

# THE AXE AND SAW

Volume 82, Issue 1

Fall 2020

Grove City College Outing Club

www.gccoc.org

Brian Ross

## *A Message From the Secretary:*

Greetings all! As the fall is coming to an end, it's time for another edition of the Axe and Saw to arrive! It has been great welcoming all of the wonderful new members to the club. Unfortunately, with COVID going on, we weren't able to have some traditions, like the Pig Roast, but we here at the College have had plenty of fun and memorable times, and here's to having many more in the future! Included in this issue are both articles from this fall semester and from the prior spring. I hope you enjoy this issue of the Axe and Saw!

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## *Message From the President:*

*Benjamin Cooley*

I want to make this quick and clear and true, not sappy or melodramatic. Everybody has heard a graduation speech or other "letter from the editor" this year that falls more into the latter camp than the former. COVID-19 happened. We got in a great trip to North Carolina in February. No Pie Sale. No Beast Feast. No "spring cleaning" at the cabin. We all got sent home. There was a while there when the club was regularly meeting over Zoom (or Teams) – not because we could go "out" in any meaningful sense of the term – but just

because we missed the Club. We missed John's awkward comments and Adam's sarcastic laughter.

The Fall semester has flown by. Although precarious and uncomfortable (at times), it has been a joy to see old faces and invite a rather large freshman constituent into the unique culture of the Grove City College Outing Club. Again – no Pig Roast, no Fall break trip, no pie sale(s). But we improvised. Made the best of it. Since when has the Club considered events such as “the secret fire challenge” or the legendary “slip’n storm” on the Quad? We did sunrise walks down Pinchalong, one spontaneous jog early on a Monday morning, organized a geocache for Fall Fest, and learned about mushrooms from a freshman fungus expert. (We’ve got a taxidermist now, and a Texan – and everything in between.) There were a handful of treasured events at the lovely Cabin.

One thing for sure: this Club cohort of active members will be unique in the history of the Outing Club. Who else has faced College restrictions on going “out” together? When this messy business is over, I’m afraid you alumni may have a Club full of college folks crazier than ever about hiking, camping, backpacking, exploring – and so a more quirky, boisterous, and genuine group of Outing Club Grovers there never was.

I think I succeeded in being quick, clear, and true. An insightful reader might discover a bit of emotion behind

this, but I hope I stayed clear of sappy and melodramatic.

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***The Saga of Spring 2020:  
Outing Club Takes on COVID-19***  
*Elena Peters '20*

Spring Semester of 2020 ended rather abruptly for the GCCOC, as it did for every other campus club across the nation. Speculations about Grove City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic began to fly around the week after Spring Break. The speed with which plans changed was a shock to everyone (including those 16 clubbers who had just emerged from the woods of North Carolina, blissfully unaware of what was going on in the world around them)!

March 14th (3.14) was that upcoming Saturday. That, of course, meant that it was time for some serious Outing Club - style pie baking. The signs were made and posted, clubbers sat for shifts in the SAC, and orders flowed in. But as the end of the week neared, uncertainty grew about the fate of the semester. After a much-anticipated email from President McNulty, announcing that students would have the option to stay on campus or leave, a Friday evening emergency meeting was called. After much thought and discussion, the difficult decision was made to err on the side of caution and to cancel the spring pie sale.

Over the next couple of days, as the reality that some members would be leaving set in, the bonds of Outing Club

friendship grew visibly stronger. There were several impromptu group meals, and frisbee on the Quad. The official announcement that all students would have to leave campus came on Monday afternoon. That night the club had dinner together, and gathered on lower campus for frisbee and fellowship. After praying together one last time there were many prolonged and tearful goodbyes. There was a vague glimmer of hope that on-campus classes would resume in a month, but in reality that was the end.

Never fear - Outing Clubbers are nothing if not resourceful and resilient! It would take more than a pandemic to beat the GCCOC. The following week, meetings were up and running again, Thursday at 7 pm as usual, from the comfort of everyone's own home. Conducting club business remotely was certainly different, but we adapted! Virtual meetings were faithfully attended by many, even into late May. The usual 30 minute or less official meetings were supplemented by "after hours" hang-outs that could last an hour or more! People loved catching up, and sometimes having show-and-tell of items found at home.

