AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California August 2004

Sunday, August 8

Summer Sizzler Can "Good Reason" Cool Down Heat?

Special Points of Interest

- Call for Supporters—2004
 Freethought Day event (page 1 and insert)
- Books for Nigeria (page 2)
- The Freethought Scene in Houston (page 2)
- Mailbag (page 4)
- A Freethought "Community"? (page 5)
- Sex After Death (page 7)

August afternoons can be fiery, so why not join AOFers for a bit of oratory to match? Members have a lot on their minds, but don't be afraid that the ambience in Room 10 at the Sierra 2 Community Center's will overload the air conditioning. We anticipate that the exercise of "sound thinking", along with the light buffet and beverages, will help us all keep our cool. Well, maybe. We can't guarantee you won't find fired-up presenters. It should be fun! *Bring an item for the "salads-desserts" potluck*.



Keeping it handy — Just in case!

Standard Fare

Darrell Lambert to Speak

Atheist Eagle Scout to Be Featured at Freethought Day 2004!

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The Freethought Planning Committee is delighted to announce our featured speaker for Freethought Day 2004 will be **Darrell Lambert**. He will recount his struggle with the Boy Scouts of America, culminating with his having been "kicked out" of the Boy Scouts in October 2002 for refusing to profess belief in a god.

Darrell earned 37 merit badges (including Eagle Scout in April 2001) and accumulated over one thousand hours of community service. We are thrilled that he has

agreed to address our gathering and expect he will greatly contribute to the success of this event.

We are further pleased to announce our featured performer for FTD 2004 will be singer/songwriter **Michael Newdow**. OK, I know you are all much more accustomed to hearing Mike being introduced in terms related to his United States Supreme Court Pledge of Allegiance case. However, we invited Mike to take

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The AAI Connection

AAI Asks for Books for Nigeria By Bobbie Kirkhart, AAI President

This month's AAI news release comes in a different form, a personal letter to all the members of our affiliate groups, because I feel so strongly about the subject. —Bobbie

Dear Freethinkers:

At the beginning of June, Harvey and I attended the Tai Solarin conference at the Mayflower School in Ikeene, Nigeria. We made many new friends and met face-to-face people we had known only through email. As in every such trip, getting to know the community of freethinkers was the best part. And everywhere we went, people asked for books on science and philosophy.

Nigeria is a very religious country. Most of you have read about the

violence between Christians and Muslims in the North. In the central coast, where the Nigerian Humanist movement keeps offices, there is no violence. There the majority Christians show their strength on every street corner, making it very difficult to be an open atheist. The government is scrupulously tolerant of both religions, while attempting the rein in the extremes, such as faithhealing fraud or the excesses of the Sharia courts. You will read more about the Solarin conference, the Mayflower School and religion in Nigeria if you get the third quarter Secular Nation.

The Nigerian Humanist Movement serves as a Center for Inquiry and

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The AOF Line By Kevin Schultz

In early April of this year I found myself in Houston, Texas on a two-week business trip. Houston is one of the largest cities in America, a vast cosmopoliton area fueled by petroleum profits and the aerospace industry. My early fears at finding unbearable pollution, traffic congestion, and unbearable bible-thumping proved unfounded. Of course, working twelve hour days, six days a week has a tendency to limit a man's observational capacity.

However, I did find one day of freedom during my trip – Easter Sunday. Having studied and contacted several local organizations, I knew my only chance of

mingling with the freethought community was through the Houston Church of Freethought (HCOF). That Easter Sunday, the HCOF met at the Courtyard Marriott hotel—downtown. Those who have traversed the vast construction efforts of Houston may empathize with this newcomer's navigational achievement!

I arrived unfashionably late. At first, I was confused as to the exact location of the event. However, a hotel concierge, upon learning of my predicament, cheerfully guided me—to the wrong room. After recognizing I had been deposited into the empty HCOF children's room, I returned to the front

The purpose of the organization,

AOF, is to promote the civic

understanding and acceptance of

atheism in our community.

desk. Our successive trip proved fruitful. With the aid of no less a man than the hotel chef, we identified the appropriate room.

I attempted to nonchalantly sit down in the second row. An-

thony Scott, a director, turned in his chair and smiled, whispering a friendly greeting. Thirty people filled the room to capacity. At the front, a

(Continued on page 6)

AOF Board

President: Kevin Schultz **Vice President:** Kay Dickey **Secretary:** Dave Flanders **Treasurer:** Ken Nahigian

Directors at large:

Tina Burgess Beverly Church Mynga Futrell Don Knutson Betty Simonsma

AOF Committees

Newsletter: Mynga Futrell, Editor Kay Dickey, Asst. Ed. (Submissions), Jerry Sloan (Mailing)

Visibility and Impact:

Kay Dickey, Mynga Futrell, Don Knutson, Kevin Schultz, Jerry Sloan, (more members welcome!)

