

Awakened to the Cosmos

BY ERNIE LAUSTEN
PHOENIX CORRESPONDENT

We are made of star stuff,” astronomer Carl Sagan said. “We are, each of us, a multitude. Within us is a little universe.”

Dr. Sagan, who died Dec. 20, 1996, was perhaps the best, most humanistic science teacher in the world. His books, lectures, documentaries and TV appearances inspired millions to the wonder and importance of science — to that realization that “we are, each of us, a multitude.”

He was most famous for his PBS series *Cosmos*, which described our fundamental connection to the planets in the solar system, the birth and death of stars, the origin and evolution of life on Earth, life’s molecular building blocks and the expansion of the universe. *Cosmos* introduced the scientists who first discovered what we know, and quite often, their struggles with authority. It has been seen by more than 500 million people.

Dr. Sagan’s last book, *The Demon-Haunted World*, was released last summer. In it, he passionately argues for the necessity of education. Now that we are so dependent on science and technology, he calls the public’s ignorance “a prescription for disaster,” giving many examples of how easily people are consumed by superstition and mysticism when they are uneducated.

“If we can’t think for ourselves, if we’re unwilling to question authority, than we’re just putty in the hands of those in power,” he warns.

Carl Sagan will be remembered for the twin philosophies by which he lived and taught: That “we make our world significant by the courage of our questions and the depth of our answers” and that “science is never finished.”

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