



CUF Links

The Monthly Newsletter of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship
A Welcoming Congregation

- a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist association -

September 2009

SUNDAY SERVICES

held in the Fellowship Hall at 10:30 a.m.

9/6 "Homecoming Sharing of the Waters"

Our children will join us in this intergenerational service that celebrates our connections throughout the world, sharing waters, rocks, and possibly other items that symbolize our travels. We're still experimenting with the form of the service, as we attempt to connect more deeply with the sources of our concern for the environment. Whether you have water from the beach at Cedar Lake, a drinking fountain at Morris Library, the Puget Sound, a glacier on the side of Mount Everest, or none at all, plan to join us! Bill Sasso will coordinate this service, and remember that this service will not include "live" announcements.

**And after the service, plan to attend our annual CEDAR LAKE beach picnic!
Join us at the beach, to celebrate the end of summer
and the start of new adventures with our UU friends and families.
Feel free to wear your beach outfit to the service,
and don't forget your sunblock, picnic lunch, unused Cedar Lake passes, etc.**

9/13 Bill Sasso: "Life as an Art Form"

Sometimes we talk about the "meaning of life" as if it exists, both singular and universal, out there for us to discover! Another way to think about the unique complexities that each includes is by considering each of our lives as a piece of art, evolving as we practice our skills of living, changing as we try incorporate new themes and values, speaking differently to others as they interpret it. Join Bill as he offers this metaphor, and see how it might help you make sense of your own life!

9/20 Michael Humphries: "Christian Origins and the Quest for the Historical Jesus"

Guest Speaker Michael Humphries, Professor of English at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and a participant in the "Jesus Seminar," will share his insights on Jesus and early Christianity. Launched in 1985, the Seminar was organized to discover and report a scholarly consensus on the historical authenticity of the sayings and events attributed to Jesus in the gospels.

9/27 Bill Sasso: "What 'Worship' Means to Me"

In many faith traditions, "worship" has a specific and generally accepted meaning. In Unitarian Universalism, we often agree to disagree, and the meaning of "worship" might be one of our most "disagreeable" topics. While we hold different opinions as individuals, we somehow gather each Sunday, and as we do, something happens. Come and help Bill out as he reflects on "What can worship be?" and "How does it happen?" within UUism.

and coming up . . .

OPEN MINDS

meets at 8:45 AM in the Commons each Sunday

September 6 - "Wendell Berry /This is What I Believe and Who Am I " - Nick Eastman

September 13 - "Imperative Issues to Address" - Miriam Link-Mullison

September 20 - " 1800 Miles: Striving to End Sexual Violence, One Step at a Time - Joshua Phillips. Josh is author of a memoir in which he recounts his summer 2008 walking journey from Florida to Boston, to raise awareness about sexual violence. His book is called 1800 Miles: Striving to End Sexual Violence, One Step at A Time. Phillips is a living example of how action and powerful words working together can raise public awareness and target social action. Josh (Joshua.d.phillips@hotmail.com) teaches Public Speaking at SIU and volunteers at Good Samaritan. Discussion will follow his presentation.

September 27 - " Alternative Healing Therapies: Reiki" - Debbie Czarnopys-White

Coordinators: Contact Bob Lembcke @ lobob1@mchsi.com , or Bob Camp @ terrinina@verizon.net.

THE MINISTER'S MESSAGE

A New Fellowship Year Beckons Us!

Even though the calendar year begins in January, and the our fiscal year opens on July 1st, the Fellowship's cycle of activities always feels to me like it begins at this time of the year. As the calm and quiet of summer ends, and the schools reopen, and the university students come back to Carbondale, I feel reinvigorated with a new sense of energy and focus. I hope that is true for you, as well!



But the Fellowship has not slept the summer away. In addition to our many ongoing programs, the past few months have seen several congregational initiatives moving forward: plans for improved communications, and potential changes in our building and grounds are underway, and many of you have offered feedback on my role here at the Fellowship. I want to thank each Fellowship member who has

participated in one or more of these congregational efforts!

