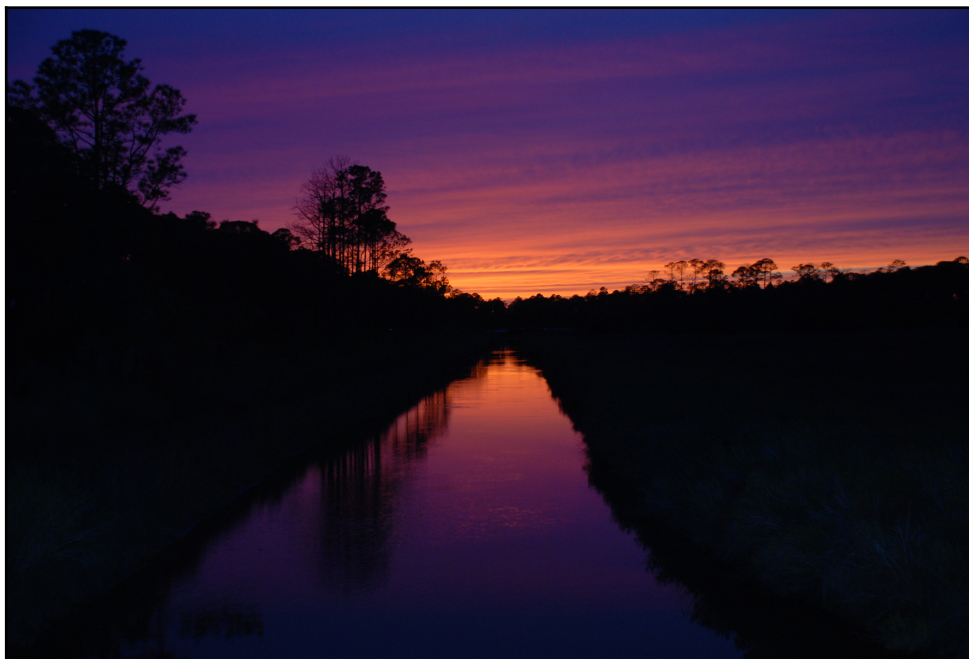


Chapter 17

Retirement

I retired in 1998 and again in 2001. Joyce retired in 2001 also. In the first retirement I went onto full pension and added a half time teaching appointment. So I was making more money than ever. I had good advice in this arrangement. My colleagues Wayne Johnson in philosophy and John Campbell in geology had made this arrangement several years earlier, and it sounded pretty cool. Our salaries had been going up 1% or 2% a year at most, whereas pensions were increasing much faster. Not only that, but my half time appointment required teaching only - no more research requirements or faculty meetings!

When I'm asked if I'm retired, I say, "Yes, retirement was so much fun I did it twice". Also I was pleased that Joyce retired the same year that I did. This allowed us complete freedom to travel without one of us being tied down to the job. We found ourselves taking up to a month long ski vacations to Colorado and several weeks long trips to Florida. We found ourselves wishing to avoid the worst part of Wisconsin winters. The question then became: should we move to the mountains (Colorado) or Florida (sea coast). Colorado would provide wonderful skiing (but also the cold), whereas Florida would provide beautiful beaches and sunshine all winter long. As you may have guessed the Florida option won.



Sunset Near Apalachicola, FL



Nancy and Joyce on Apalachicola Bay



Barnacle, our House on Apalachicola Bay

About the time of my retirement, digital cameras were coming on the market, replacing 35 mm slide cameras. My first digital camera was the Apple QuickTake which cost \$500 and could hold eight 640 X 480 pixel photos. My present iPhone, with the help of the cloud, contains 22,667 pictures at much higher resolution. Time (and technology) march on!

I have a folder, *Graphic Data*, on my hard drive with 55,593 photos, and, as I have said, the application *Photos* has 22,667 photos on my Mac, my iPod, and my iPhone. So I have a lot of raw material for this chapter. However, as I opened the first folder of *Graphic Data*, I immediately had access to 101 beautiful pictures, five of which I want to show you here. So I have decided that I will randomly scan photos and tell the stories they inspire to fill this final chapter.

In 2007 we stayed in a round house, the Barnacle, with Nancy Hennessy on Apalachicola Bay. This is the source of many of the nation's oysters. I went deep sea fishing and caught nice sail cats.

