my car to get the cash to buy a new one. We were not ready.

Jackson and Lydia portaging the first portage drop on Monahan's Creek



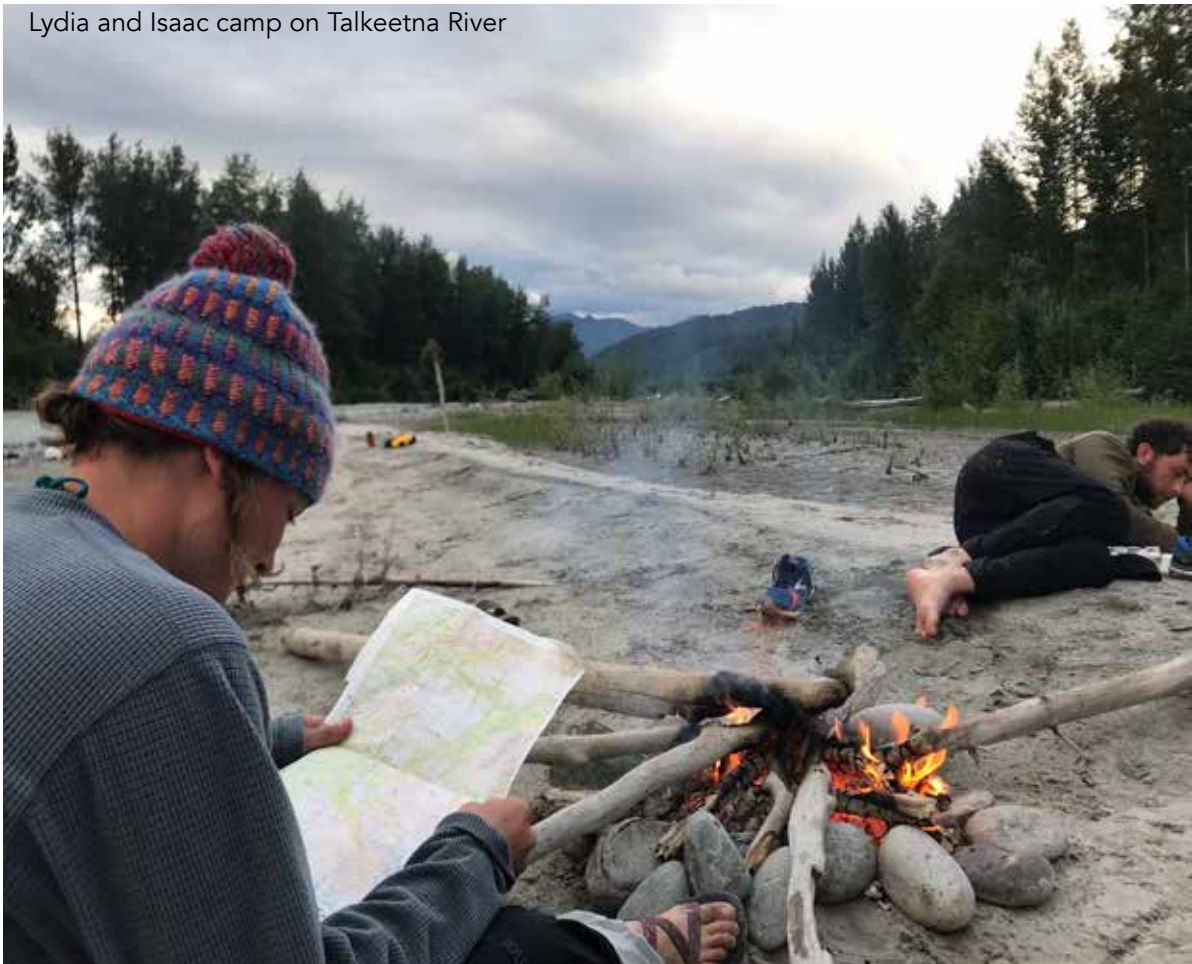
Aerial photo of the runout of Monahan's creek (taken on flight from McCarthy to Brenner's Mine)



Nighttime Routine

We set up the tent, tied the bear bag in a tree, and went to sleep after playing cards for a little, Jackson writing in his journal as he did every night. Being on the river, away completely from usual rush of life, is rejuvenating. Your sleep hours restore. You are self-entertained, focused on the simple needs of human life and the enjoyment of the natural world, without the stressors of the rat race.

Lydia and Isaac camp on Talkeetna River



Jackson, Lydia and Jesse pose with Wrangell Mountain
Air pilot at Brenner Mine Airstrip

Selections from Jesse Feldman-Stein's Accounts: Peter's Creek

The morning after getting back to Anchorage involved a great run through Kincaid after the ordinary slow morning ritual. Jackson and I did a 5-mile loop and Lydia did intervals for another half hour or so after. After we parted ways from Lydia, the Thai food began to get the best of Jackson and me. We both rushed back to the parking lot as fast as possible, trying not to laugh too hard.

