



"One Day in May"

(May 15, 2023)

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Class Year: 2005

Connection to the College (student? faculty? alum? friend of the College?): staff and alumni

Describe your day on May 15, 2023. Tell us whatever you'd like at whatever length you'd like. We think future students will especially appreciate hearing about concrete details -- What can you see and hear from where you are right now? What did you do for fun today? Who did you spend time with? Did you cook or eat anything special? Did you work or do chores?

Since beginning my employment with Hanover College, on most days I utilize my hour-long lunch break to exercise and spend as much time possible outside in the serene settings of the campus. Today, May 15th, 2023, the plan was to do a 2-mile ruck through Happy Valley. Shortly after the noon hour, I changed into my workout clothes, strapped on my pack with a 20lb weight in the back, and left my office in the Long Administration building heading for the trail entrance near the President's home.

As I descended into the valley the skies were overcast with temperatures in the low 60's; perfect weather for what the Japanese call "forest bathing" or mindfully spending time in nature. Although I'm intentionally carrying a heavy weight to make the hike challenging, I can already feel the weight of emails, to-do lists, and meeting obligations lifting as I move through the forest. Soon I passed a dead Ash tree I noticed a few days prior that had a beautiful flush of Oyster mushrooms. Unfortunately, today the mushrooms were shriveled and mostly eaten from bugs and other critters.

Once I reached the bottom of the valley, I tried to strike a balance between moving quickly yet as quietly as possible to reduce my overall footprint and not to disturb the natural rhythm in the woods. This combined with continually looking ahead and being mindful of changing smells has yielded surprising animal encounters in the past. This strategy paid-off as I approached the trail exit towards the north of the valley. About 30 yards ahead to my right I heard a rustling in the underbrush. It didn't have the quick and erratic sound a squirrel makes as it moves about; but rather slower and "heavier". I immediately froze and waited patiently as the underbrush moved and a female wild turkey emerged. She was aware of my presence, but not alarmed. She slowly made her way up the eastern hill, softly clucking and purring as my mind remembered a similar moment over 20 years ago when I was a freshman at Hanover. In this memory, it was May, and I was hiking no more than 100 yards from my current position when I came across a nest filled with over a dozen turkey eggs. I wondered if this particular hen was a descendant of that brood as she was most likely sitting on a clutch of her own eggs. Soon the encounter passed as the hen disappeared into brush and I started my steep ascent out of the valley.

I emerged from the depths of the forest on Scenic Drive and began the walk back to campus. Much like a character immersed in the archetype of the hero's journey, I returned from my hour-long adventure transformed by the physical test and natural encounters along the way with a sense of calm and focus that greatly benefits my afternoon work and overall wellbeing. I am already looking forward to what tomorrow's adventure may bring.

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We'd also like to hear about what learning looks like for you. When you think of the Hanover classes that have mattered the most to you, what do you see? A specific classroom, lab, or studio? your favorite late-night study location? What about lessons learned at Hanover outside of the classroom -- do you see conversations over meals? locker room celebrations? shared community service? the streets of a foreign city during an off-campus class? If you're no longer on campus, what does learning look like now?

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