Several years earlier we had met Julene Wright at my 50th high school reunion. She mentioned that she lived in Clearwater, FL, and that we should look her up when



My Catch of Sailcats



Joyce and Julene



6840 Northwestern Avenue, Racine

we returned to Florida. We did and had several years of nice outings together.

You have already seen the starter home in which we raised our family. Shortly after our kids went off to college we bought a much larger home on Northwestern Avenue in Racine. It sat on a one acre lot with a nice stream running through it and dozens of trees. Here is a photograph from the early days in the spring and again in winter. We lived in it for twenty years starting in 1990. We wish now that we had bought it earlier so that our children could have

lived in it and enjoyed the pleasures of “country living”.

By 2010 we decided that we should move on. The snow shoveling and leaf raking were becoming tiresome. As the mailbox photo shows, this is not a trivial matter. Unfortunately, the time we chose to sell it was near the bottom of the 2008 recession. The property had been evaluated by a real estate person at \$300,000, but we were able only to get \$219,000 for it after nine months on the market. The housing markets for condominiums was also depressed, so we were able to buy our Florida “paired villa” for \$93,000 and our Racine condominium for \$105,000. So, in downsizing, we switched from one large home to two smaller ones and came out a little bit ahead financially.

The switch was essentially 3—>2. The Northwestern home had three bedrooms, a three-car garage, two and one half baths, and a large family room with fireplace. Each condo had two bedrooms, two baths, and two-car garages. Two of the most attractive features was a large, four-season sun room and a shielded hot tub on a large deck. We used the hot tub almost every day, and it was a source of great entertainment for family and friends. It was also very problematic as we became snowbirds. The first few years we kept it full and warm (55 F°) all winter, which is sort of wasteful. The last few years we drained it, dismantled two sides, pumped out all the water, and added RV antifreeze. Of course, the process needed to be reversed in May when we returned from FL.

One of the small joys of the big home was the “climbing rock”. It was a five foot high, ten ton rock dug up by



6840 Northwestern Avenue, Racine



Lance, Maddie, and Joyce

Sunroom and Corner of Hot Tub Deck

workmen laying new sewer pipe along Northwestern Avenue. I asked the workmen, "What will you do with the rock?" "Bury it", they said. "No", I said, "Just slide it up to the top of this hill on my place." This they did, and you can see it above the mail boxes and between the tree trunk and pine trees. All four of our grandchildren, as toddlers, learned to rock climb on this rock and fondly remember the experience.

By the late 200Xs we were gradually becoming snowbirds. One of our first forays to Florida, since our wedding years, was by pop up trailer. We visited many state parks and were impressed by their cleanliness and convenience. The next year we visited Florida, staying with friends along the way. Our friends, Mitch and Jean Leavitt, told us they were going to be gone one week, and that we could stay in their manufactured home in La Casa that week. This we did and loved it. When we saw them again we asked if they knew of any available homes in La Casa for the next year. The house next to theirs was available for a month the next year. So we took it. Both homes are right on the Myakka River, and we had excellent views of the bird island in the middle of the river.

This month was so pleasurable



Mailbox and Rock



Grandson Ray on Climbing Rock



Our First Home in La Casa



Jean and Mitch at the Oyster Bar

that we inquired as to the availability of homes for longer stays. Through some of Mitch’s friends we learned of a house on one of the smaller lakes that was available for three months. For the next two years it was our snowbird winter home for three months.

Our fifth and final winter in La Casa was four months we spent in a fairly nondescript manufactured home that wasn’t on any lake. The winter was particularly cold that year, below freezing, and we lost several of the flowering plants around the house. Our friends, Dave and Carole Pucely, were visiting, and we had to apologize for the poor weather. They have not been back since, and whether it was the weather or their new grandchildren, we’re not sure.

During the La Casa years we learned to love Florida. The reasons are several. Of course, the first is the weather. During the month in which I’m writing this it had been 65 F° when we wake up, about 70 F° as we take our two mile walk, and in the low 80 F° by mid afternoon. It couldn’t be more ideal. The second reason is the wildlife. In addition to the bobcat we saw outside our



Bobcat in the Back Yard



Bass in the Front Yard Lake



Alligator



Anhinga

kitchen window, we have seen alligators, sand hill cranes, giant blue herons, great white egrets, wood storks, eagles, osprey, little blue herons, tricolor herons, cattle egrets, ibis, anhingas, pelicans and mockingbirds. The mockingbirds are our favorites. Their incredible, variable song brings pure joy!

