

February 1997

Contents

- [Lifestyles for Atheists](#)
- [President's Desk](#)
- [Freethought Quotes](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)
- [Upcoming Highway Cleanup](#)
- [The Promotion of Atheism](#)
- [Snips and Clips](#)
- [February Meeting Speaker](#)
- [AOF Board](#)
- [AOF Committees](#)
- [Cable Access](#)
- [Atheist Programming](#)

LeRue Grim: Lifestyles for Atheists

by Kay Dickey

The speaker at AOF's December 8th general membership meeting was LeRue Grim. Grim is a criminal defense attorney and president of Humanist University in Oakland. He has been an atheist activist for many years, and served in atheist and humanist groups over the years, including national positions.

Grim stated that for whatever reason a person avoids religion, it is also an entrance into the whole world, the whole universe of nature. Many people take a variety of directions after they become atheists. Once a person ceases to be religious, the opportunities are enormous in the way you develop your viewpoints and lifestyle.

Normally, for people who become atheists, learning becomes a lifetime involvement and commitment, because there is a whole universe to learn about. We not only have opportunities, but an obligation to learn and develop. We need to recognize in each other room to be different and unique.

We face many challenges in life. We need to try to find situations in which we feel adequate. We all need to experience the joy of success, and the gratification of achievement. On the other hand, we need to avoid looking for too much validation.

Sometimes we can waste a lot of time just proving something to ourselves or others. P> We need to think about what kind of institutions, what kind of cultural development do we need in order to support our development as atheists.

We need a community where we can be ourselves.

Grim discussed the progress that his Humanist University is making. They're working on developing a curriculum which would qualify a person to receive recognition and degrees in atheism, freethinking, or naturalism.

He likes to think about how improbable it is that we are here, considering the evolution of the Homo Sapiens, and that atheists only number about nine percent of the population. And a fewer segment of those get together as atheists. He feels that we are a very privileged group, and he is very, very glad to be an atheist. He feels very sorry for Christians, and feels they have abandoned their potential.

He asked the audience to think about our own lifestyles. Are we doing everything we can for ourselves as individuals and are we being useful members to the human species and to the earth's biosphere? Grim feels that we all need to get behind democracy, and try to make it work. However, he sees that democracy isn't handling a lot of issues very well, such as population growth.

The most important point Grim wished to leave us with was to urge us to define our atheism to include the whole of nature, and to include a natural style of thinking.

He pointed out that it is very noble to be a civilized great ape. We are very privileged to be a part of the great ape family, and fortunate to be members of the human species.

He also has some very interesting, naturalistic views about humanity. He feels that civilization has been a wonderful thing and it has spared us many of the brutalities and the suffering of natural selection.

But he thinks that it must have had some impact on human evolution, and has probably suspended human evolution. Once natural selection is removed, a species begins to deteriorate.

He also put forth the theory that in the past, human beings existed in a harem pack, and that only a few members of the species survived. He does not think that monogamous relationships would have achieved evolution of the species.

To help counteract this, Grim hopes that in the future many women will voluntarily choose not to have children and that those who do will choose mates with superior genes to their own. Of all the species that ever existed, 99.99% have become extinct. We have had a population growth that carries great risk to our earth's biosphere, and to the well-being of our species.

Grim feels these issues need to be talked about.

No one knows the answers, but we need to generate discussions in a decent, responsible way.

President's Desk

by **Karen Abbe**

February is now upon us, and it's not too early to start thinking about what commitments we will make to AOF in the next term. AOF bylaws allow a nomination committee to form during the month of March each year, then elections are held at the May general membership meeting. The bylaws also state that the new slate of officers will start their term on the day after the May general membership meeting.

This year's officers and active members have done a splendid job already as we wind our way to the end of this, our fourth, year. Recognition of our active members and officers will take place before the end of this term.

Take a moment to decide what kind of commitment you will make to AOF this next year.

After fulfilling my current commitment to AOF by serving as president for this past year, I will be making a one-year commitment to serve from June 97 - May 98 in the following capacities:

1. working with AOF members and fellow freethinkers on community cable projects and public service announcements
2. maintaining and updating AOF's voice mail system, and mailing introductory brochures
3. actively participating in and supporting our highway cleanup project and dinners for the needy
4. setting up and maintaining our public address system and supporting our programs/speakers by regularly attending general membership meetings
5. upon request, assisting in the videotaping of special presentations by speakers at AOF meetings

To be clear, I'll be very active in AOF during the next term, as I have been during the past four years.

I am not, however, going to serve as president. We need new blood and a changing of the guards to keep AOF fresh.

What kind of commitment will you make to AOF this next year? I've been thinking about all the tasks (big and small) that go into keeping our club alive. Following you will find a list of other job duties related to AOF. Some are official offices to be held, others are less formal, but no less necessary or valuable to our group.

