

## Three Months Living the Simple Life: One Mont Alto Student's Unique Experience

Dan Erdman

"Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!" Thus wrote Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*, his account of his experiment in simple living. Seeking a simpler life, Thoreau lived for a year and a half next to Walden Pond in a small cabin he built with an ax, contemplating man's existence and the beauty of nature.

Curious as to whether I could duplicate Thoreau's experiment on a smaller scale, and growing tired of conventional living (I also knew that I had no job waiting for me and I would save considerably on rent), I decided when I returned to Mont Alto for the Fall semester that I would live a simple existence on the Appalachian Trail (AT) about five miles from campus.

Thoreau, however, did not have access to the vast technological advances that we do today. There wasn't "Desperate Housewives" on the weekends, computers, the Internet hadn't been conceived, and the automobile was still about a half century off. Uncivilized lands were much more abundant than they are today. It was much easier for

Thoreau to escape civilization in the 1840's than it is today.

Thoreau was not alone in his desire to break from conventional society and live in harmony with nature. John Muir, the founder of the Sierra Club and a staunch conservationist, would often walk through the Sierra Nevada mountain range with minimal equipment in search of the raw beauty and inspiration that nature has to offer.

I had spent the previous summer hiking along the Pacific Crest Trail and had witnessed the beauty of the Sierra Nevada range along the John Muir Trail. I felt a serenity and peace that is difficult to describe. The Sierras are an inspiration to one's soul, and the reason that I think individuals like Thoreau and Muir turn away from the civilized world is to feel this inspiration. I wondered whether I could find this same inspiration living in a shelter along the AT for a semester.

The Appalachian Trail has a network of shelters, small lean-tos with the front wall missing, to provide hikers cover from the elements. I decided to live in

Tumbling Run shelter near Tumbling Run creek. I used the creek and a nearby spring as my water supply for cooking and cleaning dishes. I felt it would be impractical to bathe in the creek, so I decided to shower at the MAC, the first of a few conveniences that I thought was simply too practical to dismiss. I rarely ever built a fire; instead, I used a small backpacking stove for cooking.

I had spent long periods of time in wilderness areas before, but the majority of my time had been occupied with walking from point to point. I found that I spent hours in the computer labs surfing the web, reading the news or playing cards. I found myself without much to do at my shelter besides read and think.

After several weeks, I found it easier to sleep on campus instead of driving or walking back up to the trail; this was accomplished in a variety of ways. The auditorium stage proved a nice flat area to spend the night on. After several nights, though, I soon quit sleeping in the Auditorium after awakening one morning to an incoming class. I soon quit sleeping in

campus buildings altogether after an incident in the Library.

Needing to write a paper (and more importantly, thinking the couch upstairs would make a nice bed), and having no means to do so after 11 p.m., I thought if I fell asleep in one of the quiet study rooms in the Library until after it closed, I would be able to use the upstairs computer to type my paper. Unfortunately one of the campus security officers patrolled through the Library that night and came upon me studiously at work. He asked what I was doing. I gave him an innocent look and said I was writing a paper.

Following the strictest protocol, he called the state police and two troopers came. The four of us held a little powwow in the library foyer. The troopers, looking positively annoyed at being called in for something like this, informed me that I was committing a felony crime of criminal trespass in a building and not to do so again. I agreed and decided to trespass (the misdemeanor sort I hoped!) in Mont Alto State Park and sleep under the picnic pavilion.

The patch of woods near the commuter parking lot soon

turned into a personal favorite spot to spend the night. There was plenty of soft grass to sleep on and I could even throw a sheet of plastic over one of the picnic tables and crawl under it if it started to rain.

I soon ran into some problems that were not so obvious when I began this adventure. I had to keep all of my possessions in my car, and my Saturn was pushed to the limits on space. The trunk was reserved for food and cooking utensils. I couldn't leave these at the shelter, as I feared wild animals or other people would get into them. My back seat was dedicated to clothing and dirty laundry. It soon became quite a hassle trying to keep everything arranged in my tiny cubicle of space.

Annoyed with the difficulties of this lifestyle and the acquisition of a new job, I moved into an apartment in December, vowing to myself that I would some day return to the simple life, only next time in a place much more suitable, like the Sierra Nevada or the Alaskan wilderness.

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## The Truth Behind Intelligent Design in Public Classrooms

Kriscinda Meadows

In 2003 the Michigan state legislature considered legislation that required the state revise its curriculum to include the theory of a Creator via Intelligent Design (ID) whenever Evolution was mentioned. Similarly, in 2004, Missouri's legislature deliberated over two bills, which mandated equal time for ID in classrooms. Neither of these bills passed. And despite the victory in Georgia on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005 that forced the Cobb County school board to immediately remove the stickers that read "Evolution is a Theory, not a Fact," there is

still a heated debate currently over whether or not Intelligent Design should be taught in our public school science classes. Unfortunately, what seems to be a simple question with a simple answer gets more and more complicated as the argument gets more and more convoluted with sloppy reasoning, ignorance and outright deceit.

The Dover Area School District, here in Pennsylvania, voted in October to include in their courses a statement read by biology teachers to their ninth grade students claiming that Evolution is merely a theory and should be taught as such, and

that Intelligent Design is a perfectly good alternate theory, amongst others. This was actually implemented on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Eleven parents backed by the ACLU are challenging this in a lawsuit scheduled for September 26<sup>th</sup>.

Let's look at some of the difference between Creationism and Intelligent Design. First and foremost, ID sounds more academic. While this is an effective psychological tool, it takes more than clever wording to actually make something a science. ID repeatedly pulls

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