

What Work shall we do as Humanists?

Jeanette Ross

Doubt and skepticism are part of our approach to our cultural 'givens.' This comes out of discussion from Daniel Loxton, editor of INSIGHT at Skeptic.com.

We self-defined skeptics leave few sacred cows unprodded, and for that reason alone are criticized. Many of us even take pride in the quality and character of our detractors. We can, let's confess, look smug, and confident in the rational basis for our take-downs, can feel both misunderstood and superior at the same time.

Loxton is considering a criticism from another writer, John Horgan, who berated skeptics who go after what he calls 'soft' beliefs, like chem trails and the falsification of the moon landing. Horgan argues that we should keep our attention on big issues like global warming and the damage done by modern warfare. Horgan wrote before our November elections, back when the finger on the nuclear button was brown and rational. Now, what's not a Big Issue? Still, Horgan makes a point when he wonders if our ability to identify someone else's poor logic and lack of evidence is enough reason to mock. Should we only speak up when we are knowledgeable on the topic we consider?

In our defense Loxton reminds us that Carl Sagan found energy for both, as an anti-war demonstrator and a scientist dismantling various mythologies. Sagan went into murky territory and urged us to do the same, to be a public voice for science and logic, even when we are not experts on the issue.

One reader suggested in the comments that we each find one action, one cause, at least, and find a way to work on it. This may or may not include letters to the editor. Ideally our choice makes us a little uncomfortable at times, and puts in conversation with citizens who do not agree with us. I'll add that we can participate in what were once called the liberal arts — attend a poetry reading, dance recital, local theater. Read a good book. Find something to be positive about while remaining skeptical. And we can educate ourselves in one important area, as I show in the life of one interesting man, in this issue of Secular News.

President's Message

For anyone who might be interested, I will be speaking to a gathering at BUUF (Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship) on Sunday, July 16, at 11:15 AM, in the library at BUUF, 6200 N Garret, Garden City. The talk will be about my journey to Humanism, involvement in Humanists of Idaho, duties of a Humanist Celebrant, and some discussion of Humanist Philosophy. Bring your questions; I will do my best to answer them.

Monday, July 17 will be our next meeting at the Flicks. There is no speaker or program scheduled. Instead, this event will primarily be a corporate meeting, and we will be discussing the recent merger with ISOR, possible changes in HOI organizational structure, Board of Directors, and future scheduling specifics for corporate meetings. Meeting is open to the public, and I would encourage all paid members to attend, and provide input toward proposed changes. The top issue will be when, where, and how often to have corporate/Board of Director meetings, to plan events, approve spending, and strategize about the future. We will also be discussing adding one or two leaders from the merged ISOR group to our board of directors. We have 2 board positions open, and if we have a sufficient turnout to the meeting, a vote on officers could be held to fill those positions, assuming we have candidates.

HOI/ISOR will have a booth at Goddessfest 2017, July 22 & 23, at Julia Davis Park. Come on down, enjoy the festivities, stop by the booth, and say hi to the crew. We could use a few volunteers to help staff the booth. Anyone who has two or three hours to spare, either day, can contact me directly at CelebrantVan@gmail.com. The work is easy. Hand out informational materials and talk to people. I try to schedule 2-5 people at a time, to facilitate breaks and conversation. Goddessfest is a lot of fun, color and diversity, as well as good food and live music. Jan will be nearby selling her jewelry, so stop and say hi to her, too.

Mia Russell of Friends of Minidoka and Japanese Internment camps will be giving a Presentation of the history of Japanese Internment camps at noon on Sunday, July 23rd. Check in at the meetup page for specific details.

We have two more activities, a book club meeting August 5 and a community cleanup on the 13th. See page 8 details.

HOI president D.G. Van Curen

Based on interviews by Jeanette Ross

His path to a personal philosophy:

Woody learns from native people

“I became interested in Native Americans when I was a little boy living on the Snake river plain in Rupert, Idaho. I was able to find arrowheads made out of obsidian and agate and stone— and I thought they were ancient artifacts from thousands of years ago. Later I found that they were not that old, they were probably fairly recent. I was somewhat impressed with the history of native Americans. A friend of mine had an eagle bone whistle passed down a couple of generations from Custer’s Last Stand, one of the whistles used in the battle. I didn’t realize then that it was only a lifetime from the time of Custer’s last stand to the time I saw the whistle. I had a vague understanding in this.