When we got back, we scored through the Tim Johnson guidebook to figure out what to do. We narrowed it down to Bird Creek and Peters Creek, both class IV+ runs in canyons. Ultimately Peters Creek looked a little friendlier, though it apparently often collected wood. At about 2 PM, we told Dave we'd be back by 6 PM for dinner, only expecting the run to take about 2 hours. We drove about 30 minutes up and located the creek put-in, where we geared up and began the hike down to the river.

After a bit of working through Devil's Cub and brambles, we made it to river level. Off the bat, we were presented with a 15-footer with an extremely fine line. After scouting it for too long, we each decided the most likely result of running the drop would be a trip to the dentist for a new set of teeth. We portaged around, put on, and began down the river. A few class IV boogie drops brought us to the first class IV+ rapid, called Skateboard, due to the grind-like flare boof required. First, we scouted. The scout was tough, as Skateboard has a big cliff wall

on the right that makes the rapid blind from above. We hiked up and around, got a good view of the drop, but realized there was not a good place to stop before the next rapid, the Zit, a class IV+ drop with a massive sieve in the middle choked with logs. The sieve was utter death, and to top it off, had a log stuck in it that extended all the way to the right bank of the river, blocking the right channel. This left only the undercut left channel open, which we couldn't see. First, we scaled across an extremely steep cliff/hillside through a forest of Devils Cub to get to the Zit. Then, on the river right bank, I tried to move the log on live-bait, to no avail. Then, Lydia tried to cross the river, also on live-bait, but didn't quite have the height or strength to fight against the current in a safe way. After a few attempts, I gave it a go and was able to make it across. Then I looked at the left slot of the Zit, noticing it was relatively clean though a little undercut. I threw a rope to Lydia and Jackson and pulled them to the left bank. We all hiked back up the left bank and swam across to our boats. Jackson and I ran Skateboard and found a micro-eddy on river left that we pulled our boats up on. Lydia ran a cleaner sneak line on the left. We all pulled our boats around the meat of the Zit and seal launched into the left chute. The whole process had taken us about an hour and a half, giving the group bad juju about the rest of the oncoming river, which was supposed to step up in difficulty.

We continued down, running a

few more tight, technical drops very carefully, knowing that the big drops, Rodeo Drive and Big Dog, lay below. We were all getting a bit nervous with the river gorging in and the fear of logs in the front of our minds. Finally, I saw a horizon line in a box canyon with just a tiny micro-eddy above to scout. I pulled in and hopped out. Rodeo Drive is big. The drop involves a 4 or 5-foot ledge over an extremely sticky hole that feeds into an undercut cave on the left. After 10 more feet, the rapid accelerates over a 4-foot wide, 8-foot tall vertical falls onto a roiling eddy line. The left side potholed out while the right quickly flushed down the river.

Lydia pulled into the eddy behind me, got out, and looked at the drop. She was composed, but stern and focused. Lydia is generally a person who revels in the fun of kayaking, so I knew that focus was coming from a place of fear and an understanding of the intensity and import of the coming rapid. We discussed the line for a minute and I told Lydia to communicate the line to Jackson. I got in my boat, ferried up river a bit, and got as much speed as I could for the massive boof I knew I needed to get over the hole. I had a good boof off the first drop, drove hard over the next drop, and ferried out into the pothole pool on the left. The drop was class V. It was fast, intense, and consequential. I hopped out of my boat and pulled out my boat, signaling as best as I could up to Lydia that they needed to charge. Jackson pulled into the eddy, Lydia

communicated the line, but he clearly did not receive the signal of how intense the drop was.

Jackson had never before been truly humbled by a river. Jackson is a solid class IV paddler, but a weak class V boater. Rivers are forgiving sometimes and Jackson had been lucky. But he was overdue. The river did not forgive his naivete this time. He decided not to scout. He didn't get speed. He didn't really boof. The river boofed him. He got stomped for about 45 seconds. He was ended over and over, a flurry of yellow tumbling in the white fluff of the hole. He swam, fortunately away from the cave on river left. Jackson floated right down the center, over the next drop. After he resurfaced, I tossed him a rope and pulled him out. One by one, pieces of his gear floated by. First, the paddle, then the boat, then, after floating around on the backwash of the hole for 45 seconds, taunting us, the DSLR camera.

Everyone was quickly bummed, and scared, at the ferocity of the situation we were in. I checked on Jackson to make sure he was okay and then told him to see if anything had washed up downstream. I then repacked my throwbag in preparation for Lydia to come down. After seeing Jackson get thumped by the rapid, Lydia tried to sneak around the top hole on shore. Unfortunately, this resulted in a very complicated maneuver of trying to ferry out away from the undercut walls without getting sucked back into the vicious hydraulic. It took her a few attempts and a lot of fear.