The third reason we love Florida are the flowers and trees. The hibiscus bloom year around. So do the bougainvillea, birds of paradise, and poinsettias. The Bismarck palm we planted as a five foot bush is now a fifteen foot tree. The three foot pigmy palm is coming. The fourth argument for Florida are the friends that visit. Somehow our Florida climate attracts more visitors than does our Racine condo.



Hibiscus



Azalea



Nancy Hennessy



Jack and Jane Frost

Our friend and travel companion, Nancy, visits us each year. The Frosts visit frequently, hiking, biking, or kayaking with us. The Florida climate so appealed to them that they moved from Racine to Ocala, FL. Ray and Helene used to visit annually until Ray's health declined. So did the Bluemels until Van died in 2014. We hope Polly will come to visit this year. Both Susie and her kids and Steve and his boys have visited, Susie every year. Our sister-in-law, Sharon, visits regularly. We even offered several days in our condo as an auction item, and some friends from the Racine UU church bid on it and visited.



Ray and Helene Dilulio



Van and Polly Bluemel on the Beach



Front Door of Idlewood Drive Home



Back Yard Pond

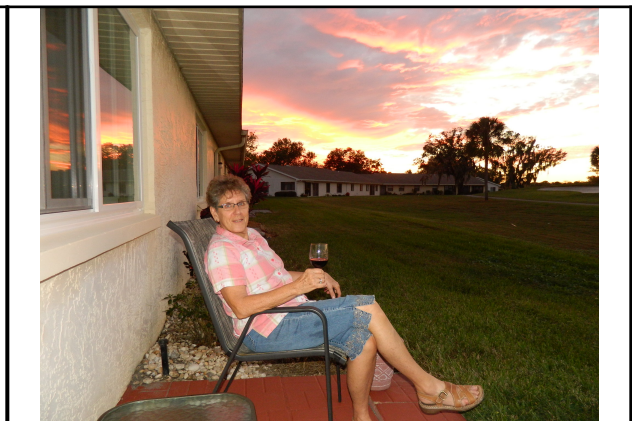
When we wintered in La Casa we began going to the new UUCOV (Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Venice). We made several friends there, some of which have become particularly close. We continue attending UUCOV after moving to Sun City Center, even though it's a fifty minute drive. Occasionally I attend the UU Fellowship of Sun City Center, where I have, in fact, spoken a couple of times.

As I indicated before, on our 2009 Caribbean cruise Ed and Dorothy Necco volunteered to spend a day showing us Sun City Center and the gated community of Kings Point. We were so impressed that we could buy a "real house" for even less money than some of the La Casa manufactured homes. We were particularly impressed by the two club houses in Kings Point, each with three pools and a huge number of speciality rooms - carpenter shop, stained glass facility, art studio, card game rooms, etc.

We asked Ed for his real estate person and, after an unsuccessful short sale bid, settled on a "paired villa" or duplex. It was located on a quiet street and golf course with a large pond filled with lily pads and bass. We greatly enjoy our 1,600 square foot condo. It had a two car garage, two bedrooms, two baths, a large living room, a dining room, a sun room, kitchen, and laundry room.



Front Yard at Christmas



Back Yard Sunset



Paul and JoAnn Buell



Ann and Tom Utschig

Since moving in we have made a number of improvements. The first was to replace all of the windows with modern, high efficiency ones. Next we replaced the worn carpet with hardwood floors in the living room and dining room, and new carpets in the bedrooms. We expanded the backyard patio by several feet in both directions. We also modernized the kitchen with all new appliances, new self closing doors and quartz counter tops. The bathroom has new faucets and toilets. We now have quite a modern house.

Our greatest joy of living in Florida are the friends we have made. Apart from our friends, Ed and Dorothy who talked us into coming to Sun City Center, our first friends were Paul and JoAnn Buell. They lived in the house across the street when we moved in. The very first day JoAnn walked across the street and introduced herself and hoped we would become friends. We have been ever since.

