

Colby



Colby Magazine

Volume 87
Issue 3 *Fall 1998*

Article 7

October 1998

Western Collection

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Recommended Citation

(1998) "Western Collection," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 87 : Iss. 3 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol87/iss3/7>

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A Sampling of This Fall's Western Collection



Cortney Kirkendall, Arcadia, Calif.

Most of her friends are at Cal-Berkeley, her best pal is at UCLA, and another classmate "went East"—to Utah. Cortney is the only one among her inner circle to go coast-to-coast. But Colby seems to be a perfect choice, she says. "I like it; I'm having fun," she said.

Battling loneliness and homesickness during the first few days, Cortney called home one morning in tears. "It can be scary when you don't know very many people," she said.

Her COOT trip—a bike ride to Camden—helped ease her transition, she says. It also reminded her to appreciate simple pleasures: "After three days in a tent, being able to sleep in a bed and take a shower is pretty exciting."

Her parents, who accompanied Cortney to Colby for the orientation period, drove her to Freeport for some additional preparation—the purchase of winter clothing. "We bought a jacket, gloves and some warm socks. I didn't own any real winter clothing. We don't have much need for it in Arcadia," she said.

Her hometown friends provided Cortney with another way to ward off a February chill—a paperweight with a beach scene inside. "They told me I should look at it if I start to miss the sunshine," she said.



Nicole Laurent, Houston, Texas

Nicole, who recently endured one of the hottest summers on record—"the heat index was around 115 every day," she said—is looking forward to winter.

"I know, I know, I've never been through a real winter before, but I love snow and I love the seasons," she said. "We don't have seasons in Houston. We just have sun. My mom asked me to send home some leaves when the fall foliage arrives. We don't have leaves, either—colored ones, I mean."

But avoiding the swelter of Houston wasn't the only thing that prompted Nicole to go north. "I had a good feeling when I first visited Colby. Little things about the place—like my mom and I going to Big G's for lunch—I just liked everything about it."

Fellow students are learning a bit more about Texas through Nicole. "I don't own a cowboy hat, but I do like country music," she said. "People have this association with Texas that it is all Marlboro Man country, or something like that. I've been to rodeos, but I wasn't roping the animals."

Nicole prefers skiing to throwing a lasso and even has some experience dog sledding from earlier family vacations in New England. "I can't wait for the first snow," she said.



Andrew Hoyt, Upland, Calif.

Just off the bus from Boston, 3,000 miles from his home in suburban Los Angeles, Andrew was tramping through the mountains of eastern New Hampshire on his COOT outing when his education began. "It was fascinating talking with kids who grew up in the woods," he said. "I come from a high school with an enrollment of three thousand six hundred; some of them didn't have that many people in their town."

The contrasts between rural and urban settings and between West Coast and East Coast cultures struck Andrew almost immediately upon arriving at Colby. "One of the reasons I came here was to get away from what was familiar," he said. "Being in a small community is new for me. Back home you can say hello to the same person for eight years and never really get to know them."

While he tries to dispel stereotypes about California—"people seem to think everybody is a surfer," Andrew said—he does display certain, shall we say, warm weather proclivities. He uses a skateboard to get around campus, a practice that most likely won't last past Thanksgiving.

"My classes are great, the teachers are excellent, and I'm in a place that is conducive to escaping the chaos," he said.

The first-year class of 454 students is among the most geographically diverse ever to arrive at Colby. Maine and Massachusetts provide the largest percentages of students to Colby, but the College is attracting more students from outside of New England, particularly from the West. *Colby* caught up with a few students whose hometowns are far away and asked them for some early impressions.



Jamee Gidwitz, Chicago

Leaving home for school is nothing new for Jamee, who spent her high school years at Hotchkiss in Connecticut. Nevertheless, the adventure is exciting, she says. "I'm the oldest [sibling] in my family so I'm the first to leave for college. It's different than boarding school. My dad told me, 'Now it's up to you.'"

Because of her boarding school experience, she says, the separation from family and friends wasn't so difficult. "It was weird watching my friends crying and getting so upset about going off to college," she said. "I mean, they're coming home for Thanksgiving. It's not like they're dying."

Despite growing up with three siblings, Jamee had never had a roommate until she arrived at Colby. She was apprehensive about how she would respond. "I think I'm adapting pretty well," she said. "It's a learning experience for me."

The most appealing aspect of Colby so far, Jamee says, is the friendliness of the people. "Even the upperclassmen don't seem to care that I'm just a dorky freshman," she said.

She feared that Colby might be "a little too relaxed," Jamee said, but she is satisfied that the academic rigor of the College makes for just the right amount of intensity. "It definitely will not be boring," she said.



Terry Ahern, Mercer Island, Wash.

August 31, the day her son left for Colby, was not a good day for Laurie Ahern, Terry's mother. In fact, the entire month of August was pretty dreary. "She wasn't looking forward to me leaving," Terry said.

At the airport on the morning of his departure, Terry says, "things got very emotional." His mother and 16-year-old brother began to cry. "It was all I could do to hold back the tears," Terry said.

Once he arrived at Colby, though, the outlook was sunnier. A COOT hiking trip that culminated at Sugarloaf put Terry in mind of his happiest moments back home, where he often climbed in the Cascades. "I had a great time; met some nice people. I already have a pretty good idea who some of my best friends will be," he said.

Although many of his hometown friends left Washington to attend college, Terry says, most of them went to California. "Coming out here is pretty unusual," he said. He was pleased to find that his roommates, who hail from Connecticut and Massachusetts, "seem to be perfectly normal."

"The slang words are a little different, but other than that I haven't noticed much difference [between Maine and Washington]," Terry said. "People here are liberal just like they are in Seattle. There is a lot of environmental activism among the students I've met so far."



Myra Romero, Ruidoso, N.M.

Myra, the first member of her family to attend college, turned down a full-tuition scholarship from the University of New Mexico to come to Colby. "If I had gone to UNM I always would have wondered what Colby would have been like. When I visited Colby last fall, I could picture myself here. It just felt so comfortable to me," she said.

An exceptional student and athlete—she already has made the tennis team—Myra patiently corrects stereotypes others hold about her home state: "People assume I live in a desert; my hometown looks like Maine—lots of trees."

She laughs when describing her conversations with friends about why she chose a college in Maine. "Colby has an outstanding program in Spanish, but when I tell people that I left New Mexico to study Spanish in Maine they can't believe it."

Shortly after arriving she placed a *ristra*—chilis strung together to dry for cooking—on her door, and she has been fielding questions about it ever since. "People here think they're peppers; they're not peppers, they're chilis," she said.

She's learning her way around some new food items, too. "You know those little sprinkles you put on ice cream? People here call them Jimmies. I had never heard that before." Can fiddleheads be far behind?