



# DORM sweet DORM THE SEQUEL

ART DURITY

**In September 2002,** a group of newly arrived preps (and a friendly returning upper) gathered in the Wheelwright Hall common room after dinner. The start of classes was still a good 12 hours away, and the kids were busy getting to know each other and the school that

would be their home for the next four years. Their laughter caught the ear and eye of photographer Art Durity, and the resulting picture became the cover of the fall 2002 *Bulletin*, and the lead-in to a feature story on dorm life.

In the spring of 2006, we went back to those same students. Now seniors about to graduate, they had spent four years around the Harkness table, but we asked them to share their favorite dorm stories. Several themes quickly emerged: Food. Late nights. Extreme silliness at night, often involving food. By day, in class, Exeter students are mature thinkers, surprisingly adult in their insights and the effort they expend; at night, in the dorm, they get to be kids, with all the loud noise, Ramen noodles and Silly String that implies. “We find our own fun” is how Ashley Dreimiller put it.

What they also found were close friends. Asked to describe his favorite dorm moment, Charlie Wolff replied, “Each and every moment spent with friends”—some of whom he met that first night in the Wheelwright common room.

Here, then, a few more tales from the dorms.

## David Pittman: There’s No Place Like Wentworth

Over the last four years at Exeter, I have learned quite a bit about myself, my friends, New Hampshire’s climate—and maybe a thing or two around the table. After an academically tumultuous prep year, and the growth that followed, I have come to truly love this place (despite the winters).

While on spring break my lower year, I caught myself telling someone that I was “going home” in reference to Exeter. The way it slipped out so naturally caught me off-guard. Upon reflec-

tion, I realized what it was that made Exeter home: the people. It was the fraternal bonds I had formed with my dorm mates and the relationships I had formed with the faculty. I can’t imagine living anywhere else on campus. Wentworth, over the course of four years, through ups and downs, has become Exeter for me, and therefore, home.

I believe I was lucky to be placed in Wentworth Hall. The guys in the dorm are like brothers to me. Most of us have been close friends since the very beginning. In our time here we have kept many traditions alive; traditions that were handed down to

us by the seniors our prep year. But we have also established some of our own, including our ritualistic cookouts on Wentworth lawn, which have become a time for us to talk, relax and generally take our minds off our academic work. Grilling together is a sanctuary in our chaotic schedules, a rare moment when we can stop and appreciate what we have here.

My advice to those not graduating this year: Take the time to appreciate this place. Slow down every once in a while. Try to keep it in perspective. Take the time to develop relationships with students (especially the people you live with) and faculty. Exeter is as much an experience as it is an education. Don't be afraid to enjoy it.

### **Charlie Wolff: Unforgettable**

No single story could possibly summarize life in Wentworth Hall. To me, the key moments over these past four years are each and every moment spent with friends; not just one conversation, but every word spoken. These fragments I'll never forget form a lasting image of Exeter I'll forever carry.

Here are a few of those fragments: Grilling out with the guys. Painting the dorm benches Wentworth blue and gold. Walking to Dunkin' Donuts at 5 a.m. for our warm-up breakfast, followed by a trip to Rogan's diner. Playing duck-duck-goose, wiffle ball, golf and four-square on the quad. Playing pranks on friends in the dorm as a break from my 333. Bowling with the dorm crew at midnight. Trading "Family Guy" quotes in my room. Each moment is etched in my mind, building the love I feel for this school and the brotherhood we've developed in the dorm.

Every day of my senior spring I notice something new I know I'll miss. Three days ago, I realized it was my last day of Saturday classes. Yesterday, it was the Sunday afternoon game of quad golf. Tomorrow, who knows? Possibly I'll forget about some of these things as time passes. There are some things, however, like the deep friendships I've made, that I'll never let go of.

### **Tommy Smithburg: Boys Meet Grill**

The majestic clouds had been rolling in and out all day long. Finally it seemed the sun would prevail, so we Wentworth boys gathered up our money and bought five pounds of raw steak tips and sausage. It was the last Sunday of the school year, my upper spring was coming to an end and everybody was ready to celebrate with a barbecue outside Wentworth Hall. The intoxicating aroma soon drew people outdoors. The

meat was rich and addicting. We quickly started a second batch and our party continued.

The storm seemed to appear from nowhere. Doing what Exonians love to do—talk!—we hadn't noticed the threatening clouds, which now blocked the sun and cast a dark pall over the Phillips Exeter Academy campus. It seemed as though the lightning had waited to strike until it was right over the school.