Paul is a handyman whose job was re-



Ed and Dorothy Necco



Our Idlewood Neighbors



South Shore Community Band

December 2014
*The Fractal Beauty of Nature
 Mandelbrot and Mountains*
 Dr. Morris Firebaugh
 Emeritus Professor of Computer Science



One of My SET Talks

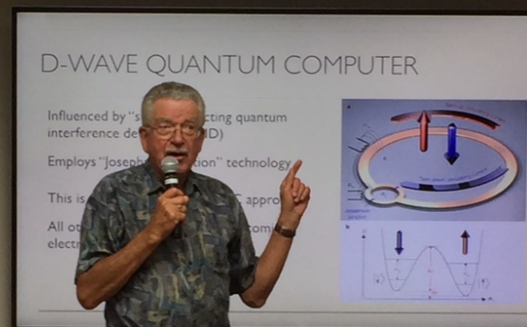
frigeration and air conditioners. He installed new bathroom utilities, water filter and a ceiling fan. They help watch over our house when we are up north. We regularly eat with them and watch the sunset at Sunset Grill.

We met Tom and Ann at UUCOV. Besides being Unitarians, they are our neighbors in Wisconsin. They have a large house in Eau Claire and a family compound in Minnesota. They have visited our condos in Florida, Racine, and our cabin at Island Lake. We have toured the north shore of Lake Superior several times with them. Tom was bankruptcy judge for northern Wisconsin during his working days. He handled Telemark's bankruptcy in which we were involved as lodge owners.

One of the attractions of Sun City Center was the large number of special interest groups, clubs, and organizations. Joyce soon joined the South Shore Community Band



SET Club Board



Lecturing on Quantum Computers

as flutist and has remained a member. She is above on the right side of the chair in the band photo. After giving a couple of talks to them, I became President of the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) Club. What originally began as START (Science & Technology Active Round Table), an unorganized group of scientists and engineers, that was required by the Community Association (CA) to develop a set of bylaws and select a board of officers. I wrote the bylaws using a model document, and we had election of the board. Shown is a photo of the board, all of whom served all three years. We had five Ph.D.s, one Master's degree and one baccalaureate on the board. Although we had a program chairman on the board, I did most of the program planing, and I laid awake many a night worrying about filling out our monthly speakers schedule. After three years, I resigned from the board but remain a member of SET.

For several years I was also in the tennis club and played every morning except Sunday. Both Joyce and I are in the Audubon Club and the International Forum, both of which meets monthly. We are also in the Apple Users Group, and I serve as a director. Joyce plays Mahjongg every week. She also works out in the Fitness class Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. We both walk the two mile golf course trail every day, and I try to swim two or three times a week. So we keep active.

There are two short stories that illustrate why we enjoy our life in Florida. The first concerns our Bismark palm. When we moved in there was a nice holly (?) tree behind our house. After a year or two, when we returned in November, it was gone. We like Bismark palms, and we requested permission to replace the missing tree with one. With a lot of hard work we tore out the root system of the previous tree and planted one. The following four photos tells the story of its growth. We are gradually turning it from a bush into a tree.

The second story involves Sandhill Cranes. Last year, around the first of April we observed a Sandhill Crane sitting on two eggs on a peninsula in our pond. We were a little concerned about raccoons, foxes or alligators raiding the nest and eating the





Growing



Today

eggs. One day, about midway through the hatching process, a five foot alligator began approaching the nest, and we were fearful that the end had come. The mother crane jumped from the nest towards the alligator, spread her wings to at least six feet, and began a fearful cackle. The alligator turned and fled, and the incubation was successful!



One Day Old Chicks



One Week Old Chicks



Family Seven Months Later



Kayaking at Ft. De Soto

We anxiously awaited their hatching, and one day as we were walking the trail with our friends, Tom and Joyce Andrews, there they were - two tiny goslings about the size of your fist! After a week they had grown to six inch tall youngsters, and we had to leave for Wisconsin. Seven months later, they were a full grown family.

