

**Shrink Rap Radio #91, May 20, 2007, A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Dreams**  
**David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Curtis Hoffman, Ph.D.**  
(transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio) by Dori Lehner)

*Excerpt: One of the things that’s happened in cultural anthropology over the last, I’d say, 25 years or so, is that anthropologists have begun exploring consciousness in the ethnographic setting, and they have actually participated in ceremonies and dream sessions and so forth with indigenous peoples. And so they have come to learn the richness of that side of native and indigenous life, when the people have been willing to share it. And that has provided the beginnings of a base of understanding of these cultures from within themselves, rather than from some externally applied perspective. And that’s really valuable.*

**Introduction:** That was the voice of my guest, Dr. Curtis Hoffman. Curtis Hoffman, Ph.D. is chair of the Anthropology Department at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts. He is an archaeologist and consciousness researcher in the Department of Anthropology. He is particularly interested in cultural systems of thought relating to dreaming, myth, ritual, visions, religious iconography and symbolism, and is the author of *The Seven Story Tower: A Mythic Journey through Space and Time*. He was a presenter at the 2004 International Association for the Study of Dreams Conference in Copenhagen, as well as this year’s upcoming conference which will be at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, California. Now before we get into the interview I have to apologize for the fact that my voice is very soft compared to his, and I thought I had all this balancing stuff down pat by show number 91. Something went wrong here; I’m not sure what, so I just apologize in advance. I think you’ll be able to hear both of us, though. So here’s the interview.

**Dr. Dave:** Dr. Curtis Hoffman, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Thank you. Glad to be here.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, I’m really glad that you can be here too, and I know that you’re going to be a speaker at the upcoming 24th annual International Association for the Study of Dreams conference, and we’ll be talking about that maybe more towards the end of our discussion, but let’s start off with me asking – well, you’re trained, I guess, as an archaeologist and ...

**Curtis Hoffman:** That’s right, that’s right.

**Dr. Dave:** ... and you chair an anthropology department, right?

**Curtis Hoffman:** That’s correct, yeah. Bridgewater State College is a small state institution about 30 miles south of Boston, Massachusetts. And I’ve been there since 1978, and our anthropology department is fairly newly independent as of 2003.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay, and let's back up and tell me how you got interested in dreams in the first place?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, I've had an interest in dreams off and on for all of my life, but what brought me into the more intensive study of this – every year I go to a spiritual conference down in New York City, and back in 1991 I met two people there whom I had not known before. We hit it off. We decided that we would stay in touch with each other, and get back in contact the next year at the conference. In '92, when we get back in touch with each other, we discover that each of us had had a rather significant dream, and the three dreams wove in and among one another, and we said, "Wait a minute; we've got something significant here." So thereafter we resolved, and continued for many years, to send each other all of our remembered dreams every month.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, that sounds fascinating.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yeah, and then one of our members was living in New York City at the time, and happened to go to the 1995 IASD Convention, and spoke very highly of it. She then moved down to North Carolina, and in 1997 the conference went there, to Asheville. So, the three of us agreed to meet at the conference -- actually we met a bit before. And then we went to the conference and that was my first exposure to the organization. And I've been hooked ever since.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay. I'm just curious. What was that spiritual conference that the three of you first met at?

**Curtis Hoffman:** It's called the Arcane School. It follows the writings of Alice Bailey. I don't know if you're familiar with that.

**Dr. Dave:** Not terribly. I've heard the name, certainly.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Right, right. But it simply served as meeting ground for the three of us to get together at that time, and then we've since blossomed, and we've added another person, and then it's just sort of gone on from there.

**Dr. Dave:** That's great. Now that initial experience, are you saying that – that somehow the dreams that each of the three of you had seemed to be relating to one another?

**Curtis Hoffman:** They certainly did. And I don't have a record of those dreams, because at that point we weren't journaling. But, since that time we all have been doing extensive journaling of our dreams and I currently have something over 7000 of them on a database in my computer.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh my goodness.