Eventually, she figured it out, came down the rapid, went over the drop, flipped over, and rolled up. She was shaken, but okay.

Below the rapid we regrouped. Jackson was upset. Lydia was scared. I was on edge. We decided that Jackson was going to start hiking out and I would go down the next bend to see if more big rapids were coming up. If there were, I would signal Lydia to hike out. If not, I would head down alone, looking for Jackson's gear.

I went down through the next canyon to find nothing but class II, below, and signaled Lydia to come down. Jackson had begun his hike out through the Devil's Cub, singing Lydia's dad's phone number to himself, interspersed with "Hey Bear!"

Lydia and I found Jackson's boat washed up on a rock jumble in the middle of the river. We pulled it up on a big rock so it would be easy to see from shore. Then we continued downstream, portaged the "Big Dog," a class V rapid with a bad piece of wood in it, and went down to the takeout.

At this point, it was around 8 PM, already two hours later than we were supposed to be back in Anchorage for dinner with Dave. Lydia ran out into the road and stopped the first car that came by. The 17-year-old inside the car let Lydia use his phone to call her dad. Dave told her that Jackson had called him already having somehow run into one of his friends. The guy who had let us borrow his phone was

also kind enough to give us and our boats a ride up to the truck where we found Jackson. Jackson's path to safety had been an odd one. As he emerged from the Devils Cub to suburban lawns, he found himself changing his chant from "Hey Bear" to "Hey Dog." He was greeted by dogs and then people, who turned out to be friends of Lydia and her family. They helped Jackson get the manual truck, which Jackson couldn't drive yet, and met us.

Overall, the Peters Creek descent had been scary, but important. We were reminded of the power of the river and the speed which everything can fall into chaos. Jackson and Lydia had been progressing fast as paddlers and hadn't felt pushed in that way before; where the hazards and lack of knowledge of a river evoke more worry than the features and whitewater itself. It was a good practice in swiftwater rescue, a testament to the importance of being able to catch the smallest eddies, a forceful reminder of the need to scout, and a good, hard adventure. We were a humbled team but knew where we were as paddlers.

QUEBEC, CANADA

SEPTEMBER 2018

Photos by Rory Gawler

In September of 2018, Sarah Kolk '20 led a group of students on a whitewater canoeing expedition trip down the Mistassibi River in Quebec, Canada. Rory Gawler, general manager of the DOC, came along on the trip as technical guidance for the white-water aspect of the trip.

While Sarah was the trip leader, Rory was a good technical guide because he had been to the Mistassibi previously; however, when they arrived at the river, the water levels were much higher than usual, possibly due to the recent forest fire.

"I was like, 'okay, well, this is going to be a slightly different trip,'" Rory said.

All of the trip members were decently strong paddlers, but few had much whitewater experience. The goal was to teach as they paddled, but the pumping river forced the paddlers to jump right into it. Some boats tipped; some gear got washed down the river. At one point, one of the boats was lost downstream and found two days later.

"No one was ever in any severe danger, but people were definitely feeling pushed," Rory said. "We picked our way down the river

and grabbed people's stuff as we found it. I think the only thing we lost was a paddle and maybe a Nalgene or two.'

The trip proved to be very demanding, but never impossible, and Rory pointed out that less-than-ideal situations spark growth.

"It would be nice if it were sunny and warm the whole time, but at the same time, I really like when it's challenging because that's when you see what people are made of and it really brings you closer together as a group," he said.

Rory recognizes that there is much more to these expeditions than merely mastering the specific activity. Along the way, little things happen that bond a trip. Before they even got in their boats, the paddlers found wild blueberries and filled three gallons with them. Later on, Rory made blueberry cinnamon rolls from scratch, which was "a good morale boost."

But even without the pastry pick-me-up, the group was doing well.

"It was a really great group of folks, really strong comradery," Rory said. "I think it was, at worst, solidly type-two fun and, at best, really good leadership

experience and outdoor skills growth."

The challenges began before they arrived in Quebec, though. Planning a DOC trip right before fall term is chaotic because every ounce of DOC energy is being channeled towards first-year trips.

"The DOC and OPO are completely allergic to trying to do anything during that time," Rory said. "So I sort of promised everybody that I wouldn't take anything that anyone else needs. We repaired five broken boats that nobody was using and took those. We took the jankiest van that nobody was using and this weird trailer. It was really hard to make sure that we were doing things in such a way that it didn't impact first year trips at all."

But the group made it through the logistical planning challenges, crazily high water levels, lost items, flipped boats, and cold nights.

"Those things fade away," Rory said of the less-than-perfect memories. "What you remember is just a cool experience to go through with a group of really neat folks."