- newsletter committee member

- newsletter editor
- writing articles for newsletter
- desktop publishing of newsletter
- photocopying, stamping, mailing of newsletter
- maintaining membership database
- sending renewal letters to members
- nomination committee member
- setup/cleanup of meeting room
- monthly speaker scheduling and coordinating
- special events (i.e., debate) program planning
- social events (i.e, hikes, picnics, outings)
- serving as a speaker at an AOF meeting
- monthly meeting facility liaison
- promotion (i.e., display or classified ads)
- public speaking (i.e., AOF on TV or radio)
- maintaining AOF's presence on world wide web
- community cable, public service announcement
- hosting Board meetings at your home
- AOF literature (writing, design, production)
- literature table (setup/storage)
- highway cleanup coordination and leadership
- highway cleanup participation
- dinners-for-the-needy leadership
- dinners-for-the-needy participation
- [Atheist Alliance](#) liaison leadership
- picking up mail from post office; distribution
- fund raising (i.e., raffles, book sales)
- greeting members and newcomers at meetings
- helping with name tags at meetings
- president
- vice-president
- secretary
- treasurer
- director-at-large

Do these activities appeal to you? There have also been suggestions for activities relating to our monthly meetings which would make them more enjoyable. At least three people have suggested to me that we should be singing rabble-rousing songs (like Dan Barker-type tunes) at our meetings! Think it over, then state your desires to any AOF board member. We need more than a few active members to do these jobs -- and many hands make light work. Keep the voice of reason alive in Sacramento by making a commitment to serve AOF during our next term.

Freethought Quotes

"Civilization will not attain to its perfection until the last stone from the last church falls on the head of the last priest."

Emile Zola

"It is wrong, always, everywhere, and for everyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."

W.K. Clifford

Letters to the Editor

Jan 9, 1997 As one who spoke out strongly against assisted suicide, I feel I must respond to Eric Pengelley's letter in the January News & Views.

First of all, the comparison between the abuse of assisted suicide and the abuse of motor cars: one of the great abuses resulting from motor cars is the paving over of our country, plus air pollution, when there are many forms of clean, efficient means of public transportation. Reason: greed. As I pointed out, the abuse of assisted suicide can easily have the same reason: greed.

You are also rattling the wrong cage when it comes to your other examples. As a matter of fact, I worked for years as a volunteer in nursing homes, eventually becoming the coordinator of volunteers. When I saw people begging to die, it was almost always because no one visited them, they were being neglected by the doctors and other staff, their disabilities were misdiagnosed and/or their pain was not being properly managed.

Also, I refuse to acknowledge that I am cruel and sadistic as a result of my religious upbringing. My parents were not particularly religious, and I was never told anything regarding God's judgment of suicide. However, I was suicidally depressed, off and on, for about six years. My husband had to keep an eye on me almost every minute, and lock up all the pills so I wouldn't take them all at once. In their desperation, I'm sure my loved ones frequently thought of just letting me have my way. However, they finally found a medication that helped me, and we are now all very grateful that no one was "kind" enough to have "put me out of my misery."

I certainly respect your right to your opinion, but I hope you will consider what I have written, and as they used to say, "Put that in your pipe and smoke it." Best Regards, Eleanor Bernstein

Upcoming Highway Clean-Up

As a reminder, the next clean-up day will be Sunday, February 23rd and we will begin working at noon.

After our job is done, we'll repair to a local restaurant for lunch and socializing.

If you need instructions on how to get to the Highway 99 Caltrans meeting station, call our highway cleanup project leader, Hank Kocol, on the voice-mail line.

Snips and Clips

From Betty Simonsma

From the January 1, 1997 *The Washington Spectator*: "House Speaker Newt Gingrich predicts a post-election implementation Congress and a nation, and its legislators, submissive to God's will. But as the 105th Congress convenes this week, these words of peace and piety are being decoded here as notice of continued devilish conflict."

From *Who Wrote the New Testament?*, Burton Mack: To claim its right to speak with authority the church must always keep the Bible in its hands. The Bible creates the aura of a universal plan, and it grants the church its charter and charge to represent that plan in the histories of the peoples of the world. Without the Bible, the church would look ridiculous. How would it verify what it says it knows? How would it point to what it represents? How would it have any authority to speak? Why would any working society put up with its scoldings? But with the Bible in hand, the church can represent much, much more than it ever need display.

It can represent the human quest for the kingdom of God which, according to the Bible, has been part of the plan of God from the beginning of creation. And it can know how the story will end. What more could anyone ask?"

From the solstice letter, Paul Geisert & Mynga Futrell: "We've been pondering the future timing of our return to California. As things stand now, we do intend to come back sometime later on in 1997 but not at the April 1 end of our two-year commitment ... [Mynga] was drafted into teaching two science ed. classes at Eastern Kentucky University." (Paul was our second president and he and Mynga were very active in publishing our newsletter.)