**Curtis Hoffman:** With easy means of pulling them back up and looking at anything, and doing studies on them and all sorts of things like that.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, that's a good database to have close at hand. So then how did your involvement with dreams – where did it go from there in terms of professionally, in your teaching, your research?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, by that time – I think it started in '96 actually – I put together a course called The Anthropology of Consciousness, or eventually it became Culture and Consciousness, in which I had anthropology students in an advanced course – anthropology students studying how consciousness is construed in many other cultures. And as part of the course, we had a number of dream work sessions right in class, where they could explore their own dreams in a group setting. And I have offered that several times since for several occasions in conjunction with a member of our psychology department and since, again, on my own. It's an exciting opportunity for students to explore the nature of consciousness through dreams as well as across cultures.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, well, you know I've actually done something very similar for quite a few years before I retired. I taught a course at Sonoma State University called Myth, Dream, and Symbol. And half of class time for 15 weeks was devoted to small dream groups. So I know how rich that can be. But one place that I've always felt deficient is in terms of my knowledge of cross-cultural aspects of dreams, so I'm particularly interested in hearing your comments.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, there's more and more out there. One of the things that's happened in cultural anthropology over the last, I'd say, 25 years or so, is that anthropologists have begun exploring consciousness in the ethnographic setting, and they have actually participated in ceremonies and dream sessions and so forth with indigenous peoples. And so they have come to learn the richness of that side of native and indigenous life, when the people have been willing to share it. And that has provided the beginnings of a base of understanding of these cultures from within themselves, rather than from some externally applied perspective. And that's really valuable, because it turns out that people, of course, people everywhere dream every night. I once did the math on this and calculated that there was something like 400 million people are dreaming right now somewhere in the world, and so this is going on, and in every culture they have had to come to terms with what their dreams are and what they mean to them, and they have developed systems that incorporate dreams into the culture, in some cases quite explicitly and quite actively.

**Dr. Dave:** I've had the impression that cultures everywhere throughout time have regarded dreams as to be something special, and that they do have a message for us. Is that true, is that true as a general rule?

**Curtis Hoffman:** It generally is, though cultures also develop classification systems for their dreams. There's a nice kind of a hierarchy that exists in Iroquois culture, for example, in which they define four types of dreams, and the first type of dreams are called no account dreams. And those you don't bother with; you just sort of put them aside. They're just day residue things, as Freud would say. Then there are dreams that are healing dreams, that are for either the individual to clue them to things that might be going on – on in their system that need to be addressed, or other people. Then there are cultural dreams, that are dreams of things that need to be brought before the larger culture and enacted. And then there are the really big dreams. These are the prophetic dreams, the ones that can absolutely change not only the person's life but the life of the whole culture. And so they have their own ways of discriminating amongst their dreams to decide which ones a particular dream – which category a particular dream falls into, and so they would say that not all dreams are equally important, but that some dreams are very important.

**Dr. Dave:** Right, and don't most of us have that same feeling these days?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, that depends upon whom you're including in the most of us.

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs). I'm thinking about ...

**Curtis Hoffman:** Most of us in IASD think so. Most of us worldwide, no, I don't think that's happened yet, because there is a current – certainly a tendency for people around the world under the influence of globalization to adopt a more materialistic attitude, in which what happens during the third of our lives when we're asleep is not given serious consideration during the other two-thirds of our lives when we're awake.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, that's certainly the case. In – you know, we have a fairly democratic approach to the understanding of dreams these days, that is, people like you and me sort of teach our students, "Well, you know, you can learn to figure out what your dream is saying to you, and whether or not it's important," and so on. I wonder, did the Iroquois have that same democratic attitude, or was it relegated to the shaman or some special person of the culture?

**Curtis Hoffman:** It depends. In other words, some dreams you would have to take to the shaman for interpretation, especially the last two categories, the more important ones. You would need to have – to make sure that you got it right. Whereas people could easily discriminate the no account dreams and the healing dreams more or less.

**Dr. Dave:** So what does all of this research say to us about the nature of consciousness? Have you developed a model? Or ...?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, I kind of like the model which some of the anthropic principle people are talking about, in that their accepting consciousness as a third force in the universe alongside of matter and energy. And the idea is that consciousness conveys another – another way of describing it is information. Some of them prefer the term information to consciousness. But information, for example, is not lost in a black hole. So, you know, we look at it from many different aspects. And I'm inclined to see it as a third force.

**Dr. Dave:** It's interesting. Have you heard of – there's something called The Secret. It's a film or a Web site or a movement or something that kind of goes along the lines of saying that what we imagine, what we really wish for and visualize and so on, that that will come to pass. Is what you're saying a variant of that, or something different?

