

FIG LEAVES

Volume 21 Issue 10

November 2012

Nov/Dec Meeting:

The November/December FIG meetings will be combined.

Tuesday Dec. 4, 7-9 PM,
Hannaford Suites, Cincinnati

No Agenda Potluck

Tuesday, December 4, 7-9pm
Hannaford Suites Hotel

As we approach the Solstice and the end of year (perhaps even the end of the world!), we will have a relaxed FIG gathering and potluck to celebrate and enjoy good company. There will be no official agenda for our meeting, but we will have a projector hooked up and can watch YouTube videos as well as play board games and engage in conversations of politics and religion. Of course they will be plenty of time to plan our impending War on Christmas!

Feel free to bring a dish or dessert to share, but it isn't required since we usually have lots of extra food. Also, feel free to bring along board games or cards to enjoy.

Inside

Page

October Meeting	2
Things To Do, Things To See	4
Science Book Club	4
Celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the Voyager Mission	5
Identity Crisis	6
In Memoriam - Remembering Paul Kurtz	7

Events

Nov/Dec. Meeting

Tuesday, Dec. 4th at 7-9 pm
Hannaford Suites Hotel
5900 East Galbraith Rd.
Cincinnati, OH

*The November/December FIG meetings
will be combined.*

Please Let Us Have Your E-Mail Address!

Whenever we send out an E-mail, several rejections are returned. To confirm your E-mail and Snail-mail address if it has changed, please send an E-mail to Brian Sellers at bsellers@fuse.net.

The Torch has Passed



Paul Kurtz
1925-2012

Obituary by Herb Silverman
on page 7

Illustration Copyright Pat Linse



October FIG Meeting:

Cincinnati's Occult History



The Free Inquiry Group featured a Halloween themed program for the October 30th meeting. Presented by Justin Patrick Moore, the program highlighted events and personalities from Cincinnati's past that contributed to the establishment and continuance of the culture of occult practice in the Queen City. Mr. Moore is a local writer who has his own radio show on WAIF FM. He is a self-confessed heathen and practicing pagan, who believes in the supernatural. He has done extensive research on the occult and brought several books from his private collection to share with the attendees. In addition to stories of local

ghosts he also shared the stories of occult heroes who have contributed to the culture in this area.

Halloween was celebrated by pagans in Ireland on the night of the full moon falling in late October or early November. It was a time when tribute was paid to one's ancestors and was considered a holy day. The tradition was continued in America by Irish settlers in the new world. Much like Christmas, Halloween has become a popular secular holiday with its traditions bastardized and distorted by modern celebrants. There are some that still practice the ancient rituals of Magick and the occult, including Halloween celebrations. Justin described how the occult practices survived and are still around even now when the scientific worldview is dominant.

Justin began tracing occult history with local native American tribes. The Adina and Hopewell tribes inhabited this area long before the advance of modern culture. In fact the Carew Tower sits atop a ceremonial mound built by the Native Americans. It is just one of many in this area that are considered sacred, including Serpent Mound, where rituals were practiced and in some cases are still practiced today. Researchers have speculated that these mounds were built to provide for burial space, mark and observe celestial movements, perform rituals and to serve as places to meet and trade.

The first modern era occultist that Justin mentioned was John Cleves Symmes, Jr. A hero of the War of 1812, Symmes lectured extensively on his theory of the hollow earth. He hoped to establish trade with those living inside the earth. Eventually an expedition was planned into the Arctic to find the opening to the hollow earth. The mission was a failure but the leader wrote a story of a legendary white whale that may have been the inspiration for the novel Moby Dick by Herman Melville. Symmes theories also influenced stories by Edgar Allen Poe and other writers.

