Let me introduce myself. I am Darrel and I spend most of my time living in a Walden Two. Yes, a “Walden Two” DOES exist! I have been asked to describe what it is like to live here in mine.

First, a little history. I was born the year Professor Burris pulled his notes about Frazier’s Walden Two together in the form of the book. If you have read the book, you will recall that Burris visited the utopian community and decided to live there. He subsequently spent a great deal of his time writing in the public relations area. I first read Walden Two in the fall of 1966 when I began graduate school in the psychology department at Western Michigan University. At WMU I accidentally fell into the context of the many "operant conditioners" in my program. Several faculty members knew Professor Burris, Frazier, and their field of the experimental analysis of behavior. Variables at Western Michigan quickly converged to pull together my professional and personal identity. I became a dyed in the wool Skinnerian, and now live in an “intentional community.” A powerful influence was, of course, B. F. Skinner’s book Walden Two.

I had come through many natural science courses during my undergraduate years, all of which established a firmly deterministic point of view. I eventually questioned the possibility of supernatural forces, including a miraculously creative mind. Somewhere during the first few pages of Walden Two it dawned on me that that human behavior was also part of the physical universe and was also governed by the laws of nature, not a free will ordained by a supernatural force. If this scientific conception were true, we could build behavior just as we can build a bridge.

The idea of a planned world that produces behavior by design shook me, but was logical. I eagerly read each new chapter of Walden Two and a purpose in my life evolved--make a better world and live in it piecemeal, if necessary. And I began to wonder why we should continue to build a world that cannot possibly be sustained with the resources Earth has.

Before I move on to other issues let me tell you about Frazier. T. E. Frazier was the man who started Walden Two. He was, indeed, an activist and a visionary. Frazier was around 31 years old when he began forming the community. (Burris asked Frazier to recount exactly how the community got started but Frazier’s notes were somehow lost.) Burris and Frazier enjoyed long and productive lives, refining the details of a science of behavior and promoting behavior patterns typical of the original Walden Two. Sadly, they both died in 1990. Their roles in the community of Walden Two remained significant until their deaths, but both had refused to play any administrative roles because they did not want
the community to depend upon their leadership. They remained relatively quiet and largely out of view and attended occasional professional conferences and speaking engagements. When you listened to them speak, I am told they were much like Benjamin Franklin has been described—good listeners, who spoke briefly and directly to the point. I first met both Frazier and Burris at a Division 25 Hospitality Suite at the American Psychological Association Convention in 1967. Unfortunately, I could not spend significant time with either of them. I had to depend upon their writing which I, of course, studied diligently. Eventually, I did visit with them more extensively.

Let me tell you a little about how I have developed my Walden Two. The process has happened in slow stages. We all begin any enterprise as prisoners of our circumstances and genetic endowments. At the time I read Walden Two, I was preparing to possibly work in a private school that accelerated learning with the application of behavioral principles and I had adopted Frazier’s world vision. But a university teaching position came to my attention when I was finishing my dissertation and I applied for it. This offered the security of working in an established educational system with its health and retirement benefits and I postponed attempting to visit what I thought might be the original Walden Two community. Instead, I began to prepare to eventually live in my own Walden Two by adopting behavioral practices very much like those described by Professor Burris in the novel.

In my Walden Two, members live by a code and each member reviews the code in some way at least weekly to keep on track—in a manner similar to that described in Frazier’s Walden Two. This code is occasionally revised based upon intermittent discussions about problems and trends in the behavior of members. Originally, the community wanted to reproduce itself physically by rapidly acquiring and reproducing members. But world population has burgeoned and population control, not expansion, has taken over as a community objective.