During this virtual era of Outing Club meetings, the weekly Outdoor Challenge was created. Its purpose was to encourage people to get out of their houses, and to have accountability in doing so (afterall, it is the Outing Club)! Each week, people submitted a photo or video of their activity. Everyone voted on who they thought completed the last week's challenge "best," and the winner got to issue the next one. The entries were very creative: hammocking 11ft in

the air, hiking on closed trails, a 123-mile paper airplane trip, hunting chocolate bunnies in the wild, making mud cake, and much, much more!

The Spring of 2020 will go down in Outing Club history as proof of the strength of the club. Even though we may normally strive to get *off* the grid, the blessings of technology helped to prove that not everything that happens at the cabin has to stay at the cabin. Our friendship and love for the outdoors will thrive wherever you put us.

But still, whenever possible - see you at the cabin!

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### ***Spring Break Not Cursed (Or Is It?)***

*Abby Treusch*

Legend has it that the GCCOC spring break backpacking trips are cursed, with past events ranging from hitting a deer with a car to trying to camp in conditions sure to induce hypothermia. Spring Break 2020 was *going* to be different. With spirits determined to make this the best spring break trip yet, 16 club members packed up the cars and caravanned down to Linville Gorge in North Carolina.

The trip down was uneventful and barring some fairly easily solved parking issues involving an extremely steep dirt road leading to the trailhead, spring break appeared to be off to a great start! Having to rethink parking lead to us being a little behind schedule and unable to hike to the originally planned

campsite, but this, again, was easily solved and we found an alternate site. The next few days brought to us astonishing views of the gorge, songs around the campfire, PB&J on tortillas, and countless laughs with friends. There was one day where we were to cross the river but were unable to because of a washed-out bridge and high water levels. As a result, we had a layover day which was used to explore the surrounding area, make bracelets out of wood fibers, and do “yoga” on the boulders in the river.

At this point, it appeared that Spring Break 2020 had broken the unfortunate streak of “cursed” trips. Little did we know hiking out on the final day that our lives were about to be drastically changed from what they had been a week prior. Entering into this spring break backpacking trip, COVID-19 was viewed as equivalent to the common cold and essentially, nothing to worry about. Five days of no cell service later, we exit the wilderness to find the world in the midst of a global pandemic with entire countries shut down. In this sense, despite being the most uneventful trip in the past few years, Spring Break 2020 was the most cursed of them all!

They say, “ignorance is bliss,” and personally speaking, those five days spent in the woods were some of the most blissful of 2020, not only due to our lack of awareness regarding the state of the world, but also because the spirit of adventure, Mexican smores, a beautiful landscape, and the best people combine to create memories to last a lifetime.

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## *The Spirit of Outing Club*

*Mikayla Gainor*

The first time I heard about this club was last year from a friend. I remember being intrigued when I heard about her painstaking endeavors to peel apples for hours one Saturday and her long night sitting through a storm to rotate a burning pig. I didn’t know anything else about the club at that point! Of course, now I know that the pig roast is just one of the many exciting traditions that are part of this club, and I have enjoyed several other experiences with Outing Club this semester. Since joining, Outing Club has been a breath of fresh air in the midst of a challenging semester filled with uncertainty, polarizing politics, and ever-changing Covid restrictions. Here are some things I have learned about it so far:

1) Outing Club has a unique history and memorable traditions. It really is incredible to think that the club was founded in 1938 and is still going strong today. One thing that is particularly unique about this club is the ongoing unity between previous and existing members. I think the intentional journal entries play a special role in this joint story. These short snippets of members’ experiences provide a glimpse into the nature of this club from years past, allow us to continue those stories with memoirs of our own, and give us the ability to share a piece of our journey with those to come. What a beautiful thing it is that we

get to enter into these generational memories and look forward to making new ones!

