Project 5 – Geocaching

What a journey it was doing this project. I started off, having registered on www.geocaching.com, feeling very ambitious about this potential new hobby. I knew I was staying around Princeton over break, so I searched the 08544-area-code and found a ton of caches. The first one that caught my eye was a puzzle cache by the name of “Fa fa fa fah, fa fa fa fa fah fuh” (GCT4W3). I read up on its information, and saw that there was a system of equations to solve to get the coordinates. I tried it a couple times, but acknowledging that I had chosen to come to Princeton for Art History and not Math, I gave up.

I moved on to a cache with a Travel Bug, thinking that when I’d find the bug it would encourage me to go geocaching more – strike up a new healthy hobby. It was a Multi-Cache, too, called “Lake Loop” (GCC740) and it meandered around Mountain Lakes park, a place I knew well from cross country practices and dog walks. So I made my way over to the park with high hopes.

With the coordinates correctly entered into my unit and four satellites locked, I selected “goto” as I made my way past the sign at the edge of the parking lot, leaving
behind both my car and my high spirits, though I didn’t know about the latter until I had
gone a ways down the trail. I got to a picnic table and jungle-gym, and was told I was 18
feet away. But, it wasn’t under the table and wasn’t on top of the gym.

So I kept walking and found myself in another patch, off the trail like the site said the
cache would be.
I kicked around leaves, turned over stones, threw tree limbs out of the way, but the thing was nowhere to be found. Then, all of a sudden, after my unit told me I was 1 foot away I was 26 feet away!

What was going on?

I wandered in a familiar direction – back to the picnic tables – trying to follow the decreasing distance to the coordinates rather than the deceitful navigation arrow. I
thought it could’ve been that I was holding the unit in front of myself and was blocking the signal so I did a Tai Chi exercise with the handheld over my head.

I probably looked like an idiot in the middle of the woods.

I was losing patience, when all of a sudden I heard a groan from behind the camera. My girlfriend had just stepped in dog poop and she was not happy about it.
Needless to say, that ended our geocaching for the day.

**Project 5 – Geocaching (TAKE TWO)**

The next day we headed out with clean boots and a new cache to catch. We thought we’d go to a spot a little more familiar, the towpath down by Turning Basin Park. We were headed for “Carol Ann's Mother's Day Cache (from Ryan)” (GCNWP1), and smelled success from the start. Headed down the path for a mere 9 minutes, we came across a path on the right side that went over an embankment with only 50 some feet to go. There, nestled in the niche of a tree….

Was the “Mother’s Day Cache”!
Oddly enough, my unit said I was still 20 feet away from the cache when I was standing over the spot where it was hidden. I guess the trouble is that most caches are hidden in wooded areas and subject to multipath errors, but moreover those errors end up affecting both the person who left the cache (their coordinates are erroneous) and the person looking for it (their unit is erroneous and looking for coordinates that are erroneous, too).

Well, I left a coupon to Market Faire’s Regal Cinema movie theater for a free soda, signed the logbook, and was on my way.

Well, the moral of the story is geocaching is only fun if you find what you’re looking for.