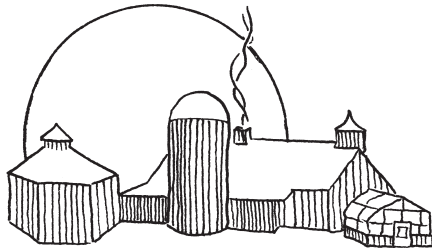


TMS Returns to Kinsman

Solo returns to the White Mountains just in time for autumn rain and reflection. pg. 5



Fall 2024

Letters from Last Fall

Recent alum Dillon Evans f23 shares a pig-inspired college essay. pg. 9



Pearls & Seaweed

Alumni Spotlights

f24 students talk to recent visitors Courtney Bowen s14 & Corey Bassett f08. pg. 6 & 12

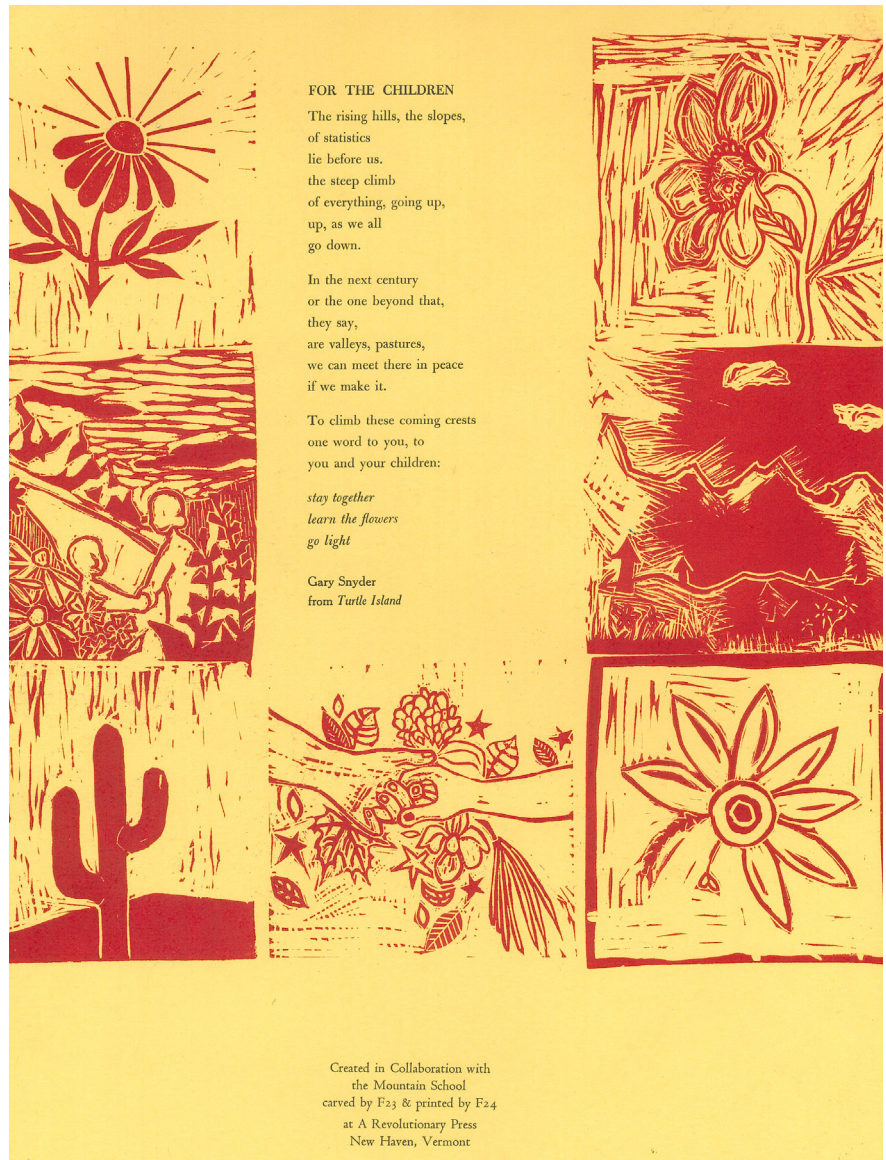
No. 70

September

by Len Harrison f24

Walking back to my dorm
in the near-dark, once I've cleared
the swath of light emanating
from the woodshop's windows,
it's all navy sky, streaks of gray,
the shadowy figures of trees & the tossed
bits of gold
of windows in the distance.
The grass is rustling with the cool wind,
the crickets are chirping like a wool
base layer to the scene, and I
can feel through my socks to my shoes to
the gravel
to the roots of the birches in the dirt to
the center of the earth,
and I can feel through my hair to my
hood to the air
to the stratosphere to the stars,
and for one crystalline moment,
everything is perfect.
I am perfect; the universe is beautiful.
It has no flaws; it's shaped perfectly,
like a lump of clay spun around and
around and turned with deft fingers
into a deep bowl.
Everything is as it should be.
The warm lights from the buildings down
the path,
my pack on my back, the books
settled against my spine:
everything is perfect,
the cold, the lone bird singing in the
woods, the taillights

Continued on page 11



FOR THE CHILDREN

The rising hills, the slopes,
of statistics
lie before us.
the steep climb
of everything, going up,
up, as we all
go down.

In the next century
or the one beyond that,
they say,
are valleys, pastures,
we can meet there in peace
if we make it.