Journalist Patrick Lafcadio Hearn reported on murders that occurred in Cincinnati in the late 1800's which contributed to the development of the true crime style of writing. His interest in the occult led him to collect stories of ghosts and folk tales. Several of these tales and some of his newspaper writings were consolidated into, *Period of the Gruesome: Collected Cincinnati Journalism of Lafcadio Hearn*, edited by John Christopher Hughes. Hearn was reported to have tried to contact his deceased father at a séance and investigated several hauntings. He also investigated a local →



FIG Leaves - Thoughtful articles, letters, reviews, reports, anecdotes, and cartoons are very welcome. Submit in Electronic format via the internet to figmessage at gofigger dot org; or on disk or typewritten via mail to Editor, FIG Leaves, P.O. Box 53174, Cincinnati, OH 45253. Contributions received before the first Friday of the month will be considered for publication that month.

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John Welte

Memberships run from:

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We request contributions above membership dues. Contributions are tax deductible.



FIG LEAVES



Tarot reader and fortune teller who performed illegal abortions. His writings tell of the difficulties and horrors that women had to endure to terminate a pregnancy. Hearn wrote, "According to all accounts, the den of the fortune teller has been the scene of many a fearful act." Witch hunts of the past may have been instigated in part to restrict a woman's control over her own body. Elimination of those who



provide abortions is still a tactic of ultra-fundamentalist religious conservatives. Hearn later moved to New Orleans where he reported on the practice of Voodoo and is often credited with inventing the city's reputation of being exotic and mysterious. Hearn eventually moved to Japan, where he became a major interpreter of Japanese culture to the western world.

J. Augustus Knapp, an artist, and Dr. Jeriah Dewey Buck were prominent Cincinnatians who were involved with Madam Blavatsky's Theosophical Society in the 1930's. Dr. Buck wrote extensively on the "involution and evolution of the soul," which closely mirrors the Hindu theory of reincarnation. A soul could inhabit bodies through many lifetimes to evolve into "godhead" by practicing certain occult rituals, meditations, and other practices.

John Uri Lloyd was a writer of fiction, a pharmacologist, botanical researcher and a contemporary and collaborator of J. Augustis Knapp in the 1930's. Lloyd delved into the effects of herbal medicines and was a member of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, which practiced séances and the art of ritual lovemaking called Sex Magick. His brother, Curtis Gates Lloyd, was a premier fungi botanist who studied and wrote about mushrooms and their healing and psychedelic properties. It is speculated that John Lloyd's most popular book, a scientific and sexual fantasy titled "Etidorhpa," which was illustrated by J. Augustis Knapp, was inspired by a psilocybin mushroom experience. The Lloyd brothers established the Lloyd Library, which is still operating at 917 Plum Street in downtown Cincinnati. The library contains over 200,000 volumes on the subjects of botany, natural history, pharmacy, medicine, scientific history

and the visual arts. It is home to a wealth of information required by researchers in these and other fields. This is another example of the occult influencing popular culture.

Between 1940 and the 1970's there is little information on occult practices in Cincinnati. In the early 1970's in Mt. Adams, the Dawn of Light Occult Bookstore and the Sign of the Fool bookstore became gathering places and reservoirs of research materials for those interested in the occult. The Cincinnati Order of the Crowned and Conquering Child was established there. Its followers honor Horus, the Egyptian god associated with the Alistair Crowley practice of Magick. They conducted ritual ceremonies at Oz Farm in Brown County. In 1974, one of these rituals reportedly brought Maggie Engels, known as Nema, into contact with a Magus or adept, a powerful being from another astral plane. Two



weeks later Nema reported having a vivid vision which led her to establish the order of Maat Magick. Based on an Egyptian goddess, this order revered the black flame seen in the vision. Together these groups established The Horus-Maat Lodge which combines the two practices and refers to them as the Double Current. From their web site, www.horusmaat.com,



That of Horus, the fiery energy of the vibrant and explosive age we live in today: the 93 Current. Through Love and Will, we channel the Red Flame of Passion. /The Current of Maat, 'The Future Aeon' - Omega Point when N'Aton, the united consciousness of Humanity, awakens: the 696Current: Through Love and Will we channel the Black Flame of Balance. We bring these together.

According to Mr. Moore there is a growing interest worldwide in Magick, Voodoo and the occult. As an editorial aside, I think that this renewed interest in occult practices is in large part a result of people who are searching for meaning in life that is not provided by the world's established religions. As disenchantment of the major religions grows, alternative cultures will probably thrive.

