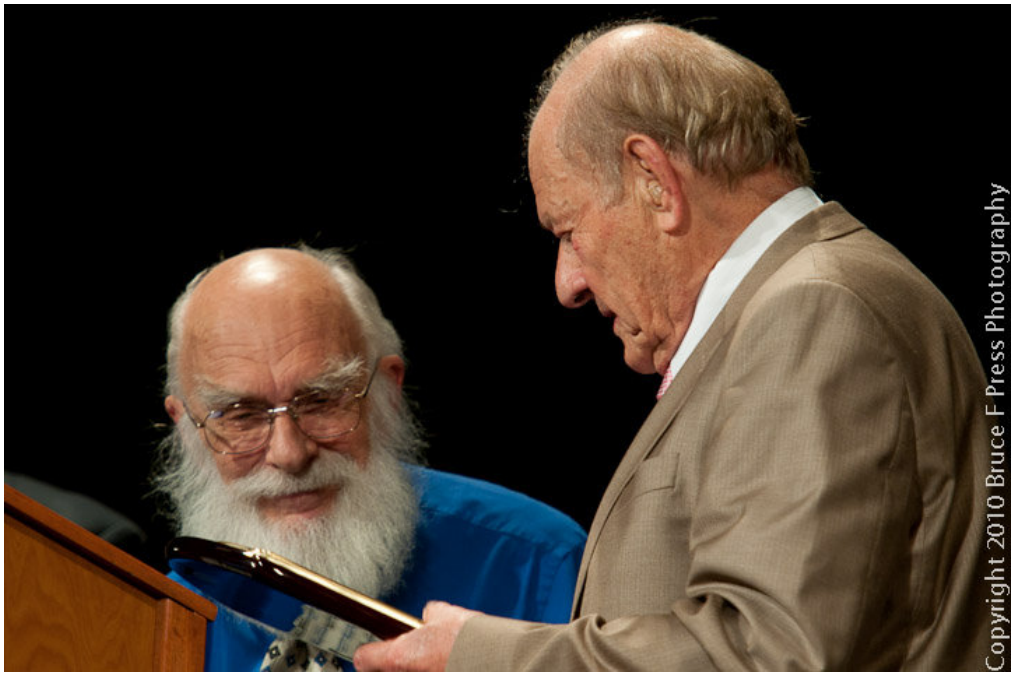

The James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF) mourns the passing this weekend of Paul Kurtz, a very important figure in the history of the worldwide skeptics movement. In 1976, Dr. Kurtz co-founded the first national U.S. skeptics organization, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (now called the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry), along with James Randi, Ray Hyman, Martin Gardner, and others. He also supported and inspired the founding of a number of skeptics organizations in other countries around the world.

Dr. Kurtz' dedication to fighting superstition and paranormal scams was surpassed only by his devotion to advancing secular humanism as a worldwide nonreligious social justice movement. In addition to co-founding CSICOP, he founded the Council for Secular Humanism and the Center for Inquiry, and spent the last years of his life focused on his important new organization, The Institute for Science and Human Values. Dr. Kurtz was known for publishing and contributing over decades to *The Zetetic Scholar* (now *Skeptical Inquirer*), a science periodical primarily devoted to examining paranormal, supernatural and fringe science claims from a scientific viewpoint, as well as to
Free Inquiry
, a secular humanist journal. He was also founder of the influential independent publisher Prometheus Books.

Public intellectual, skeptic and magician James Randi, founder of the JREF and a co-founder of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, had this to say: "Along with my colleagues in the community of skeptics and rationalists, I will deeply miss Paul and our frequent exchanges over the decades. When our small group met in the 1970s to start the organized skeptics movement,

little could we have predicted its worldwide growth. We largely have Paul's genius to thank for that. We didn't always see eye-to-eye, but I've always admired his vision. This is a sad day."

"Paul Kurtz was not only my dear friend, but an inspiration," said D.J. Grothe, president of the JREF and formerly a colleague of Kurtz' for over a decade. "His humanity, his passion, his creativity and his organizational skills were the bedrock of a number of international organizations, and he worked tirelessly to grow the worldwide skeptics and humanist movements. In this respect, his impact remains unrivaled. His death is deeply felt and he will be sorely missed."

For more details on Dr. Kurtz' life, see the obituary released jointly by his family and publishing company.

Photo: Paul Kurtz receives a Lifetime Achievement Award from the James Randi Educational Foundation for advancing skepticism in the public interest. 2010.