First Boat: Katy Axel '21, Quang Dang '19, David Vonderheide '21
Second Boat: John Brady '19, Thanh Nguyen '21
Third Boat: Kevin Mercado '19, Sarah Kolk '20



Camilo Toruno '20, Sarah Kolk '20





EL CHACO, ECUADOR

DECEMBER 2018

Photos by Berit DeGrandpre '20 and Jordan Sandford '19

In December 2018, twelve Ledyardites made the annual trip to El Chaco, Ecuador to paddle class IV+ rivers. Berit DeGrandpre '20 remembers that the excitement began the moment everyone met up at the Quito airport.

"There was Spanish all around us and the air was a little bit different, and warmer," she said. "We were on this crazy winding road and everyone was so excited and so tired. When we got there the sun was starting to come up and there were chickens crowing and it was just... wow. We are in Ecuador."

Sheppard Somers '19 recounts paddling an "easier section" on the first day of the trip, but Berit had a different experience.

"I absolutely got my ass kicked in Ecuador," she laughed. "I started kayaking a year ago and I obviously really enjoyed it, but on the first day of the trip I got destroyed on the river. I swam so many times that at the end of the day I was like, 'Oh, my God, I don't know that I can do this.' I had never experienced true fear before."

Sheppard started whitewater kayaking when he got to Dartmouth three years ago. He had an easier time on the rivers because he had a solid roll: when you flip over in a kayak and you're able to flip yourself back up instead of pulling your

skirt and swimming.

"It just ends up with the people who can't roll having not the best time because the rivers are hard," he said. "If you can't paddle hard, it's not going to be fun, and if you're always swimming and cold, that's not going to be fun either."

Berit cherishes the experience, though.

"We have incredible ability to get through things and that was pretty cool," she said. "With anything—if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. That's pretty corny but I think that my kayaking and my mindset improved a lot."

Berit's experience was really influenced by her mindset.

"The days that I could sort of let that go and say 'If I don't roll, if I swim, it's not the end of the world. It's a beautiful swim,' taught me to not dwell on the bad and instead focus on the good: what it means to be with my friends in Ecuador, in an incredible place learning so much about the people, the culture, kayaking... just taking everything in," she said. "That was really amazing."

Her favorite memory was on the last day when they paddled the Quijos river.

"It was just the most beautiful

day—a wonderful temperature," Berit said. "Kayaks floating down the river in Ecuador is just the most beautiful sight. The bluest sky, the brightest boats, all these amazing green jungle plants and purple flowers... all the colors were just so vivid."

She was paddling really well that day and feeling confident. Then came the last rapid, and she flipped and swam, but didn't mind.

"It was a beautiful rollercoaster," she said.

They got out of their boats and started swimming and playing in the water, jumping off a big rock next to a deep spot in the water.

"It was just true frolicking," Berit said. "I think we were all sort of reflecting on a great trip and excited to be leaving but more excited to have had that experience."

Sheppard felt pretty confident in the river most of the time, but accidents happen even with the best paddlers.

"Coby was stuck in a hole and we didn't have an eddy to stop in so I just went down it, forwards-ish, and bumped Coby out of it, which was good for him, but then I got stuck," he said. "I just got side-surfed for a long time."

A "hole" is a spot in a river



where a lot of water is recirculating back upstream, so you can get stuck in one and battered around until you get out. Sheppard was scared at one point because one paddler almost got stuck in a sieve, a constricted rock formation that water flows through.

"It's like a hole with water going through it, but the hole isn't big enough for you to go through, so you would be stuck underneath because of the pressure," he said. "They swam right above the sieve but they swam out, which was a little alarming."

But the trip wasn't all about kayaking; there was a whole new country to appreciate. Sheppard was interested in the varying environment, with its rainforests right near its mountains so different from the ones on the East Coast.

"It was interesting to see it rain—it rained about three inches in half an hour one night or something absurd," he said. "There were a bunch of small-ish or medium landslides. They'd wash out the road and cover it in rocks but they're not taking out a village or anything."

A highlight of this trip every year is the Ashqui family. Ledyard has built up a relationship with the Ashquis over the years and our paddlers always stay at their home in El Chaco.

"That was probably the best part," Sheppard said about staying with the Ashquis. "We have a built-up relationship with them and with the town. The fire chief knew us and came over and made empanadas. The family brought us over for dinner at their house and we made them dinner."

No matter how the morning on the river went, the paddlers could look forward to an afternoon of games, reading, cooking, eating, and just relaxing.

"Everyone was just so engaged and excited to be there," Berit said. "I felt like everyone just really wanted to get a lot out of the trip and have the best experience possible, which was a really great vibe."

Sheppard and Berit recognized the fortune of being able to go on these trips at such a diminished cost.

"One of my favorite Dartmouth memories is going to be going to Ecuador," Berit said. "The fact that I even had that experience is so so phenomenal. It's going to live on in me and in my memory until I become senile. This is something really unique to Dartmouth and the DOC."