My wife and I adopted a boy 7 days old. He weighed 4 pounds. I believed him to be Native American because he had brown skin and was born in Idaho Falls. But we were unable to open the adoption records until he was 18 years old. It turns out he was Native American and his people lived at Fort Hall, (the Shoshone-Bannock reservation in southeast Idaho.)] I wanted to give my son some of his heritage but most people didn’t know anything about it or if they were Native American they wouldn’t talk to me or tell me anything important. It turns out they suspected my son was an Indian and I somehow stole him from the reservation; they wouldn’t have allowed him to be adopted outside of the tribe if they’d had knowledge of it. And they’re not thrilled about white people raising Indian children.

I’d learned enough to make arrowheads; I’m a flint napper. I like native crafts. To further my ability to make native crafts I took a class. When I got to the class there was no instructor. I asked the other students if they’d like to see my craft. They were amazed by them. One fellow took particular interest in me and asked about my family; I said my son’s a Native American. He assumed my wife was a native person and asked if I’d come to the Snake River Corrections which was the prison there in Ontario, and do native ceremonies. He suspected I knew quite a bit.

I told him I didn’t know that much about native traditions, but I was available and we’d go from there. He met me at the prison and took me in and introduced me to the Native Americans there. He explained that they could not do ceremony without someone from the outside coming in and supervising. They did have their own special area set aside.

Idaho Society of Reason has now joined with Humanists of Idaho. <http://meetup.com/nontheist/events> They meet 2nd Sunday in Boise, 4th Sundays Nampa at noon. Watch for any changes.

Objectivists meet last Wed 6pm , varying restaurants. Contact is Tim Scharff , scharffdesignworks@icloud.com

There were men from many tribes, all over the northwest, even Navajos and Nez Perce and Sioux, and Blackfoot. Many tribes, Slats and Yakima, the fish people were represented. Native American took on a multifaceted meaning because most of these people were completely different from each other, didn’t have a common connection. But the Lakota let their ceremony spread across the country and so most people followed Lakota ways, although they grumbled and mumbled that they wanted to follow their own ceremonies.

I was open to whatever ceremony they wanted to do, and there were ceremonies by Cherokees, Osage, some by the Slets, Modocs, the Piutes, the Yakimas— they all had sweat lodge variations particular to their own groups. One of the ways we started the ceremonies, because we had no experts there, was to say we would do it in the best way we knew how to do it. Everyone was certain that it was okay to do it that way.

In the meantime I looked for an elder on the outside of the prison who could give me a little bit of help. Ralph Redfox, who was a Cheyenne elder, lived his life as an interpreter for the BIA and worked also as a carpenter, so he had pretty extensive knowledge of the people and the ability to express it. But he had moved to Boise. He goes back to the Lame Deer reservation, which is the Northern Cheyenne, and he goes to Bear Butte, which is in South Dakota, a holy mountain where his ancestors went to pray and get directions.

He went with me to prison three times over five years. We built a sweat lodge and a fire and invited whoever wanted to come and do ceremonies in his backyard. I did this to make sure I was authentic. I didn’t want it to become a gang related event or something pro or anti Native American.”

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Humanists of Idaho, a chapter of American Humanist Association & Council for Secular Humanism, is a nonprofit corporation promoting ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism through public awareness, education and community involvement. We will meet July 16, upper room of the Flicks, Boise, with discussion and dining at 6:30pm; business 7pm.

Officers for Humanists of Idaho

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On his path *Woody Weyerman continues from page 2*

“Ralph Redfox called me up early one morning and said, “It’s time to go to the mountain.” I said, wait a minute, I need to organize my schedule. He said, well, now’s the time to go, be over here tomorrow. And so we headed out to South Dakota.” This was in June. He was anxious to get there around the equinox. We stopped at a place in Wyoming called the Big Horn Medicine Wheel. The park ranger explained that no one knew the origin of this wheel or the purpose of it, but Ralph seemed to know a lot about it and took us up there with our pipes and said, this is where you should pray and what you should do and we did that.

It was really cold, there was a little snow blowing on us. I carefully looked over the medicine wheel, noted what direction different parts of it were and where we were instructed to pray. He gave me no idea of the purpose of our being there, he just told us what to do.