*A band of Wentworth brothers (from left), Charlie Wolff, Carter Simpson, Tommy Smithburg, Tom Mandel, David Pittman.*

"We'll wait it out," Charlie Wolff said, as a bolt of electricity shot through the sky. "Just keep the grill going." Somehow I had become the day's grill master, and now I was stuck caring for the meat, a spatula in one hand and tongs in the other. The group stared as the clouds expanded to fill the sky, turning from gray to black before our eyes. Hale and rain poured down on the innocent Exonians below.

"Grab the umbrella!" I yelled.

As fierce winds tore through the campus, Charlie and a few friends did their best to keep the umbrella upright over the grill. Some other friends and I held onto the barbecue, hoping it wouldn't tip over and spill our precious meal onto the ground. Our primary objective: to ensure that the coals remained lit and hot.

Mr. Morris, our dorm master, had a different objective. "Get in your dorms!" he yelled as he ran out from his backyard.

The Wentworth bubble filled quickly with 30 sopping wet teenagers staring at the monsoon as it ripped through the campus. Within five minutes, the squall dissipated to a rain shower, and we all ran outside. The grill crew sprinted to the barbecue, which we had left secured against the side of the dorm. We opened the hood to find the coals hot and the meat intact. It tasted as rich and addicting as ever.

## Ashley Dreimiller: Finding Our Fun

Legend has it there's a ghost in Wheelwright. I don't know how many people know that anymore. His name is Johnny, and the story goes that he jumped from the third floor a long time ago, back when Wheelwright was still a boy's dorm.

Morgan lived in the very same room, prep year. And I had Johnny's desk. At least that's what we believed, and I think that's what drew us together. After Morgan printed out crosses and taped them to her wall, we forgot the supernatural and started to enjoy each other. We're certainly not the kind of people who would've naturally found each other—I was too loud for her, and she was too quiet for me. But somehow it all worked out.

We're always doing silly things. Shaving parties in the bathroom, sleepovers in the common room, Silly String fights in the hallway. During upper year I happened to have a video camera for a project I was doing for class, which is how one Tuesday night we produced, directed and co-starred in our own movie. I don't think it will be a big summer blockbuster, but we had tons of fun making it. That's always been what we do: We find our own fun. We can talk for hours and hours, and when that gets old, we throw in a guitar and make up our own songs, although neither of us knows how to play.

Next year will be hard. She'll be in Virginia and I'll be in New Jersey, but we'll make it work. A part of me is very sad to leave this place. A world-class education is great—but what I'm most grateful to Exeter for is giving me a best friend.

## George Stern: Secret Agent Men

One night during the winter of my prep year, Rajeev Chanderraj '05 and I were still busy procrastinating the papers we had due the next day.

"You know," I told him, "these papers will probably take us about three hours. And we've got seven hours until class. So if we just stay up all night, then we can make them *really* good, and we'll have time to hang out while we write them."

We agreed to the plan, though I am quite certain we both fell asleep and our papers were a few days late. But what matters is that during that hour when we were unsuccessfully trying to form our arguments, we somehow got sidetracked and created one of Wentworth Hall's most illustrious, if short-lived societies.



*Morgan Ryland (left), Ashley Dreimiller (right) and the remains of a Silly String skirmish.*



*Student Council President George Stern gained valuable leadership experience as a co-founder of the George and Rajeev X-Treme Select Membership Society Q.*

After we decided that "any good society needs an X and a Q in its title," the George and Rajeev X-Treme Select Membership Society Q was born. Without a clear purpose, and after only a couple of uneventful meetings, the George and Rajeev X-Treme Select Membership Society Q was thriving. So much so, in fact, that a rival society was quickly formed. Relations between the two groups remained peaceful until the infamous night of the Great Kidnapping.

Rajeev and I were in headquarters 455 one Thursday planning the next meeting. There came a series of knocks at the door—Morse Code for G and R—and when I opened it, leaders of the rival group swiftly moved me to their own headquarters, despite my loud protestations. Rajeev tried unsuccessfully to negotiate my release. Eventually, he was able to garner the assistance of two rather large seniors in our dorm, and with help from members of the George and Rajeev X-Treme Select Membership Society Q I was freed. Fortunately, there were no casualties, just a disheveled dorm room. As we gazed around, a prep announced, in true Exonian fashion, that "it was necessary for us to hold a Geneva Convention, and said convention must begin immediately."