To climb these coming crests
one word to you, to
you and your children:

*stay together
learn the flowers
go light*

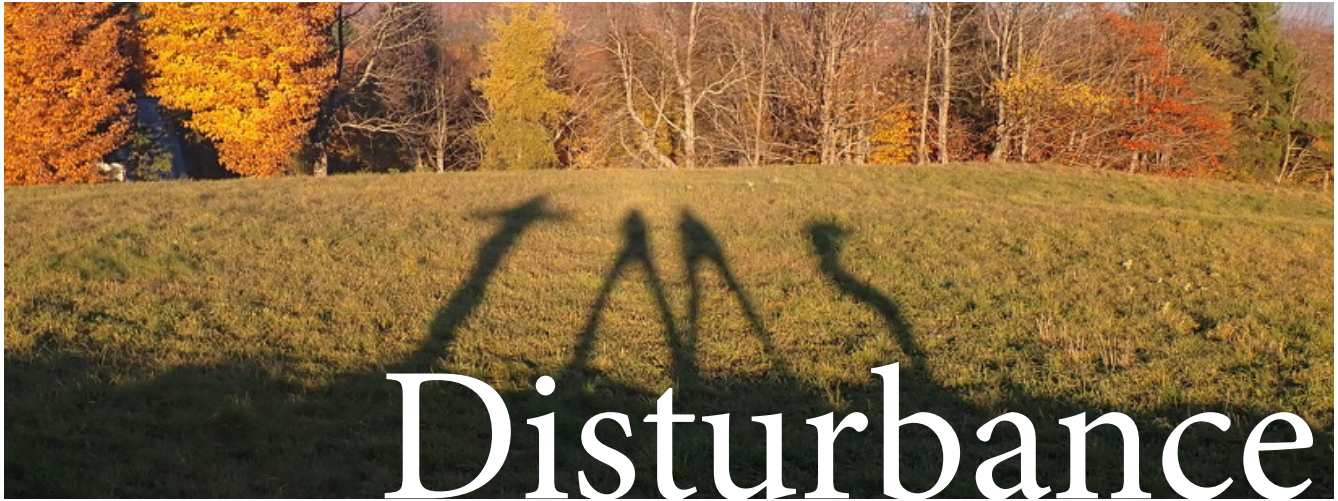
Gary Snyder
from *Turtle Island*

Created in Collaboration with
the Mountain School
carved by F23 & printed by F24
at A Revolutionary Press
New Haven, Vermont

Let the daily tide leave some deposit on these pages, as it leaves sand and shells on the shore. So much increase of terra firma. This may be a calendar of the ebbs and flows of the soul; and on these sheets as a beach, the waves may cast up pearls and seaweed.

—Henry David Thoreau, 1840

Letter from the Director



Early this fall semester, a student asked a group of faculty about their favorite places on campus. There were many options offered and eventually I put forward my own: the sugar house.

“What do you like about it?” the student asked.

I thought about all its hallmarks – the steep road down to it (treacherous in mud, fun to sled), how the maples in the summer made dappled light all over the ground, how light and open the building seems. “I like how haunted it feels,” I said at last. “It’s always empty.”

“Not haunted,” another faculty member added. “It’s as if someone was just there and they’ve stepped away for a moment. When I walk by, I always want to put my head in and say, Hello? Anyone home? And I wouldn’t be surprised if someone answered.”

The next day, I went out to the sugar house, slipping on the gravel down the steep hill, admiring the yellow-orange-red of the leaves. I looked at the gleaming sides of the evaporator, the neat piles of logs by the door. Yes, it did look like someone had just been there and might return anytime.

As I let that feeling wash over me on my return to campus, I thought about how true that sensation was for much of the Mountain School. The place has a sense of presence. In the best way, so many spaces on campus give the deep impression that someone was there before you. It’s the books on the shelves in the library – so many with notes in the margins or scraps of paper stuck in the pages. It’s the art on the walls – a painting of a view that is slowly becoming familiar, a drawing of tree you walk by every day. The world you know, rendered in someone else’s hand, seen from someone else’s point of view.

There are the more overt things, too: the plaques in the

dorms, the messages written inside desk drawers, the waiting stack of time capsules in the gloom of Purgatory. But what I’m talking about is more than physical objects. It’s the sense of care – of deliberate construction and consideration – for what is needed now and what might be needed in the future.

I feel this from the past whenever I walk into the dining hall and get that gravitational pull towards the center of the room. This place was designed for a circle, for a community to come together and all see and hear each other.

I feel this from the present when I leave Derby early in the morning and smell woodsmoke, then see it rise from the boiler chimney and curl all around the schoolhouse. There is work we do to keep each other warm.

That is the essential promise of the place, what is implicit in all the work we do. It is for ourselves, and it is for each other – the people we can see around us today – but it is also for the people who will be here tomorrow and the year after.

This fall, after the crops had been brought in from Garden Hill, we redistributed work groups and began woods crew and sugaring crews. “Oh good!” one enthusiastic student exclaimed. “I’ve always wanted to make maple syrup.”

I felt a little bad as I explained that she wouldn’t actually be making any syrup. Wouldn’t, in fact, be tapping any trees. As I talked her through brush clearing, tree trimming, log stacking, and such, I could see a growing sense of disappointment in her. “Then it’s the same as the trail work we’ve been doing. Why call it sugaring?”

“What you do now lets the spring semester arrive and get right to the sugaring – tapping and gathering sap and then boiling.” She wasn’t buying it. I tried again. “It’s kind of the same thing as the spring semester students planting seedlings

on Garden Hill that you get to harvest.”

Off she went with her crew and when I saw her later that afternoon, I asked how things had gone. “I like how it feels out there,” she said. “It’s nice to imagine spring semester being there with all the snow and the boiling sap keeping them warm.”

I didn’t need more explanation. I thought she had it just right about the sugar house, about the Mountain School, about farming and forest and community in general. Properly tended, it is there, waiting for you, ready with what you need.