We went from there to Bear Butte. We sat around the campfire a couple of days and then he pointed up the mountain and says, go up over just over that little ridge and take the pipe. He didn’t tell me what to look for or what to do. When I came back down he asked what I noticed, and I said, ‘nothing.’ He says that was where Sweet Medicine’s teepee ring is. (A medicine man from the past) When they’d move they left their teepee stones behind. The stones were still there in the grass; I didn’t see them, the grass had grown up to hide them. So I wasn’t getting any extraordinary powers from this.

And so he sent me further up the mountain to pray and make prayer ties with tobacco and put them in certain places and come back, and I did that. Then he told me to go up the mountain and spend some time there. I did that, I climbed clear to the top of the mountain and was sitting there observing where the valleys were, where the people camped and where the elders camped. Several eagles came, riding the air currents where I was, there were six of them. I stayed awake all night and watched the stars and where the stars were in relation to the mountain and Sweet Medicine’s campsite. I realized that the door to his teepee opened exactly south of the highest point on the mountain according to the North star.

I decided to pay attention to the sun and how I

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 More at www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Idaho.

did things. I went directly to the prison and did a sweat lodge and noticed that they drew a circle on the ground and put a cross in it. I asked them why they did that and they said they always did that in front of the door to the lodge. I asked them what direction and they said it pointed to the east; they had arguments with each other on where east was. I thought, since east is important and where the sun comes up is important and they anciently did prayers at sunrise there was some connection between east and sunrise. I went home, put a twelve foot pipe in the ground and started observing where the shadow fell. The first thing I marked was the shadow where the top of the pole crossed a line with the North star; I figured out where north was. Opposite of the shadow was south, and that’s where the sun was at high noon. I got my watch and checked it to make sure it was directly south at noon, it wasn’t. Then I realized we were at daylight savings time and I was off. I corrected for that and was still off, then realized that every latitude has its own time zone. We have time zones but they are conventions, they don’t really line up with the sun. One spot on the time zone will line up at noon but most of it is way off.

And so I would go out and put a stone at the end of the shadow as it crossed the north line and noticed each day the shadow get longer. I made it a goal to put a rock to line up with where the sun came up every morning. I noticed how each stone went a little further south each day. I took a long string that radiated out from the pole and drew a circle. When I got the complete circle made and stood by the pole I realized that I was standing inside one circle and the horizon was a bigger circle.”

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Woody's Path, his own Medicine Wheel *continued from page 3*

"It took four years to get all the coordinates I thought were important by going out every morning when the sun came up and went down at night. After I went through that I could go to any medicine wheel, I could get up on a knoll and look out and the whole sky looked like a big circle and all the coordinates fit exactly as they did at my home medicine wheel.

Right away I went up on the hill a mile from my house and made another one. No matter where you made this wheel and lined it up with the north star you knew the time of the year, the time of the day, east and west, all the points of the compass and you had an excellent navigation tool, because if you sighted across the wheel or even a drum with this square on it, if it was lined up with the north star, one spoke with a mountain on one side of the valley and another spoke with another side of the valley, you had coordinates to find yourself back to that exact spot. I don't know how many Native Americans actually used this but I look at their drawings, particularly in the South West and they had patterns very similar to those I made on my wheel, with pictures of the corn being planted, harvested, a time of rest, the things that were seasonally oriented could be measured on this wheel.

I haven't gone south of the equator but in Yuma AZ the coordinates work as well as they do in Idaho or Montana. The key to the whole thing is a circle with a post or tree exactly in the middle of it. I got to looking at lodges of some of the more knowledgeable, they line up with the equinox, the solstice. How they come to it, I don't know. When I'd talk to Indians about it they didn't know about it from personal experience; the elders tended to the lodge and knew what time of year it was, knew there was a good time in summer to get together with other tribes and have social events. When fall came they knew when to put food away for winter. Before this I believed they went by animals growing fur, trees changing color. I now believe they had a much more sophisticated way for knowing the seasons. They would see these things happening, which would confirm what they learned from the sun.

I don't know who their fire keepers were but they had use for the older people to tend the fires; they also knew where the game was, they would listen to the hunters and disseminate information about where game was found, where to say prayers— all of these were clues as to how to live their lives, how to listen to mountains, how to listen to the trees.

