



# The Fuzzy Cheesecake

“FOP: The Harvard of First-Year Outdoor Orientation Programs”

Vol. 3: December MMV

www.harvardfop.com

Welcome to the third annual Fuzzy Cheesecake, the only publication compiled by FOP's current Steering Committee, designed to share the spirit of FOP with the entire family. Delivery is free, but subscriptions can be purchased NPR style - through your voluntary donations.

## Insight on FOP In-Site

By Anna Deknatel '05 - '06

From the rock climbing and biking of the FOP trips of yore to our present perfected classic-service-switch triumvirate, the shape of FOP trips has constantly evolved over the years. FOP 2005 took this progress to the next step with the first ever In-Site trip. Three brave leaders (full disclosure: myself included) and eight eager but cautious FOPpers headed into the woods to try out a new model: rather than six consecutive nights of backpacking, we set up camp at a site just north of Squam Lake in New Hampshire for three days of trail maintenance and day hiking followed by an overnight backpacking excursion--the first for all the FOPpers in the group. With a few more comforts of home--most prized, Clive, our local composting outhouse--this group of first-years, who admittedly may have passed on FOP otherwise, experienced all the joy of FOP, right from the comforts of our very own makeshift home base.

The most important elements of FOP remained the same: the couscous and hummus, the evening group meetings, the fear-in-a-hat, the Big Booty, and, of course, the satisfaction of reaching a peak. But, vanguards that we were, we stepped up to the challenge of braving this week in the woods with a little less dirt--showers for some--and more sugar than we could handle. With the extra time of leaving camp up, we had the benefit of a pace that allowed for games of cards and nightly campfires. A water-

fall just up the trail made a picturesque lounging spot for a few meals; and, when we did venture from our home camp, our overnight sent us over a mountain in packs, up to the side of a beautiful mountain lake. We had a great time, and if nothing else, our In-Site trip proved that you can't take the FOP out of a FOP trip.

“As someone with little previous camping experience, In-Site offered the perfect combination of living in the wilderness and having basic amenities of civilization. We experienced all the wonderful aspects of FOP - forming close friendships, going on challenging hikes, and learning how to survive in the woods - in a way that was fun and manageable for everyone.”

-- Rachel Pollack '09



## FOP in the Family

By Jill Comins & Howard Stein  
Parents of FOPpers and Leaders Luke C.D. Stein '02 and J Zachary Stein '07

We have been a FOP Family now for eight years. Yes....FOP has been a “Family Orientation Program” for us, as well as a First-Year Outdoor Program. Beginning at Harvard College is a big deal, and what better way to begin than with the friends and the sense of camaraderie and mastery that FOP provides.

It is exciting at move-in and at Freshman Parents Weekend to see the hugs and greetings that accompany the words that the huggor/huggee was “in my FOP group!” Then throughout the college years — and who knows for however many years to come — we heard students described as having “been in my FOP group,” an all-encompassing description of the original freshman group and of the subsequent groups where our sons were the group leaders.

And, it turns out, FOP can be a continuing activity. Harvard has lots of stimulating extra-curricular activities, and FOP is amongst the best of them. There are inter-personal and technical skills to be learned and honed; huge leadership oppor-

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## FOP Fun Facts 05

263 participants

71 leaders

31 trips

1 - new trip type added: In-Site.

3 - new routes added. One was a traverse of the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway Trail.

0 - FOPpers who had to leave their trip permanently

31 - new leaders who trained this year

13 - transfer students who went on FOP

98 - total FOP leaders

\$23K - how much FOP offered in financial aid

30% - proportion of FOP participants who received financial aid

Nine FOP leaders attended the Association of Experiential Education Conference in April of 2005 (two of these leaders attended the International AEE conference in November).

*"Family," continued from page 1*

strengths to be developed; and weaknesses to be avoided or compensated for; nurturing to be done; occasional emergencies to be responded to; and just so much darn fun to be had that FOP turns out to be a huge lifetime experience. In later years our kids have gone for "FOP training", been "FOP leaders", been on the FOP Steering Committee, and even attended a FOP wedding.