Alex Myers, *Director*

& Succession

On the possibility of humans as a pioneer species

by Kemi Mugo s14, Environmental Studies & Food Systems Instructor

We have an instinct to assign moral judgment to the ecological processes of disturbance and succession. We associate succession with progress, and disturbance with natural disasters, loss of life, and destabilization. But in an ecological context, disturbance also represents an opportunity for other species to ascend and ultimately benefit the living community.

By the end of the semester, students are very familiar with the extensive disturbance that humans have caused. They learn about the history of logging, stream straightening, and colonial agricultural practices that have shaped Vermont’s landscape. They also learn about the conventional food system and its associated ecological and social challenges. All of this disturbance means that there are plenty of opportunities for a pioneer species to step in and do what it does best: begin the honorable ecological work of creating conditions conducive to more life, more complex relationships, and more stability.

Can humans act as a pioneer species? Could we restore the very relationships we’ve rifted apart with our growth-oriented, human-focused endeavors of the past few hundred years? Is it possible to feed each other instead of hoarding wealth, to live within the limits of living systems instead of fossil fuel-powered acceleration on borrowed time, to tend to our relationships instead of prioritizing the individual?

If our goal is a liveable, dignified future, we don’t have a choice. We can and we must act as a pioneer species; there

Continued on page 4



could this be it?

by Jackson Shuck f24

September 27, 2024

cold, wet, and windy is where it starts
the forest around you bellows ambiently loud
the weight of the woods
you feel so small, out of place, unwelcome
rain falls and the brook roars
all your cries and thoughts are drowned out by
the weight of the woods
you are the eye of the storm
everything around you quakes, trembles, and shivers
yet the mind encapsulated in darkness is still
ripples like those from rain entering the brook.
overhead a sky so vast it is beyond comprehension, looms
you really are small, ever so tiny,
it is nice, no?
the stress and pressure you put onto yourself
pales in comparison to the weight of the woods.
let the woods smother you, embrace its dark
for only then will one be able to see it's light
be the eye of the storm, for the rain will pass
my time here was short or long?
all I know is that it has come to pass.
you will come to bear that weight...

On the Possibility of Humans as a Pioneer Species

Continued from pg. 3

is no alternative. It is our obligation to push past the despair and use our unique capacities to affirm life, both human and nonhuman. The real question is, how do we create the conditions for humans to act as a pioneer species and begin the hard work of knitting together the pieces of a living system that we have torn apart?

Our current paradigm won't train us to do this. Ironically, our present disruptive processes act as a climax community does at the end stage of

succession. A climax community is characterized by the stability created by a group of species that recreates the very conditions conducive to their own survival, resisting disturbance. Similarly, mainstream, dominant human cultures keep us locked into our destructive feedback loop, perpetuating the same forces that created our predicament. Inequitable distributions of power, ideologies of individualism, and even our despair at the damage we've caused robs us of collective agency, unless we choose differently.

There is one more disturbance we need to cause, this time in favor of an

ecological future instead of in opposition to it: tearing through this destructive loop and allowing a constructive one to bloom. The Mountain School prepares students to do this. Every time students hone their skills as storytellers, systems thinkers, naturalists, leaders, communicators, and teammates, they are creating the conditions for us all to act as pioneer species and bringing us closer to a liveable future. I see it in the way they pay attention to the shift in seasons, walk each other home, and study together. They do it for the love of Earth, love of others, and love of life itself, which are all one and the same. •

Always Returning

by Bruce Brough, Environmental Studies & Outdoor Program Instructor

The tributaries of Reel Brook drain the southern flank of South Kinsman, dropping several hundred feet from densely packed conifers near the 4,358' summit to the temperate deciduous forests below. Along the way, the brown, tannin-filled waters slide over moss-covered rocks, curl around giant glacial erratics, and careen over smooth ledges into deep, tree-shrouded, seemingly bottomless pools. It's the perfect place to spend some time alone, immerse oneself in natural beauty, and reflect on a passing life.

In 2020, Covid and the tumult of faculty turn-over put the brakes on solo activities so far removed from campus. We contented ourselves instead with on-campus experiences that were no less challenging—darkness, run-away ruminations, and material needs have little sense of place—but that echoed too loudly with the familiar.

After a multi-year hiatus, 24 Mountain Schoolers began a return to the forests and streams of South Kinsman, a place filled with the ghosts of dedicated students and teachers who had at one time setup shelters, cooked food, braved the elements, and indulged their imaginations. This time around was no different: some students wrote letters and read novels, others slept non-stop, some tested and honed their outdoor culinary skills, and still others confronted their many fears, both real and imagined. And some just sat and observed, hewing to the pace of the natural world.

The growing fields of eco-psychology and wilderness therapy remind us of the benefits of wild places: how 120 minutes/week alone in the outdoors improves our social, spiritual, physical and emotional health; how in a hyperconnected world there's an even stronger need to disconnect (to reconnect); or how, to steal from John Muir, by going out one really goes in. But do we need to be convinced? Spend some time alone outside—for multiple nights in the woods, on a familiar trail, or even just for 20 minutes underneath a favorite tree—and you might experience some

subtle, salutary changes. The practice is as important as the potential result.

To be sure, not all students liked solo. Rain, cold, boredom, and loneliness can dampen any experience. But anecdotal evidence suggests they were glad they did it, even if they never intend to repeat it. In fact, the Mountain School website asks incoming students to “connect with the land, connect with others, connect with yourself,” and so solo seems an important way to do that. Our own Courtney Bowen '14, who spoke to faculty and students on the morning of our departure, told us that by confronting her fear on solo, she emerged a more confident person, sure of her skills, her physical and emotional limits, her abilities to succeed, and her love of nature.

In “The Peace of Wild Things,” Wendell Berry writes, “for a moment I rest in the grace of the world and am free.” To many students at the Mountain School, it's a familiar line, both academically and experientially. And it's a line that will resonate always among the brooks and woods of South Kinsman.



