

August 1997

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Dinner For the Needy

Come one come all to help people in need. The next dinner for the needy provided by AOF will be held on Friday August 22nd. Kay Stinson and Jody Craig will co-chair this event, and they'll need lots of servers and cooks as usual, so let's give them all the support we can.

The Robertson Community Center will again be the location of the dinner -- that's at 3525 Norwood Avenue (corner of Silver Eagle and Norwood) in Sacramento. Take Interstate 80 to the Norwood exit and go South.

Dinner is served to our hungry guests at 5:00 p.m., but we (helpers) need to be there EARLY to help get tables set up and last minute food items prepared. Talk to Kay and Jody at the August 10th meeting to verify what time you should arrive to help. Donations will also be accepted at the August 10th meeting to cover the costs of the dinner.

Highway Cleanup

The next AOF highway cleanup project will be held Sunday morning, September 7th at 8:00 a.m. Our new project leader is Don Knutson, and Don will appreciate lots of support. For newcomers, details about where to go are available 24 hours a day on our voice mail line (920-7834). This is just a heads-up notice so you can mark your calendars.

Freethinkers Inaugural Camping Trip

by **Karen Abbe**

Cottonwood Creek was the destination for AOF's first camping excursion held from July 25th thru 27th. The campsite was located 21 miles north of Truckee and offered hiking trails, beautiful trees, and super clean fresh air.

A complete report on the trip will be printed in a subsequent issue of News & Views, so stay tuned. One tidbit, though, is that one AOF member (to remain unnamed) said I hiked up the hill like a mountain goat. Gee, thanks. That's the nicest thing anyone's ever said about me.

In short, a good time was had by all who participated, and the rain on our parade didn't dampen the "spirits" of we freethinkers. The entire event was expertly orchestrated by AOF Board member Steve abrogate Knapp. So, by the powers vested in me as Immediate Past President of AOF, I thus name him "Mr. Camper Extraordinaire."

President's Message

by **Hank Kocol**

Atheists and Other Freethinkers has something for everyone. We have very diverse programs. I encourage all members to take part in as many of those activities as possible.

Of course, the monthly meetings are our main attraction. We have had some great speakers on a myriad of interesting subjects. We can also ask questions and make comments at the presentations. If we go to lunch after the meeting, we usually can discuss the program issue further with the speaker and each other informally. Further, there is the newsletter, News and Views, which can be a forum for contrary, or supportive, positions.

However, the monthly meetings, as very important as they are, are not the total essence of AOF. If a member wishes to engage in community activism, charity dinners are organized by Kay Stinson, and the highway clean-up program is under the aegis of Don Knutson. These activities enable us to show the local community that we are more than against something; we also have positive attitudes concerning our society and our responsibilities to that society.

Another program to make ourselves visible is the video project organized by Peggy Lucas. The needs in this project range from technical support and "talent" to moral support and the construction of scripts. Since this project is under the "sponsorship" of the various freethought groups in Sacramento, it is an opportunity for us to explain freethinking to the local community.

For those of us with a more social bent, there are social activities, such as the recent solstice brunch where sixteen members participated in a morning repast as well as discussions ranging in scope from the philosophy of science to recent movies. The recent camp-out, organized by Steve Knapp, falls under the same heading.

So, gather up your interests, pack up your activist tendencies, become more social, and take part in as many of the AOF activities as possible. If the above suggestions still do not fulfill your needs, organize an activity of your own. AOF, and YOU, will be better for your efforts.

Upcoming August Meeting

Our August 10th meeting will feature AOF Board member Steve Knapp. The running title of his talk is, "Genetics, Personality, and Philosophy."

In a presentation taking about an hour, followed by questions from the audience, Steve will give a non-technical summary of what he thinks is the current state of the new field of behavioral genetics. He will include a summary of the history of western thought on the subject, the implicit beliefs in the Judeo-Christian traditions, the emergence of Darwin and evolution, and the recent work on twins and related topics. He will conclude with some suggestions regarding what factors determine our personalities.

Steve admits he does not have formal training in psychology or the social sciences, and does not claim the advantage in the field of genetics. His background includes a B.S. degree in Physics from Trinity College in Hartford, and a Ph.D. in Astronomy from the University of Maryland. He has long experience in designing/building electro-optical and other advanced instrumentation in astronomy and geophysics. He worked at Caltech, Carnegie Observatories, and Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Presently, he is Staff Scientist at Folsom Research, Inc., a small high tech company where he works on advanced radar and sonar imaging projects.

Join AOFers for this important discussion and presentation on August 10th.