**Curtis Hoffman:** It plays into that, however there is that old proverb to be careful what you wish for, because you may get it. In other words, it may be that what you think you want is not what's really good for you, and so to a certain degree, it is possible to learn to work with consciousness and to guide the way things turn out. To a certain degree, if we insist upon that as being absolutely true, then for people who don't succeed in doing it, we wind up blaming the victim.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Curtis Hoffman:** So there's an arrogance involved in that, too, that we have to avoid.

**Dr. Dave:** Right. There's a definite danger there, a pitfall, of blaming the victim, as you say.

**Curtis Hoffman:** That's right.

**Dr. Dave:** Though, that's really a very shamanic view – model of the world, isn't it?

**Curtis Hoffman:** I suppose it is, and I do a lot of study of shamanic cultures, because I'm kind of attracted to that. And I think that that's a kind of the base upon which all the rest of the world's religions grow out of. One of the things that I've done – I don't know if you know of Robbie Bosnak.

**Dr. Dave:** I do know of him. I've read one of his books. He's a Jungian analyst, kind of a radical guy, I guess.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yeah, I guess so. Back in 2002, he led a group of us on a dream tour of the Paleolithic caves in southern France. And I went on that. It was spectacular.

**Dr. Dave:** What made it a dream tour?

**Curtis Hoffman:** We went into some of the caves. We were not permitted to actually sleep in the caves. The French – very rightly so – protect those spaces very carefully because there is some sign of deterioration if you get too many visitors in them. So they monitor them very carefully. But we were allowed to go inside the caves and spend some time in there. And then we incubated dream around them, and we were there for, I think, nine nights altogether, including camping out at a ancient rock shelter. And some remarkable things happened during that time.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, say a little bit, first of all, about dream incubation in case some of our listeners are not familiar with that, and then give us some examples of remarkable things that happen.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, it's a very ancient technique. The Greeks were well aware of it, so were the Babylonians and the Egyptians. In fact, most peoples have known about it. It may be shamanic, for all we know. But essentially what you do is you go to a place which is some kind of sacred place, and you are taken through a couple of stages of preparation in order to prepare to go to sleep, and before you go to sleep, you meditate upon some problem or issue that you would like to have resolved in your dream. And then you dream. And then you come out and you report your dreams and then, of course, you have the responsibility to follow through on whatever it was that you got. So this is a technique that has been used as a means of divination for thousands and thousands of years in many cultures around the world.

**Dr. Dave:** And also for healing, right?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yes, yes. And that was the technique which we used. And what we began to get into, was the idea that these wonderful paintings on the walls of the caves are not just three dimensional -- I mean, they're sort of two-and-half dimensional on the cave walls, because the painters took advantage of bulges and recesses in the walls to sort of bring out the musculature of the animals – but that they are gateways. That is, that for the Paleolithic people the world represented the boundary between the manifested and the unmanifested world; and the painting was the means by which things could come out – I guess a Jung would call them archetypes – could come out of the walls into manifested reality, and go back in. So they seem to have understood that the nature of existence is dual; that is, it is on the one hand, what we see around us in waking life, and on the other hand, something immensely more mysterious and impersonal and powerful. And the idea of going into the cave, is you are sort of going into that reality, that borderline reality. One of the things that's been observed about the cave paintings, is that you do not find cave paintings until you have gone deep enough into the cave that you are beyond the point where there is any outside light. So it's only when you get beyond that point you start to see the paintings, and then they get more as you go further in.

**Dr. Dave:** And what's the significance of that?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Because you are leaving the day world completely behind.

**Dr. Dave:** I see; yes.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Bringing with you only a little lamp – of course, today they have electric lights down there, but in the bigger caves anyway. But you are leaving behind the outside world and going into a different world, and that's prime for incubation. And what they seem to be understanding here, is that, when they painted the animals on the walls, they are painting a doorway for the animal spirit, the archetype, to emerge. And not just so they can hunt them; that's not the point.

**Dr. Dave:** You've just anticipated my question or comment, because that's what been said traditionally, right?

**Curtis Hoffman:** What? Yeah, yeah, but there's – you know there's – that theory doesn't work. And, I've got my archaeologist hat on now. One of the reasons that that doesn't work, is that the kinds of animals they actually hunted do not correspond to the kinds of animals they painted on the walls too well.