- reported by John Welte



THINGS TO DO....

THINGS TO SEE...



A Request from Emmett Fields,
Bank of Wisdom

Science Book Club

2012 Schedule, books, and dates

All meetings are on 3rd Sunday of month at 2:30 pm. All meetings at the Hamilton County downtown Public Library in room 3A.

November 18 — *The Revenge Of Gaia: Earth's Climate In Crisis And The Fate Of Humanity*, James Lovelock 2006

December 16 — *How We Decide*, Jonah Lehrer 2009



I was wondering if you know of anyone in Cincinnati - or where ever - who would be willing to manage my *Bank of Wisdom* Web site?

If I cannot find a Web Master to manage it, I will let it go down, it is bringing in very few orders and I am tired of pouring money into it. I don't mind paying the website costs, but not the Web Master. The person I have now is doing very little for my money.

If I can find a person, I will offer all my files for free download, and just ask for non-tax exempt donations to maintain the site. If you know of anyone, please let me know. Thank you very much.

Emmett

Emmett F. Fields

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Quote

We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.

Jonathan Swift

Unquote

WARNING: the crumsumpten of alchol may Mack you tink you kan type reel gode.



Quote

The Puritans hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators.

Thomas Babington Macauley

Unquote



Upcoming Meetups

Monday, November 19, 2012; 6:30 PM

Monthly Monday Meetup @ Rio Grande Mexican Restaurant, 40 Carothers Road; Newport, KY 41071

Thursday, December 6, 2012 7:00 PM

First Thursday @ Betta's Italian Oven 3764 Montgomery Road, Norwood, OH 45212 (513) 631-6836

Monday, December 17, 2012 6:30 PM

Monthly Monday Meetup @ Rio Grande Mexican Restaurant, 40 Carothers Road; Newport, KY 41071

Friday, December 21, 2012 7:30 PM

End of the World Party @ Go Bananas Comedy Club, 8410 Market Pl Ln, Cincinnati, OH 45242

Thursday, January 3, 2013 7:00 PM

First Thursday @ Betta's Italian Oven 764 Montgomery Road, Norwood, OH 45212 (513) 631-6836





Celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the Voyager Mission

Carl Sagan Day — November 9

Celebrate with these Event Ideas & Sagan Day Posters

Every November, those of us who love both skepticism and wonder gather together to honor and remember Carl Sagan, astronomy professor, Pulitzer Prize winning author, and the creator of the Emmy and Peabody award-winning PBS television series, COSMOS.

Sagan's birthday was November 9th, but fans celebrate all month long and in a variety of clever ways. Check our Carl Sagan Day Event Calendar for activities near you and let us know if you're hosting a public event so we can add it to the list. Email event info to grassroots@centerforinquiry.net.

How can you celebrate Sagan Day?

Whether you're an independent skeptics group, an astronomy club, a science department, a researcher, a teacher, a student, or just a really big Sagan fan, there are plenty of ways to celebrate Sagan Day:

Host a COSMOS marathon—all 13 episodes are available for free at hulu.com.

Check out Sagan's many books at your local library or bookstore using the thorough listings from WorldCat.org.

Enjoy the special collection of articles by or about Sagan, previously published in *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine.

Listen to Sagan's last public address for the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (formerly CSICOP) as replayed on CFI's podcast, Point of Inquiry: "Wonder and Skepticism."

Listen to Ann Druyan, writer, producer, and widow of Sagan, discuss life with Carl, his outlook on life, and his famous Gifford Lectures, "The Varieties of Scientific Experience," also on Point of Inquiry.

Host your own apple pie baking contest (from scratch, of course).

Dress like Carl for a day!

Refresh your skeptic skills with a review of Sagan's Baloney Detection Kit.

Invite your friends over and try to convince them you have a dragon in your garage.

Take in a star show at your local planetarium.