How I Was Loosened From A Need For A God (Step 1)

by Denis De Luchi

For those of us who attended public schools but were expected by our parents to be fully indoctrinated Catholics, there was a thing call catechism. A period of catechism preceded the taking of First Holy Communion, and another preceded that rite of passage called Confirmation.

Catechism required attendance at a parish facility two or three days a week, after school. The instruction consisted mostly of the rote learning of some long prayers and the rote commission of dogmatic answers (generally fill-ins) to questions and statements concerning Catholic doctrine.

The nuns who ran the communion preparation had a system of rewards for acolytes who filled in the blanks best -- "best" meaning the only accepted word or phrase. I was quite good at these memory games and consequently usually won the "prize." The prize was a little holy picture, playing card size, with happy themes like Jesus, with his chest asunder, displaying the Sacred Heart, or Mary, weeping, as she always seemed to be doing. The mirror on my dresser was completely lined with these cheery cards, which I had stuck between the glass and the wood frame.

And then one day, one of the more adventurous nuns offered a completely different sort of prize, the image of which I hold clearly in my mind well over fifty years later. It was a little glass ship, a destroyer, filled with those candy beads that are so useful in decorating cookies. What a departure from the head of John the Baptist.

With this incentive, I trounced the competition. But the nun, whom I've always thought to be a kind and good-hearted person, and yet do, had other ideas.

"I think, today, we'll give the prize to Augie. He tries so hard!"

Augie! In fact, I like Augie. He was in my class in public school and we often played together. He was a nice guy, a lot nicer than his brother Guido, from whose terror he protected the rest of us. But Augie was terrible at catechism. Still, he won the little glass destroyer and all its candy.

As a consolation, I got another holy picture. I have absolutely no recollection of what it was.

June AOF Program

by Lia Posey

AOF's June 8th general membership meeting featured Jack and Lois Trimpey. They are co-founders of Rational Recovery which is a private, for profit, self-help program designed to deal with substance abuse.

The introduction was provided by Lois who gave a brief update on the status of their organization. She stated that there are currently four franchised centers in the U.S. with one of them located in Sacramento at 3000 Arden Way. Although their organization has not reached the status of Alcoholics Anonymous, they do have several books in print and have appeared on "The Maury Povich Show" which is aired nationally. Their goal is to inform the public that there is an alternative choice in recovering from substance abuse, whether it is alcohol or drugs.

According to Jack, Rational Recovery utilizes cognitive psychology toward their recovery approach and does not adhere to traditional outlines. His reasoning for this approach is to provide an alternative to the strong religious content rooted in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). From his personal experience and frustration with the lack of guidance from AA, he decided to find other means to deal with his alcoholism, therefore, Rational Recovery was founded. He asserted that the individual has to become responsible for their own recovery and outlined certain steps that are necessary for that person to reach that goal.

First, before people are able to kick their habit they must decide to give up their addiction, which is the critical concept toward this program. This decision is called the "Big Plan." They must be able to say, "I will not drink, or I will not use drugs, period." Not that they will try not to abuse their habit or they will do their best to refrain from their habit but they must make a firm and definite decision that their substance abuse will no longer be a part of their life.

Next, they will undergo AVRT which stands for Addictive Voice Recognition Technique. AVRT helps to alert a person to that "inner voice" of the addiction and to counter it with logical thinking.

Jack stresses the inability of AA to successfully keep someone sober and states that 70% of true addicts recover on their own without meetings or group therapy. He outlined his view of the "cult" techniques that AA uses to keep their members.

- 1) Discredit the family by keeping the family at bay, it makes the addict dependent on the meetings.
- 2) Fear -- here is where religion plays a big role, by not accepting a higher power (God) will prevent you from fully recovering.
- 3) Disease excuse -- by shifting the blame of your abuse from personal responsibility to genetic predisposition. Stating that your addiction is caused because you have a disease will provide a scapegoat to why you will not be able to recover and continue to relapse. Jack does not believe that alcoholism is a disease and therefore there is no treatment for that ailment.

He by no means hides his distrust and dislike for AA and he is greatly disturbed by the power that AA has on the community. He pointed out how citizens in some jurisdictions were being punished if they did not agree to attend an AA meeting required by their employer or through the legal system. He urges anyone who knows someone who is with AA to get them to seek an alternative method toward their treatment.

Jack and Lois' presentation was very informative and brought out serious concern on the techniques that were being used to help addicts recover. They stated that those who chose Rational Recovery were able to seek the help they needed and they by no means made you believe that it's an easy process. Questions and remarks were exchanged from the audience afterward.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I would like to make some comments on Jack and Lois Trimpey's presentation about Rational Recovery (RR), the for-profit addiction recovery program they operate. I will be brief, but I will be glad to discuss these ideas more fully with anyone.