**Dr. Dave:** Hmm.

**Curtis Hoffman:** For example, there's this wonderful cave called Rouffignac in France, which we visited, which is dominated by images of mammoths. But mammoths were not living in that part of France, or indeed in Western Europe, at the time those things were painted. They were out on the plains of central Europe, and so they were painting animals that they may never have seen. They were painting them with marvelous accuracy, but they were not painting the animals that they themselves hunted.

**Dr. Dave:** So these may be images that came to them in visions? Is that what you're saying?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yes, or remembered images from previous generations. Who knows? But they knew their animals, that's for sure. But then again, you know, people make artwork of things they've never seen either. You know, when was the last time you saw a sphinx flying around?

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs) I can't say that I ever have.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yes, I mean, there are plenty of these mixed creatures. See, now we're getting into the grounds of my doctoral dissertation, I should warn you.

**Dr. Dave:** That's fine. What was your doctoral dissertation?

**Curtis Hoffman:** It was entitled “The Lion, the Eagle, the Man, and the Bull in Mesopotamian Glyptic.” What I was studying back then were Babylonian cylinder seals, which were used for marking identity on documents – a sort of primitive id cards. And they are crawling with animal – archetypal animal – imagery, which people have tried to explain in a number of different ways. And in some cases you get these mixed creatures, which are the sort of things that you would not want to meet on a dark alley, late at night.

**Dr. Dave:** Right.

**Curtis Hoffman:** You know, they’re things which have the bodies of lions and the tails of the lions end in serpents, and they have the horns of bulls, and all kinds of weird stuff like that. So these are things that are imaginary, but one of the things that Robbie talks about – and again this goes back to this idea of consciousness as this third force – is that in the Middle Ages in Europe, and certainly in the Middle East, between the realm of the known, manifested world and the realm of divinity, there was a middle world called the world of the imagination, which sort of translates to the world of analogy, or metaphor. And this was considered to be a real place. It was a place which was inhabited by its own spirits, and which one could come into contact with. And so that’s sort of like the consciousness aspect or third force.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, that’s very interesting. You know, I went through a part of a training, a shamanic training one of my former students has put together, and has very successfully taught around the world. And it became clear that this – how important this imaginal space is, and I call it imaginal rather than imaginary. Imaginary makes it sound like it’s not real.

**Curtis Hoffman:** That’s right. That’s why we call certain substances entheogens rather than hallucinogens now.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, say that – say a little bit about that.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Okay. Well, in some cultures, particularly in the tropics, where they have plants that have powerful psychotropic substances in them, these are used to enhance the exploration of consciousness. And back in the ‘60s we called them hallucinogens.

**Dr. Dave:** Right, which suggests ...

**Curtis Hoffman:** But a hallucination is something that is not real. So the preferred term now is entheogens, which means “things that have god in them.” Now, I’m not recommending this to any of your listeners, by any means. There are many cultures which achieve the same ends on pure consciousness alone, without the help of exterior substances. And that’s my preference, anyway.



**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Now, you wrote a book, I notice, called *The Seven Story Tower: a Mythic Journey through Space and Time*. What's that about?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yes. Well, for many, many years I've been teaching courses in comparative mythology, and this book arose out of those courses, because one of the ways of understanding how universal mythic images are, is to take a series of myths from cultures that probably have never been in contact with each other, until today, and compare them. And so that's what I did, and striking similarities in content, meaning; but the symbols are jumbled in order. So it doesn't seem to matter in what order the symbols are presented, as long as they're all there, or enough of them are there. So I used as key myths to this – these are the seven stories, okay – from Irish, Greek, Mesopotamian, Indonesian, North American native, South American native, and finally, the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien.

**Dr. Dave:** Boy, that sounds really fascinating. In your title, *The Seven Story Tower*, I realize now is a play on words.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Oh yes. Well, myth works that way; so does dream.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, so seven's – it's seven stories. (laughs)

**Curtis Hoffman:** That's right. Yep.

**Dr. Dave:** And so you found similarities from these very different cultures in the stories, and that, of course, brings to mind both Jung and also Joseph Campbell, who – you know, Campbell, I taught out of his book for a long time, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

**Curtis Hoffman:** I still do. I still use *Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

**Dr. Dave:** I think it's just a marvelous, remarkable book.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Um hmm. But what one has to do with that book nowadays, is to gloss it with another book which I use by Hopkins and Anderson called *The Feminine Face of God*, because Campbell does not really do the female hero.