The Communications Planning Group – Dinah Seibert (chair), Judy Aydt, Melanie Bray, Yo Presley, Ann Ruger, Matt Schlesinger, and me – has conducted two surveys and requested input from specific groups within the Fellowship in order to better understand CUF's communications needs and opportunities. That group will present a report to the Fellowship Board at its September 10th meeting, and will open a conversation with the congregation about it recommendations shortly after receiving the Board's comments.

The Building and Grounds Planning Group – Julie Arendt, Al Babbitt, George Feldhamer, Stan Harris, JoAnn Nelson, Charles Ruffner, Bob Swenson, and me – has collected your ideas about our building and grounds the past three Sundays, and has also received suggestions by email. That group will present its findings and recommendations to the Fellowship Board at the October 8th meeting. Again, I am confident that there will be further congregational dialogue

following consideration of the Board's suggestions. While I cannot predict the future, I strongly suspect that recommendations from these two planning processes will be brought to the early December congregational meeting, when we set priorities for the Fellowship year to come.

And a third group, the Committee on Ministry, has undertaken a survey inviting your comments on my strengths and opportunities for improvement as minister here. The Committee – Joe Schmit, Matt Sronkoski, and Joyce Webb – met with me in early August to discuss what I am doing well and what I might do better! I appreciate your collective affirmation of my ministry here, and will give serious consideration to your suggestions as to how I might serve you more effectively.

Some of your suggestions will help me as I plan for a three-month sabbatical beginning on January 1st. As you may know, my agreement with the Fellowship includes a provision where for each year of service, I "earn" a month of sabbatical leave. This month I begin my 11th year of ministry here. I have previously taken three months of

sabbatical in 2005, when I began to research earlier Unitarian and Universalist congregations here in southern Illinois. I was confident that I would be able to finish that effort in my spare time, but I was wrong about that. So returning to that effort (and "finishing" with the materials that I have found so far) will be part of my sabbatical. Your feedback will help me as I consider options, within the basic sabbatical purpose of renewing my vision, my energy, and my joy in our shared ministry.

As we enter this new cycle of the Fellowship's life, I hope that you, too, will find opportunities for your own personal and spiritual growth here! Within the work of our faith community, I encourage you to seek with intention those that will deepen your sense of personal meaning in community, increase your joy and compassion, and help you make an even larger difference in the world!

Happy New Year!

- Bill Sasso

FROM THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Last February, Renee Cogil from Urbana came here and led a workshop, focusing on the goals of the Religious Education program. Those in attendance represented a diversity of members of this Fellowship, and the result are the RE goals for the next two years. Below is an abbreviated version of the 4 main goals.

Goals:

1. Be able to think for him/herself.

- Encourage activities and discussion where students are asked to and encouraged to speak/express their own thoughts, ideas, and understandings.
- Offer activities where both theists and atheists may give voice to their views.
- Solicit children's insights to be shared in worship services. Examples – readings, poems, chalice lightings and original works. Serving as greeters, provide or deliver a reading, collect the offering, provide music, sing and dance.
- As adults, model thinking for one's self and being respectful in sharing your thoughts and listening to others. Create safety in idea sharing.

2. Know Unitarian Universalist faith and history, and the tenets of other world religions.

- Plan for the use of curricula that includes the topics of UU faith and history, and world religions.

- Provide for multiple learning styles. Include multi-media presentations, hands on activities, and a wide range of topics in the curricula offered.
- As a summer program offer a world religions series in which visitors representing various religions of the world come as guest speakers/presenters.
- Offer opportunities for members of the Fellowship to share their own UU stories speaking on such things as what being a UU has meant to me, how being a UU effects how I live my life.

3. Instill in children and youth the sense that they are valued members of the Fellowship's community and that they have ownership in this community.

