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Trail Tales, Fourth Quarter, 2008

10/16/08 New England in the fall is a site for sore eyes! :-) And all of the computer work that I'm doing these days regularly creates an experience of sore eyes. :-(I spent my high school and college years in New England. So for me, New England is the closest thing to going back home and it was a wonderful chance to catch up with some old friends in the area. In fact, I took advantage of the opportunity to look up a few people I had not seen in thirty years. As well, I also had some excellent encounters with new friends!



Connecticut is where I hooked up with some new friends. Dawn, is the one with the big grin on the upper right side of Gabriel (your right, his left). I met her in Boulder as I was about to launch the UBtheNEWS project. She was one of the first people to hear the recording of [Please Pass the Love](#), which I did right before hitting the road. You have her to thank for the fact that this is posted on UBtheNEWS.



Kathleen, seated below Dawn and Gabriel, is a friend of Dawn's from grade school. They both live in Norwalk, CT, which is in the southwest tip of the state along I-95. This puts them in an ideal location for visits whenever I'm headed up to New England. Gabriel, an artist (in case that wasn't obvious enough from the picture) is their new friend from England.

Unfortunately, this trip to New England also occasioned my first experience of getting sick since I've been on the road. A head cold put me *out* for a couple days and slowed me down for this first half of October. Fortunately, I was at my old friend Maribeth's place when it hit. So I was in a comfortable enough spot to go through the most miserable part of the experience. Maribeth was right there, though, with chicken soup, God bless her! I was also treated to a good meal at the home of Anne Davies, who absolutely loves the UBtheNEWS project. Anne pretty much insisted that I head out to the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting at the end of October. If you've been getting the emails, then you also know that she is the one who took the initiative to contact the producers of *Speaking of Faith* about having me on that radio show and saw the letter she wrote (which everyone can use as a template for their own letter). If you are not on the UBtheNEWS email list, see what you're missing? Send me an email now and I'll put you on the list!

As it turns out, Krista Tippett, the host of *Speaking of Faith*, will be doing an all-day workshop to kick off the conference. This organization, which basically boasts having all the professors in the country who teach in Religion Departments as members, will have about 5000 participants at the event. What an outreach opportunity! Tamara, who works at Urantia Foundation, has graciously offered me a place to stay at 533 Diversey, which is only about fifteen minutes away from the conference. This means I'll have a free and warm place to stay with off-street parking. Much thanks goes to Tamara and the Foundation for this most important assistance!

Getting sick slowed down my productivity considerably at the beginning of this month. So I did not do as much outreach at universities as I had hoped. Nonetheless, even though I did not feel healthy

enough to do the meet-and-greet thing. I did send out about 150 emails to professors at Brown and Harvard. Brown University has an archeology department that takes a special interest in Mesopotamia. And I did distribute about 40 pamphlets directly into the mailboxes of professors at the Harvard Divinity School, focusing mainly on their World Religions Department. Due to timing issues, I was not able to meet up with Mark McMenam, who teaches at Mount Holyoke and has referenced *The Urantia Book* in one of his books, but I did get a chance to meet with the director of the interfaith organization at Mount Holyoke. She was very interested to have me back for a presentation.



The last stop on the way out of New England was with some longtime UB readers in Connecticut, Carl Marsden and Nick Scalzo. I spent the night at Carl's place. Carl lives in Clinton, near the coast on a beautiful country road. His sizable lot is surrounded by trees, which, of course, were rich with fall colors. Though, as you can see from the picture, I was so taken with his beautiful late blooming marigolds, he had to point out the trees for me. He was a wonderful host and hooked me up with Nick Scalzo. Nick has long been associated with the UB and I gained many valuable insights from speaking with him.

Mike DiMattia has been working on the audio recordings we did before IC08 so that I can post the standard UBtheNEWS outreach presentation on the website, downloadable for those who want to use it to host outreach events. Even though there has been somewhat of a slowdown with the publication of reports, due to extensive traveling and getting sick, they are coming. The next five reports have been identified and I've been working on multiple reports at once. Chris Halvorson continues to be an invaluable resource in this regard and makes sure that the quality is where it needs to be. Quality takes time, but it's worth the wait!

Hold high the mission!