**Dr. Dave:** I've heard that from a lot of women students.

**Curtis Hoffman:** So what you need to do, is you need to complement it with one which does.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, yes, good. And the place where I was going was Campbell talks about myth – he likens it to the musical scale, and that there are all these different melodies that we have, but they're all based on, what, eight notes?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, depends on who's scale you want to use.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, right, but played – if they're played in the right order.

**Curtis Hoffman:** The second Vienna school uses 12, and Indian music uses quarter tones, so there are variants on that, too.

**Dr. Dave:** Sure, sure, but the idea applied to mythology is that there is some set of elements that, as you say, may come in different order, be ordered differently from culture to culture, but that those elements tend to be [inaudible].

**Curtis Hoffman:** That's right, they certainly do, and not only the elements, but also the import of the story. Shall I give you an example of this?

**Dr. Dave:** That would be wonderful.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Okay, this is a little bit away from dream, but that's okay. There's a creation story that's told among the Nuer who live in southern Sudan, that the first woman was walking along the banks of the river with the creator god and they were debating as to what would be the fate of humankind. And the creator says, "Well, okay, here's what. I'll take this cow pie and I'll throw it in the river, and if it floats, people will live forever, and if it sinks, they will die." And the woman says, "No, it will not be like that. I will take this heavy potsherd and throw it in the river, and if it floats they will live forever, and if it sinks, they will die." And, of course, we know what happened. And the creator asks her, "Why did you choose that?" And she says, "Because, if people did not die, they would not care for each other." Profound philosophies. You can find exactly the same story told among the Crow Indians in Montana, except that instead of the cow pie it's a buffalo chip, and instead of the potsherd, it's a big, heavy rock. So it's not only the elements, but the meaning that are found in both of those cultures. And there's no way that the Nuer and the Crow could have been in contact with each other, until the end of the 20th century, when a lot of Nuer migrated out of their homeland because of the civil war in Sudan, and wound up, a lot of them, in Minnesota, for some reason. And so now they could be in contact, but not when these stories were collected in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

**Dr. Dave:** You know, coming back to dreams, it occurs to me to ask you – and, of course I haven't prepared you for this at all – but, is there a – what's been the most remarkable dream in your personal life?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Whew!

**Dr. Dave:** {laughs} Is there one that comes to mind?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Aye yi yi. You're asking me to choose among 7000 dreams.

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs) Is there one that comes to mind that just kind of knocked your socks off?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Without revealing anything too personal, you mean, yeah?

**Dr. Dave:** Well, it will. I'm a clinical psychologist, so I always push people further than they want to go.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yes, I know, I know, but your listeners might not be. Yeah, umm. Let me see what I can find here. I've got the database easily available, you know, it's kind of nice to have these things. Okay, let's see here. Dream journal. One of things that nice about – my wife is a database programmer, and so she wrote the database for me. Let's see what we've got here. Well, this is kind of fun. Okay. This is from 1997. You know the statement that Einstein made that God does not play dice with the universe?

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, yes, I've heard of that.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Okay, so here's the dream: I'm involved with a middle-aged, authoritative woman in a complicated board game. Part of it involves playing dice with Einstein. She explains that since Einstein said that God does not play dice with the universe, and since God has played dice with Einstein, if I play dice with Einstein, I'm indirectly playing dice with the universe. And there's another element of uncertainty in the form of a Zen master who's a figure in a dark cloak, whom I and any other player will have to pass, and no one knows what he will say or do.

**Dr. Dave:** That's certainly an intriguing dream. Did that have a special meaning for you in your life?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, let's see what I said about it. Okay, well, it did have to do with certain things going on in my life at that time with an authoritative woman, but one of the people who was with me at that time had a t-shirt with a quote from Einstein that, "Great minds have always had to deal with violent acts from small-minded people."