The friendships they made have been good ones. And FOP has been inclusive - my wife and I have always felt included and close to the FOP leadership, and when Luke's younger brother J Zac was ready to go to Harvard, we think he looked forward as much if not more to FOP as to any other aspect of his college adventure.

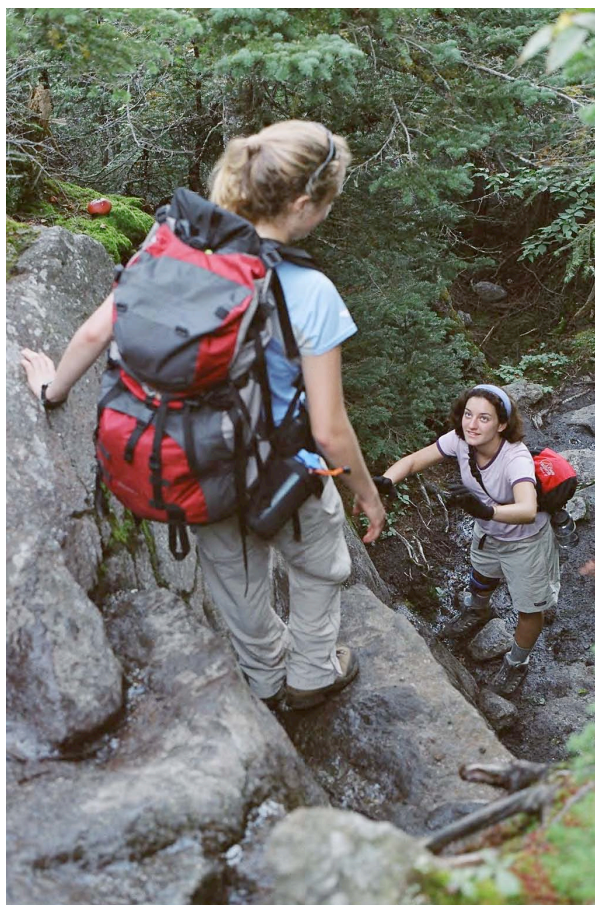
# My FOP '05

By Lauren  
Schwartz '09

From the first moment that I arrived on Harvard campus and entered Johnston Gate amid the excited cheers of the FOP leaders, I knew that FOP represented all that I wanted out of my time here at Harvard. The overwhelming sense of enthusiasm, joy, and teamwork that the members of the FOP community exhibited encouraged me and made me believe that I could handle any challenge that should arise on the trail.

Challenges abounded on FOP— from the awkwardness of the first hellos and the attempts to memorize new names and faces, to the excruciating pain of waking up before the sunrise, to the taxing physical nature of carrying large backpacks while crawling up rocks (and, at times, falling down rocks).

Despite, or perhaps because of all of the challenges, my FOP group quickly united into one, cohesive group. We shared plenty of laughs, added our own twists to the hydration games, shared stories from our pasts, complained about aching hips, encouraged each other as we tackled the white caps, and stood together in awe as we caught the first glance of Lake Mooselookmeguntic from the



highway. We shared our fears about the upcoming weeks and months and attempted to get an insider's look at Harvard life through our incredible resources, our leaders.

As the time on the trail ended and the bus deposited exited, nervous, and smelly freshmen in front of Annenberg, I regretted the thought of leaving the family that had formed on FOP 6, yet I was optimistic for the future. Equipped with the lessons that I had learned about myself, comforted by the unconditional love of twelve people who, merely one week prior, had been complete strangers, and filled with the hope that my experience on FOP was indicative of the positive experiences that were to come, I set out and entered college.

### Purchase a DVD of the 2004 or 2005 FOP Slide Show!

DVDs are \$10 each.

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Harvard FOP, 6 Prescott Street, Cambridge, MA 01238

Checks should be Harvard University,  
with "Slide show DVD" written in the memo.