Namaste,
Halbert

11/3/08 The last two and a half weeks have seen some of the most outrageous developments so far for the UBtheNEWS project. The forces of the universe seem to be aligning in ways that are perfect for the future development of this approach to outreach. In my wildest dreams I never imagined that the American Academy of Religion (AAR) conference would be such a treasure trove of scholars interested in incorporating *The Urantia Book* into their study of religion. Most of the professors in the New Religious Movements Group were already familiar with the book, at least to some degree, and they already have a keen interest in studying how religious movements try to use science to validate their beliefs and culture. There is every reason to expect that *The Urantia Book* will be seen to compare very favorably to other groups!



But before saying more on the subject of this four-day whirlwind of activity, I want to start with my excellent experiences with readers from the Washington, DC area.



Bob Debold

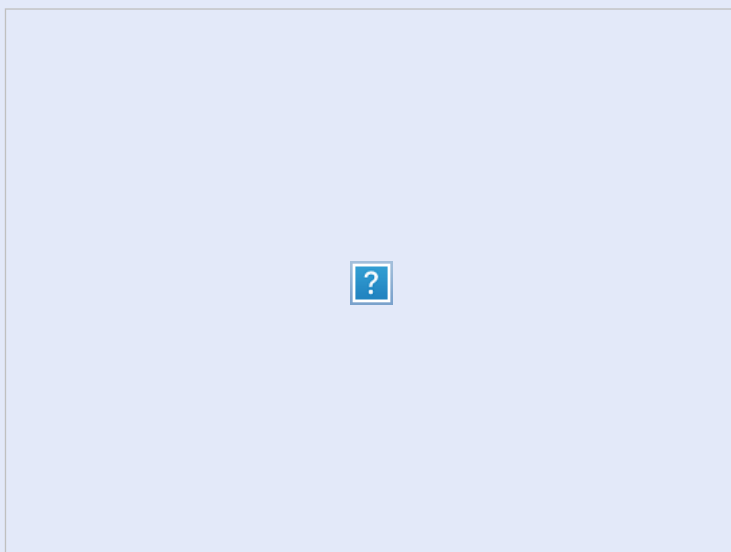
Special thanks goes to Bill and Claudette Beamer. I had some last minute scheduling changes entering the DC area that made it difficult to do my usual overnight accommodations routine at “Hotel Walmart.” They took me in with just several hours notice and made it much easier to handle the rescheduling of my activities in that area. The next morning I met up with an old friend from high school, who ten years ago provided some very nice editorial feedback for my first book, *The Logic of Love*. After meeting my friend in the city, I headed west to one of the many Panera Breadworks locations that serve as my office-on-the-road. The plan was to do the “Hotel Walmart” thing that night and then head out to Floyd Lindsey’s timeshare at the Massanutten Resort to spend several days with fellow readers. But then I got a phone call from Bob Debold. Bob and I met at ICo8 and it was his initiative that got me to Massanutten and scheduled for a presentation in Alexandria, VA. Our conversation led to the realization that I was just about five miles away from where Floyd lives. So another last minute change of plans led to spending a

night at Floyd’s house before heading out to Massanutten the next day. Getting to know Floyd was a real treat. He rocks!

Massanutten is nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains and was absolutely beautiful. A handful of us enjoyed several days of the crisp air (crisp enough that I needed to run my motor home’s heater at night to keep the pipes from freezing). The folks that showed up took very good care of me and I am most grateful for their kindness. “Kindness” needs to be defined broadly in this case. Don’t let the gray hairs fool you. Bob goes running on a regular basis and inspired me to go on a run with him. I think we did about three miles at a good pace. I can’t remember the last time I did a run like that. My legs had a lot to say about it the next day. And sadly, it was a bit problematic to be around such interesting people for several days. I thought my vocal chords had healed up pretty well, but sadly they have not. By the time we left, I was starting to have problems again.



Earlene, Bob, Rita & Floyd



My voice got a little rest on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning in advance of the presentation on Sunday afternoon in Alexandria. Stevie Shaefer and her friend Leesa did a lot of the prep work so that we could enjoy a nice meal after the presentation. As per usual a very unusual and interesting crowd of people showed up from as far away as Pennsylvania. Ed (back row, second from the left) put me up at his place that night. It was really nice to get to know him. He’s quite the treasure trove of intriguing information. Unfortunately, it led to more conversation into the evening after the presentation. So by the time I started the seven hundred mile drive

to Chicago, my voice was in pretty bad shape. As some of you may recall from the last Trail Tale, I caught a bit of a cold in New England and I really hadn’t shaken it by the time I got to the DC area. So with all the social activities, too much talking, exercise I wasn’t used to (no one to blame but myself on that account!), I was pretty depleted and my voice was in bad shape by the time I was on my way to Chicago for the American Academy of Religion conference.