- Encourage children and youth to participate in the life of the church, including worship services. Provide opportunities for children and youth to be greeters, chalice lighters, involved with potlucks, yard sale, and in each case be given positions of responsibility, which is an excellent way to develop leadership.
- Put kids' art up around the sanctuary and fellowship building.
- Offer support for young families (childcare, parenting classes, parenting support group, start a UU playgroup, offer family friendly activities).
- Ask children and youth for their opinions, and let them have a say in what happens at the Fellowship.

4. Mindfulness of Life (a process)

- Plan nature activities that included reflection and observation.
- Plan events and activities that reflect on our impact on the planet. Go green.
- Model mindfulness – write newsletter articles, include mindfulness in a sermon or children's worship, mindfully eat a shared snack.
- Plan role playing activities where children and youth consider what and how other people are thinking – How it is to walk in someone else's shoes.
- Model active listening and encourage children and youth to do the same.
- Teach spiritual practices – meditation, yoga, chakras, prayer, and include adults.

When you are considering activities, events, worship, or simple casual encounters with our children and youth, keep the above goals and bullets in mind. Refer to them more as guides, rather than specific and narrow. Parents, teachers, children, youth, friends and members are all part of the fabric that we call the Fellowship. Take ownership, and responsibility, and share from the lessons and experiences that life has offered you.

As I said, the above is an abbreviated version, but it should give you a sense of what we'd like to focus on for the next couple years. Step into the circle, and share your energy, insight, and love with our children, youth, and each other. Join hands, and grow, together.

Sincerely,

Roy Sumner

CUF MONTHLY MEETINGS and ANNOUNCEMENTS

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HISTORY: Bill Sasso will lead a program on the history of Unitarians, Universalists, and Unitarian Universalists on four consecutive Tuesday evenings, 7:30 to 9 pm, from September 8th to 29th. For more information, or to register, contact Bill at bsasso@juno.com or 618-529-2439.

A RETROSPECTIVE DISPLAY of the TEXTILE ART OF FORMER CUF MEMBER CLARIBEL McDANIEL

will be held at SIUC's University Museum (Faner Hall) from August 25th through September 13th, with a special reception on Friday, September 11th from 4 to 7 pm. Parking is open on the campus after 4 p.m., and guests are encouraged to park in the Parking Garage, in front of the Student Center (metered parking) or in front of the Library.

UU CAMPUS MINISTRY GATHERING will be held in Madison, Wisconsin September 23rd to 25th. For more information, please see the flyers on the Bulletin Board. If you might be interested in attending, and /or helping with our campus ministry efforts, please contact Bill Sasso (bsasso@juno.com or 618-529-2439). Thanks!

BUILDING YOUR OWN THEOLOGY is a Unitarian Universalist adult curriculum focusing on five major questions: Who am I? How do I know? Who or what is in charge? What is my purpose in life? and What does my death mean? These five big questions form the framework of the course; at each meeting, we will deal with one of these questions. Our Fall, 2009, session will meet Wednesday evenings, 7:30 to 9 pm, from October 14th to November 18th. Registration by Sunday, October 11th is required; each session requires advance preparation. To register, or for more info, contact Bill Sasso at bsasso@juno.com or 529-2439.

SUICIDE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP: *This group meets the second Tuesday of each month at the Fellowship, at 7:30 pm.* Judy Ashby, MS, LCPC, facilitator. This group, serving those who have lost a loved one to suicide, is open to parents, children, spouses, partners, siblings, grandparents, relatives, friends, co-workers, and others. This supportive experience will offer safe and understanding conversation about loss and healing as participants open their hearts to grief and growth. **Meets next on Tues., Sept. 8th.** For more information, contact Bill Sasso at 529-2439 or bsasso@juno.com.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION *This group meets every Saturday in the Fellowship Commons from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.* If there are other activities scheduled in the Commons, we meet in the RE area. For more information, contact Joy Price at joyfully2356@yahoo.com or 618-457-2405.

BUDDHISM STUDY & PRACTICE GROUP *This group meets on the first and third Sundays in the Fellowship Commons at 7:30 PM. For more information: www.shawnee-dharma.org or Judy Carter at 529-3110.*

Sept. 6 - Meditation, Chanting, Study, Discussion in a free flowing format. Everyone welcome.