Finally, I must close the Florida chapter of this narration with our favorite event. That is the annual visit of Susie and her children. We've done a huge number of outings with them, ranging from kayaking to dancing to sunning on the beach. We routinely ask, "Would you like to see Busch Gardens or Epcot Center?" They reply, "No, we prefer sunning at the south pool or the beach." We've eaten at the Sun Set Grill (and danced there), Pop's Restaurant, Circles in Apollo Beach, and Anna Marie's Oyster Bar (our favorite). Recently, Susie has set up shop with her computer on our kitchen table so that she can conduct her business from here in FL. We've gone on a boat ride on Sarasota Bay and toured the University of Tampa and the University of Southern Florida (in which Maddie was interested). Their visit is one of the year's highlights.



Sunning on the Beach



Dancing at the Sunset Grill



My 75th Birthday at the Cabin



Steve's 50th Birthday

Our Wisconsin retirement activities are mainly centered around our family and friends. Here I show some photos taken on memorable birthdays or anniversaries. First was my 75th birthday we celebrated in the sun room of the cabin. Our routine has developed to spend a week or two at the cabin over the 4th of July. Since my birthday is on the 5th, I usually have the family with me to celebrate. That year Susie brought sailor hats for everyone for the celebration party. It was a wonderful affair.

Next we show two photos of Steve, celebrating his 50th and 52 birthdays. For some reason, an inside joke, Max gave Steve light bulbs for his 50th. On his 52nd, he got a nice fire starter to replace the worn out one.

For our 55th anniversary in Susie's back yard, she arranged for all four grandchildren to read some homage to us. Lance's was particularly hilarious as the photo shows. She invited many of our friends, and it was a delightful affair. Susie also invited a famous local musician, a guitarist, to perform and entertain the guests. Our grandson Ray also performed on the violin.



Steve's Recent Birthday



Our 55th Anniversary, Lance Reading



Our Invitation to the Party

Michelle, Audrey, and Brother Doug

One of the biggest events of our retirement was our 50th wedding anniversary. We had an afternoon open house at our home on Northwestern and a big party at the Racine Yacht Club. We had retained membership in the yacht club in order to host this party. We had 75 of our closest friends and an absolutely wonderful time.

Our friend, Doug Clum, and his two daughters performed on the piano, violin, and cello. Joyce's cousin, Carol Jo Weber, sang two songs, as she had at our wedding fifty years earlier. Susie was master of ceremonies and did a fine job. Maddie was the receptionist and greeter. Our whole family was there, as well as friends from the OBU-UC, UW-Parkside, the whole book club, and some of our travel companions from our trips to New Zealand and Austria.

Our good friends, Mitch and Jean Leavitt, and our nephew Johnny Maier and his wife Connie made the afternoon open house and also made the yacht club party.



Susie's Family



Anniversary Kiss



The Farm Weekend Group



The Group a Year Later

Some of the most satisfying experiences have been the weekends we've spent at the Vernon farm. Shortly before Steve bought his farm in 2000, Kit and Linda Vernon bought a farm near Spring Green, Wisconsin. They invited our book club to join them for a weekend in July or August. All but one couple of the book club accepted the invitation, and we have been enjoying spirited and animated weekends since then. Sadly, since Danny, their son and the farm's caretaker, moved to North Carolina, they had to sell the farm, and such "farm weekends" came to a halt in 2017.

Two other tragedies have entered our book club circle. Don Piele, one of our closest friends and my UW-Parkside mathematics colleague, died in 2014. Don had inspired us to take up biking, cross country skiing, and organized several biking trips for us. We sorely miss him. He is right, front in the first picture.

The second tragedy that hit our book club was the death of Joy Botts. She had not only been a faithful member of the book club, but also a delightful companion on several of our biking trips. We greatly miss her. She is left front below.



The Group in 2017



Joy, Rod, et al



The New Firebaugh House



After Ray's Orchestra

One of the reasons we remain snowbirds with Wisconsin our summer home is the presence of both children and their families in Wisconsin. In 2000 Steve and Kaela moved their new family from Seattle to Viroqua, Wisconsin. I helped them move, driving their Subaru while Steve drove the Ryder truck with their possessions. They moved into an old farm house on a flood plane on their 175 acre farm. Between buying the farm and their move, the first 100 year flood filled the house with mud which dried to dirt before they moved in.

It brought us great joy and satisfaction to watch them raise Ray and Max to become fine teenagers. We loved Ray's violin playing in the state music festival and local recitals. I enjoyed riding Max's Kawasaki motor bike till I spilled it. I relived my farm background helping Steve mow, rake, and bale hay. We are very proud of the grass-fed beef and sheep his family is raising and the maple syrup production he does. We are also pleased he is putting his education to work in his new data processing job.