This was no way to start a four-day event that involves lots of talking in noisy environments. I took three days to cover the 700 miles, but not having done much “behind the scenes” work while I was in Virginia, it was not an especially restful journey. There was a lot of work to catch up on and preparations to make for the conference. Fortunately, Tamara set me up to stay at the Urantia Foundation building, which is only about fifteen minutes from where the conference was being held. This saved a lot of money and provided me with very comfortable accommodations. Unfortunately, because of the size of my vehicle, I had to show up at six in the morning so that I could get a parking space close to the entrance of the public lots. My ride is simply too big to get into the lots once they start to fill up. Events started as early as 8:30 and often went to 10:00 or 11:00 at night. By the third day I couldn’t take it any more and left around 7:30 so I could get some rest.

In the spirit of providing the bad news first, these four days, plus meeting with Barbara Newsom for a couple of hours the morning after the conference, pretty much wiped me out. By the time it was all over my voice was in such a bad state and I was so physically depleted that it was necessary to cancel the TV interview I had scheduled several days later in Asheville, NC and to cancel my plans to attend the Miami Book Fair the following week. Bruce Porter saw all this coming months ago and tried his very best to warn me. He was very gracious in his recent reiteration of the importance of working at a sustainable pace.

The conference was deliciously heartbreaking. It reminded me of my visit to northern California in 2001 to a thirty-acre property that some friends had just bought. There were several fruit trees on the property that were not much cared for that summer during the ownership transition period. So by the time we arrived in the fall, there was a peach tree with fruit so ripe that no matter how carefully you tried to pull one from the branch, it would cause three or four more to fall to the ground and be badly bruised. Most people, I expect have never had a peach ripened on the tree to this extent. It is heavenly, but bitter sweet to pick one and watch several more become instant pie material. Not the worse case scenario, I suppose, but definitely one of those classic examples of when the harvest is great and the laborers are few.

Such was the conference. About five thousand professional educators in the field of religion attend this event each year. It is a phenomenal outreach opportunity! I did the best I could with what I had to work with (physically speaking) and managed to give out about 130 pamphlets along with at least a brief explanation about what it was all about. After allowing time for attending the sessions and for meals, this works out to handing someone a pamphlet about every 12 minutes for four days. I focused my efforts on those involved with Comparative Religion groups and the New Religious Movements Group (NRM).

Naturally, awareness and interest in *The Urantia Book* was greater with the NRM crowd. About thirty people were regular attendees of their five meetings. The standard model for meetings at AAR conventions is for four scholars to read recent academic papers they have written on a particular subject. This is followed by Q & A from the audience. One of the NRM sessions was on the topic of how NRM use science to validate their beliefs and practices! Feeling the need to at least introduce everyone who attended these sessions to the UBtheNEWS project and given the problems I was having with my vocal chords, naturally, conversations were kept relatively short. I made up a special letter to go along with the pamphlet that included quotes from students. These quotes were laudatory comments about the UB in response to Dr. Fein's question on her World Religions final exam: "What was the most relevant thing you got out of the course?" It also informed them of the 12-minute highlights video from the presentation that I did for that class.

The day before the official start of the conference provided an opportunity to sign up for a special workshop featuring Krista Tippett. Krista hosts the nationally broadcast radio program *Speaking of Faith*. The topic of this workshop was "Taking Religion(s) Seriously: What Students Need to Know." Obviously, this was another great synergistic opportunity to introduce scholars to the UB. About seventy people attended this workshop and about half of them received pamphlets. The woman I was sitting beside was recently given a copy of the UB. Because some of you were kind enough to write to Krista's producer about having me on the show, this provided a nice opportunity for me to get a few words in with her on the side. Not an easy task in these circumstances. We also discussed some opportunities I have to help her get speaking engagements in New England.



Book signing w/ Krista Tippett



Rob Davis

Rob Davis also attended the conference, displaying Daynal Institute Press titles. A huge number of publishers participate in this event. I spoke with people from the Templeton Foundation and Metanexus. Templeton provides grants for people doing work that harmonizes science and religion. In another year or so I think it will be timely to apply, after we've made more inroads into the universities. Metanexus gets a lot of money from Templeton for their Local Societies Initiative, which promotes exploration of the harmony between science and religion on a local level. The editor of the Metanexus journal wrote a paper about the UB as an undergrad and encouraged me to submit something for their journal.

