

No known author

Unusual book has Quad-Cities following

By CONNIE CONROY

Reminder Editor

There's a book club that meets every Monday night at the Hauberg Center in Rock Island, but only the topics change — not the book.

Members of the URANTIA Book Club study only, what else, the URANTIA Book — a volume of 2,097 pages with no known author.

"It's quite a heavy tome," according to club member Richard Preiss. The book is not only heavy in its actual weight, but in its subject matter, too.

The URANTIA Book is not a volume to take home and sum-up the contents with a 25-word book report. It is book of universal ideals and thought-provoking treatises. In short, it is a book that promotes the kind of discussion reminiscent of college philosophy courses.

The book and its name is copyrighted by the URANTIA Foundation, based in Chicago. The not-for-profit organization has no political or religious allegiances. The Foundation's main responsibility is to oversee the publication of the book which retails for \$34.

THE TITLE OF THE BOOK — URANTIA — is the name given to the planet earth. The book itself is divided into four parts: The Central and Superuniverses, The Local Universe, The History of URANTIA, and The Life and Teachings of Jesus.

The book's subject matter is a mix of historical, factual and religious content. However, members are quick to stress that the URANTIA Book Club is not a religious group nor any type of cult.

"We have Baptists, Catholics, agnostics, ex-seminarians," Preiss said of the group. "We don't do anything else together but meet here together."

At a recent meeting there were eight participants present. Their occupations ranged from freelance writer, advertising executives, a real estate agent, a farmer and a former teacher. There are no dues or club officers.

To accommodate a recent visitor to the group, members start reading on page 1129, Paper 103, "The Reality of Religious Experience."

GROUP MEMBERS take turns reading aloud from the book, interrupting each other with questions about the text or for general discussion. (Weekly meetings are not all conducted the same.) For example, one of the discussions topics centers on "unlighted self."



Members of the URANTIA Book Club sit around a table at the Hauberg Center recently to read and discuss the URANTIA Book — a 1955 publication with more than 2,000 pages and no known author. Some

members, clockwise from left, are: Herman Nelson, Barbara Cuchra, Dave Missavage, Robert Hengerer, Tim Young, Linda Preiss, Tony DeVore and Richard Preiss.

interest versus altruism" — not exactly your typical pre-bedtime reading fare. As the conversation progresses, however, parallels are drawn between the book and everyday situations.

Obviously, the URANTIA Book is not for everyone and the book club members are the first to admit this.

"There's the desire to do this kind of thing," said Tim

Young, referring to intellectual stimulation. Young, who has been reading the book for 2½ years, and Tony DeVore come from Muscatine every Monday to discuss the book at Hauberg.

Many of the current members of the group stumbled upon each other by accident and began meeting four years ago in each other's homes. Last August the meetings moved to the Hauberg Center. Dave Missavage, who now farms in rural East Moline, used to come from Monmouth for the meetings.

THE BOOK IS LARGE enough to encompass several far-reaching topics, including the formation of the earth's, or URANTIA's, universe.

"I've met groups of people that have read only the last third of the book," Missavage said.

"They have a segment on the ice ages that is very, very accurate," added Barbara Cuchra.

Several of the group members agreed that they approached the book with skepticism, especially when they learned that the book was written by "authors of divine personality." According to the URANTIA Foundation, the book's manuscript appeared in 1934, authors unknown, and the book was copyrighted in 1955.

ACCORDING TO PREISS, "It's an intellectual approach to God. It addresses 20th century concepts, not in simple-minded parables. A lot more people today

are asking bigger questions about science."

Some of the members said they have met scientists who claim that some of the passages, such as the formation of the universe, are scientifically accurate.

"Originally, I tried to approach it by trying to disprove it," Missavage said.

Linda Preiss said the book offers more than intellectual discussion. "Each of us needed something more," she said. "For me, this has been a faith experience."

Readers of the URANTIA Book realize that nonreaders may not understand their fascination of this unusual book, and they can accept other people's skepticism with a sense of humor.

"IT WOULD BE LIKE Bob Newhart trying to sell the game of baseball over the phone to the Parker Brothers," Herman Nelson said. "Given the bare facts . . ." Nelson's voice trailed off and the other group members started laughing.

"It's really no different than a stamp club that meets here," Richard Preiss said of the URANTIA Book Club. "We don't stand on ceremony that much."

The members' only guide through the URANTIA Book is to know that they each give their best effort in interpreting the book.

"(The book) specifically suggests you examine everything in your life," Nelson said.

"All of the book's concepts carry good will," Preiss added.

Subsidies to expand day care

By BETTY FULLER

With more new mothers returning earlier to the working force and the number of single parent families increasing, the need has grown for day care services that include the age group 6 weeks to 2 years.

And with help from public and private subsidies, some families which previously couldn't afford day care services might be able to afford it.

For example, Laurel Walker, director of Skip-A-Long Day Care Center Inc., East Moline, says the center plans to expand its present service, now serving children ages 2 to 10, to include a younger group.

Skip-A-Long is subsidized by United Way funds, Title XX funds — federal funds administered by the state under state block grants — and also by federal revenue sharing funds from Silvis, East Moline and South Moline township.

Those who ask for subsidies must meet income guidelines. And to get Title XX funds, applicants must be working or else receiving approved schooling or training.

Walker said subsidies are available also for abused and neglected children.

Sue Manhard, licensing representative with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, says there is a definite need for more day care services for the younger age group. She pointed out it almost takes two people working to support a family, and the need is increased by professional women who don't want to leave their jobs during the child-raising years.

In the Illinois Quad-Cities, area centers serving younger age groups are the Florence Aldridge Child Development Center, East Moline, serving ages 15 months to 6 years; Just Kids, Rock Island, serving ages 6 weeks to 12 years; Sunshine Group Day Care Preschool and Kindergarten, Rock Island, 15 months to 12 years; Sunny Acres Day Care and Preschool, Milan, 15 months to 12 years, and The Children's Place, Moline, also 15 months to 12 years.

The Children's Place and Just Kids also offer night care.

BECAUSE OF subsidies, a center may have slots available to parents at reduced prices.

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Reminder photos by Tom Kimmell

Richard Preiss takes his turn reading from the URANTIA Book.