Sept. 20 - (ditto above)

THE DREAM WORKSHOP. *This group meets the first Sunday of each month in 06 (RE wing) at 12:00.*

Meets next on Sept. 6.

HUMANIST ROUND TABLE. *This group meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month in the Fellowship Commons at 2:00 PM.* Bob Camp and David Christensen, Coordinators.

September 9, 2:00 PM. "Time for a World Government: A Next Step Beyond the United Nations" - David Christensen, Ph.D. What are the reasons that a world government is needed? Why now? How could a world governmental body be created and under whose auspices? What would it look like in action? Other questions and Discussion. Additional information davechris@mchsi.com, or terrinina@verizon.net.

September 23, 2:00 PM. "Grow and Grow : A Vision of Healing and Learning Support in Carbondale" Exploring Integral Perspectives on Healing Through Emotional-based Learning - Dinah Seibert MSc. and R. Michael Fisher Ph.D. With over 60 years combined experience in the human services and education fields, Dinah Seibert MSc. and Michael Fisher Ph.D. bring an integral perspective to the critical role of emotional-based learning in developing healthy emotionality through healing life skills. There will be some brief introductory theory, followed by some experiential

exercises. Dinah and Michael will complement the presentation of their vision for creating a peer-based healing and learning support community in the Carbondale area. For additional information contact rmichaelfisher@gmail.com, dinahseibert@mac.com, or terrinina@verizon.net.

The Humanist Round Table is exploring interest in an evening venue for those who have daytime responsibilities. If you are interested, or think you might be interested, contact Nick Eastman at eastmann@peacemail.com, John Junge at jjjunge@gmail.com, or Bob Camp at terrinina@verizon.net. (Daytime Humanist Round Table continues unchanged.)

PSI SYMPOSIUM. *This group meets the second Sunday of the Month in Room 06 at Noon. Meets next on Sept. 13.* Contact Astrid Mosely at astrid.m@verizon.net for information.

ROUNDTABLE READERS. *This group meets on the fourth Sunday of the month in Room 05 after the Sunday Service at Noon. Meets next on Sept. 27th.* All are welcome! For September, the Round Table Readers have chosen The Geography of Bliss: "One Grump's Search for the Happiest Places on Earth," by Eric Weiner. The author is a commentator for National Public Radio who spent a year visiting places such as the Netherlands, Iceland, and Bhutan, seeking understanding of what makes for happiness. Weiner's voice is both intelligent and witty; this is the kind of book people have been known to recommend to everyone they know. The book is available in paperback and from the Southern Illinois Public Library system, including in large print. The Round Table Readers are collecting proposed book titles for the coming year. If you have a title to suggest, please contact Janet Levie on Sunday morning or leave a note in the CUF Library or the office mailbox, or phone (618)833-4971.

SCIENCE IN SOCIETY. *This group meets some Fridays of the Month in the Fellowship Commons at 5:00 PM.* Contact Gina Paul at rpaul@siumed.edu or 351-1064 if you have questions.

VIDEO CIRCLE *This group meets on the third Friday of each month in the Fellowship Commons at 7:15 PM. Meets next on Sept. 18th.* Our own R. Michael Fisher will be presenting the second portion of The Matrix Film Trilogy. The central plot of The Matrix concerns human rebellion against artificial intelligence. As always....Free Movie, Free Popcorn and Free Drinks!! Please plan to join us. Contact Amy Weber at amyweber1@msn.com with questions.