There is a lot more to say about this event, but in order to learn more about it, you need to be on the email list. Trail Tales are about the past. The UBtheNEWS email list is for discussion about the future. Much of what occurred at this event relates to plans for the future. Given the extent to which this project has grown and the enormous amount of contacts that I now need to follow up with, I'm not going to be too repetitive when it comes to writing for the Trail Tales and the email list. If you're not on the list, there is no charge. Click here to get on it. This next one is going to be a doozy, so don't miss it.

Hold high the mission!

Namaste,
Halbert

11/29/08 An online video of the UBtheNEWS slide presentation for introducing *The Urantia Book* is finally posted! Special thanks goes Mike DiMattia for spending many hours on the recording and editing process and to Joe DiMaggio for the many hours of frustrating cyber-world non sense that we had to go through in order to get the thing posted. This 43-minute sight and sound extravaganza is now available to everyone, 24/7. Whether you are long familiar with *The Urantia Book* or it's all new to you, this video is probably the most powerful and efficient way to get an appreciation for what this whole site is about.



To check it out, [click here](#).

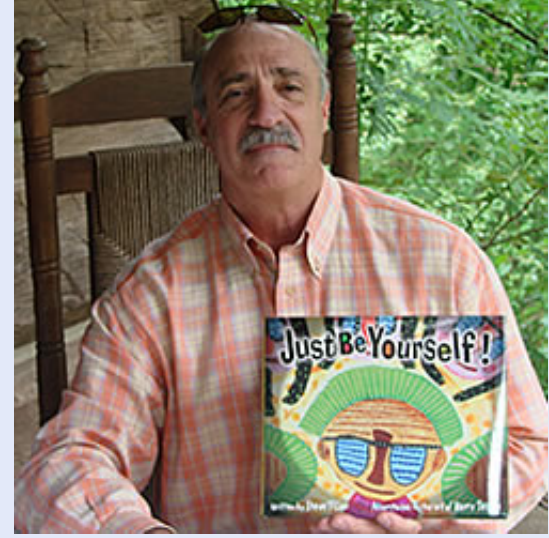
In the process of trying to get the video posted, Mike DiMattia reminded me that I still had not posted one of the Chris Halvorson talks that he had remastered. As it turns out, this talk is all about the sentence in *The Urantia Book* that is the basis for the recently published [Chromosome Count Report](#). Now that I've finally become aware of this, it will soon be the first Chris Halvorson recording to accompany a UBtheNEWS report.

Having already started with the most recent developments, let's continue looking back in reverse order.



For Thanksgiving I was blessed to be the guest of our very own Joe DiMaggio, webmaster for the UBtheNEWS project. Joe is not only a master of cyberspace, but also a master of smoked turkey. I stopped the action as we were preparing the table to get a picture of Joe and his son, Antonio. Though to most people I'm now known as the UBtheNEWS guy, there are still some who think of me as the juggler. This seems to be the case with Antonio, who I met earlier this year, when I first got to know Joe. At six, juggling and Halbertcicles are still a lot more interesting than smoked turkey and *The Urantia Book*. Fortunately, all generations received their respective blessings and Halbertcicles made an appearance for the enjoyment of children of all ages. Thanks for Thanksgiving, Joe!

Prior to Jacksonville, I spent a few days with Steve Tiller in Atlanta, Georgia. Steve writes, publishes, and distributes children's books—[Right Stuff Kids](#). Our impromptu get together led to the idea of creating a Halberticles book for children. So that's now part of the master plan. If all goes well, hopefully around next spring or summer, Volume 1 of *The Lost Art of Making Ice Cubes: the wisdom is in the questions* will be published. I spent a couple days selecting photos and writing *questions* that rhyme and have uplifting spiritual messages. If you go to the photo gallery you can view some of the pictures that will be used in this book. This is not as much of a side project as it might at first seem. There are various synergistic aspects to it. For instance, there will be a section in the book that talks a little bit about Halbert (that's me ;-). This section will make very brief mention of the UBtheNEWS project. And, book sales provide a fundraising opportunity for the UBtheNEWS project.