Whitewater kayaking is a niche skill, and without the DOC, so

many of us wouldn't be doing it.

"I can, for the most part, teach myself to hike," Sheppard said. "This is one of the activities that the DOC offers that you wouldn't be able to learn on your own."

These are just two accounts of one trip to Ecuador; this trip has been happening for years, along with all the other trips that Ledyard goes on. Thinking of all of those stories floating around, each distinct but with the common thread of Ledyard spirit, is beautiful.

"It's amazing to think about the people who have come before us in Ledyard, who have been to Ecuador before or been on Spring Trip and have had that shared experience and that wonderful sense of community and adventure," Berit said. "That's just really special. It makes me feel like I have a lot in common—more than just Dartmouth, but a common shared experience—with so many people. It's really a cool feeling."



Clockwise: Michael Schedin '20, Sheppard Somers '19, Coby Gibson '21, Charlie Pike '22, Kat Adelman '21, Berit DeGrandpre '20, Noel Siegert '21, Jordan Sandford '19, Robert Livaudais '19, Katie Bogart '20



Maria Ashqui



An Ode to Ecuador
Charlie Pike '22

Upon a midnight plane I sat awake
And looking at the stars below the hull,
I thought of all the friendships I had built
Among the jungle trees and sinking clouds.

While many moments came to me that night,
All propped up on a river flowing high,
I staked my claim of mental real estate
Into the specifics: ping-pong, chili, rain.

And from these fragments Memory soon arose
And sang to me the name of beastly holes:
El Toro.

Its mouth was snared with jaws as wide as skies,
A fierceness in its eyes that cried, "Survive!"
Its tongue a twisted, frothy, writing mass,
Its teeth suggested, "Hey you should turn back."

With fear a constant presence sewn into
My soul I looked between its eyes deciding, "No."
I can't deny the glory of a send,
But what to say if Toro was my end?

'Twas then a Muse of glor'ious light shown down,
Her sage advice she wore upon her crown
And with the grace of ripples on a lake
She sang to me:
"Kirby did this, and I think you are a better paddler than Kirby."

With sense of courage brazenly restored,
I slid my boat into the eddy pool.
And with resilience painted on my face,
I paddled out of still and into break.

The current fast it swept me to the Beast,
Its mouth agape its lips I heard them speak:
"Be warned young man for I am mighty strong,
Under my water lies my secret song."

Confused I felt its spittle slap my face
As stroke to stroke I rode its raucous waves.
And after being blinded by its light,
I found myself in stillness on the other side.

My vict'ry cry it rang out through the trees
As birds they scattered scared of this new beast
For El Toro briefly lost his reign as King
In that glor'ious moment I had conquered him.

Upon a midnight plane I sat awake,
Grateful for the time I had away.
And as the wheels of rubber touched back down,
For me El Toro kept waiting undenounced.



Noel Siegert '21, Robert Livaudais '19, Sheppard Somers '19
Jordan Sandford '19, Berit DeGrandpre '20, Charlie Pike '22



THE EVERGLADES, FLORIDA

DECEMBER 2018

Photos courtesy of Clara Goldberger '22's disposable camera



Left to Right: Clara Goldberger '22, Andrew Culver '22, Evan Christo '21



Aly Young '19, Evan Christo '21, Nour Benmohamed '21



Back: Chris Lyke '21, Evan Christo '21
Middle: Nour Benmohamed '21, Aly Young '19, Clara Goldberger '22, Cole Minsky '22
Front: Yefri Figueroa '21



Chris Lyke '21, Andrew Culver '22, Yefri Figueroa '21





Andrew Culver '22, Evan Christo '21

Maddy Waters '19, Clara Goldberger '22, Michelle Wang '21



COSTA RICA

DECEMBER 2018

Jordan Sandford '19: Second Descent of Río Platanillal

We woke up at 5:00 AM and quickly packed into our small rental car. Six boats and paddles were already strapped deftly to its feeble roof racks; one of the many skills Costa Rica had already taught us so far. We proceeded to drive south towards the Panama border and away from our temporary base next to the Río Chirripó Pacifico. Jesse, Jackson, Michael, and I were joined by locals Travis and Pillo. These two had become our friends and de facto river guides, all within the span of a few quick days. Our shared goal was the 2nd descent of the Río Platanillal, a tiny tributary that Travis and two friends had pioneered six months prior.

The Río Platanillal looks incredibly benign at the put in. It flowed with perhaps 200 cfs (cubic feet per second) and seemed to snake its way into the jungle. Travis had mentioned the night before that we would be meeting a few friends at the put in: another five boaters to be exact, bringing our total to eleven. Three or four hours after starting our journey, we rolled up to meet them, and began the usual rite of Costa Rican greetings – quick high fives followed by equally smooth fist bumps. Shockingly difficult to master. With our crew assembled, we proceeded to gear up, nervous, excited, and full of energy. From the stories we had heard, this river was a spectacular class V gorge, full of

stunning waterfalls and difficult portages. I remember praying that we would be able to find at least one 11-boat eddy somewhere downstream.