When I was listening in the prison I'd hear concerns about how the older people were dealing with the weather, this was about the time they went to hunt, this was the time when they had their sun dance and pow wows. They seemed to be following a calendar like everyone else but they were also concerned with what their ancestors paid attention to. The men I knew didn't know how to explain how these calendar dates were set— they trusted the elders who kept the explanations.

For each ceremony, it was important to the natives to have lava rock with holes and that our lodge be made out of red willows. That was the consensus. It was important that a circle be made with 28 holes around the edge. Before each ceremony we put tobacco in each hole and blessed it. There was a particular order for each person, the door either on the east or west. Everyone was in agreement that it should be one or the other. Some wanted both.

It was important to heat the stones with wood that had not been run through a saw or cut into boards. It could be sawed logs or chopped wood but not 2-by-4 or other lumber. But they were opportunists, they used what they had. Quite often they used wood that wasn't exactly the best but I did my best to get the right kind. I would gather the willow, made a bundle which got inspected by security. Security would also inspect the stones and put them in the ceremonial area. All things were purified by smudging and prayer before we could use them in any way.

The ceremonies were all about the creation of the earth. It was important that the stones be heated because they were going to speak to us. We'd heat the stones until they were red hot at the same time we put blankets over the willow frame. It was big enough that if we made two circles and sat shoulder to shoulder with our knees pulled up, with another person sitting right against our knees we could get 35 in the circle at the same time.

We had medicines that we would make offerings with, like a little bit of sage or grass, or lavender to send to the other world. It would burn and we could smell it and then it would disappear into the other world. When it would disappear it was in the other world, and the significance of that is that it took our prayers with it to the Creator.

When everything was exactly ready we'd shut the door of the lodge and it would be pitch black except for the stones in the middle. We'd ladle water on the stones, breathe deeply to take in as much steam as we could because that represented the Creator's breath and we were becoming part of creation by breathing his breath. Each stone that we put in the pit in the center represented part of the creation and the stones coming out of the water and making the continent. The American continent was called Turtle Island, because it was the back of the turtle and you could see the back of the turtle in the firepit as you put each rock in there.

Each person said their own prayers, one at a time. We would do four rounds, which would mean opening the door and bringing in the stones four times. Whoever was leading the lodge at that particular time would tell us the things we should be concerned about with each door opening and what our lodge should be concerning, whether it was the women and children, the elders, the farmers, the fishermen, whoever. Usually we'd sit in the lodge for about four hours. Everyone had the chance to say what was important to them, important about their families."

The value of the prison sweats for Woody page 5

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Woody on the Sprituality of Native Men in Prison

“You could not lie when you said your prayers because your words fell on the floor while what was in your heart went to the Creator. You might fool the guys around you but the truth still went to the Creator because it came from your heart. It was amazing how many of them were able to overlook their grudges with the person sitting across from you or next to you. They might complain at them or say their piece at them but then they’d let it go in the lodge. I thought it was quite a remarkable social and spiritual happening.

The way they set up the altar to invite spirits whichever spirits were important to them into the lodge varied a lot. Some of them were followers of medicine lodges for example; they would have no part of the sun dance. Sun dance people gave up their life for the community; they lived right on the edge of life and death for their community. They had quite a different way of being and were respected for certain things. Sun dancers danced four days without food or water, tied to a pole. How they stayed alive, I have no idea-- or some idea. They became so weak they could easily die if the Spirit let them. They want to be on the edge of another world; in doing that they had different spiritual powers than anyone who had not participated.

Afterwards their demeanor would change, their values would change, people would look up to them because there’s no personal reason to do it. What it amounted to is giving something to Spirit and their culture at the same time. Some of the men in prison had sun danced five or six times. Some of the people in the prison were elders on the outside, before they went in.

Most Native Americans live their life as the Spirit tells them, not as their neighbors tell them or buddies tell them. Frequently they run into the law because they use drugs or their family is more important than their job; and so they end up in poverty because they are taking care of, being with their family. They get involved in selling drugs. Basically their values don’t fit well with the American values of going to work every day, taking a two week vacation. They want to be with their family and do ceremony whenever the need arises.