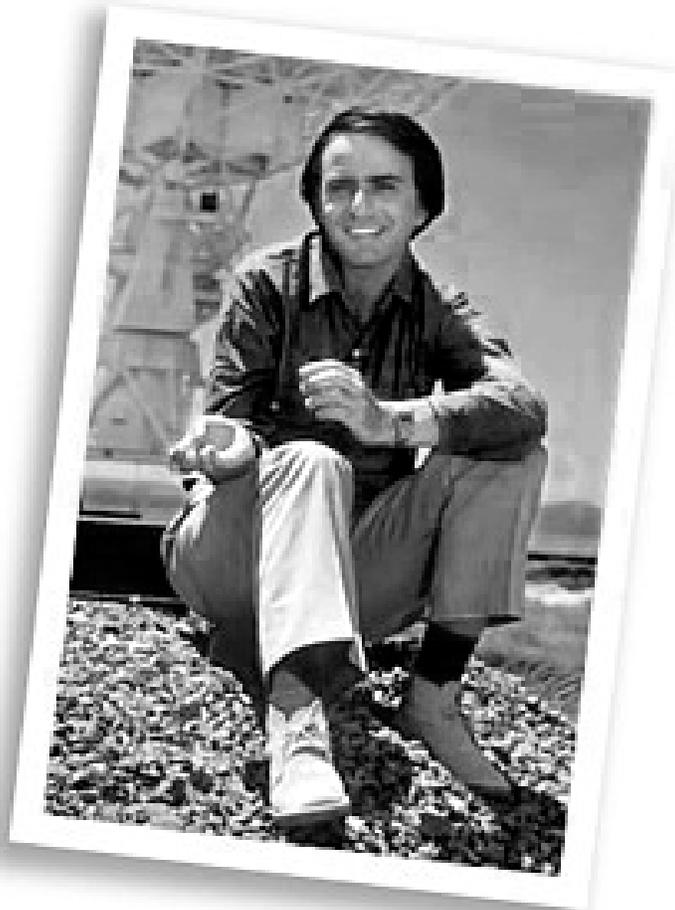
Snag a pair of these gorgeous Pale Blue Dot earrings and coasters from Surly Amy!

Learn everything there is to know about Voyager 1 and 2.

Remember how thrilled you were when you saw the first stunning images from Voyager and go revel in these gorgeous NASA Voyager galleries.

See where the Voyager probes are now! (Yes, incredibly, they are still working and sending back data from over 15 billion kilometers away.)

At the very least, seek out a dark sky, look UP, and reconnect with the grandeur of the cosmos.





Identity Crisis

By Jeanne R. Gaudia

I have no statistics to back up my claim, but I think most people end up in careers that are randomly chosen or haphazardly acquired. You live near a certain industry, or the local college is primarily an engineering school, or your father was a lawyer. For this reason, many people I know have made a career change during their lives at least once; in some cases many times. Only a few people choose careers out of a deep commitment, love or emotional desire to pursue it, and with the exception of these few, a change in career is the norm for most people.

Usually it is not one thing but many factors that are involved in the decision to make a career change—health problems, financial and family-issues, climate and geographical factors, to name just a few, but the main reason I believe is that the initial choice was not seriously considered to begin with.

I would think that there are only a few professions where one begins right after completing school and stays with it to retirement. Those few would probably include the helping professions; teaching, medicine, the arts, music, where a deep, emotional and philosophical commitment is required.

The one that has always seemed to demand the strongest lifelong commitment was the one I had chosen—one that required “a calling” such as the call I felt I had received twenty-five years ago. As a young girl, I actually believed I was hearing the voice of God telling me to spread *His Word*; and I answered it. Now, I was the first woman to head the Presbyterian church in a small Virginia community where I had been born and raised, and was fulfilling what I thought was going to be a lifelong career. But lately some ominous changes were occurring.

When I try to pinpoint the first time that I became aware of the change in myself, I am unable to do it. In the beginning it was such a gradual change. For fifteen years, I had been a minister with a church to minister to and a congregation to preach to. But today these are things that no longer exist for me; and I don’t exactly remember how it all began to crumble around me, but it did. It might actually have been in the middle of pre-Christmas preparation of my holiday sermon which was coming up shortly. The exact moment escapes me . . . but something happened and I had an incident of clarity that was so sharp that its truth staggered me. It was with great consternation that I actually said to myself, “What am I thinking? Why am I telling these lies that I can no longer believe myself? What should I do with this overwhelming revelation”? This experience

might be similar to what a homosexual must feel when confronted with awareness of their sexual identity crisis. At some point they find it necessary to “come out.” Do I have to do the same thing?