From the start, the Río Platanillal shows its teeth. A theme of the day was manky, horrible boulder gardens with more rock than water. To both enter and then exit the inner gorges required hours of avoiding pins, bumping into rocks, unpinning yourself, helping unpin others, walking down the sides of rapids that looked too unpleasant, and just generally wheel-chairing yourself over rapids that really are unfit for kayakers. Scary, yes, but also part of the experience. These rapids marked the gates to a river and place otherwise inaccessible to anyone.

The inner gorges of the Río Platanillal hide world class whitewater. Shortly into the run comes 'Gunslinger', aptly named as a riotous, twisting piece of current that falls some 50-60 feet from pool to pool. It begins with a spout that provides for a beautiful boof, which launches you into a steep slide that hugs and sometimes crashes into the cliffside wall. The slide eventually makes a sharp 90-degree bend to the left, as it culminates with a 15-20 ft. high waterfall. On the previous trip, only Travis had run this rapid. So 2nd, 3rd, and so on descents were up for grabs all around—or as many portages. Pillo

went first (another theme of the day) and had a sexy, sexy line. Inspired, I fired it up next, and emerged at the bottom feeling absolute joy. Pillo was there to greet me, shouting and smiling. Moments such as those truly validate the hours of hard work spent fine tuning skills, working to master strokes and moves so that they become second nature when there is no time to think. As our adrenaline rush gradually wore off, we were surprised to see each of our friends, one by one, run Gunslinger. Some lines were great, others okay, but one by one we all met up in the pool below – safe, blessed, and stunned that such a large group had all independently made the decision to run such a huge rapid.

From there the Platanillal drops relentlessly. Countless clean waterfalls marked our journey. At every rapid we scouted, set safety, and looked after each other. Pillo claimed descents of two previously unrun waterfalls, including 'Lower Jaguar', a 60+ ft. straight cascade. More than once, we all portaged, carefully picking our way along slick, rocky walls to find a path down. One memorable portage involved a tall, mandatory jump into the outflow below a rapid. We tossed boats and paddles from up above with people waiting down below to receive them.

Hours later and with little daylight left we finally reached our takeout. Carrying my boat up the muddy hill, the whole experience felt surreal. Here I was, having been in Costa Rica less than a week, having met many of the people I just shared this river with only hours before. Kayaking is so special because it gives us the chance to get away from other worries and troubles in life. We are

given opportunities to explore and grow as people in ways Dartmouth, classes, and other aspects of life cannot provide. Moreover, paddling can unite people. What I remember most about the Río Platanillo is not just the whitewater, but rather Pillo, Travis, and all the other Costa Rican boaters. On the river, we had to trust each other. We didn't even speak the same language, and yet were able to

instantly connect and rely on each other. In Ledyard, you will find this same phenomenon. At the end of the day Ledyard is an organization designed to get people on the water – but if you ask people why they stay around it's almost always because of the people and the friendships. Ledyard today brings together people from all around campus and even the world – bridging cultures, languages, and years.



Jesse Feldman-Stein '18



Jesse Feldman-Stein '18 post-waterfall



Jordan Sandford '19

Jordan Sandford '19, Michael Schedin '20, Jesse Feldman-Stein '18





SPRING TRIP

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

MARCH 2018

Photos by Alex Petros '19

At 4:30am on March 14th, 2018, a few dozen Ledyardites lugged their duffel bags to the clubhouse and got into vans, queueing up their carefully-constructed playlists for the 17-hour drive to Rockmont Camp in Asheville, NC. More Ledyardites joined them there, bringing the total to 39 paddlers eager to get on the river. We paddled the Nantahala, Tuckeseegee, Nollchucky, Upper Green, Green River Narrows, French Broad, and Hooker Falls. Each day we returned bruised, sunburnt, and happy; we commenced an afternoon of meditating, playing "ga-ga," dyeing hair, irresponsibly swinging in poorly-arranged hammocks, and more. This is what some paddlers had to say about the trip.

Michael Baicker '17

It was great to return to Spring Trip after several years away. The spirit, energy, and excitement are stronger than ever, and I loved meeting the new '21s and '22s in the club. Even though I was just there for a few days, it was great to see the progression of beginners as they got their first combat rolls and started feeling confident on the river. Thanks to all for letting me and fellow '17 Isaac Green crash the fun for a few days!



Sheppard Somers '19 using a hammock incorrectly



Matt Gannon '22, Andrew Culver '22, and Katherine Taylor '22 also using hammocks incorrectly

Elizabeth Hobbs '22

Spring trip was a great way to test the skills I've been working on in the pool and try new things on the water. I loved spending my spring break with such a great group of people! I remember constantly dancing to people's spring trip playlists and fully scaring other paddling groups and North Carolinians with our enthusiasm.



