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June 10, 2009

Reflections Essay

In my time researching and then interviewing P. Thomas Carroll, I really learned a lot. It was hard to grasp how interesting he was, and how much he had truly done from just reading his resume and the information on his website. However, once I was able to listen to him talk, he was really fascinating. My group was able to learn all about his life, from where he started to where he is now and much of what helped him get here.

To me, one of the most interesting parts of Dr. Carroll's life is his passion for the capital district, especially the city of Troy. I never knew that the city was so important in terms of technology development, which is exactly what he was talking about when he said that it is basically ignored in our current world. I had no idea that there were so many important buildings in Troy that are being torn down due to lack of money. I knew that RPI was in the city, but was unaware of other aspects that make it so important. He informed us that during the industrial revolution, the city of Troy was at the forefront of new technologies. He made me realize how sad it is that just because Troy is a smaller city; it is completely ignored and undervalued. I think his work with the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway to try and increase knowledge about the importance of our region is very important, and I'm glad that he is working so hard to get Troy the credit it deserves.

I was also really impressed that Dr. Carroll spent so much time learning about Charles Darwin. He has an immense amount of passion for the scientist and his dedicated a lot of time to reading and organizing Darwin's letters which is a difficult task,

not only because there are so many letters but because Darwin's handwriting is very difficult to read. As soon as we asked Dr. Carroll which scientist he would work with if he could work with any, he was very quick to say Darwin's name. Although I did know of his interest from reading about Dr. Carroll, I did not realize just how dedicated and interested in Darwin's work he was.

It was also very interesting to learn how On the Origin of Species was titled. Originally, Darwin titled his work "An Abstract of an Essay on The Origin of Species". However, his publisher thought it was too long and simply taking out "An abstract of an essay" would make it more profitable. Even in the 1850s, money was very important and the lengthy title was cut in order to make it a smoother title. Dr. Carroll also explained to us why it took so long for the work to be published. He explained that it probably had to do with Darwin not wanting to make any mistakes in his essay, so he had to be thorough and check everything multiple times. This was not only because Darwin wanted to make sure it was right, but also because in the past he had published reports that had turned out not to be completely true, and he did not want to repeat that mistake.

Overall, I was really intrigued by the fact that Dr. Carroll combined two of his loves, science and history and was able to work with them both. He didn't initially realize his passion for science, but after taking a course in history during his undergraduate studies, he became a history major. I found that this almost comforted me. I am going to be starting college in the fall, and am still unsure of what I want to study. But looking at Dr. Carroll, who proved that it is okay to change your mind about what you want to study, I see that I don't have to have my major picked out already, and I can take many different courses in order to find what I am truly passionate about.