Alumni Spotlight



Courtney Bowen '14

If you had asked Courtney Bowen what she planned to do after TMS, she would've said medicine. When she arrived at college, however, she was encouraged to chase after whatever interested her: "Medicine will always be here." After studying economics at Stanford, Bowen pursued a career in finance before stepping away from her job to assist in global health initiatives in Guyana. She began medical school in 2023 and is currently a second-year med student at Brown University. She returned to TMS this summer and again in this fall to share her experience with current students. Here, she sits down with **Ani Li '24** & **Aurora Chevalier '24** for a Q&A.

What was your solo experience like? How did it impact your time at TMS and life after?

Pre-solo I was definitely very scared. I was afraid of the dark and the solo was going to be very dark, and remember that being my main focus: I thought, I don't know if I can do this. I'm going to be very scared. And then, obviously, I did it and I survived. That was big—big from the perspective that I overcame something I wasn't sure I could do and I didn't let fear stop me. I still think back on that as a really important lesson.

What was your favorite TMS class? Why?

I loved Environmental Science with Bruce. In general, science just fills me

with so much awe and amazement to realize there's so many complex systems going on behind anything you look at. Environmental Science was really cool because it explained so many things that you interact with but that I never understood, whether it's wind or how trees fall or how forests evolve over time or why the topography is a certain way based on what animals were there. It just gave the context and the story for everything that we always see. I also loved using nature as our actual classroom, like skiing around the Inner Loop with Bruce and pointing out trees or walking to our science site and telling the history of the space. It was such a cool, very embodied way to learn.

How has TMS shaped your life?

I think in a very simple, obvious way, the people I met at TMS are still some of my best friends, some of the most important people in my life. Bigger picture, more existential? TMS wasn't perfect, it was hard and challenging and had its ups and downs, but it was also this ideal utopia for me. You were with people who you really cared about in a place you really cared about working on something you really cared about. You were just so deeply invested in the place and in the community and that for me is still the standard for what I want from my life.

When I left finance, I didn't know exactly what I was looking for, but I knew I wanted something similar to the feeling that I had at TMS. I wanted to be with people who were like-minded, working hard towards a goal, working together.

Any advice?

A lot can be learned in vulnerable moments, which is sometimes hard and sometimes scary. Lean into things that scare you. That's where some of the most profound growth and connection and relationships come from. Savor it. It's such a special place and such a special time. There will never be anything like it again in your life. Enjoy it. Cherish it. Be as present as possible. And stay in touch with your TMS folks.



The Admissions Desk

The theme of disturbance and succession has been very much at play over the past six months. In happy news, I welcomed my first child, Gardner, on August 26 around the same time as lunch after the first morning of classes at TMS. With my parental leave ahead, we were fortunate to hire Rachel Handler f16—an alum of Milton, TMS, and Yale—who has brought her strategic thinking, detail-oriented communication, and deep understanding of our mission to our team.

Rachel and I worked together during the month before Gardner's arrival to study the dual challenges ahead. For one, we faced low enrollment for the year (67 students total versus the 100 we had enrolled in July 2023), a trend experienced by other semester schools and programs like NOLS. We also needed to figure out how to conduct a full slate of recruitment events, which traditionally involves in-person presentations at as many as 100 schools, for next year's application cycle despite my parental leave and Rachel's remote work.

These two challenges forced us to adapt and ultimately led us towards some wonderful new developments. For the 2024-2025 year, we boosted our enrollment by eight for a total of 75 students, some of whom would never have been able to attend TMS had we not remained open to connecting with them on a delayed timeline. For our recruitment events, we put out a call to our alumni, who, in true TMS spirit, generously volunteered their time to lead school visits. To date, we've scheduled over 90 events and built a new form of connection between prospective students and those who know TMS best: you!

I returned to work part time in early October, and, with an excellent collaborator in Rachel, dove into some existential questions about admissions: Are we sharing the essence of TMS in the most compelling way? Does our program appeal to our audience? How can we leverage relationships with alumni and school partners while also reaching the broadest and most diverse applicant pool? In what ways might social media and

partnerships with extracurricular programs or alumni be more effective at reaching high-quality candidates?

With these questions on our minds, we also left room for other new possibilities to crop up: a Campus Visit Day publicized on Instagram, regional recruitment events hosted by alums, an inquiry interview at the start of the application process that allows us to vet candidates and identify any barriers such as finances or home school support up front, and heavier social media outreach, including some sponsored posts targeted alternately to parents and candidates.

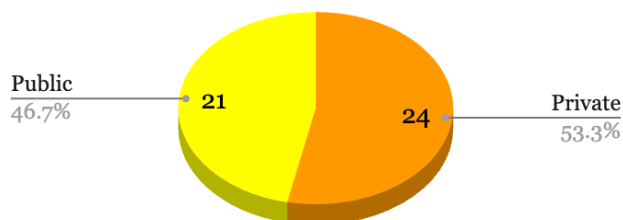
We'll know the precise impact of these new strategies in late March, when students reply to their offers of admission. Until then, please help us get the word out about TMS! If you'd like to take on a greater role, two important volunteer opportunities include conducting alumni interviews between February 1 and March 1, and reaching out to admitted students after decisions are released on March 7. To sign up, please complete our survey linked in the online edition of *Pearls & Seaweed*.

Lucretia Penfield, *Director of Admissions, Enrollment, & Financial Aid*

s25 by numbers:

S'25 School Type

45 students enrolled



Note from the Farm

Weeding: My favorite disturbance

by Liana Horster, Farm Manager

Disturbance is the name of the game in farming. How do we manage and orchestrate elements in a system to create the right conditions for our intended outcome? It's not a linear process: in the best-case scenarios, we can gently introduce a shift that will coax along the change we hope to see via a natural process; in the worst cases, we must choose force or lose out.

