

Question of the Week

asked by Kelly Walsh

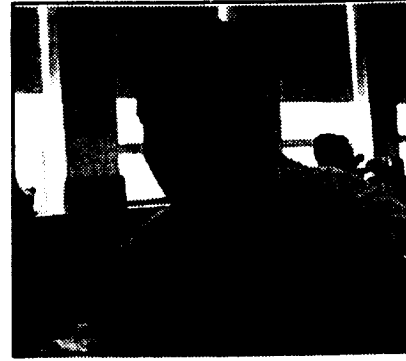
"What was your most memorable Spring Break moment?"



"Not doing homework."
Molly Boni
Biology, 02



"Going to the Strip Club."
Justin Creep
Physics, 08



"Finding out Karas was a Pro
prospect."
Lurch Krawczynski
Liberal Arts, 08



"Go-kart racing."
Holly Ristau
Chemistry, 08

Speaker Dr. Ian Marshall walks the paths of literary giants on the Appalachian Trail

by Erin McCarty
news editor

Thursday night, Dr. Ian Marshall presented "The Literature of the Appalachian Trail," a lecture accompanied by a slide show, in Reed 117.

Marshall, an English professor at Penn State Altoona, has hiked a large portion of the Appalachian Trail. He wrote "Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail," which was published by Virginia Press. English professor Dr. Greg Morris introduced Marshall, sharing his esteem for him as a writer and as a friend.

"Storylines" is a rich, evocative work of scholarship," Morris said, noting the "profound affection" for the natural landscape present in Marshall's writing.

Marshall began his presentation with a brief history of the Appalachian Trail. He related how the trail grew out of one man's vision. This writer published an article detailing his dream of a great pathway stretching across America, and he inspired many people to make that a reality. To this day, the Appalachian Trail is maintained by volunteers.

It is within a day's travel for two-thirds of the U.S. population, affording an excellent opportunity for many to embrace their inner wildness and to see the land much as the early pioneers first saw it. Additionally, on the trail hikers can walk the paths trod by literary giants like Henry David Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne and capture some of their experience.

"The title 'Storylines' is taken from Australia, where they believe the world was sung into existence," said Marshall. "It's a lovely mythology. You can follow the path of your literary ancestors if you know the song... The contours of the melody follow the contours of the land."

Just as aboriginal adolescents embark on spiritual pilgrimages to follow those songlines, so many Americans make their way to the Appalachian Trail to undertake a form of vision quest. To further illustrate this point, Marshall pulled out his guitar and regaled the audience with a song titled "The Appalachian Trail."

"The Appalachian Trail is where it all began. That's where this boy first learned to call himself a man," he sang. "It was the wind that taught me how to spread my wings. It was the path that led me on to other things."

"There is lots of wisdom in the experience of backpacking," Marshall said. "I emerged with a deeper, stronger love of the natural world."

During his journey along the trail, Thoreau's "Walden" was required reading, and he found it far more useful than any trail guide. It helped him to achieve a sense of knowing life at its essence. After he returned to the working world, it was an annotated copy of "Walden" which he received as a gift that led him to realize he was not making the most of his life. One passage particularly struck him.

"If you've been building castles in the air, your work need not be lost," he quoted. "Now, build foundations under them." Thus inspired, he went to graduate school, hoping to eventually find himself in a position where he could "get paid to read and hike." Along the way, he discovered eco-criticism, which is an integration of ecological awareness and literary study. In this branch of criticism, setting -- which is traditionally given the short shrift in literary criticism -- is of great importance. Place matters immensely.

At this point, Marshall segued into the slide portion of his lecture. He presented three series of slides, most providing breathtaking views of the landscapes which so inspired some of America's great nature writers. The photos were taken in the late '70s, when Marshall first hiked the northern section of the trail. He has since hiked the entire length from Maine to Georgia. Most of the scenes in the photographs were in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

He described his encounters with other hikers, each of whom had code names such as "Wolverine" and "the Von Trapps," and pointed out especially remarkable plants or animals. Among his photographs were the largest oak in Vermont and a snake in the process of swallowing a frog.

He spoke at particular length about his visits to the mountain which may have had a

hand in inspiring Melville's "Moby Dick," the various sites which inspired Hawthorne's "The Great Stone Face," "The Ambitious Guest," and "The Great Carbuncle," and to Walden Pond, a sacred site of solitude populated by hundreds of people on a given day. The slide presentation concluded with a sign bearing a quote from nature writer John Muir: "Society speaks and all men listen. Mountains speak and wise men listen."