2) The people are genuine, multi-talented, and a whole lot of fun to be around. Our times together this semester have included a mix of things from sunrise walks and hikes, to bear sightings, to cabin ventures, to wood chopping, to board games, to cookouts, to campfires and sunsets. The mini-escapes we have made together have honestly been so refreshing. They have allowed for some kind of normalcy away from the world of Covid and have been a great opportunity for building new friendships.

3) There is clearly a shared love for nature and a desire to experience God's glory by being actively engaged in His creation. I have been encouraged by this collective awe and appreciation for our Creator and His handiwork. These are just some of the things I have enjoyed learning about Outing Club so far. Joining this semester has certainly been a highlight of this fall, and I am excited to see what the spring holds.

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*A word to returning members, from the  
newbies...*

*Evalyn Summers*

Perchance in recent months you've found yourself ambling along Pinchalong Road at 6:30AM, surrounded by a tangle of flannel-clad freshmen, and thinking with a sigh, "This is not what it

used to be." To you, Outing Club means so much more than this semester. It means friends who have since graduated, leaving their large, trail-traveled shoes for you to fill. It means sizzling, savory sounds of fire-seared pork in the wee hours of the morning, whispering of a feast to come. It means concessions at Friday night football games and long-awaited backpacking trips and last-minute weekends in the woods. Indeed, these are strange times, times when a club characterized by "going out" has been forced to stay in.

For us, this semester is all we know of Outing Club. We do not share the memories that you have made before us. But you have shown us that the true spirit of the Outing Club rests not in a mere chance to escape campus; it rests in resolving to make the most of every situation together. We may be working with wet firewood this year, but you have not let the coals beneath burn out. They are glowing, and you have kindly made room for us around your campfire. So from your newest members, *thank you*. It is an honor and joy to call you friends.

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*Man, A Small thing in the Big Woods:  
Reflections on Dr. T. David Gordon's  
Lecture on Solitude in the Forest*

*Estelle Graham*

After some Outing Club meeting on some Thursday evening at some point this semester (the days tend to blend into one in these unprecedented time), our

[alleged] faculty advisor, Dr. Gordon, was kind enough to speak to the members of Outing Club about his reflections gained from solitary sojourns into the woods. Dr. Gordon has been an avid outdoorsman for nearly all his life, but during the last decade, he has taken to venturing into the forest alone, sometimes for days at a time. He has found these times of solitude to be immensely refreshing, and much of his knowledge of the forest has come during these times. One of the truths he has realized in these journeys has been that compared to the forest, man is small, insignificant even, and that this realization is humbling. (For the record, when I say Dr. Gordon realizes that he is small in comparison to the forest, I do not simply mean in terms of his physical stature; “smallness” here is more in reference to just how little a human being, even the tallest of humans, can affect the vastness of the woods.) Dr. Gordon spoke of the looming antiquity of a century-of hemlock, the near-infinite number of the stars, and the majestic power of a river that has carved the land into a valley for centuries. In comparison to these things, how can man believe himself to be big?

In addition to his reflections on the grandeur of the woods, Dr. Gordon spoke of what he has learned to appreciate about the forest from his solitary musings: When one is alone in the forest, one can *listen* to the forest speaking. The footsteps of animals, the calls of birds, the sounds of the wind in the pines.... These are things which

cannot be attended to when other humans are present. And one also learns the satisfaction of working with one’s own two hands to provide food and shelter to survive in the woods. This satisfaction is diminished when the labor is divided between more than one person. Being alone in the forest teaches one to attend to God’s creation, to appreciate the gifts He has given us to enjoy and use with good stewardship.

Members of Outing Club, past and present: this message delivered by Dr. Gordon is for us all. Never forget the power of the woods to restore you, to teach you, and to lead you a greater appreciation of God’s good Creation.