Every farmer contends with weeds—a literal “perennial problem”—so management strategies are those most quintessential elements of disturbance on the farm. It's an intervention; whether by hand, through physical barriers (think cardboard, mulch, or big tarps), chemical suppression, or mechanically (we don't use these latter two for ecological health). Intervention can happen at whatever stage—germination, thread, three-foot-tall colossus, or somewhere in between—when we must interrupt the growth of what put itself there to support what we put there.

If our paths crossed at TMS, you probably know that I love weeding. I really do: “Too much,” said more than one farm crew member in the past. I love almost all forms of weeding, and the nuance and variety offered by different stages of life and growth habits and species. I love finger-scuttling thready red root pigweed, swiping the collinear hoe through the barely-visible roots; I love the efficiency in the push-pull rhythm of the stirrup hoe thrashing young lamb's quarters and galinsoga, and the beauty of a swept-clean row; I love hand-pulling bigger weeds—with or without my favorite hand tool, the cobra—and overlapping roots-on-leaves so they wither and die, making a matted carpet to prevent the growth of the next generation. I would be happy weeding a few hours everyday.

My immense enjoyment notwithstanding, the overall management strategy must not revolve around supporting a limitless abundance of weeds, especially the perennial varieties. When there's a lot of necessary weeding to do, it inevitably shifts from meditative to physically taxing. Shoveling deep-

rooted chunks of tightly networked quack grass or prickly lettuce (which I imagine covers every square inch of my personal hell) feels a Sisyphean task. It gets tedious quickly. I think about weeds year-round and am always scheming on new ways to approach the task while preserving our soil health.

At the 2023 Acres USA Annual Eco-Ag Conference in Covington, Kentucky, I happened upon *When Weeds Talk* by Jay L. McCaman. Full of tables and lists, the book contains well-categorized information about not only the characteristics of weeds, but also the ecological conditions indicated by each type of weed. Did you know that common milkweed indicates very high levels of soil calcium? Knowing how to “read the weeds” is like having a soil test analysis right there in the field! Shifting the balance of soil chemistry and biology impacts which weeds grow well, and McCaman's guide offers biological and soil-based countermeasures for management and suppression.

Enter bindweed: it's a type of wild morning glory vine that will suffocate anything it gets its tendrils on, spreads through rhizomes, is exacerbated by tillage (which we do once or twice annually—just enough to integrate fertility and spread the rhizomes, but not enough to kill the stuff), and is one of our most noxious perennial weeds. McCaman mentions that root secretions from marigolds can kill it and I love a *biological* intervention! So, this year we interspersed hundreds of orange and yellow marigolds throughout our plantings of corn, squash and melons on over an acre of Garden Hill.

Even within one season, we saw a dramatic decrease in bindweed. Our successive crops of corn, squash, and melon thrived. Let the marigolds exude the disturbance!



Tomatoes from “Object Lessons” by Evelyn De Los Reyes f24

A Letter from Last Fall

Our Pigs, Ourselves

by Dillon Evans f23

In Fall 2023, our Assistant Farm Manager/Art Instructor penned a Farm Note for Pearls & Seaweed under this title. More recently, Dillon Evans, a graduate of f23, shared his ruminations on the pig chore (turned college essay) with Alex. It seemed fitting to share Dillon's essay under the same title.

For three months last fall, I woke every morning in Miles dorm at the Mountain School, a Vermont farm that hosts 50 high school juniors every semester. And for two weeks early into my time there, I got up (to the chagrin of my roommates) an hour early to care for the eight pigs who also called the school home.

Sidney, one of the farmhands, had piqued my interest in this chore with an insightful introduction to the pigs in the first week of the semester. Contrary to typical farm customs, she had spent enough time with them since their arrival the previous month to note their distinct personalities and even give them names, a courtesy generally considered taboo for farm animals with a lifespan of just a few months. In Sidney's handout, next to the pigs' photos, appellations, and dispositions, was an E.B. White quote: "A farm is a peculiar problem for a man who likes animals, because the fate of most livestock is that they are murdered by their benefactors."

Despite this unsettling reality, I signed up for the chore and got to know my charges. Spotty Dog was genial and welcoming, and the only pig who would willingly submit to a belly rub. Tender was spirited and mischievous, and within a couple days could untie my shoelaces and engage in a commanding tug-of-war with the toe of my boot. Masterpiece was equally playful despite a hoof abscess that gave her a severe limp, remedied only with occasional pain medication; the needlessness of real treatment for her was always a reminder of these animals' lifespan. So, too, was the process of feeding them - I did once find a misplaced chicken head by the pigpen - but the true unease was in every scoop of coarse brown pellets, building not just edible muscle and fat, but bone, blood, and brain matter, the elements that combined to give these beings life, soon to be limply discarded.

Even after my time on the pig chore was over, I often found myself around the pigs. Just days after I passed the responsibility to my roommate Liam, he left the gate open one evening and I was called upon to wrangle seven pigs snuffling



Dillon gives Spotty Dog a belly rub as Little Red Brown observes behind.

around the lawn in front of Miles the next morning. By mid-October, the pigs had grown enough for a new enclosure near the late chickens, and I was there to escort them uphill using electric fences, then to help Sidney coax an ailing Masterpiece up the hill after the rest. Despite her hoof, she reached the top and joyfully joined the porcine frolic in the crisp fall sun.

The night before we left for Thanksgiving break, I entered the pig enclosure for what would be the final time. The pigs were sleeping, curled together to combat a chilly wind bringing a suggestion of snow. I knelt despite the soiled, frost-damp hay and listened to them breathe for a while, their exhales syncopated with the rush of the breeze through the trampled grass. Sensing my presence, Tender lifted her head, sniffed, and blinked at me, then let out a long, satisfied sigh before settling back into the warm pile of pigs. Her stay at the Mountain School wouldn't be much longer than mine.

