



The Evergreen State College - Olympia, Washington 98505  
**THE STUDENT'S OWN EVALUATION OF PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT**

---

Hunter	Ryan	D.	A3529835
Student's Last Name	First	Middle	ID Number
Life on Earth: Postcards from the Edge		01/03	06/03
Title		Date Began	Date ended

---

As an entering freshman, I chose Evergreen for its uniqueness. It provides a learning community like no other, with opportunity abound and inspiration around every corner. My desire to examine the development and progress of life through the scale of geologic time led me to choose to study in *Life on Earth: Postcards from the Edge* as a natural stepping-stone from my fall program *Nisqually Landscapes: Mountain to the Sound*. The intricacies of the natural world have always amazed me and have provoked my desire to understand the relationships between organisms and their environment. In order to comprehend the ecology of today it is essential to grasp an understanding of the biotic and abiotic factors responsible for the evolution of life. To an unanticipated degree, I was able to accomplish this in *Nisqually Landscapes*. In *Life on Earth*, I wanted to push myself (and succeeded in expanding myself) to the next level.

In the first part of the program, I built a basic understanding of the geologic, chemical, and biological factors responsible for the shaping and maintenance of life. As the program progressed, I used these basic understandings to observe the evolution of life from its very beginning to modern times. Biology lectures focusing on changes in carbon and oxygen isotope ratios revealed scientists' tools for peering into the past and aided understanding of ancient climates and organisms, as well as the inception of life itself.

The geology portion of the program provided me with a firm understanding of past and present geologic forces including plate tectonic, glaciers and rivers. Through a field trip to the "Staircase Rapids" area of Olympic National Park, I saw a variety of geologic formations caused by these forces. My journal suffered somewhat during the spring quarter, as a result of overcompensating for the stresses of fieldwork and transcription of historical field notes, but it nonetheless chronicles some significant findings on high-energy sediment deposits while I observed glacial and river sediments.

Through chemistry lectures and workshops, I learned of many stratospheric reactions, as well as those in the troposphere, responsible for the chemical makeup of the atmosphere today. I applied my knowledge of ultraviolet wavelengths, the energy responsible for these reactions, in the laboratory through a series of labs in which I measured UV absorption of standard ion solutions with a spectrophotometer. I used the same procedure as part of my small group research through which I measured changes in nitrate phosphate, and iron concentration of the Nisqually River as it flowed from its glacial source.

I have also started to become more aware of the legacy humans are leaving on earth and the problems we may have to deal with in the future, such as global warming and the end of our human subspecies "hydrocarbon man." I became more aware of the intricacies of anthropogenic global warming while studying both global climate trends during the Neogene and Holocene epochs and the factors that caused these trends to change. The matter is much more complicated and disturbing than I previously thought.

*Life on Earth* provided me with a strong understanding of the living and non-living forces responsible for environments throughout geologic past and modern world. And, I was fortunate to be able to do three weeks of field studies at the Grand Canyon National Park. This program expanded my interest in the natural sciences. I worked very hard and pushed myself further than ever before so I would be better prepared to begin undertaking upper-level work and research opportunities. As a result, I plan to stay at Evergreen and take more programs in the sciences that allow me to explore and expand my interest in ecology, geology, and natural history.

---

Student's signature

---

Faculty signature: Paula Schofield

---

Date

---

Date