Before Atlanta, I stopped off at Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina. I met with [Ben Zeller](#), one of the professors that I encountered at the American Academy of Religion conference (see the previous Trail Tale). He is coming out with a book early next year called *Prophets and Paradigms: New Religions and Science in Late Twentieth Century America*. I gave him a crash course on issues related to science and the UB to help make his research into this topic more efficient.



Views from Rabia's place

Brevard is only about 45 minutes from the Asheville area. Rabia Harris lives right outside of Asheville and provided me several desperately needed days of R&R after the conference. Thanks Rabia! At the beginning of this year I met with several professors from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. These meetings went very well. I think it made a good second impression to return the next semester asking for their help with hiring students to assist me. A history professor and the Chair of the Anthropology Department both agreed to take a few extra fliers to repost after the periodic cleaning of the bulletin boards occurs.

As some of you may noticed, as of late, postings to the Trail Tales section have not been made on the twice per month schedule that otherwise has been the consistent practice throughout 2007. Next year it will probably drop to once per month. Not only is the newly upgraded UBtheNEWS email list providing updates, as well it also addresses plans for future developments and ways that we can work together to realize the full potentials of the UBtheNEWS project. If you are not already on this email list, please take a moment to do that now.

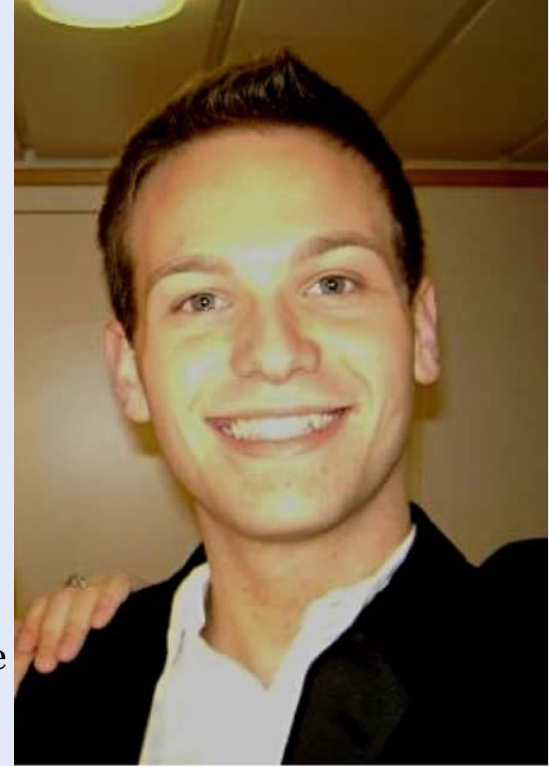
[Click here](#) to sign up.

Namaste,
Halbert

"Get a clue; then FOLLOW IT!"

12/31/08 During the first week of December I hired an anthropology student from the University of Florida at Gainesville to help write reports. The Chair of the Anthropology Department was willing to send out an email advertising the position to all the anthropology majors (hundreds of them). Sixty students responded to the ad. From this group, eight students were interviewed. Josh Carden, a sophomore, was selected. At the time of this writing he is already working on a report about when human beings were first able to control fire. It's a very hot topic. As it stands right now, I probably have enough work on anthropology-related reports to keep Josh busy for a year.

The email advertisement led to the largest number of website hits ever in a single day. The response was immediate. Within hours my mailbox was flooded with inquiries. Reading through writing samples and resumes and scheduling interviews took up the whole week. Most of the interviews lasted about an hour. One Peruvian student had heard about *The Urantia Book* from her aunt in Lima. A freshman I interviewed will likely be a good candidate for employment a year from now.



Josh Carden

The stop in Gainesville gave me a chance to stay at the Neibaur's. As some of you may know, back in the late eighties and early nineties Matt was involved with helping to publish some of the earliest collections essays about how science has been catching up to the UB. The Neibaur's just became grandparents for the first time this month. Their daughter in Orlando had a baby girl!