During the question-and-answer period which followed the lecture, Marshall advised anyone wishing to hike the trail to do as much training beforehand as possible. He warned, however, that no amount of training would be enough, and everyone feels sore when first starting out on the trail.

"I love the whole culture of the trail," said Marshall. Although there are times when modern society breaks into the pristine na-

ture, he said he doesn't mind the presence of other people because the human community is one of finest in the world. He does, however, object to motors, cell phones, radios, and other objects which encroach upon the beauty of nature and the disconnectedness of his trek. In addition to the beauty, he finds the danger of nature exhilarating.

"The element of nature gives it the extra relish," he said. "We use our finest human capacities to the fullest." He concluded his remarks with a proclamation of the connection between children and the natural world, and he encouraged taking children out into nature to satisfy their natural curiosity. He also related its therapeutic and educational value, noting how he's seen everyone from biology students to troubled teens reap benefits from interaction with nature.

Marshall's lecture was paid for by the Mary Behrend Cultural Fund.

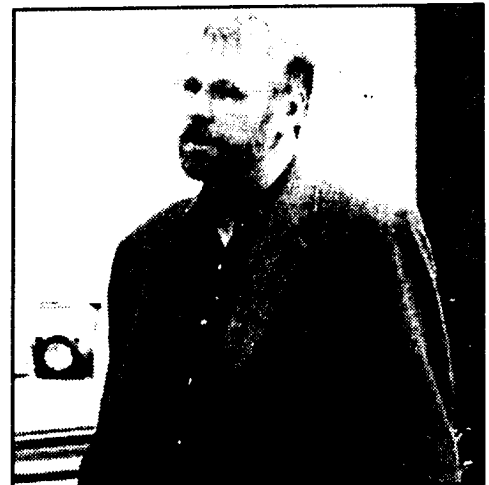


PHOTO BY ROB WYNNE / BEHREND BEACON
Dr. Ian Marshall, author of "Story Line: Exploring the Literature of the Appalachian Trail," spoke on Thursday about his experiences chasing literary visions in the Appalachians.

FROM FRONT PAGE

BREAK

the students weren't working they could rest in comfort. There was ample time for leisure, but most of the remaining days were devoted to labor, which was primarily focused on the preservation of the environment and the provision of opportunities for everyone to enjoy it.

"It was fun to be able to use my skills as a laborer to create things that others will be able to enjoy for years to come," said Rigoni. "I couldn't believe how energized I felt during the long days, even though I was only getting 6-7 hours of sleep a night."

On Monday, the students divided into

groups and tackled three different tasks: planting 200 trees, shoveling sand, and planting a garden with plants native to the area. Everyone worked together on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to build a bridge with a ramp that would allow visitors in a wheelchair to visit the beach.

"We completed a rather large project in a short amount of time," said Pflugh, MIS 07. "We even got to see a lady in a wheelchair using our ramp on our last day. It was really a positive experience." Shroud said that this was at least the seventh alternative spring break at Behrend. Several of the students in

attendance this year had participated in the trip before and returned because it was such a positive experience.

"I went because when I went last year, my relationship with God grew so much," said Webb, MIS 06. "It was impossible to serve bread to homeless, and not see the beauty God put within each of them." One of the most positive aspects of the trip was the sense of community enjoyed by the students, causing them to build friendships that may last long into the future.

"The break was a great experience for all of the students," said Pflugh. "Even though

few of us knew each other prior to the trip, this group of strangers really pulled together by the end of the week."

Shroud said that this trip proved to be an ideal pairing of service to people and service to the environment. She hopes that future trips will be similarly balanced so that students of varying interests can put their skills to the best use. She also said she would like to see more faculty participation in the future.

Any students interested in taking part in service opportunities here on campus should contact Jestin Carlson, president of Reality Check, at jnc118@psu.edu.

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825-3700

THIS GLOBAL PARTY BEGINS

<p>Thursday</p> <p>St. Paddy's Day Wagon Up at 7:00 PM</p>	<p>Friday</p> <p>Wellness (Happy) Hour Begins at 4 PM Ischabaha Live at 6 PM DJ at 9 PM</p>	<p>Saturday</p> <p>After The Parade at 3 PM Ischabaha Live DJ at 9 PM</p>	<p>Sunday</p> <p>Celebrate St. Paddy's Day at The Corner Stone "Special Irish Menu" DJ, Playing the best Irish Music All Day long Be Part Of The 93.9 Pub Crawl * Tune in for details</p>
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We would like to thank everybody who made our grand opening week such a huge success!