In their presentation, and in the subsequent discussions, the Trimpeys rejected categorically the idea that addictions can be classed as diseases. This ignores a tremendous amount of current research which is showing strong correlations between the concentrations of neurotransmitting agents (such as dopamine and serotonin) and behavior and mood.

Furthermore, they seem to exclude nutrition factors from diagnosis of pathological behavior and from their therapy program. Although hardly scientific, this isolation from current investigations is itself quite comprehensible, because conceding a place for the latter in the therapeutic setting would render incorrect their fundamental assumption of pure choice on the part of those who are addicted, and would seriously compromise their RR methodology as described.

Moreover, I think Jack Trimpey was irrationally savage toward Alcoholics Anonymous. There is no question that AA and other 12-Step programs are religious; after all, AA's core dogma was borrowed from a fundamental Christian organization. AA offends many freethinkers who happen to be addicted to alcohol or other drugs, and this may cause further damage. And AA appears to be a cult to some others seeking help. But to ignore the many who have achieved long term sobriety and other benefits using AA is unreasonable.

In the week following the Trimpeys' talk, I consulted informally some AA members who also happen to be freethinkers, and who are familiar with RR and the Trimpeys. I can report that two physicians and a university professor (the latter with 30 years of AA sobriety) did not think favorably of RR, mainly because of its simplistic approach. Another doctor, a psychiatrist, was repulsed by the continuous stream of advertising from the Trimpeys promoting the referral of addicted patients to RR.

Yet another AA member stated that she had gotten her first DUI 26 days into a 28-day RR program conducted personally by the Trimpeys, and that all the other clients in her group had also failed to stay sober (but note that such failures are common in any treatment program). This last AA member stated spontaneously that she thought the Trimpeys "were in it for the money." But all of these AA freethinkers agreed that any method of recovery which shows success should be available.

I suggest that, in the face of the poor success rates of all recovery methods, any approach which helps is valuable. Moreover, I personally think that in his demeanor and absolute exclusivity, Jack Trimpey acted as if he himself was the leader of a cult. That he was apparently a practicing nicotine addict I found to be shocking.

Steve Knapp

Atheist Programming For Your Viewing Pleasure

by Bob Wilson

There are many freethought shows scheduled for Channel 74 on Sacramento Cable as shown below. The programs for the next few weeks are as follows:

Sunday August 3rd 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) -- Cardinals, Mormons, and da Champ

Wednesday August 6th 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) -- Matt Cherry on Atheism and Humanism

Friday August 8th 12:00 pm, The Crossroads Debate -- Atheism vs. Theism

Sunday August 10th 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) -- Atheists: their Dilemma, Part 2

Wednesday August 13th 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) -- Licensing Parents

Thursday August 14th 5:30 pm, Atheists Talk -- discussion show

Sunday August 17th 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) -- Alabama Inquisition

Wednesday August 20th 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) -- "Anti Clause" with guest, Tom Flynn

Sunday August 24th 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) -- Theist mail

Wednesday August 27th 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) -- Atheists Read the Bible

Thursday August 28th 5:30 pm, Atheists Talk -- discussion show

Sunday August 31st 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) -- AA News

Wednesday September 3rd 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) -- Two ways to prove atheism; Dr. Quinlan Smith

Member Profile: Lia Posey

by Cleo Kocol

Lia Posey grew up in Alabama with a Methodist minister father and all the trappings of religion, including bible study. She realized when she was young that religious answers to life's problems don't make any sense. The "good book" provided her no evidence for the things that were propounded, and no one else gave her any proofs either. But living in the South was not conducive to freethinking. She never realized that there were other people who seriously questioned religious beliefs. The thinking was that all people believed in a god.

That sheltered life took a distinctly different turn when she joined the military. She became aware that people think, act and react differently in other parts of the country. It was also in the Army that she had what she designates as "a very good experience." She met her first Atheist. "What's that?" she asked, never

having heard the term atheist before. The word intrigued her, and she noted with interest that everyone in the room became quiet when they heard it.

She left the military at Ft. Ord and came to Sacramento. A resident of "River City" for six years, Lia is a surgical tech, work that she says is very rewarding.

In Sacramento her life took another turn when she read about AOF in the Ticket section of the Sacramento Bee. She quickly became involved with the freethinking group and is now co-secretary of the AOF Board. When she isn't working or helping with AOF projects, she enjoys reading mythology. To her it is extremely interesting to read that the Greeks, and other people of that time, created gods to explain events in their lives.