Half & Half, Little Red Brown, Masterpiece, Pivotal Key Essential, Spotty Dog, Tender, Three Friends in a Boat, and Truffle were slaughtered sometime last January. Their names, derived from inside jokes, stories, and quirks, remain solely in memory. There's a lot I took away from the Mountain School, including a grounding sense of place, a restored faith in the natural world, and a handful of lifelong friendships. There's also quite a bit I left behind. The eight pigs whom I counted among my best friends occupy some gray area between what I abandoned and what I still carry.

Campus Refresh

by Alex Myers, *Director*

Summer at the Mountain School is a nice mix of busy and quiet - busy during the reunions, quiet in between as farm crew works on Garden Hill and the dorms sit empty. This summer was a little less quiet than usual as the school undertook several much-needed maintenance projects.

First, the glasshouse was taken down and work began on the remediation of the gable end of the schoolhouse (right underneath the bell cupola). While that was going on, halfway up Garden Hill, the old Hen House was being converted into a new potting shed and farm office.

It was great to see a building go from disused to fully used - the new "Farm Central" is ready for seeding and potting and growing plants this winter and spring!

Second, the Jackson sanitizer in the kitchen was replaced with a new (and larger!) Jackson model. This upgrade included new sinks and countertops to facilitate the flow of dishes. Don't worry, though, it isn't too automated... dish crews still have plenty to do.

Both of these projects were underwritten by individual alumni donors, and we are extremely grateful

for their generous support of these renovations, which allow for our programs to continue, grow, and develop.

The Mountain School is fortunate to have such a beautiful campus and such wonderful historical buildings. As infrastructure ages, we will need to keep working away at construction projects large and small to make sure all the spaces are safe, functional, and fit our programmatic needs.

I hope you'll have a chance to come and take a look at the new buildings (as well as enjoy the old ones!) - come visit soon!



Granola from "Object Lessons"
by Tess Ventola f24

For those who may not be familiar, "Last Call for Seconds" is the announcement made by a dish crew signaling that food will soon be taken back into the kitchen following a meal. This announcement is usually made by simply ringing a bell after 12 to 20 minutes have passed. However, a trend emerged a few weeks into our semester when one of the dish crews kicked it off with a short skit that ended with "Last call for seconds." Since then, many entertaining skits, songs, dances, tricks, and performances have ensued.

Some of the best performances came around Halloween when the nights grew darker before dinner, allowing for some spooky skits. Astor Dish Crew created a short act where one student was Dr. Victor Frankenstein, and another lay on one of the dining hall tables, pretending

to come alive. When asked what their first words would be, they said, in a very Frankenstein's voice, "Last... call... for... seconds". Another popular skit involved three members of Fireweed Dish Crew standing around a trash can pretending to stir it and reciting a spell. When the spell ended, a student popped out of the bin and yelled, "Last call for seconds!". When a member of Clover Dish Crew happened to receive a very long scroll-like letter from a friend, they reenacted a medieval message-bearing procession: One student pretended to read the "scroll" proclaiming "last call for seconds" in an old-timey way.

While these are just some of the most memorable examples, every meal this semester has proven an opportunity for dish crews to bond and be creative together.

last call

by Delilah Roller f24

Although this trend has become a norm this semester we hope it will eventually become a tradition. We have taken the moments in the day when everyone is together and infused them with joy and humor. I can confidently say that f24's "thing" will not be forgotten.



New Faculty by their favorites

Meet our new faculty through this classic listicle
compiled by **Pippa Carmel f24**.

Zac Hewitt, Assistant Director

Favorite TMS meal (so far)? *Honestly, I love our pork and the oatmeal berry bakes; though Kareen's birthday meal was pretty incredible.*

Favorite TMS tradition? *Definitely Solo! But can we make the Hunger Games a tradition?*

Favorite spot on campus? *Either the top of Garden Hill or Back Brook.*

Favorite TMS animal? *I miss Hud. (Hud, may he rest in peace, was the Pinzgauer bull who fathered the last three years of TMS calves. He was handsome, kind, and a gentleman through and through. Take notes Rama Lama.)*

Favorite thing about TMS students? *Everyone is always willing to jump right in; no matter how earnest or goofy.*

Mina Wade, School Nurse

Favorite TMS meal (so far)? *One chilly morning I walked into the dining hall and there was miso soup for breakfast! It was exactly what I needed.*

Favorite TMS tradition? *I love Morning Meeting shares. Whether the share is somber, comedic, or introspective, it really strengthens the TMS community.*

Favorite spot on campus? *Granite pile atop Library Hill.*

Favorite TMS animal? *I am a sucker for noses. Right now, it's the cows' noses that I love. But in the spring, it will definitely be the lambs.*

Favorite thing about TMS students? *Watching the way students transform throughout the semester is my favorite part about the student community.*



Bread & Mug from "Object Lessons"
by Gemma Iaccarino f24

september

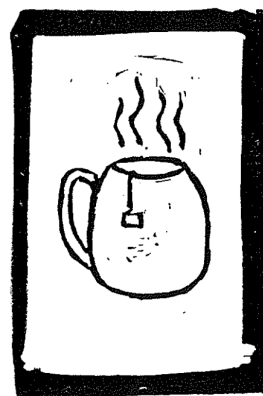
Continued from pg. 1

from a car on the rural road beyond the field.

Everything is perfect, though it cannot be forever,
and as I breathe slowly, do a circle on my heels,
turning gently like the solar system,

I know this; I know everything.

When the September air exits my lungs,
the instantaneous clarity is gone, but I know:
it was there, and it will be there waiting for me
at the end of all things, and I will remember this
lucky glimpse
until I see it again.