Our culture punishes them really hard for that. They become disgruntled, they turn to drinking, mainly anything they can do to survive. But since they’re disfranchised, there isn’t much to turn to. The things they did traditionally, in the past, which made them great hunters-- they’d hunt, be back to families, there was always someone taking care of the families, doing what needed to be done. Since that’s been disrupted they don’t have much to hang on.

There are two distinctions currently, urban and traditional Indians. In some ways it’s possible to be both. I met one who’d sun danced-- he’d been in the Vietnam war, became an attorney, a district attorney, said it was time to sun dance. Afterwards he was more welcomed by the traditionals who saw that he was willing to give his life for his culture. He didn’t see one culture as better than another.

The ones who started the sun dance were Lakota people. Since they came west they married into the Slets, Umatillas, Modocs, and spread the practice of the sun dance. Now there are several kinds of sun dance, although they are all similar there are different purposes for each one. I’d say the tribes of the Northwest have pretty much adopted some form of the sun dance. They include all of the essentials (tied to the pole, swinging from a pole). They will not talk about it with those who are outside, who did not see it.

There’s one thing different between natives and the Christian culture. Christians have adopted the idea that pain should be avoided and Jesus was the last one who had to suffer for his people. He suffered for everybody. But the Native Americans think that each one of them has the opportunity to suffer in the way that Jesus did. Something pretty common among all the native people is that suffering is a noble and worthwhile practice. This really separates them from the Christians. While they are experiencing pain for their people, Christians are busy avoiding pain for their people and themselves. I was shocked when I found myself experiencing pain in a sweat, as a good thing. The first time, I passed out. My body was not in any way prepared.

The sweat lodge gets so uncomfortable, so painful that unless you remember you are there for your people and to put your prayers to the Creator, it’s totally unbearable. It would be for me, anyway. It has to be for some reason other than yourself. For yourself, you’d get up and run out of the lodge immediately.

The real change is what happened to me. I went out to the prison to see what it was like and to participate and be available. I came away understanding that the rocks in some way did give me wisdom, did give me understanding, that the trees in some way communicated with me. Even the rocks that I gathered seemed to talk to me. When I’d get them all loaded in my pickup I would see just the right amount of rocks, the right size. I took in new willows once a year. Each spring we’d build a new lodge.

I was making it possible but seldom did I lead it. Only a handful of them accepted me as a person. My son who is Native American did his first and second ceremonies in the prison; he was really accepted, I was tolerated. In many respects I was just a tool for them to use. But if I needed a ceremony or a prayer for my family they did it. I wasn’t shunned, just never 100 percent accepted. They were always surprised I was there when it was ten degrees below. I’d do anything they were willing to do and for the same reasons. It did allow them to make amends to their creator, and when they left the prison they give the prison and ceremonies credit for retaining-- or gaining-- their own culture. What they learned from their fellow Native Americans actually gave them their culture back because they didn’t have it when they went in.” *Conclusion is on page 6*

Summer Sages

The Boise Unitarian Universalist Sages have been meeting for three-odd decades now, admission based on having a (2nd or 4th) Thursday morning free to enjoy a no-host breakfast, friendly conversation, and a variety of interesting presentations. We meet next on July 27, 9:30am at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way), and are happy to welcome newcomers. Why not give it a try? Contact Tom von Alten at 208 378-1217 or tva@fortboise.org for more information.

BUUF Humanists next meet informally for conversation, a 3rd Sundays, July 16, 11:15:am, in the Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship library. Sages meet 9:30am, July 26, at the Kopper Kitchen, near the Boise airport..

Pagans and Christians

 notes from Jeanette Ross

Robin Lane Fox' learned, detailed study of the Mediterranean world from second century AD to the legitimization of Christianity by Constantine, sat in my library, glancing down (I imagine) with a tight-lipped frown, for several years, until I brought it out. These notes are barely a start.

At this time, non-Christian public life supported a sense of community with civic festivals and temples related to private cult associations. There was some commonality but no orthodoxy—no heavenly rewards for the pure and in fact not much purity. One of those cults, which we now label as Christianity, was different in one way. Christians incorporated the persecutions they experienced under Roman authority into part of their story, as the personal costs for sin. They built an institution on anxiety, which by a twist of one man's experience turned into the only allowed religion of an empire. The result: a blend of authoritarian state and one cult's death-obsession that damaged a diverse and mutually tolerant source of civic pride for an entire region. This was an unplanned outcome. Christians did not have civic duties; in their system to believe was to be saved. And yet in many practices within their own faith, Christians incorporated both ceremonies and festivals with the personal involvement and mutual group support of the earlier cults.