**Dr. Dave:** So that was day residue?

**Curtis Hoffman:** A little bit, yes, and the uncertainty of the future is represented by that dark figure, and learning to use the Zen tactic of [buji] -- that is, not reacting beyond the necessary to present a smaller target -- was the message that that gave us. So I shared this with the other people that were it, and in fact, we did prevail in a certain struggle that was going on at the time. So, yes, so I've played dice with Einstein, who's played dice with God, so God does play dice with the universe, I guess. The dice are loaded. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs) Yeah, right, definitely. Have you ever had a healing dream?

**Curtis Hoffman:** A what?

**Dr. Dave:** A healing dream.

**Curtis Hoffman:** I've had a number – I've probably had any type of dream that you could name, one way or another, about myself, about others, yeah. I've had precognitive dreams. I mean, if you start journaling, and journal faithfully, you're going to wind up with a lot of material.

**Dr. Dave:** That's right.

**Curtis Hoffman:** And you'll eventually run the gamut, I'm convinced. Anybody who does it for a sufficient length of time is going to have all sorts of stuff. So it's not as if I'm unusual. I think that everybody has that capacity; it's just a matter of learning to pay attention.

**Dr. Dave:** I think you're completely right, and blocking on the guy's name right now, the Harvard brain researcher who, as I understand it ...

**Curtis Hoffman:** Ah, yes. Allan Hobson

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, Hobson, and he seemed to be saying that, "Well, these dreams have no meaning, they're just kind of a spin-off off your brain during the night."

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, you know, he's revised his opinion on this.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, really?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Because we – you know, we invited him as a keynote speaker to the Tufts 2002 conference of IASD, and he's revised his thinking. He no longer says that dreams are the result of the random firings of brain neurons. He now says that they are result of chaotic firings of brain neurons.

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs) Is that better?

**Curtis Hoffman:** It is absolutely, profoundly different.

**Dr. Dave:** Really?

**Curtis Hoffman:** But in order to know that you have to understand chaos theory.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay, well tell us about that.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, chaos theory in mathematics and elsewhere posits that there is an implicate order that is revealed beyond randomness, and that the way in which certain processes in the universe work, is according to these chaotic equations that are a little bit off of what most mathematicians have played around with. They include the imaginal – rather than the imaginary – number  $i$ , and it begins to look as if most things are really that way, rather than simple. So chaos is a different kind of organization than random. Chaos can be meaningful; random can't.

**Dr. Dave:** But anybody who follows their dreams in the way that you've suggested – and I find it hard to believe that he's done that –

**Curtis Hoffman:** Oh, he does.

**Dr. Dave:** He does?

**Curtis Hoffman:** He does, oh, yes.

**Dr. Dave:** And he doesn't see the patterns of meaningfulness in his dreams?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, he – what he told us in 2002, is that what he's really striving to do in his experimental work is to determine which of the features of dreaming are mechanical, in the sense of being the result of brain function, so that you can take those out and see what's left. And I think he's coming to acknowledge that there's something left.

**Dr. Dave:** Ah hah.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Which, you know, that's interesting.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, yes.

**Curtis Hoffman:** He certainly was – I think that what he succeeded in doing, was convincing the audience that he wasn't the devil. (laughs) You know, we sort of invited him there and wondering if we were going to completely, violently disagree with him, and we turned out, "Well, we didn't," which was actually, how to put it, refreshing. He's a good speaker, too.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, well, good. Well, I hope I have a chance to hear him sometime. I wasn't aware of that particular conference. I didn't go to that one. You hosted – you were the person in charge of last year's conference. I bet that was a job and a half.

**Curtis Hoffman:** That was a job. That was quite a task.

**Dr. Dave:** Because it's an international conference, right?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yep, yep. We had people from, I think, 38 different countries. I think total close to 280 people, as I recall; people of all different walks of life, people from all different theoretical perspectives; the art shows were spectacular. We had music; we had dance; we had native ceremony. We did a solstice ceremony. I discovered in my archaeological work a Native American sacred site on campus, and so we brought them out there.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow.

**Curtis Hoffman:** See, one of the things that's been happening over the last five years, is I've been putting my archaeology and my dream work together, and there's been some very interesting synergies that have resulted from that.