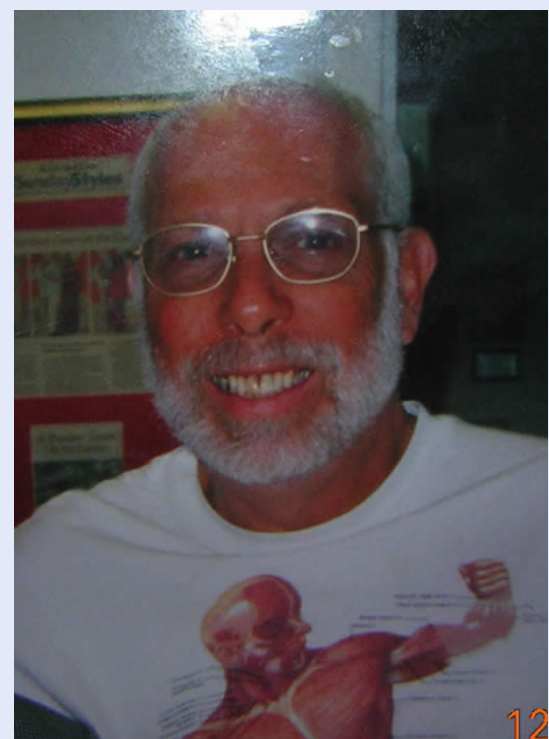
After Gainesville, the next stop was southern Florida. On December 12th I did my second presentation at the Theosophical Society in Deerfield Beach; I did the first one at the beginning of the year on January 12th. At the first one, six people showed up. This time eighteen people attended and they had me talking for three and half hours! Naturally, we did not spend all that time talking about the reports, probably less than an hour. This group had all kinds of questions. The presentation went from 7:30 to 11:00 with only a ten-minute break.

Some of you may know Chuck Bellman. He's been a reader for decades and lives outside of Miami in Lauderhill. This summer Chuck retired after thirty-five years as a high school science teacher. Around Thanksgiving he had a stroke. He regained consciousness just as I was getting into southern Florida and I have been visiting him each day in the hospital and, as of last week, at the HealthSouth Rehabilitation Center. He's been making excellent progress, especially in the last several days of this month. Chuck is in very good spirits, cracking jokes constantly to the great amusement of family, friends, and the staff of doctors, nurses, and therapists.

Chuck is a real pillar of the community down here and has powerfully brought people together as an outgrowth of his misfortune. None of the other patients have nearly so many visitors; there's been a constant flow in and out over the last several weeks. He very much appreciates everyone's support and often says so. I'm happy to report that his speech and mind function are for the most part unaffected. The left side of his body is still quite sluggish. I've been doing what I can to help him reawaken the left side.

People who want to follow along with his progress can go to this website: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/charlesbellman>

Because the UBtheNEWS project was launched in January 2007, the end of the calendar year also brings an end to the yearly cycles of this outreach endeavor. Some incredible potentials have been realized in these last two years. The UBtheNEWS project has created a format for introducing *The Urantia Book* to communities of people. From students and professors to churches and interfaith groups, we now



see that people are not only open to learning about *The Urantia Book*, but also interested in scheduling follow up presentations. What more could we ask for?

Much thanks goes to all who have made this effort possible. I can't mention everyone (that's what the List of Contributors is for; if you'd like to be on it let me know). But I do want to mention some of the folks who have been crucial to the progress and development of UBtheNEWS. Chris Halvorson's scholarship is invaluable. We have him to thank for the quality of the more scientifically sophisticated reports. Joe DiMaggio, our webmaster, has made an enormous contribution of his time and expertise. Mike DiMattia put in a lot of hours recording and mastering the UBtheNEWS slide presentation that is now posted on the website, as well as doing the 12-minute highlights video of the Denison University presentation and creating the blindfolded juggling video. Fred Harris, Paula Sutton, and all the folks from Mind Body & Spirit have graciously made it possible to do online, tax-deductible fundraising and been extremely supportive of this project in other ways as well. Phil Calabrese has contributed to numerous reports. Thanks goes to Donna Whelan for all her proofreading and to Kay Nuissl who is now starting to handle accounting issues.

To all the folks that have fed me and housed me and provided funding over the last two years—bless your hearts! I am truly honored to have gotten to meet and work with so many wonderful Urantia Book readers across the country, even the world. What we are achieving, the documentation of *The Urantia Book's* superhuman quality of credibility, is transforming outreach opportunities and it is a pleasure to be in cooperative service with all of you.

As some of you may have noticed, the Trail Tales are becoming less frequent as communications on the recently started UBtheNEWS email list have become more frequent. If you are not already on this email list, please take a moment to do that now.

[Click here](#) to sign up.

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and are anticipating a great new year!

Namaste,
Halbert

“Get a clue; then FOLLOW IT!”

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