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***The Stunning Beauty of The Familiar:  
Becoming More Acquainted with The  
Personality of Pennsylvania’s Outdoors***

*Aurora Good*

Being raised in Grove City by parents who delight in the outdoors, I grew up romping in the local woods and rivers. Seared into my childhood are memories of my dad teaching me to identify trees in PA. I have learned to crane my neck everywhere I go to catch a glimpse of the intricate green lace that Pennsylvanian trees wear in the summer that turns to vibrant shades of red, pink, gold, purple, orange, and maroon in the fall.

However, even this local Grove Citian was thrilled upon being introduced to the Outing Club’s property

and its surroundings at the New Members Outing this fall. Upon seeing the scenic overlook of the Allegheny, I was utterly stunned by its breathtaking beauty. Looking down from an extraordinary height, my eyes feasted upon rich green foliage, rolling hilly regions, and the Allegheny glinting up at us peacefully though mischievously. Looking up, I was met with an immense sky with massive, varied clouds. It was a humbling experience.

Beyond that, we were amazed by the moss-covered boulders, ferns, streams, mushrooms, animal claws, and shells that add a personality to the woods and river. In fact, we were able to appreciate some of the facets of this personality on a closer level. For instance, some of us were able to eat wild Chicken of The Woods and Hen of The Woods mushrooms, identified and cooked by Daniel Beevers of West Virginia. Similarly, in a project spear-headed by Etienne Pienaar of Ohio, several of us were involved in making acorn flour. From the grand vistas to the most minute details, even this local girl was amazed by the sheer beauty and majesty of her neck of the woods.

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### *Cabin Update*

*Mark Place '77*

*Alumni Cabin Manager*

This past Summer the annual outing was limited to a very small COVID Warrior crew who came out the end of July to just get done the stuff that

needed done should the students return to campus and be allowed to use the cabin. Thanks to Sue, Matt, Henry, Ben, and Mark Fair for assisting and Cory and Laura for swinging by to provide moral support. With such a small crew practicing social distancing, cleaning, adjusting the menu and meal presentations etc. was pretty manageable. The kitchen also got Sue's attention for her annual cleanup and sorting out.

The spring box was cleaned out as was debris around the spring box. The heater in the left (Women's) wing was relocated to the end wall for better heat distribution and safety like in the Men's wing. Several gas lights were serviced. The yard was mowed following up on several mows by Dave Gordon the alleged advisor, over the summer. Ben pushed everything back to the edge for another year with the string trimmer. The roof and gutter guards were cleaned off.

All the power equipment was serviced and after consultation with the club president, the oldest chainsaw was scraped based on major engine damage found by the local Stihl dealer in Franklin the following week. It had apparently been repaired at some time in the past with off-brand parts and when the piston failed, the engine was toast. Dave Gordon will be removing the tractor battery any day and storing it until Spring at his house.

Not knowing when the students would return and the status of the pig roast, we also cut up and stacked the slab wood

already on site since we had plenty of time. Firewood was pretty non-existent, so we dropped several widow makers along the trail down and skidded them to the yard where the rounders were racked.

SAR gas was contracted as the lights were not burning very brightly even with properly installed mantles. They replaced the gas pressure regulator the next week and the lights are much brighter.

Yet to be done is the annual fire extinguisher inspection. I forgot to schedule it for that week and will try and set that up before Thanksgiving yet as someone must meet them on site.

When visiting the cabin please remember that the road drains are aggressive to protect the yard from run-off and please do not drive past the gravel at the top of the yard.

If you are using the range, please pickup your brass and take any target debris home with you.

Please also make sure the basement door is closed and locked if you are the last one at the cabin to leave. With the easy-to-use keypad like the front door, more folks have access and the person who opened the basement may have left before you.

A last note regarding the gas lights. Please remember that the valves require a push to turn the flow of gas on. And a gentle turn the opposite way to turn them off. We have had several valves

damaged from turning the handle without pushing in and that can result in an out-of-control lamp. If there are flames coming up around the mantle, the lamp needs to be repaired.

Also, the gas lights are configured for use with preformed mantles. Coleman "tie on" mantles are designed for much higher gas pressure and will not provide nearly as much light. The preformed mantles do cost more, but with a little care should last several semesters.

Happy Holidays!

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