We unanimously agreed. With the strange but admirable ability that Exonians have to act like children one moment and adults the next, we reassembled around the negotiating table 20 minutes later dressed in ties and blazers. The convention lasted until an official peace treaty had been signed by both parties. The terms were clear: Both societies would officially disband so as to ensure lasting peace. And the resident of the room where the battle had taken place would be offered alternate living accommodations until the strong odor of sweat subsided.

We signed the treaty and all the members celebrated the return of peace by spending most of the morning catching up on our sleep.

## Aviva Lillian: California Dreaming

In the fall of my upper year, girls in Merrill Hall began to watch "The OC," a popular TV show about a group of Orange County teenagers. Every Thursday night, we would tape the show at 9 o'clock and then gather at 10 to watch it together. It was a welcome break from the intense experience of sitting

at a desk for hours at a time, drilling vocab and underlining history homework.

When 10 o'clock came, a bunch of us regulars would rush to the preferred spots in the Merrill common room and assign button-pressing roles for the night (our remote was missing). As the credits rolled and the well-known theme song—"California" by Spoon—began to play, we would start to smile and shout out the song lyrics along with the TV. There was something truly beautiful about this, at least to my tone-deaf ears. For the next hour, we would squeal a lot and generally overreact as characters became pregnant or died. "The OC" is probably the flakiest teen soap you'll ever see, and yet we loved it—loved watching it together and forgetting everything else.

### Joe Blount: A Recipe for Friendship

A Saturday night in Exeter—perhaps not the most exciting prospect in the world. As I pondered the rare opportunity to get some much-needed rest, Carlos Cagin and Evan Rose, two uppers in Soule Hall, convinced me to play a little poker. Forty-five minutes into the game, we decided that we were too hungry to play and we went in search of something to fill our stomachs.

After scouring the dorm, the three of us managed to procure the following: some two-year-old Ramen, some four-month-old instant couscous, some five-month-old, just-add-water chicken-pilaf basmati rice, and some who-knows-how-many-years-old Quaker Oats oatmeal.

Our travels through the dorm had attracted some other hungry boys, and we all gathered in the kitchen. After some bowls of Ramen, we decided to try the rice and couscous. With the laziness characteristic of adolescent males, we figured there was no point in spending extra time to cook the two items separately, so we just dumped them both in one big pot. As for how the mixture might taste, well, nobody really thought about that. No matter what, it was food.

As soon as a pan and a source of hot water opened up, we moved on to the oatmeal. I still felt famished, despite eating an ungodly amount of unhealthy food, so I dumped three packs



Aviva Lillian (second from left, at rear) and friends from Merrill had a standing date to watch "The OC" every Thursday night.

into a bowl and let the boiling water do its magic.

By now, some of the weaker underclassmen had succumbed to fatigue. The real troupers, however—well, we stayed up and ate and talked about what high school boys talk about. We complained about the preps and the lowers. Those of us who were seniors emphatically stated that after we graduated, Exeter would be nothing.

We yelled, we laughed, we sang, we ate, and then we did

it all over again. At dawn, we who remained decided that a run to Dunkin' Donuts was absolutely imperative. As I jogged out through the frigid New Hampshire rain, I couldn't help but smile. Nights like this are what Exeter is all about.

### Chandler Brewer: A View From the Bridge

The night before, I had been up late in the dorm, trying to crank out a chemistry lab. It was a blur of solvents, precipitates, test tubes and numbers. My friends and I had paced, argued and calculated to exhaustion. I had gone to bed with a sore knuckle from gripping my pencil too tight, and eraser shavings still clung to my clothes.

The next thing I knew I was walking. My friends and I were now out in an open field, in bare feet, and for the first time in months, I was completely unaware of what time it was. After fretting and worrying about tests, SATs and the infamous 333, our problems had been reduced to deciding between rope swinging and bridge jumping. It was the end of our upper spring, and I felt like the marathon runners you see on TV, the ones who throw their hands up and fall into someone's arms as they finally crossed the finish line.

I have been bridge jumping before during my four years at Exeter, but that time sticks in my memory. Only after you have really pushed yourself can you truly relax and feel like a kid again. I was almost giddy as I repeatedly threw myself off the ledge of the bridge, watching the world fly by as I crashed down into the water. Climbing up the bank, I caught a view of the immense sea of brick buildings in the distance, and I felt proud that I had conquered

all they had thrown my way, proud that I could handle Exeter and still hold on to the child in me, and my sanity. Walking back to the dorm, feeling the soft grass in between my toes, I felt 10 years old, and 10 feet tall. ●



Joe Blount reveals the secret ingredient of a Soule Saturday night.