# Bell Family Transitions

By Brent Bell

2005 was a year of change. Marriage, doctorate, new son, and tenure track job. All were positive blessings, but the job forced me to give up a job I loved (the Harvard FOP Director role) for new challenges. Beth and I moved to Durham, NH where I am on the faculty at the University of New Hampshire, Beth is a writer in the news office there, and our son Holden "Denny" Bell is the newest member of Growing Places Daycare. Although I have moved away from Cambridge and out of the FOP office, my commitment to FOP grows stronger.

My dissertation research studied social support as an aid to adjustment. At Harvard the results show that students who participate on FOP report higher levels of social support compared to their non-participating peers.

In my new role as an academic I hope to develop a body of research that will provide assistance to outdoor orientation programs, expanding the knowledge and research base. As I begin to collect data on different campuses, the stories from participants are consistent--these programs provide great educational experiences and are highly valued by the students. These campus visits have reinforced my pride in FOP. It has been great to be a part of such a wonderful program and I hope to continue to support and help out in the future.

## This spring, become a Wilderness First Responder!

Course given March 25-April 2  
@ Harvard.

Email fop@fas  
or call 617-493-7935.  
All are welcome!

# On Alumni Networks

By Will Krause '04

FOP is now at a stage in its organizational development at which the maturity exists to support an alumni group. Small improvements enacted over the 26-year history of the program have given it the infrastructure to optimize alumni involvement and allow that involvement to incrementally improve the program itself. One example of organizational maturity is found in fundraising. For the first time in its history, there is talk of a FOP endowment. Significant barriers to endowment exist that continue to make this a distant goal, but now that the organization is well past its infancy, the program can begin to do the work to approach such an undertaking. FOP is now poised to benefit substantially from organized alumni support.

Yet FOP itself would not be the only beneficiary of such an organizational undertaking. The benefits alumni groups confer upon their members are widely known and even more apparent for a program such as ours. In addition to reconnecting members of the community and rekindling old flames, trips and outdoor activities are certainly a possibility (and are in fact a plan - see below), and professional connections are a very real potential benefit. FOP instills a value system and skill set that could be especially useful for networking and attract-

ing talent in outdoor education and outside the field as well. Most importantly, we, as a community, should capitalize on our shared love - that of the outdoors - to bond over it and let that bond lead us to get out a little bit more.

For an organization to thrive and strengthen, the mutualism inherent in the relationship between a program and its alumni must be fully expressed. By connecting the people and resources of an alumni community with the structure, talent, and energy of the program's primary participants, we can help our organization perform at its best. So many people have given such love to FOP, and it in turn has given so much back. Let us try to enhance this virtuous circle.

Thank you for your contributions of all shapes and sizes to FOP. Please email me at [will.krause@gmail.com](mailto:will.krause@gmail.com) with your thoughts or indications of general or specific interest in a FOP Alumni Network. But more importantly, sign up for our new email list [HFAN@googlegroups.com](mailto:HFAN@googlegroups.com) by sending an email to that address! And keep your eyes open for the inaugural FOP alumni-inclusive event, coming next year.

*Will Krause was a FOP leader from '02 to '04 and a member of SC '03. He currently lives and works in New York City. The urban jungle is making him crave some hiking, which is part of the reason he's so excited about the possibility of organized alumni. FOP is dear to his heart, and he wants to see the positive energy it gave him and so many others continue to live on past the undergraduate years.*



## Smelly Hugs and FOP Love

By Jessica Ross, Interim Director

The day the FOPpers arrive each fall, there is a rush of excitement that is unmatched. The people that we have been preparing to meet for a full year are arriving at last. Every ounce of training and energy that has been poured into the program finally blooms into a celebratory ritual of meeting and greeting, a fine-tuned flow model from registration to luggage storage.

This fall, the morning after the students' arrival, thirty-one trips started heading out at five AM, and a week in the wilderness began. Each trip commenced its own unique experience across the three states of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. The trips this year were as smooth as ever; the weather was sunny, the water was calm, and the leaders and the first-years were stellar.