Gretta Pickett '21

One of my favorite memories from spring trip is of the giant, pulsating waves engulfing me in a frigid cocoon as I struggled to remain upright. Frantically, I attempted to orient myself in the churning water and perform a roll. Adrenaline coursed through my veins and the oxygen drained from my lungs with each failed attempt at righting myself. It would not be my day to roll. Like a butterfly, I pulled my skirt and emerged from the dark abyss of class-two water. The frustration of another wet-exit burned on my cheeks, and I longed to kayak like the leaders who so competently and kindly led me. My metamorphosis had occurred, I was hooked on white-water kayaking—no longer terrified by the pumping water, but instead invigorated by its spirit.

Nour Benmohamed '21

I had an amazing time during Spring trip getting to know everyone and paddling some sick rapids. I learned many skills and can't wait to practice them more in rivers around campus.

Andrew Culver '22, Clara Goldberger '22, Alana McClements '22, Matt Gannon '22



Gab Smith '22, Alana McClements '22, Katherine Taylor '22, Clara Goldberger '22, Claire Callahan '22

Ben Brody '22

I loved pulling up to the put-in at the Tuck in the last van that was running five minutes late. We turned in to the parking lot and the first image we saw was at least four Ledyardites singing and dancing to Taylor Swift as they were getting changed on top of the BBT.

I genuinely can't think of a time when I've felt more "just happy to be here."



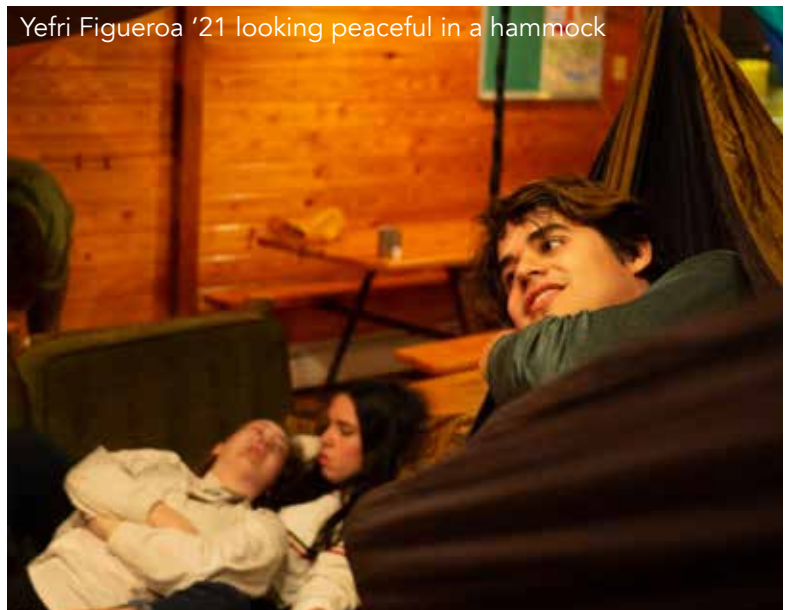
Andrew Culver '22 struggling with his drytop

Cole Minsky '22

Spring Trip was my first time white-water kayaking and was one of the best experiences I have had at Dartmouth. One time, I remember everyone swimming on a rapid, including a few leaders. Because so many boats were floating down the river, people had to walk about a quarter mile to go get their boats. It was a very interesting experience walking through the forest; it was almost an obstacle course.

Yefri Figueroa '21

Spring Trip was once again one of the most rewarding Dartmouth experiences I've ever had. To get the opportunity to go paddle some beautiful whitewater with some awesome people is something that was not even close to a notion in my head before Dartmouth. This year, Spring Trip posed new struggles and excitements that came with being a leader and I feel like this year made me grow both as a person and as a leader in the water and has made me even more excited to give back to this club that I love so much.



Yefri Figueroa '21 looking peaceful in a hammock

Katie Bogart '20 pulling kayaks up the hill the day before our departure



Charlie Pike '22

When I think of spring trip, I think of meditating barefoot in the grass with Sam Albertson and Mallory after yoga. To be surrounded by people you love, paddling, meditating, reading, running, all together in a cabin in North Carolina — if there's such a thing as Heaven, I think I found it there.

Gab Smith '22 and Alana McClements '22 on St. Patrick's Day



Clockwise: Jai Smith '22, Claire Callahan '22, Elizabeth Hobbs '22. Charles Chen '21, Ben Brody '22, Katherine Taylor '22



COUNCIL

MONDAY NIGHTS

Photos by Alex Petros '19

These exciting, far-flung trips are a big part of Ledyard, but week-to-week, our community and identity is shaped by Monday night Council. We ask for trip reports (sometimes on paddling, sometimes on a social event or Frozen Chickens hockey game) and leaders announce future trips. Sometimes we play a game or talk to someone we don't know. Every Council is different, but one thing that is absolutely crucial for Council is the INTRO QUESTION. Here are a few snippets from the year, recorded by our minutes-taker, William Kirby '20.