I also enjoyed hunting the deer that live on his farm. Here is the buck whose antlers I have mounted in my study in Racine.



Steve, Max, and Kaela



My Eight Pronged Buck



Susie, Maddie, and Lance



Christmas, 2007

Susie and her family live just the right distance from our Racine condo. Their home in Bayside is just north of Milwaukee, about a 45 minute drive from Racine. We visit often, but did not have to babysit as their children grew. They have a beautiful home on a one acre lot with lots of flowers and a ravine in the back through which deer visit.

We have gotten to know a number of their friends through mutual visits, and Susie has thrown several parties in our honor including our 55th wedding anniversary. Most of our closest friends were there. We usually visit at Christmas time, and their home is always beautifully decorated. Often one of Jeff's sisters also has a great party.

After her master's degree in journalism at UW-Madison during which she taught, she worked for the Milwaukee Journal newspaper as editorial assistant and then for Kit Vernon's advertising agency. After several years there, she broke off and founded her own public relations agency.

We are so pleased that her family is so close in Wisconsin, and have observed with pleasure the development of their two lovely children.



In the Backyard



At the Sunset Grill



The Pike River Pathway



Along the Pathway

Our favorite exercise in Racine is hiking the Pike River Pathway which is a short block from our condo. This path, plus the proximity of Razor Sharp, our health club, about three blocks from our condo, was one of the determining factors in selecting our condo. From May to September there is at least at least one new flower blooming weekly along the path. From our condo door it is about a two mile path.

On Northwestern Avenue I had a rose garden with at least 25 tea roses. On the utilities plot of our Racine condo Joyce has at least four beautiful knockout roses and several additional blooming flowers. The gazebo in our front yard has lovely flowers blooming all summer.

One of the reasons for moving from our three bedroom home to our two bedroom condo was to avoid having to garden. It looks like we're still hooked! But the workload is reduced.



Our Front Yard and Condo Door



Lilies by the Gazebo



Moraine Lake in the Valley of the Ten Peaks



Canadian Lake

I can't refrain from one brief travelog. In September of 2017 Joyce and I did a Roads Scholar tour of the Canadian Rockies. We spent two days each in Banff, Yoho National Park, and Jasper. We visited five or six beautiful mountain lakes, including Moraine Lake and Lake Louise. We took a huge mountain bus with tires taller than me out onto the slippery glacier. It had receded several hundred yards from where Joyce and I had visited the glacier 35 years earlier.

We had educational talks by local experts every day. One of the most memorable was a wilderness camp in which they had installed a trail camera activated by motion. We saw video of bears, coyotes, and raccoons walking this trail.

The Canadian Rockies are far more rugged than those in Colorado. They reminded me very much of a combination of the Wind River range in Wyoming and the Bugaboos of Canada.



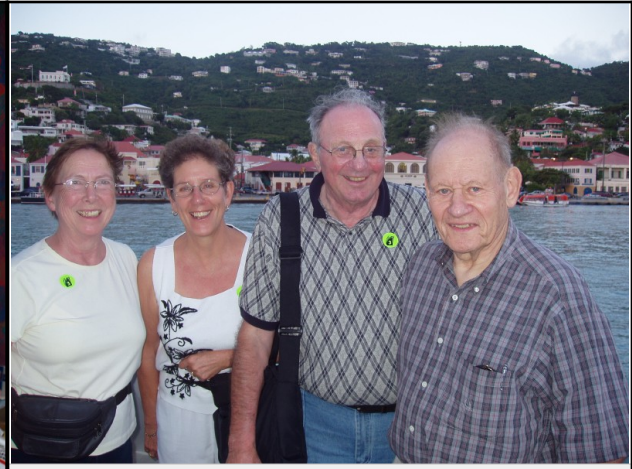
Athabasca Glacier



Mountain Scenery



Richard Dawkins and Me on CFI Cruise



Dilulios, Joyce, and Paul Kurtz

Around the time of my final retirement, I attended a Center for Inquiry (CFI) Conference in Atlanta. There I met several influential philosophers, including Paul Kurtz, the father of secular humanism, and Richard Dawkins, evolutionary biologist and atheist author. Dawkins's book *River out of Eden* had helped clarify and shape my views about religion. In 2004 Joyce and I took a Caribbean cruise with Ray and Helene DiIulio and met many of the same people.