We're Hiring!

The Mountain School is seeking the following
to join our faculty for the 2025-2026 academic
year:

Math Teacher

Applied Science Teacher

(with a particular interest in physics,
chemistry, and field science)

Part-Time Cook

If you or someone you know is interested,
please see the full job listings on our school
website or email Alex Myers at
alex.myers@mountainschool.org

Alumni Spotlight



Lessons from an urban forester:

Corey Bassett f08

by Chloe Alimento-Miller f24

We sit at a round table in the dining hall, talking about the changes since Corey Bassett f08 attended TMS. “That’s what I was thinking before coming back here for my visit—that the students now were born when I went here.” She laughs and continues to talk about how although there may have been many differences, like the schedule and faculty, the school’s core values have not changed.

Today, Corey Bassett works as a post-doc researcher at George Washington University’s Department of Environmental Health. Before getting her PhD at the University of British Columbia, she worked as an urban forester and arborist across the US. “The difference between an urban forester and an arborist,” Corey says lightly, “is like the difference between working in public health and being a doctor.”

She has come to the Mountain School to visit our Environmental Studies classes and to see the school again. She mentioned how coming back for her 15-year reunion gave her a new perspective on the Mountain School. She found a new appreciation and curiosity for how it runs now.

Corey talks about the environment TMS fosters—one in which students and teachers work together for the good of the community. This is similar in her own line of work as an urban forester. Her favorite part of urban forestry was working with people across a broad range of backgrounds who had visions for what they wanted to see and saw them through: “In terms

of educational backgrounds and income levels, there’s so much respect for people who’ve been in the trades or don’t have college degrees. You have meetings and panels with people who don’t have college degrees but are still considered experts in their field, sitting next to PhDs; and everyone’s opinions are valued with so many experiences to offer.” She is frequently impressed by how much progress her collaborators make in their communities in so little time. She loves seeing the results of hard work in a way that immediately affects people and will continue to impact them for the rest of their lives.

That’s part of the reason Corey wanted to share her experiences with us. She wanted to show that though we are doing so much for nature and the environment here, there will be more to see (and do) when we leave. Her presentations taught Environmental Studies about different places in which urban forestry is being used and the debates and ideas around what the balance between urban and natural life should be. She put into perspective that when we move forward we shouldn’t think of the Mountain School as its own isolated place and what we learn here as isolated ideas that can’t be applied in other settings.

“The Mountain School is like one system, and it feels like when we’re here, we are the system,” I say.

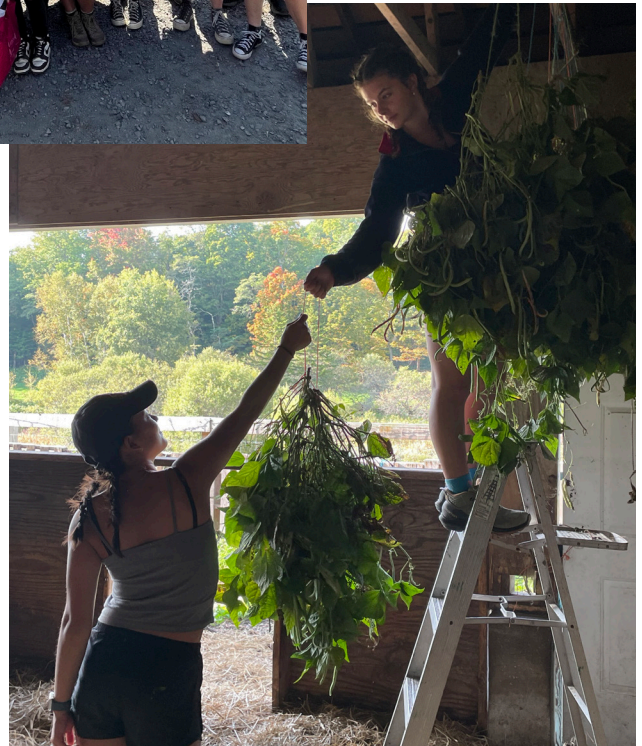
And to that Corey nods before reminding me, “You are the system in other places too.”



Neat Soap by Vivi Draganic f24



Fall 2024



News from the Alumni Office

After an action-packed summer reunion season that included the recognition of 40 years of the semester program, it was great to be able to bring some June reunion participants back to campus for student connection and guest speaking this fall. Courtney Bowen S14 and Corey Bassett F08 each shared their Mountain School experience and career trajectory, spending a few days in late September (Courtney) and mid-November (Corey) in Vershire. The visits were well-received at school. Courtney led an especially inspiring morning meeting and Corey brought her knowledge of urban forestry to Environmental Studies.

Students were also introduced to the 10 volunteers of the Alumni Committee who came to campus November 16. The students spent a lively evening with committee members, who dined together for a Korean meal planned by students in Culinary Studies. Dish crew raps and Jeopardy in the library provided entertainment to round out meaningful conversations about student experiences and the students' appreciation of their teachers and classmates.

Then on November, 20, eighty alums and parents joined a virtual gathering in a Town Hall format moderated by three Alumni Committee members in conversation with Director Alex Myers and Assistant Director, Zac Hewitt. Ken Nakamura s01, Cale Jaffe s90, and Serena Sen f16, asked Zac some student life questions, and Alex fielded questions that included admissions, current projects, priorities, curriculum developments, and how alumni can help the school.

Jared Rubinstein s05, who has co-chaired the committee this past year, has completed his term on the committee and Giovana Espejo f07 also finished



Members of the Alumni Committee meeting at the Grants'. Left to right: Josh Drake f97, Serena Sen f16, Alix Wozniak s09, Rob Johnston f93, Lucia Perez f08, Lily Zhou f03, Katie Sharafi f96, Ken Nakamura s01, Kristen Butterfield-Ferrell s03, Nancy and David Grant, Molly Rauch s89.

up her service. Thank you to these two dedicated alumni leaders. Two new members will be added in the spring of 2025 through the January application process.

