

## Memories of Marietta College

Class prepares to graduate, looks back on flood as bonding experience

Only a few weeks after leaving home, Marietta College freshman Molly Chievitz found herself canoeing down the middle of Second Street, with the belongings in her dorm room piled high atop bunk beds to avoid rising waters.

Chievitz was one of 425 newcomers to the college who, while still adjusting to their class schedules and dining hall food, found themselves in the middle of Marietta's worst flood in 40 years, with the Ohio River rising nearly 10 feet above flood stage.

Now, as the class prepares to graduate Saturday, its members say the flood was a defining moment for the group, the last class to have experienced the September 2004 flood.

"To see the flood marks now and know that happened while we were here is pretty amazing," said Chievitz, 22, of Canton.

Some of the students pitched in to help protect—and later clean—downtown businesses, while others scrambled to move their cars and belongings from low spots on the campus.

Emily Godard, 22, of Bristol, Vt., was awakened at 7 a.m. that Saturday by her crew coach, telling her to get to the Gilman Avenue boathouse immediately.

"I was groggy and not paying attention and all of a sudden I looked up and the Hermann (Fine Arts Center) parking lot was a lake," she said.

Conditions were even worse once Godard made it to the west side of the city on her bike and found herself in deep water on Gilman Avenue.

"About 20 feet in, my bike was totally covered," she said. "I still thought I could make it, but the water was so deep it came up over my bike when I was holding it over my head with my arms fully extended. I had to turn around."

Godard and the other crew members there had to swim to the garage where their boats were kept and move them to a nearby cemetery until the flood water receded.

"We were all soaked, smelly and sore afterward," she said. "I remember the coach patting the captain on the back and saying, 'Good job, girls, now go home and get a tetanus shot.'"

Classes were canceled at the college for a week, and students not involved in fall athletics were asked to return home.

“It was big,” said Keegan Haid of Arthur, W.Va. “It was exciting more than anything else, but some people were scared too. No one knew that it could get that bad. No one expected it.”

Chievitz said the week she spent on the mostly deserted campus with her soccer teammates was one of her most memorable at the college.

“We bonded a lot during that week,” said Chievitz, who moved out of her first-floor housing and bunked in other rooms upstairs during the flood.

While competing in the recent Jewett Oration competition, to determine a graduation speaker, Godard said she heard many speeches that focused on the flood.

“Everyone talks about how the flood made this class really close, really fast,” she said.

“A natural disaster really brings people together. It’s people from all walks of life sharing a common experience, and it’s an experience you’ll never forget.”