NONDUALITY SATSANG invites you to A Gathering with Mike Snider, Sunday, September 13th, 1:00 to 3:00 pm at the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship. Mike is coming back to Carbondale, and those who attended Mike's satsang (or "cutting through the crap" as he prefers to describe his sharing) in June were moved by his music, humor, clarity of being, and straightforward message of truth of who we are. Mike Snider hails from Tennessee and is a musician extraordinaire (he is a regular performer at the Grand Ole Opry). He has been asked by ADYASHANTI to share his knowledge and deep realization of the truth of awakening. Mike's teachings emanate from his personal experience of awakening following an in-depth study of A Course in Miracles and his consuming desire to know the face of God. For those familiar with Zen Buddhism, the teachings of Jesus, Ramana Maharshi, Eckhart Tolle and Gangaji, you will be at home with Mike. For those who would like more information about the tradition of non-dualism from where these teachings spring go to: www.adyashanti.org. \$15 suggested donation. For further information, contact Matt Denis, 527-8358, mattdenis@msn.com, or Sallie Schramm, 559-7059, sal@shawneelink.net.

UNITARIAN FOLK ORCHESTRA will begin weekly practices at 10:00 a.m. Saturdays, at the Fellowship, beginning Saturday, Sept. 5. For info contact Charles Maxwell at cmaxwell@siu.edu.

Update on Ranchod Orphan Program in Kabwe, Zambia...

We are getting free shipment to Zambia!!!!!!!!!!

SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR ZAMBIA: WE HAVE FREE SHIPMENT IN A SHIPPING CONTAINER!!!!

I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE SHIPMENT READY TO GO IN OCTOBER, if possible.

In order for us to get free container shipping...all shipped items must be NEW . When you donate something with an expiration date, it should be at least one year from now.

Persons could also donate fabric and sewing supplies.

- Young children's books and reference books--NEW or VERY SLIGHTLY USED.
- School supplies
- Wound care dressings and tape
- Incontinent pads
- Urinary catheter sets with drainage bags
- Pressure sore dressings
- Syringes and needles
- Walkers
- Canes
- Hospital gowns
- Vitamins for children and adults...Expiration date should be at least 1 year away
- Tylenol or Advil for children and adults...Expiration date at least 1 year
- Mouth care swabs
- Medicine boxes
- I.V. catheters
- Adult diapers
- Body creams and soap
- Products for dry lips—Chap Stick, Blistex, etc...
- Eye lubricants
- New twin sheet sets for hospital beds
- Light blankets-new
- Pepto-Bismol
- Imodium
- Prilosec
- Pepcid
- Mylanta
- Tums/Roloids
- Empty pill bottles

SPECIAL REQUESTS FROM GABRIEL (Coordinator of Ranchod Hospice & Orphan Care):

- equipment to sterilize supplies
- pressing iron
- Stretchers
- Gloves
- Nurses aprons OR UNIFORMS
- Patients clothes, shoes etc.. NEW
- Bed covers
- Cotton balls and sheets
- Staff protective cloths against rain season...PLASTIC RAINCOATS
- Bed screens
- Dressing forceps
- Mortuary trolley
- food trolley (ROLLING CART)
- wheel chairs
- FLASHLIGHTS
- Washing machine
- Tooth brushes, toothpaste /soap
- MENTHOLATUM OR VICKS
- IV giving sets

For more info, contact Carla Feldhamer @ hospice88@aol.com.

The next **RALPH ANDERSON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE** will be on "Torture & Accountability – Where Do We Go From Here?". The event will be held on Monday, October 5, 2009 – 7:30 PM, at The View Baptist Church (1201 S. Giant City Road). Richard Whitney, Civil Rights Attorney, will make the initial presentation. Member of the interfaith panel will be the Rev. Sam Foskey, Imam Haqq and Steve Low. Comments and questions from the audience will be encouraged. The dialogues are sponsored by the Carbondale Interfaith

Council. Everyone is welcome and attendance is free. Contact Ken Starbuck for more information: e-mail (cubrats@verizon.net) or phone 942-3986.

Fair Trade News and Information...

What's new with CUF's Equal Exchange program? (1) I am! (2) More great products!

