

Steve  
WILLEY

# There's no place like Schramm

## Hankering for homestyle residence hall comforts



An open letter to Mr. Doug Zatechka, Director of UNL Housing

Dear Mr. Zatechka:

Recently, nostalgia has been getting the best of me. I constantly long for the peaceful days I spent back in Schramm Residence Hall when I first began my academic saga — days when someone else cleaned my toilet and emptying my trash was as easy as dumping it into the TV lounge.

I fondly remember the great times that were created there. Like the night I took it upon myself to discharge a fire extinguisher into the rooms of unsuspecting students who shared sixth floor with me. I remember telling Jeff Griesch, my student assistant, that I encountered the fire extinguisher on my way to the bathroom.

"Honestly Jeff, it was already goin' off when I found it," I said. "I was sooo scared! I ran from room to room asking for help, but the guys wouldn't open their doors."

Jeff didn't believe my *only* recourse at the time was to stick the nozzle under everyone's door and blast the rooms with toxic dry

chemicals. Just so you know, I still stand by my decision.

Man, those were the good times, and I miss them terribly. But as you probably know, back in 1994 I was expelled from Schramm Hall because, as one of your assistants put it, "Steve violated numerous UNL health and morality codes."

Well, I've been living off campus ever since, and I must admit, it's getting kind of old.

Currently, I share a seven-bedroom house with five roommates. Having so many roommates is not without its advantages. For one, bills are extremely cheap compared to UNL housing's. Also, there's always someone around, which is comforting for people like me who can't stand to be alone.

But that's about where the advantages end and the problems start. As I see it, the main problem is that everyone in the world has faults. (The little sweetheart from the movie "Savannah Smiles" excluded, of course). And when you have that many faults under one roof, there's bound to be trouble.

One of the largest "faults" in my house is the insane belief in the "Trash Fairy." Apparently — and I didn't know this until I moved out of Schramm — every house in America has a benevolent trash fairy who has the sole responsibility of emptying the house's garbage. Did you know this? Do you have a trash fairy at your house?

Seriously, in three years, no one in my house can ever remember taking out the garbage. Mysteriously, though, it always gets done.

Unfortunately, my particular trash fairy must be an alcoholic because sometimes it takes him months to get around to it. As a result, my roommates and I have been forced to master the art of "piling the trash."

With the use of a protractor, a stepladder and our engineering backgrounds, we can pile the trash into enormous heights. Our personal best is 6 feet above the top of the can! It's like playing Jenga for a reason!

Every once in awhile, though, we'll hear a tremendous crash of garbage followed by random cursing. When we arrive in the kitchen, however, the trash is gone and only the lingering sparkle of fairy dust can be found.

Anyway, with so many roommates, it's hard to keep the house clean, especially since some of my roommates have got to be the messiest people in the solar system. My old dorm room was spotless, so why does my living room now look like the comedian Gallagher just finished a show there? My carpet honestly looks like I've been housing families of lactose-intolerant raccoons!

At times my house has been so messy that I've been awakened at night by cockroaches demanding to know when someone intends to clean up the place.

"At first I thought this place was cool," a roach once told me. "lots of food, you know. But God! You've got a banana in the cupboard that's been there for 17 months! IT STINKS IN THERE, MAN!"

Roaches aren't the only creatures we have in my house; we've also got mice, crickets, snakes and a couple of weeks ago, we found a donkey living in our oven. I never saw a donkey when I was living in Schramm — though once, I did find a llama wearing ladies underwear in the basement. I don't blame you, though. I just dismissed that as a fraternity prank.

Bathroom cleanliness is another problem I encountered upon moving out of the dorms. I NEVER realized how much hair guys shed until I moved in with my roommates! Our bathtub drain often accumulates hairballs the size of obese wiener dogs.

None of us is bald, so I have no idea where that much hair comes from. I have, however, formed two hypotheses. I'd appreciate your thoughts, Mr. Zatechka:

1. Chewbacca from "Star Wars" has cunningly stolen a key to my house and showers while I'm at class.

2. Either Art Garfunkel or Larry from "The Three Stooges" was accidentally sucked down my drain but got stuck halfway, leaving only his hair protruding.

I'm also disgustingly amazed at how messy our toilet is. I often wonder if my roommates have any real intentions of urinating in the pot or if they're simply content and proud that they relieved themselves somewhere in the general direction of the bathroom.

And really, we try to keep our house clean but with so many

roommates, messes are inevitable. It's sort of like trying to keep President Clinton lawful; it just ain't gonna happen, you know.

But it's not only keeping a clean house that upsets me. I'm also bothered by my roommates' desires to never admit to anything. Whenever I think about my roommates, I'm reminded of the "Not Me" character that occasionally appears in that pathetic comic strip "Family Circus."

Well, that little son-of-a-bitch is always causing turmoil in my house. So far, "Not Me" has been responsible for flushing my sweater down the commode and constructing a surprisingly powerful pipe bomb out of mouse droppings and a stick of licorice. Again, more problems I never encountered in Schramm.

Well, in March I'll be getting another female roommate. I can only hope that her incessant "freaking out" is enough to promote a cleaner and more suitable living environment.

But just between you and me, Mr. Zatechka, I'm ready to move back — that is, if you'll take me.

I'll gladly spend a couple extra hundred a month to preserve my sanity. This time, I'll even bring my own fire extinguisher. Please find it in your heart to let me return.