From the media: The *Sacramento Bee* reported a woman saying that God must be very angry to bring on such destruction in the flood. The same weekend a football player told the TV reporter at the end of the Carolina/Dallas game that God helped them win the game. Well, God must not be able to be everywhere at once for I'm sure a few victims of the flood must have been doing some praying too. But then, what should be God's priority in America? Football or farmland?

From the December 14 *Sacramento Bee*: Pat Kelley got top billing with her answer in the Q & A section on the religion and ethics page to the question: "Harold's wife has been hospitalized for three years in a vegetative state and given no chance of recovering. Harold intends to care for his wife as best he can, but he also wants to get involved with another woman. Is this wrong?" Pat gave a very practical and compassionate answer, far more straight forward than the two pastors.

One pastor, as usual, dumped the problem on Harold and God by telling Harold to determine what he believes God wants him to do. That guilt trip ought to do it for Harold.

From Don Massy's card: "The truly ethical question is not whether we can justify abortion, but whether we can justify compulsory pregnancy."
Joseph Fletcher

(The following article is from the Atheists United newsletter, Sherman Oaks. Their club is tackling education and promotion issues similar to AOF.)

"

The promotion of atheism, primarily through education

,

is the second part of our purpose statement. How are we doing that and what more can we do? Right now our principal means of educating people about atheism are our cable television shows, but we have no idea of their effectiveness. We know that some of our members watch them, and that we have had a precious few people contact us because of them.

Our KPFK program used to be the principal means, and most of the people who would come to our meetings for the first time would say they heard about us through that program. We have been off the air for some time, but we have been trying, without success, to get back on the air. We have two possible program formats: 1) broadcast live from the station so that part of the program can be dedicated to receiving on-air telephone calls; or 2) a taped magazine type program.

The first would be tied to the local area and requires one or two people to be at the station to do the program. The latter has the potentiality of being syndicated to other stations across the country. It can be done piecemeal in other locations, edited together, and delivered to the station for broadcast at times and days other than those on which it is scheduled for broadcast. We need volunteers. Are you willing to participate? Not only that, but you could become famous!
Ken Bonnell, Co-president

Newsletter Freebie Policy

We'll send one free newsletter to any individual upon request, but after that time, please subscribe to AOF's newsletter for only \$8 per year. Or become a member and get your newsletter free as part of your membership. (*Donations from you internet views is also appreciated! ;-)* Pat)

February Meeting Speaker

AOF's February 9th general membership meeting will feature Chuck Hunsinger. Chuck is an AOF member who lives in Fresno. His topic will be "Redefining life and society" with an introduction to Sapien, a philosophy of reason. Join AOFers on Sunday February 9th for this stimulating discussion with your fellow freethinkers.

AOF Board

President	Karen Abbe
Vice-President	Cleo Kocol
Secretary	Kay Dickey
Treasurer	Ed McConnell
Directors-at-Large	Don Massy, Edgar Brichta, Roland Roberge, Kay Stinson, and Betty Simonsma

AOF Committees & Projects

Atheist Alliance liaison:	Cleo Kocol
Speaker Scheduling:	Karen Abbe
Newsletter Publishing:	Karen Abbe
Highway Cleanup Project:	Hank Kocol
Newsletter Editor:	Opening Available
Meeting Facility:	Betty Simonsma
Membership Database:	Betty Simonsma
Voicemail System:	Karen Abbe
Charity Dinner Project:	Kay Stinson

Cable Access

Pre-production Meeting

On Thursday evening, February 6th, Peggy Lucas will hold a meeting at her home to discuss the cooperative freethought show we are working on. During this planning session, we will prepare for our (third) studio taping session scheduled for Wednesday February 12th 7-10 p.m at Access Sacramento. If you need directions for the Thursday meeting, call Peggy at 965-8227.

Atheist Programming For Your Viewing Pleasure

As you are probably aware, Sacramento's Community Access channels 17 and 18 have been unceremoniously dumped (I mean moved!) to channels 73 and 74. There are several freethought shows scheduled to be shown on Channel 74 during February.

Sunday Feb. 2nd 5:00 pm Does God Exist? (AOF) Debate between Dan Barker and John Morehead

Sunday Feb. 2nd 7:00 pm Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Potpourri talk format

Wednesday Feb. 5th 11:00 pm Atheist Talk (Minneapolis) Diversity in Practice

Sunday Feb. 9th 7:00 pm Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Atheist Good News

Thursday Feb. 13th 5:30 pm [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Freedom from religion with Michael Moore

Sunday Feb. 16th 7:00 pm Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Religious Freedom Amendment

Wednesday Feb. 19th 11:00 pm [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Sin and Sexuality

Sunday Feb. 23rd 7:00 pm Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Religious Parasites Act Up

Wednesday Feb. 26th 11:00 pm [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Corporations and Ethics

Thursday Feb. 27th 5:30 p.m. [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Religion and Human Rights

See you at all the February AOF events!