What does Cohaeramus mean?
(Michael holds up the wooden sign from the clubhouse that has been in Michael, Tyler and Hannah's apartment for a week.)

Colin: You made it to the end of the email

Wylie: It's a "don't go in, mold" warning

Hannah: I think it means Michael is going to remove this from our kitchen counter this week

If you had to rename Green Key a combination of a color and a noun what would you name it?

Donovan: Salmon Shorts

Kirby: White Claw

Hannah: I forgot to think... can we pass?

Michael: It's literally a color and a noun

Hannah (after a long pause): Purple



Clockwise: Andrew Culver '22, Charlie Pike '22, Grace Callahan '19



Yefri Figueroa '21

If your life was a TV stories, what plot twist would you most like?

Savannah: Santa is real...and I might be him

Wylie: Why is it 'might'?

Savannah: That's part 2

Michael: Have you ever seen both of them at the same time?

What is your big term goal?

Hannah: Paddle four days a week

Kirby: Don't you already do that?

Tyler: She paddles five days a week, she's trying to cut down

What is the best home remedy you've learned/used?

Gab: I know people who use steel wool on poison ivy

James: you can't have poison ivy without skin

Will: Works for everything from colds to Hepatitis B...chug a bear of honey

Maddy: please take a different action if you have Hepatitis B

Best Halloween Costume (Past or Future)

Wiley: I felt angsty and wore all black and put rhinestones on my face... but I didn't have an explanation

Abigail: I was Tinky-Winky for all of middle school

Yefri: Teletubbies are scary

Charlie: Last year I dressed up as a rejection letter from Dartmouth... it's nice to come out on top



Left to Right: Jai Smith '22, Yefri Figueroa '21, Michael Schedin '20, Jaime Eeg '18

April Fool's Fun Fact

Ben: the reason that you see low stone walls around New Hampshire is that moose don't have working knees

Katherine: the reason why you see so many low stone walls around New Hampshire is I don't have working knees
(this is way funnier than when Ben said it)

What event would you add to Riverfest next year?)

(Context: Sunday race cancelled because of rain)

Alex: A kayak race on Sunday, too
[whole room ooooohs]
Claire: Burn to the weather

April Fool's Fun Fact

Daniel: last winter I felled a tree, I dug it out, and paddled it to the Atlantic Ocean

Tyler: last year on my off term, I dug out a tree canoe, and paddled it to the Pacific
(this is way funnier than when Daniel said it)

What is something you enjoy that you wish you did more of this term?

Berit: Dancing with my friends
Jordan: You did that a lot
Berit: Well, I wish I did it more

CENTENNIAL

2020

Q+A with Centennial Committee member Yefri Figueroa '21 about what this celebration of Ledyard will look like and how you can get involved. Much more detailed information will follow in the year to come—get excited!

What are the current plans for the Centennial?

Right now, we are structuring it into three big categories: fall weekend, spring weekend, and break trips.

Fall weekend is focused on the students, generating excitement and having a fun time. We'll spend all of Saturday at the clubhouse playing games and catching up. We'll have a concert there before paddling out to Gilman Island. The next day, all the students will come back, and we will take them all to Hartlands, a nearby class II river here. We'll have everyone float down in an assortment of floatable objects ranging from kayaks and canoes to tubes and inflatable animals.

At spring weekend we'll have a big symposium event as we have had in the past. This one will be more focused on alumni and we'll have some speakers here to talk about rivers, the club, and the outlook of the club. We will focus on conservation. This is the same weekend as Riverfest, so we'll host two paddling races and a party.

The biggest focus is sending out all of our break trips, especially to new areas. We will also have a big Trip to the Sea and a big spring break trip that will both incorporate alumni.

What are some of your goals for the Centennial?

I think our biggest goal is to gather excitement for our club. We've been fighting for a clubhouse for a while, and although this isn't the main goal of the event, we would like more attention to be put on the clubhouse and our club in general. We'd also like to have more alumni involvement in the club.

What should students do to get involved?

Students should try and plan trips, volunteer during the event, and get excited for the events. They should also reach out to their friends from other colleges.

What should alumni do to get involved?

Alumni should do essentially the same: reach out to other alumni and the college and show that they care about the club and how it's progressing. I think one of the big things is alums having a voice together and showing support for the club.

RIVER RAT TEAM

Claire Callahan '22, Eden Price '21

Lidia Balanovich '22, Charles Chen '21, Andrew Culver '22, Clara Goldberger '22