During the latter part of their lives, Frazier and Burris became firmly convinced that burgeoning world population, excessive consumption of natural resources, pollution of the environment, and wars based upon contests for the remaining resources increasingly threatened the survival of many species, including humans. They became pessimistic for a critically important reason—operant conditioning prepares the individual for only a similar environment. We have learned to consume energy and natural resources at a prodigious level. We have acquired pleasures and creature comforts that consume our time and money at such a rate that we work long hours only to have brief periods in which to enjoy them. We cannot imagine a world without smartphones, traveling in motor vehicles, large living spaces, and experiencing a vast media system. But in all of this, humans have lost basic self-supportive skills. Few people grow what they eat, and few know how to prepare basic foods and have no inclination to do so. Few people can play musical instruments, do craftwork, or compose literature that they and others find interesting to hear, see, or read.
We here at my Walden Two have taken personal action to reinvent life. We are moving to a less consuming lifestyle. Like Frazier's Walden Two, each adult member has his or her personal room for sleeping and privacy. We spend a good deal of time in our personal rooms because they offer a retreat from community life and the solitude that brings renewal. Here personal security does not depend upon social or legal commitments. All members maintain a strong caring for each other. Members apply for personal rooms when they reach the age of 18. The community is small and arranged in a network of garden apartment/personal rooms accessible from central halls and outside patio entrances. A central kitchen with a buffet line and a variety of eating areas allows for the semblance of private dining. Members often take their meals to their personal rooms. We maintain an extensive store of food and our gardens and greenhouses supply year around fresh food. There is no fear of manual labor and good exercise happens as a natural course of things. Every effort it made to reduce vehicle use to the minimum necessary.

Our members tend to have good health. The code insists that all members hold their personal weight to ideal recommendations posted in the infirmary. No members smoke. Recreational drugs are rarely used by anyone because all members engage in artistic pursuits, play some form of instrument, sing, and practice a variety of crafts. The natural emotional byproducts of successfully doing productive things render recreational drugs unappealing. Members select their own physicians and dentists outside the community because it is not large enough to support those professional practices.

Our Walden Code requires an enlightened view of the last years and days of one's life. Each individual signs an agreement that the community is not responsible for health care. However, the network of personal living spaces provides an automatic social support network. Individuals are in close proximity to each other without “living in each other’s’ pockets.” When anyone needs special help, members are glad to supply it. Electronic monitoring equipment allows members to live in their personal rooms as long as possible. Our shops are able to create all sorts of prosthetic devices not available in the culture at large. And for the final days, all members have clearly outlined advance care directives refusing heroic methods to keep them alive when death is eminent. Members are given end of life choices.

New members find moving to Walden Two to be a significant adjustment from living in the world at large. Living harmoniously requires rigorous self-management. Unfortunately, the world at large establishes and maintains behavior that is often self-defeating. The struggle for dominance in social relationships is not nurtured and enhanced in our culture. Competition is not honored nor are awards given to those who "win." Instead, cooperation is encouraged. Thus, moving into our community requires a turnaround from the world at large and prospective members have a long probationary period for adjustment.
I have much more to tell about living in my Walden Two but I have been asked for a brief introduction. Stated in the vernacular, “Walden Two” is a state of mind, which can be defined as the strengthening effects of operant behavior when it is reinforced. **It is a way of living, not necessarily a place.** It is a life with the purpose of making one’s world a better place—one in which humans can live sustainably. Anyone can live in a Walden Two because it is the **behavior** you engage in. But the place—the social and physical environment—is important because it sustains the behavior of Walden Two. To produce and sustain “Walden Two” behavior that environment must be designed and redesigned through time as a more sustainable and happier life evolves. Fortunately, one’s Walden Two can begin where one finds oneself—and immediately in a piecemeal fashion. It can begin with one person just like Thoreau, and then two, and then three . . . .

In summary, your environment controls you and if you are to **direct** its control, you must in turn control it. That is how to maintain a designed life—a happier one. And by the way, here is a tutorial from my Walden Two about how to design a happier life: [www.scienceofbehavior.com/enjoylife.php](http://www.scienceofbehavior.com/enjoylife.php)

Thanks for the opportunity to tell you about my Walden Two.

Darrel
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