My name is Nicholas Eastman, and getting to know many of you over the past few months has been a great honor. I am continually amazed by the wealth of compassion, intellect, and experience here at the Fellowship, and I look forward to lengthening my list of new friends as I come to know more of you. The Fair Trade movement has been a passion of mine for years, and I thank Janet Harris for helping me become involved with the Equal Exchange program, which is a great benefit to this congregation and sustainable farmers around the world. If you would like me to order something from Equal Exchange or have any questions about the program here at the Fellowship, the UU Service Committee, or the greater Fair Trade movement, stop by the Equal Exchange table during coffee hour after the Sunday service. I would love to meet and talk with each of you. You can ALWAYS contact me via phone (618-571-1277) or email (eastmann@peacemail.com).

Now, the goods! We have some great new EE products, including a wide selection of premium loose leaf teas in stylish 3.5oz. metal canisters. These would make a great gift to someone (especially yourself). We also have some Rooibos tea for \$3/box! In my opinion, this tea is best served iced with a slice of orange, but it is also good hot. This particular Rooibos comes from the Wupperthal community in South Africa's Cederberg Mountains. It is grown and harvested by a cooperative of 50 small-scale, tribal farmers. For the past 200 years, these farmers have battled apartheid and its large, white-owned plantations. Climate change now also poses a threat. This already arid landscape is put at great risk by rising temperatures and less rainfall. With the help of Equal Exchange, the Wupperthal cooperative is fighting back by developing and implementing the best sustainable growing practices like biodiversity and soil/water conservation.

I know many of you are like me: the day really begins with the coffee pot – not the alarm clock. We also know that the coffee doesn't simply come from the grocery store; each bag has a story behind it. Equal Exchange's mission is to see that that story is one of preserving – rather than degrading – land, body, and spirit.

UUA Central Midwest District news: Debbie Czarnopys - White and Cathy Kline have volunteered to serve a three year term each, on the UUA Central Midwest District's Women's Connection Council. In 2002, the Women's Federation changed its name to the Women's Connection. This organization and its predecessor have been around since before the merger of the Unitarians and the Universalists . . . over 50 years! In order to meet the needs of UU Women, a retreat is offered each fall at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and a conference is held each spring at Pilgram Park Camp, Princeton, Illinois. Educational programs are conducted by the Council in local UU Fellowships/Churches, throughout the district. We will provide you with more information about the Council's function and activities as we learn about them. The registration brochure for the fall retreat will be coming out soon. Debbie and Cathy will be going, and encourage you to go with them.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FELLOW CUF MEMBERS ...

One of our newest members (May, 2009) is Terry Elliott. Terry was born in Paducah, KY. He was raised in Metropolis. Terry has also lived in Champaign, where he worked at the U of I and then for a private architectural firm, and in Bloomington, where he did earthquake underwriting for State Farm Insurance.



When he retired, Terry returned to Metropolis to care for his aging father. He has stayed in Metropolis ever since, where he lives on seven acres on a lake on the north side of town, on property that has been in his family for over 60 years. He lost his wife Kathy to cancer several years ago. Terry has a daughter Ann Elizabeth, who lives in Chicago and does advertising and development for a paper company, with a few other women who also graduated from Northwestern, as she did. For the past two and a half years, Terry has spent lots of time with his significant other, Janet. Janet lives in Poplar Bluff, so he generally divides his time between Poplar Bluff and Metropolis. Janet is a realtor, but at this time she manages her own properties. Terry has interests which include sailing on weekends in his sailboat on Kentucky Lake, a love of classical music, and enjoying his Goldendoodle dog Kirby, and Janet's Corgie named

Jake. Terry believes that he has always been a Unitarian in his thinking and values, most of his adult life, at least since his college years; however, this is the first time he has formally joined a Unitarian congregation. We are glad to have you, Terry!

Our very newest member (August, 2009) is Maggie Dorsey, 401 Barr Street, Carterville, IL 62918. Her spouse is John Dorsey, and her children are Abby (3 yrs.) and Andy (1 yr.). Welcome! We will hope to feature a short bio of Maggie in an upcoming CUFLinks.