For several weeks after the initial awareness I was unable to sleep and I found myself having imaginary debates with myself and members of my congregation that eventually turned into nightmares. Everything I had believed and preached now came under intense scrutiny, and was challenged, and I was no longer satisfied with the answers that I gave. Sleeping through the night became impossible. Most nights I would awaken wringing wet and trembling as if I had actually been in a physical struggle.

One recurrent dream involved standing at the front door of the church I no longer belonged to shaking hands and smiling happily; visiting briefly with each of the congregants as they entered “His house”. . . and at first I would be enjoying the conversations. But before long my parishioners were screaming at me, that I have deceived them and they were turning away and running from the entrance.

Another nightmare involved the rolling, thunderous chords of hymns being played on the organ, an organ paid for by the entire congregation during a two-year-long fund drive, and one they were very proud of. Soon the organ music would become intermingled with sounds of the night train passing through our city at 3 AM, engines roaring and whistles blasting; filling the bedroom and my mind with terror.

But through all of this, “He” did not make an appearance. Yes that’s right, “He” did not show His face once and I did not seem to miss it one bit. It seemed perfectly natural that God was not in this picture, and I knew that my life as a minister was coming to an end, and I had to put some closure to it. After several months of no sleep and many nightmares I decided to seek help and I began to search for a counselor.

A friend put me in touch with a psychologist who after three months of counseling convinced me I was undergoing

a “creative disintegration”; a new personality was being born out of the destruction of the old—and I needed to accept my new identity as a non-believer. He was right. There was no escaping the fact that I had become an atheist and surprisingly, once I accepted that truth, my nightmares ceased. What I needed now was to deal with the practical aspects of the situation, informing my congregation and . . . changing careers.

I saw on television an announcement that the American Atheists were having a convention next week in a nearby city, and I decided to attend. For two days of meetings and lectures I was so moved by the firm convictions of the speakers I heard that I made a decision to come out as an atheist. At the closing ceremony, I stood and recounted my story to over a thousand people amidst thunderous applause. Various newspapers reporting on the convention started broadcasting about a woman who was until recently, a Presbyterian minister and who had, at the convention, come out as an atheist, and of course it became news in my home town.

At this point I had no choice but to “confess” to my congregation and to the church officials who were responsible for finding my replacement as it was obvious I could no longer serve in the role as their “spiritual leader.” I was totally shocked at the notoriety I had developed in my community. It was not possible for me to even go to the local market without being inundated with swarms of people and their questions, accusations and some compliments.

But all that matters to me now is that it is over—my charade of claiming to be spreading the “word of God” was no longer a burden to me and the truth is that there are only two things that I really miss; the relationships with the many kind and caring townspeople who had become my friends . . . and the music—the beautiful soaring uplifting strains of Bach, Handel and others . . . and our magnificent organ. I do not miss God or whatever it is I was talking about for all that time. I felt free.

Now I had to find a job. ☞



Remembering Paul Kurtz

By Herb Silverman, *Washington Post*, 23 October 2012

Paul Kurtz was a founder and a leader, more so than anyone else I have ever known. Before there were the new atheists and their best-selling books, there was Paul Kurtz promoting humanism and skepticism through his many publications and institutions.

When I first met Paul Kurtz in the early 1990s at a meeting of the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), I was enthralled by his presentation in support of living a good and reasoned life without religion. Paul presented thoughtful arguments that described why such a philosophy would benefit humankind. As a skeptic, I pride myself in finding reasons to disagree at least on minor points with any speaker, so I was a little scared that I found none. I had thought that only religious people accepted 100 percent of what they hear from a leader. As a consequence, I became a strong supporter of Kurtz—and a regional director of the Council for Secular Humanism.