At the end of the week, it was with great pleasure that I watched this twenty-sixth generation of 263 first-years come back from a week in the woods with giant smiles on their faces. Every year, the smelly hugs on Deissue Day have become more priceless. I have heard enough first-years come back raving about their week of FOP to know that the experience we provide out there is special. My hope is that we find ways of providing this unique experience to more first-years each year.

I have been involved in the FOP community now for six years, as a FOPper, a leader, a Steering Committee Member, the Program Coordinator, and now as the Interim Director. I have watched FOP undergo several changes: increasing its gear rental and financial aid, improving its internship training, adding the in-site trip to the typical repertoire of backpacking, switch and service trips, and most recently, a change in leadership.

I am humbled to have the opportunity to step in for Brent Bell as he moves on to a professorship at the University of New Hampshire. Brent came into FOP at the same moment that I did, so the words "Brent" and "FOP" are often synonymous in my head. He has been a mentor, a friend, and a leader in so many capacities to so many first-years and upperclassmen at Harvard, including to myself. Though I am excited for his new position, I think I can speak for the FOP community in saying that we are all sad to see him go.

Fortunately, Brent has helped nurture a culture of caring, responsible leadership in FOP, and I now have the chance to work with an exceedingly talented, fun Steering Committee this fall. FOP remains a leader in the field as an Accredited Institutional Member of the Association for Experiential Education, a distinction uncommon among college outdoor orientation programs. I hope to help carry on Brent's commitment to fun, support, professionalism, effective risk management, and most importantly, to a great orientation program.

Thank you all for being a part of the extended FOP family.

With Much FOP Love,  
Jess Ross

## Greetings from SC '06

Victor Alcade, Kate Cosgrove,  
Jessie Daigneault, Nate Dern, Rachel Garwin,  
Amelia Kimball, and Jackie Stenson

Every program dreams. When not thinking about high peaks, blue skies, and open lakes, FOP dreams of creating an extensive support network for as many incoming first-years as possible. One of the Steering Committee's most important jobs is to help



FOP realize its dreams. True, we also have the unique opportunity to do other cool things--train new leaders and work logistical miracles, for example. Nothing excites us more, however, than the chance to help our program stride toward its goals.

We're not starting from scratch, fortunately. Building upon the tireless effort of Steering Committees past, we hope to continue and expand their successes. One of many achievements of this past year, the new "In-Site" Program, deserves special recognition. Its goal was to increase the accessibility and appeal of a FOP experience to those who might see living in the outdoors for a week as challenge enough without backpacking. The group was based in one camp for most of the week, took day hikes to nearby mountaintops, did service work, and culminated in an overnight along a nearby trail. In-Site was a great success, and we hope to improve and expand this opportunity in order to offer FOP to as many first-years as possible.

FOP has an exciting year ahead of it, both programmatically and individually for the people involved with it. For FOPpers and non-FOPpers alike, the opportunity to train to be a FOP leader approaches. In order to send every trip into the woods with the best leaders possible, we constantly evaluate our training methods. We're excited to get to know a new class of trainees and offer them what has turned into one of the best experiences in many of our Harvard lives.

We also plan to focus our attention on further strengthening the existing leader community, while at the same time making it even more inclusive of others on campus. We dream of leader and alumni involvement, whether it be in spreading the word about FOP to potential FOPpers, in helping with training, or in other ways. We have already made steps toward increasing communication directly from the Steering Committee to the leader community and will continue to do so throughout the year.

Of course, FOP would not exist without the FOPpers themselves. We see great potential for expanding the portion of the freshman class that participates in FOP and gains the incredible support network that the experience provides. We understand that cost can be a prohibitive factor for many first-years, and thus hope that through continued generous financial aid we can continue to help as many people as possible participate in FOP. We believe (and evidence supports the fact that) FOP provides an important support network for incoming first-years. At the most fundamental level, we are committed to making FOP as attractive and accessible to as many people as possible.