**Dr. Dave:** Say a bit more about that; how you've been putting them together.

**Curtis Hoffman:** All right. Well, the site where I'm currently working is a site which was used for ceremonial purposes for producing materials for ceremonies in other places, assembling and producing. And my students and I have had numerous dreams about that site, including one case in which a student, who was a very gifted psychic, dreamt a map of the site before actually ever visiting it. And the map, once we figured out how to orient it, was accurate. And also, the dream that he had, got into the Chubby Checker song, "I Found My Thrill, on Blueberry Hill," and so he decided that where he wanted to dig was on the hill where the lowbush blueberries were. Okay. So we measured him in a square, and he started digging, and he found a cache of Herkimer diamonds, which are biterminated quartz crystals, very unusual. We currently have 14 of them from the site. Hardly have these ever been reported in the archaeological literature, hardly. But they come from some distance away, and they're brought there.

**Dr. Dave:** And it would seem that his dream led right to that treasure trove.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yep, yep. That's right.

**Dr. Dave:** Wow, amazing.

**Curtis Hoffman:** So things like that were going on, and probably still are going on, at that site. We just actually started fieldwork again today, so I'm sure there'll be some interesting dreams about that.

**Dr. Dave:** That's a site there in New England?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Yeah, it's in Middleborough, which is just south of where the college is. So, yeah, so sacred stones – also, Native people have recognized for years, but kept very quiet about, the existence of larger stone structures that are there in the landscape, which most people have – archaeologists have concluded

are just the result of farmers clearing their fields of rocks. But it turns out that some of these are very different from that, and the Native people are saying, "These are our sacred sites." So I've been involved in advocating for that, and their culture is a dreaming culture.

**Dr. Dave:** Which Native group would this be?

**Curtis Hoffman:** I'm particularly working with the Narragansett and the Wampanoag, who are the local southern New England groups.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, you're into some fairly esoteric stuff, and having been in an academic environment myself – I was fortunate enough to be at a very, very liberal psychology department – but I just wonder if you had any political problems as a result of your interest there, in the academic environment?

**Curtis Hoffman:** Not at the college, no. Now, our state archaeologist thinks all of this is nonsense, but that's her problem.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, it's good that the college has supported your work and your interest.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Oh yes, they've been very supportive.

**Dr. Dave:** That's wonderful. You're going to be presenting at this upcoming Association for the Study of Dreams Conference; what's your presentation on?

**Curtis Hoffman:** I actually have three different things that I'm going to be doing: I'm going to be leading a morning dream group, basically a Jungian with some cross-cultural amplification; I will be doing a special presentation, which is sort of way outside of my field but very close to my interest, on dreams in the music dramas of Richard Wagner.

**Dr. Dave:** Say that again, that sound got a little weird there.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Okay, dreams and the music dramas of Richard Wagner.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, okay.

**Curtis Hoffman:** And then I'll be participating in a panel which will be talking about sacred places and dreaming in sacred places.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, tell us just a little bit about Richard Wagner, and how dreams play into that?

**Curtis Hoffman:** In all of his mature music dramas, there are dream texts and dream scenes. There's mutual dreaming; there's lucid dreaming; there's precognitive dreaming; there's a whole theory about the nature of consciousness be arising out

dream. One of the characters says, “My sleep is dreaming; my dreaming thinking; my thinking control of wisdom.” So, there. And so, I’ll be presenting musical fragments; I’ve worked out -- with the help of one of my sons who’s more technologically adept than I am – I’ve worked out a Powerpoint presentation with music in it,. And so I’ll actually be playing the segments along with the text side by side and some nice images as well. So that’s – you know, I mean, he really was into dreaming and, in fact, was inspired by dream in some of his compositions.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay, well. I think we should probably begin to wrap it up here. I wonder if there’s any last pitch you’d like to give. We do have listeners all over the world, and ...

**Curtis Hoffman:** Right, well I would encourage everybody to come to the Sonoma State conference. There will be something for everybody there; dreaming in many different guises. IASD is a very big tent. We’ve got room for all sorts of dreamers and dream theorists and dream researchers, and what have you. We run the gamut from the neuroscientists to the shamans, and everything in between. And you’re likely to find something that will be of interest to you there, so I’d encourage you all to show up. It’s going to be a great time.

**Dr. Dave:** That’s where I’ll be. That’s well put. I’ve been to some of these, and definitely going to be at this one, since it’s in my backyard. And I look forward to seeing you there.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Okay, well I hope to meet you there.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, I look forward to that. So, Dr. Curtis Hoffman, I want to thank you so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

**Curtis Hoffman:** Well, thank you. It’s been a pleasure.