Your buddy,  
Steve Willey

Willey is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

### Guest VIEW

## Religion and science not mutually exclusive

**Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part discussion on the origins of life.**

SAN JOSE, Calif. (U-WIRE) — The origin of the universe, of our planet and the species that inhabit it — especially ourselves — has been of pressing concern since time immemorial.

Surveys conducted over the past 25 years indicate that the majority of Californians prefer some version of the biblical account of origins over the scientific account. This isn't surprising. As any student of human nature is aware, people need explanations. The preferred explanation is the one that is easy to understand, emotionally satisfying and spiritually comforting.

In a head-to-head war between bible-based creationism and science-based evolutionary biology, it's not even close. Though the former will win every time — being more popular is not the same as being correct.

I argue that neither religion and science, nor belief in a god (theism) and science, nor religion/theism and evolutionary biology are incompatible or mutually exclusive belief systems. Rather, they exist in two different realms.

Religion is many things to many people and is arguably the most effective means of instructing us on how we should behave toward each other, establishing moral codes and satisfying spiritual needs. Religion is quite good at accomplishing these things but it is not natural history.

While religion and science are not incompatible, what is incompatible is this: a literal interpretation of

Genesis (the first book in the Bible) and all the evidence accumulated over the past 200 years. Science is precisely adept at things that religion is not, and insufficient in those realms where religion excels.

Science is both a way of knowing — a way of understanding the natural (as opposed to the supernatural) world — and a method. In the scientific method, a potential explanation, called a "hypothesis," is only as good as its ability to explain the data, which are objectively observable, measurable and replicable aspects of the natural world.

The data are real while the hypothesis is conditional. If we encounter data that are inconsistent with the current explanation, we modify the hypothesis. In this fashion, although science is in one sense a search for the truth, it is truth with a lower-case "t"; this contrasts rather markedly with religious absolute truth, which requires no evidence to substantiate it, only faith.

Given the evidence from all the biological sciences, the best explanation for the origin and diversity of Earth's species is the evolutionary explanation; i.e., that all living things are related to one another and have undergone changes in genetic makeup since last sharing a common ancestor.

All the evidence available is explicable in terms of the evolutionary model, and there is no evidence that is inconsistent with it. It is not possible in this short a space to fully comprehend the power of evolutionary theory because that requires

familiarity with diverse and numerous data sets. Instead I would like to address some objections commonly raised in anti-evolution discourse. The majority of creationist treatises raise spurious objections to the evolutionary model rather than presenting evidence that actually supports their explanation.

### Random probability

A common objection to do with probability theory, as in "how could an entirely random process like evolution produce anything as marvelous as a (fill in the blank with your favorite species or structure)." This reasoning is fallacious on at least two counts. Put quite simply, improbable events happen. The likelihood of any particular person winning the lottery is infinitesimally small; that someone wins is indisputable.

Add to this that evolution (at least via natural selection) is not a random process. The genetic variability that characterizes all natural populations is entirely random, whether because of mutation, crossing-over events or chromosome assortment. For a particular variant to increase in frequency at the expense of an alternative requires that it confer a reproductive advantage in a particular environmental niche at a particular point in time. This is a decidedly nonrandom process.

### No coexistence

Another common ploy is to bring up evidence of dinosaur and human footprints coexisting in the same

stratum; this is based on some Cretaceous limestones in Texas. Suffice it to say that while what was once thought by some creationists to be dinosaur footprints are just that: heel prints from a duck-billed hadrosaur. What was once felt to be human footprints are toe-claw marks from the same hadrosaur.

This is now the conclusion even of the creationist who first described the site. There are at present no strata containing evidence of both dinosaurs and humans. There is, however, ample evidence that dinosaurs became extinct some 65 million years ago (but not before the bird lineage diverged from them), while a human lineage distinct from the other apes has only been around for a mere 5 million years.

### Missing Link

Lastly, there is the old conundrum of missing links. Why, oh why, if humans evolved from apes are there not perfect intermediates, and/or how come there are still apes? To the first question let me say that our current understanding of the speciation process is such that "a missing link" is a faulty concept. Also the nature of the fossilization process is such that most species that existed are not represented in the fossil record.

Occasionally we're lucky enough to find a fossil such as Archaeopteryx, dated at 150 million years and possessing an even mixture of avian and reptilian traits. As for the second question, it is useful to think of evolutionary lineages as genealogical lineages writ large. No one

discounts they've descended from their parents and grandparents, yet all three generations may coexist.

The fact is that humans did not evolve from chimpanzees or any other extant ape; instead, all available evidence suggests that both share a more recent common ancestor with each other than either does with any other species. One line of evidence for this is that humans and chimpanzees share 99 percent of their DNA sequence in common.

If humans and all species were created in independent creation events, how does one explain the gradient of DNA sequence homology we observe to exist in all living things?

My point is this: It is quite easy to mislead a scientifically naive public with erroneous "facts," misrepresentations and quotes. This is particularly the case when the public is scientifically naive and the explanation being proffered is simple to understand as well as comforting.

Scientists will never fare well in debates with creationists because the format is set up to favor the latter. If you look at all the available evidence the conclusion of evolution is inescapable. If you want to know what is the currently accepted explanation for the origin and diversity of life on this planet, you're more likely to find it in the ages of rocks than in the rock of ages.

— Jonathan Karpf  
The Spartan Daily