CSH was the only nontheistic organization I had known about, and its fine magazine *Free Inquiry* was the only such publication I had encountered. Prometheus Books, another creation of Paul Kurtz, was the only publisher I knew that was devoted to books about Freethought.

As I became more engaged in the secular movement, I began to agree with Paul Kurtz less than 100 percent of the time (a sign that I'm not religious, perhaps), and Kurtz became upset with me when I joined the board of the American Humanist Association (AHA). Both CSH and AHA seemed to be fine organizations worthy of my support, but I soon learned about their divisive history. Kurtz had been on the board of AHA and was the editor of the *Humanist* magazine, which was published by AHA. After Kurtz and the AHA parted ways in 1978 on less than friendly terms, Kurtz founded the *Committee for Skeptical Inquiry*, the *Council for Secular Humanism*, and the *Center for Inquiry*.

Unfortunately, relations got worse before they got better. Kurtz had been a major contributor to *Humanist*



Manifesto II in 1973, a better and more secular document than the *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933. Around 2000, both Kurtz and the AHA thought it was about time for *Humanist Manifesto III*, but who had the right to write it? Both sides threatened lawsuits, and I urged both Kurtz and the AHA to consider how damaging such a lawsuit would be to our movement—regardless of who was in the right.

Fortunately, Paul Kurtz wrote instead a document called *Humanist Manifesto 2000: A Call for a New Planetary Humanism*, and he asked me to be one of the signers. I happily agreed, and was listed seventh.

The AHA came out with *Humanist Manifesto III* in 2003.

Paul Kurtz's greatest strengths were his ability to found and grow organizations. A true visionary, he gave meaning, substance, and a philosophical grounding to the importance of advancing ideas of reason and science over religion. He will be remembered as a significant, and perhaps the most significant, force in the second half of the 20th century in support of secular humanism and living a good life without religion.

In my mind, Paul's greatest weakness was his less than enthusiastic willingness to play well with others. When I helped found the *Secular Coalition for America* in 2002, Kurtz wanted no part of it. He tended to view with suspicion organizations he didn't lead or create, but shortly after Kurtz left CSH, the organization joined the *Secular Coalition*. Like CSH, the AHA also declined at first to be one of the original member organizations, but sometimes it takes changes in leadership to emphasize cooperation over competition. The *Secular Coalition* now has 11 cooperative nontheistic member organizations.

In 2007, I was thrilled when the AHA, at its annual conference, presented Kurtz with its *Humanist Lifetime Achievement Award*, richly deserved. There, Paul Kurtz and I chatted amiably, and I treasure the memory of that time with Paul, whose brush with immortality will be his good works, his influence, and the fine organizations he created and left behind.

Herb Silverman is founder and president of the *Secular Coalition for America* and author of *Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt*.



January FIG Meeting
TBD
Hannaford Suites Hotel



Nov/Dec FIG Meeting
Tuesday Dec. 4th 7-9 pm
Hannaford Suites Hotel



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FIG Leaves
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FIG

Our Purpose

The Free Inquiry Group, Inc. (FIG) is a non-profit organization founded in 1991. FIG is allied with the Council for Secular Humanism as well as an affiliate of the American Humanist Association and of the American Atheists.

Though most of our members are secular humanists, we welcome to our meetings anyone interested in learning about or furthering our purpose.



To foster a community of secular humanists dedicated to improving the human condition through rational inquiry and creative thinking unfettered by superstition, religion, or any form of dogma.

In accordance with our purpose, we have established the following goals:

- To provide a forum for intelligent exchange of ideas for those seeking fulfillment in an ethical secular life.
- To develop through open discussion the moral basis of a secular society and encourage ethical practices within our own membership and the community at large.
- To inform the public regarding secular alternatives to supernatural interpretations of the human condition.
- To support and defend the principles of democracy, free speech, and separation of church and state as expressed in the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

For more information, write the Free Inquiry Group at the address above, e-mail - [figmessage at gofigger dot org](mailto:figmessage@gofigger.org), or visit our web site at gofigger.org or freeinquirygroup.org.