'Cult' is descriptive of private group devotional practices as contrasted with civic observances. 'Pagan' to early Christians identified the unbaptized who refused to join God's army against Satan. Fox uses 'pagan' for those who participated in ritual with only the expectation that their choice of deity might be paying attention and be pleased; they did not have to accept a creed or doctrine or covenant to remain faithful. Members of cults often were part of several different cults as well as civic activities. The first shared gods were shared in communities including Rome, Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor and Syria.

By the time covered in this book, the gods of Egypt, Asia Minor and Greece were well known and considered ancient (only Mithras and Silenius emerged within the time period covered by this book). Practices and favorite stories about the gods varied by place and modified over time—the closest they get to a universal faith is a shared affection for Homer. Philosophical inquiry was advanced and included the nature of the gods— but there was no atheism in our sense— even the most skeptical, who attempted to shear off absurdities of belief and practice, believed that there were gods responsible for great natural catastrophes, to be appeased by shrines and appropriate observances. Those few who suggested that gods are simply unknowable and can only be described by extension from the ways of humans— these were ignored. *Continued on page 7*

After the Sweat lodges

Woody continues from page 5

"The prisoners could talk to each other about their concerns and regrets inside the prison and quite often they did that inside the lodge; the thing was, anything that was talked about inside the lodge couldn't be talked about outside the lodge. A few of the prisoners were really knowledgeable about their tribe's ways and they participated fully in the ceremonies. They did a few things that got them into the prison that they were really sorry for. And some of them wouldn't even lead the ceremonies because they believed that what they did was really wrong and they were unworthy to lead the ceremonies. But they would teach other people to lead the ceremonies. One way or another they passed on traditions they wouldn't have been able to pass on otherwise, and others wouldn't have been exposed to them outside of the prison setting.

My participation ended when I had an unfortunate experience. I went out to do a ceremony on a foggy day and left my medicines in the chaplain's office. Somehow the officer with the drug dog came around and decided they were contraband and confiscated them. The officials said they were certain I was bringing in all kinds of illegal drugs. While they were doing an investigation on me they found that I had accepted a collect phone call from an inmate. That was against the rules. They suspended me for an entire year. During that year I made the decision not to go back into the prison, I had served there long enough. After they said I had drugs they didn't send any of my medicines to the drug lab. They wanted to teach me a stern lesson that I should not go against their wishes.

The Christian people really did not like the Native American ceremonies. They thought they were heathenistic, had no redeeming value. However, after I left, they got a Native American from the outside to lead their ceremonies, and so in some ways it was a blessing to them that I had kept things alive. It turned out quite well, actually. Also, while I was working with prisoners inside the prison I was not allowed to have contact with anybody on the outside who was on parole. Since I have left the prison I have contact with people on the outside. Everything has its time and place. The only qualification that I've ever had is that I was available."

Pagans and Christians *continued from page 6*

This book covers a period of relative peace in the lands of ancient civilizations. Cities that might have started small, with connection to one protective deity, began to benefit from wealthy families that subsidized construction of a temple that honored a community Protector or connection to a particular hero of legend. A statue was carved to provide focus for prayers and sacrifices. A priest was hired, a festival day appointed, and the neighbors called over for a dress-up procession with singing, incense, a speech of praise for the deity, the sacrifice, roast and sharing of a fine large animal.

