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MACALESTER
COLLEGE

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located at 9550 Inver Grove Trail (Dakota County Road 77), Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION at ORDWAY.

Instruction in environmental principles often meets with complete, sometimes enthusiastic approval only to be torpedoed by some thoughtless act of the listeners. This includes such things as depositing litter in the form of gum wrappers or cigarette stubs; of running and climbing up and down steep slopes which encourages erosion of the hillside soil.

Perhaps the most discouraging thing is to have a teacher or adult present a poor example to his class or group. One science teacher lectured his student group to not disturb things, to leave them untouched and uncluttered; having finished his instructions he took out a pack of cigarettes, tore off the wrapper and tossed it into the grass alongside the trail. Understandably none of the students reacted to the incident; I wonder if they heard what he said or saw what he did. Apparently the two acts did not seem incongruous to the students - a disturbing thing.

It is said that the best way of teaching something is by example. At Ordway we do attempt this. It often poses annoying chores - when one must police the trails to remove paper litter, beverage cans and the like. If this type of debris is not removed it seems to attract more of the same. At times I have had the heartening experience of having visitors join in to remove debris from the trails. Recently one such visitor deposited a broken bottle and a bullet-riddled beer can on the doorstep, a thoughtful indication that someone else cares about such things. I have resisted putting out trash receptacles on the property; such things seem to encourage the appearance of litter - "They must expect picnics; otherwise they wouldn't have waste-cans here."

Environmental education is a continuing process and does not depend only on words or writings. This is one situation where deeds indeed speak louder than words and self-discipline is the key to a healthy outlook on the environment. The ultimate solution to the world's environmental problems begins with each one of us.

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rjc/vmc

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