And...learn more about a member who has been around for some time: I'll go first. Cheryl Robinson (April, 1997):

Ten things you (probably) don't know about me:

1. I worked for the Chicago Board of Trade as a "Runner" in the trading pits during summer breaks while I was in college.
2. I collect vintage costume jewelry from the 1920's to the 1950's.
3. I sold Shaklee environmentally friendly products in the early 1970's.
4. I love dogs; have owned pet rats; am allergic to cats.
5. I was a Theology minor as an undergraduate.
6. I have lived in IL, WI, FL, and IN.
7. I love to decorate the homes I have lived in.
8. In addition to 33 years working in human services, I have also worked in a plastics factory, six banks (as a teller), and have held multiple temp. jobs.
9. I volunteer for Hospice of Southern Illinois.
10. I enjoy water aerobics.

Who else would be willing to share? Contact the editor at cherrob1@msn.com.

And an article from our CUF member currently working in Saudi Arabia... You will remember that our previous CUFLinks editor, Joe Robbie, was suddenly called up for a job in Saudi Arabia in last February. He has graciously offered to tell us about his adventures there in installments over the next few issues:

Dispatch from Arabia

Part One

by Joseph Robbie

"Marhaba" to my fellow Unitarian-Universalists back in Southern Illinois. As I sit here writing this, within the confines of the heavily fortified company compound in which I am kept, you cannot imagine how much I miss you. In addition, I miss many of the comforts, freedoms and pleasures which, I suspect, you may generally take for granted. I am living and working in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia.

This dispatch represents the first of a series which I plan to contribute to the CUF Links newsletter. I hope to inform, entertain and, to a certain extent, provoke you, as such is my nature. You will read of my sudden transition from Pizza King (PK's) to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; I'll describe some of the history and culture of my host country; I'll relate the travails and rewards of an expatriate's daily life here; I'll also touch upon issues of religion, law, and politics. It won't be boring. So, let's begin:

Last year, at this time, I was living in a two-bedroom rented apartment, with no windows, in Carterville. Alone, unemployed, depressed, and windowless – it was not a great situation. Sure, I had a few friends around, and seemed to make more every week at the Fellowship, but overall, I was at a dead end. Yet even at my most inactive, I guess I'm still pretty active. I pursued my interests, which included the Southern Illinois Toastmasters club (I was vice president), writing and editing for some extra cash, serving as back-up bass player for several bands around the area, running around in the woods with the Hash House Harriers (an international running and beer drinking club), and, of course, participating in the UU Fellowship. But mostly I was alone and brooding. I wasn't even seriously looking for a job.

Then in December, out of the blue, I received a tentative job offer from a company which I hadn't even applied to. To this day, I don't know how they got my name. I have an MA degree in ESL, English as a Second Language, so I teach this stuff to foreigners. The job offer was contingent upon that company's contract negotiations with the Saudis. Hence, it was on again, off again, and I stopped taking it seriously. Then, in mid-February, it was on again. So they flew me to D.C. for a rigorous, all-encompassing physical exam, including the ever-popular drug test. That was on a Thursday.

I flew back and spent a typical weekend, breaking my brooding with a winery visit and a UU dinner club function. On Monday, around noon, I got their email: I had passed the physical (that was fast!) and was booked on the 3 pm Tuesday flight out of Marion airport. Following an overnight stopover in Washington, I was scheduled to depart for the magic Kingdom of Saudi Arabia the very next day!!! They needed me ASAP on the job site. It was "take it, or leave it – now". Wow...



(To be continued)

CUF LINKS HARD COPIES are available at the Fellowship on the visitor table.

Deadline for October CUFLinks: Fri., September 25. Please honor this deadline.

Send your articles to Cheryl Robinson at cherrob1@msn.com or to Melanie Bray at cufvolunteers@verizon.net on or before Sept. 25. Thanks! – Cheryl Robinson, Editor

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618-529-2439 www.cuuf.net, carbandleuu@verizon.net
The Rev. William Sasso, Minister

An inspirational thought: "I hope for an America where no president, no public official, no individual will ever be deemed a greater or lesser American because of religious doubt – or religious belief." – Sen. Ted Kennedy