Then someone discovered another important god born in the neighborhood. Cities combined civic and religious pride with an understandable desire for the benefits of a well-attended yearly festival. More temples, evidence of the devotion of more wealthy families, led to even more, until traveler's accounts describe town centers chock-a-block with temples and shrines. Some cities sold off the priestly position, with the understanding that the priest received a share of what was left at the shrine. Several communities still have a cave that was the birthplace of Zeus. Shrines were typically in natural places considered holy—on a mountain, a cave, in groves, by springs or pools. Many caves were associated with Dionysus. "On Samos, people explained the redness of the local stone as due to the blood of the Amazons who had been killed there by Dionysus." An underground river near Seleucia was the monster Typhon. Apulius, in a court pleading, described his rival as 'a scoundrel who would not bother to honor country shrines.' At those shrines, 'people came together to offer sacrifices, hold parties and drink.' The wealthy had small shrines on their country estates, where they offered a prayer and a wish before going out to hunt. The rites to wish for a good harvest were honored by the landlords. Sacred groves protected deer, birds, dogs, snakes, suppliants and escaped prisoners. Preservation and replanting of such groves were reinforced by codes and practices.

An individual could buy a small land site, pay for a small temple, and set rules for observances there. These might eventually become popular enough to receive public support. There were family shrines, Greek cults of the hearth. Schools had a school cult figure, festival day, regular offerings—see Tertullian's description of a schoolmaster in a north African town, collecting fees for offerings to Minerva from pupils, maintaining regular sacrifices, holding prize-days when civic dignitaries came.'

At first, those who wished to continue to receive respect after death paid family members, but this was less certain than forming private associations, funerary organizations banding together to hold ceremonies of remembrance for those who did not have funds or influence for a city-wide recognition. The recorded rules of the Iobacchi p 85 sound like rites of the Masons or Elks lodge today—complete with calling for the question and voting to acquire a new statue. There were votes for officers with titles, terms of membership including a vote of other members to include. Special officers maintained good order. Meat and drink were accompanied by speeches. And the burial club provided a wreath plus a jug of wine to be shared by mourners. There may have been some sorts of sacred drama as part of the ceremonies. One club, founded by a slave, provided funerals for slaves.

Practices varied by temple. In some oracles, Apollo asks for bloodless sacrifice, while in others he prescribes exactly what to sacrifice in his name. Egyptian priests might open their shrine every day, offer food, clean up—it was a full time job and paid as such. Some Greek temples had similar rules, with a choir that sang hymns each morning with the opening of the shrine. Others could be entered privately with permission of the residing priest. Still others were open only for the annual festival time. Some of these festivals had become extended and elaborate—there might be a *paeseo*, a walk through the city center, that included a cadre of singing children and a silent procession of the dignified, fabulously dressed notable families. There could be a dedicated sacred way to the shrine p 66. Each city would send envoys to invite neighboring cities. Attendance and local sales increased dramatically if the governor attended; which encouraged holding court at the same time. And what a natural combination with a market and fair!

For festivities, a clean white robe was good. The wealthy brought oxen, with gold foil horns, to vie for the privilege of being sacrificed. Garlands of flowers hung on temples and some homes. Statues of the Honoree were carried, dressed in new robes, to preside. Bands were hired, wind instruments and drums, accompanied dancers. Old songs and new hymns of praise, formal and spontaneous, were sung; poetry was declaimed. Candles, incense, embroidered vestments were all part. Bigger festivals had plays, dramatic mimes based on Homer, and prizes for acrobatics, conjuring, spoken panegyrics. And the prostitutes were there, teams of whores regularly following the festival route.

Remember an address from Richard Carrier on National Day of Reason a few years ago?

Author and historian Richard Carrier will be at Pengilly's Saloon in Boise (513 W. Main St.) from 7-10pm on Wednesday August 9. He welcomes anyone to join him for drinks and chat, and will have books available to sell and sign. Dr. Carrier delivered a rousing speech on the separation of church and state on the Idaho State capital steps in 2015. He'd love to see again many of the great folks who joined him for dinner and drinks after. For more about Richard Carrier, see richardcarrier.info.

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MORE UPCOMING EVENTS for Humanists from Van

Boise Rationalist Book Club meets 1 PM, August 5th at Moxie Java, 4990 Chinden. The topic will be Mary Roach's book, *Grunt: The Curious Science of Humans at War*. The book is a look at many things associated with war, including those not generally considered, from mental stresses to clothing issues.

On Sunday, August 13, 9 AM at Ann Morrison Park, we will be having a community service day. Come on out, help a little, and enjoy some fun in the sun. The group will meet at the Pioneer Bridge picnic area, and the goal will be to do some Greenbelt cleanup. Mainly picking up trash in about a half mile area. A meal stop afterwards has been suggested, but isn't set in stone yet.