Throughout my graduate school days and career as a scientist I had irreversibly begun to discard most of traditional religion. The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) continues to litigate in favor of the separation of church and state. They are located in Madison, and we have attended their 2015 and 2017 conference in Madison. In 2017 Steven Pinker, one of my heroes, signed my copy of his latest book. I have given a number of lectures on his books, *The Blank Slate* and *The Better Angels of our Nature*. Dan Barker, the head of FFRF has given several lectures at the UW-Parkside Forum on Religious Issues that my colleague, Dr. Wayne Johnson, and I started years ago.



Dan Barker at 2015 FFRF Conference



Steven Pinker Signing his Latest Book

In April, 2018, I attended the Sun City Center UU Fellowship. The main speaker was Ms Jeanne Danek, one of the founders of the Fellowship. Her topic was Your Ethical Will, and she handed out this set of questions and gave everyone plenty of time to write answers.

- What are you most proud of?
- What are your biggest regrets?
- What are your spiritual beliefs?
- What/who will you miss most when you are gone?
- Who is the most important person in your life?
- What have you learned from him/her?
- If you only had one year to live, what would you do?

These are intensely personal and provocative questions, and I found my answers in unexpected agreement with several other members. Jeanne emphasized that we owe it to future generations to make our beliefs explicit and well known. This experience inspired me to write an appendix on each of the first two questions and to close this chapter with a concluding discussion of the third. The group generally agreed on the *most important person* questions being our spouses.

In answer to the third question, I found my beliefs spelled out clearly and concisely by the Roman poet/philosopher, Lucretius, in his poem *On the nature of the universe*. This six-book poem, written at least 50 years BCE, elaborates on Epicurean philosophy and Democritus' atomic theory. An exciting book, *The Swerve - How the World Became Modern*, by Stephen Greenblatt, describes how Lucretius' poem was discovered in 1417 and contributed powerfully to the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Among Lucretius' ideas listed by Greenblatt that resonate most strongly with me are:

- **Everything is made of invisible particles.**
- **All particles are in motion in an infinite void.**
- **The universe has no creator or designer.**
- **Nature ceaselessly experiments.**
- **The universe was not created for or about humans.**
- **Humans are not unique.**
- **There is no afterlife.**
- **Death is nothing to us.**
- **All organized religions are superstitious delusions.**
- **Religions are invariably cruel.**
- **The highest goal of human life is the enhancement of pleasure and the reduction of pain.**

You may recognize these materialistic ideas as the basis for secular humanism, the belief system closest to my own. Although Lucretius was not an atheist, he believed that the Roman pantheon of gods had no interest in nor interfered in human affairs. However, every scientist I hold in high regard was or is an atheist, including Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, Michael Schermer, Carl Sagan, Neil deGrass Tyson, Susan Blackmore, Richard Dawkins, Ray Kurzweil, Daniel Dennett, Lisa Randall, Esther Perel, Sam Harris, E. O. Wilson, Bill Gates, and Steven Pinker. Something like 95% of members of the National Academy of Science, the finest scientists of the world, are atheists. So I am certainly in good company.

Speaking of company, we have found, through the years since graduate school, wonderful, like-minded friends in Unitarian-Universalist churches. Their non-judgmental set of principals make our secular humanism philosophy completely acceptable. Many of our closest friends, both in Racine and Florida, are UU. The seven UU principles clearly define a humanistic philosophy and are devoid of any theological reference. The only principle Joyce and I have trouble with is the first: *The inherent worth and dignity of every person*. In view of ISIS atrocities and President Trump's immigration practices, this statement is clearly open to question.

As we approach the end, Lucretius' seventh and eighth idea are strikingly relevant and reassuring. As some comic has said, "I'm not afraid of death - I'm just scared of dying." As members of Compassion and Choices, an organization calling for physician assisted suicide, we hope that we do have a legal choice at the end of our lives. If death comes quickly and easily, fine - if we are faced with a lingering and painful death, we will opt out.



Sunset on Island Lake