The Alumni Committee would like to thank the 120 contributors to the 40 for 40 reunion giving fund that achieved its goal of \$40,000. A big thank you to Lily Zhou f03 for the gift of the 40-year hat that many reunioners were seen wearing on campus during the summer weekends.

The Alumni Committee continues to take an active role in gathering graduates at regional events. Most recently, the committee helped to plan a special evening with Alex Myers at former committee member Scott Bulua's f01 Brooklyn home in late September.

In the line up of TMS alumni events for the spring, we look forward to

organizing an evening meetup on **March 19 of Providence TMSers**. A **Boston brunch event is being scheduled for Sunday, April 6** at the Jamaica Plain home of Kate LaPine s85 and Clare Wibiralske f18. The **D.C. area** alums should mark the date of **April 27** for a brunch. And in **New York**, we are planning a get together for the week of **May 12**.

The winter of 2025 will feature an ever popular community event co-sponsored by the Mountain School. Mark your calendars for the **VerShare Snowshoe-a-thon fundraiser scheduled for Saturday, February 22**. This event aims to raise at least \$10,000 for the Vershire Community Camp which takes place late in July/early August and is offered free of charge. We encourage alumni and families in the region to participate and support this endeavor, and details will be available at vershare.org.

Annie Janeway, *Director of Alumni & Donor Relations*

SAVE THE DATE! See back page for info on our 2025 reunions!

Did someone say *squash?*

The TMS Squash Pancake: A Love Story

by Chef Zach Stremlau, Managing Chef & Culinary Arts Instructor

Ingredients

For the pancakes:

- 1 cup squash puree
- 2 large eggs
- 2 c. milk or buttermilk
- 1/3 c. neutral oil or melted butter
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 1/4 c. AP flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3/4 tsp. baking soda
- 1 1/2 tbsp. baking powder

For the berry sauce:

- 2 cups mixed berries
(fresh or frozen)
- 2 tbsp. water
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. honey or maple syrup
- 1 tsp. cornstarch
- 1 tbsp. cold water
(for cornstarch slurry)

These orange-hued pancakes transform skeptics into enthusiasts with their first bite. While any winter squash works beautifully – butternut, acorn, or yes, even pumpkin – we've found that butternut squash creates pure breakfast magic. On crisp mountain mornings, I often toss fresh raspberries or blueberries directly into the batter as it cooks, creating pockets of jammy sweetness that perfectly complement the squash's subtle earthiness.

The secret to perfect texture? Treat the batter gently – overmixing is your enemy. Fold the ingredients together like a letter, leaving a few small lumps, and let the batter rest while the griddle heats. No buttermilk? No problem. For each cup of milk, stir in 1 tablespoon of white vinegar or lemon juice and wait 5-10 minutes for kitchen chemistry to work its magic.

Squash Pancakes with Berry Sauce

1. *Prepare wet ingredients.* In a large bowl, whisk together the squash puree and eggs until well-combined. Gradually stir in the milk/buttermilk. Add the oil/melted butter and vanilla extract. Whisk until smooth and well-incorporated
2. *Combine dry ingredients.* In a separate medium bowl, whisk together flour, salt, baking soda, and baking powder. Ensure all dry ingredients are evenly distributed.
3. *Mix batter.* Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients and pour the wet ingredients into the well. Gently fold together until just combined; do not overmix – some small lumps are okay. Let batter rest for 5 minutes
4. *While your batter is resting, begin making your berry sauce.* In a small saucepan, combine berries, 2 tablespoons water, lemon juice, and honey/maple syrup. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Cook for 3-4 minutes until berries start to break down.
5. *Thicken your sauce: multi-tasking now, make a cornstarch slurry as your berries cook.* In a small bowl, whisk cornstarch with 1 tablespoon cold water. Slowly stir the cornstarch slurry into the simmering berry mixture. Cook for 1-2 minutes more, stirring constantly until sauce thickens. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.
6. *Cook pancakes.* Heat a griddle or large skillet over medium heat. Lightly grease the cooking surface and pour about 1/4 cup batter for each pancake. Cook until bubbles form on the surface (2-3 m.). Flip and cook other side until golden brown (1-2 m.).
7. *Enjoy!* (Think back fondly on all the squash you ate at TMS.)



151 Mountain School Road
Vershire, Vermont 05079-9655
www.mountainschool.org
info@mountainschool.org

Non Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID

2025 Reunions:

We invite recent grads to help as
reunion hosts; this paid work can be
arranged by contacting
annie.janeway@mountainschool.org.

In Summer 2025, TMS will once again
host four reunions! Save the date and
consult mountainschool.org/alumni
for information starting in 2025.

June 13-15: 5, 10, 15-Year
June 20-22: 1-Year
July 25-27: 30, 35, 40-Year
August 1-3: 20 and 25-Year

Class Notes are Online:



Or visit mountainschool.org/pearls-and-seaweed

Support the Annual Fund:



Or visit mountainschool.org/giving
Thank you for your generosity!

Introducing:

Summer @TMS

Keep it Simple! Have you ever wanted
to come back and experience the
Mountain School as an adult? Now
is your chance... we are offering two
week-long sessions in July open to
adults. These sessions will feature
Mountain School faculty teaching
versions of our "standard" courses
(Environmental Humanities,
Landscape Ecology, Food Systems)
as well as some new offerings
(Pastry-Making, Farming in French,
Landscape Photography, and
more!). Return and reconnect with
community, with nature, with learning
for the joy of it!

**[mountainschool.org/
summer-sessions-for-adults](http://mountainschool.org/summer-sessions-for-adults)**