Archive: Jody Craig, Kay Dickey, Mynga Futrell, Ken Nahigian, Betty Simonsma

Connections (ad hoc):

Don Shirley (Caring), Ken Nahigian, Tina Burgess (Youth) Betty Simonsma Kevin Schultz (E-mail)

Freethought Day 2004:

Beverly Church (Chair), Mynga Futrell (Program), Jerry Sloan (Event Day), Ken Nahigian (Publicity), Kay Dickey (Finance)

AOF's Voluntariat

Affiliation Liaisons:

Mynga Futrell, Kay Dickey (AAI), Hank Kocol (CSH), Betty Simonsma (AA), Beverly Church (AHA/HAGSA)

Community Service Projects:

Don Knutson

Internet Website: Pat Kelley Meetings: Dave Flanders, Jerry Sloan, Betty Simonsma

Membership Database:

Betty Simonsma

We welcome additional involvement from AOF members. Right now we need a volunteer to assemble "visitor packets" of print literature. Just phone the voice mail 447-3589 if you can help out . Or, send an e-mail to us at

aofboard@rthoughtsrfree.org

Meeting Recap By Dave Flanders

Art Tuma spoke at the July AOF general meeting. Art agreed with much of what Judge Gray had stated in his book—that drug reform is the most important issue facing this great country, and that the so-called war on drugs has been our biggest failure.

Today more drugs available in our communities, and at a lower price than ever before. We have greatly expanded the number of prisons in the United States, but all of them are overflowing. As a direct result of the enormous amount of money available from illicit drug sales, the corruption of public officials and private individuals in our society has increased substantially.

The war on drugs has resulted in the loss of more civil liberties protections than has any other phenomenon in our history. Instead of being shielded, our children are being recruited into a lifestyle of drug selling and drug usage by the current system. Revolutionaries and insurgents abroad are using money procured from the illegal sale of drugs to undermine legitimate governments all over the world. Many law enforcement officers, judges and politicians who realize this war is a failure, fear exposing themselves to an electoral challenge by addressing this issue publicly.

As congress and state legislatures enact more punitive and costly drug

control measures, the war on drugs now cause more harm than the drug abuse itself. Those who profit on the war on drugs are the drug smugglers, the prison industrial complex and those who build and supply burglar alarm equipment.

Honest debate is needed. We have never been a drug-free society and never will be. Recognizing this fact, and the fact that these harmful drugs are here to stay, we should try to employ an approach that will effectively reduce the deaths, crime, and misery caused by their presence our communities. Education, prevention, treatment, and holding people personally accountable for their actions is a better solution to the so-called war on drugs.

Our president turns photographer to "capture" half the scene he sees from the lectern.



But...Paul Geisert "captures" Kevin Schultz.



Atheists and Other Freethinkers



AOF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization,. It is a member society of the Atheist Alliance International. AOF maintains affiliations with the Council for Secular Humanism, American Atheists, and the American Humanist Association.

AOF's Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the association, Atheists and Other Freethinkers, is to promote the civic understanding and acceptance of atheism in our community. To accomplish this purpose, AOF will, through educational programs, projects, and publications, extend atheistic perspectives concerning the separation of church and state and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.

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Subscription \$12 per year (free to members).

Reprinting of original material in this newsletter is granted to atheist, freethought, rationalist, skeptical, and secular humanist groups as long as acknowledgment is given. Exchange of newsletters with aforementioned organizations is solicited.

In the Mail



Re "Is Atheism a Religion?" (article in May issue, AOF News & Views)

Fellow Atheists, Friends and Humanists:

I submit an attachment copied from my ten pound, five inch Webster's *New 20th Century* unabridged 2nd edition in which you will note (re the entry, *religion:*):

3(a) Any specific system of belief...code of ethics and philosophy...ethical values...as humanism is his religion

5. Any object of conscientious regard...

So, I give 10 points to Michael and Paul.

In Humanism (can you say that?), Phil Lazier AHA Celebrant and Counselor

The articles by Newdow and Russell and Geisert were interesting, yet I'm personally sick and tired of having to defend ourselves on why we do or don't believe in fairy tales! ...

As an American in a secular state, I'm fully protected in my thoughts and life by the Constitution. A document written by men far ahead of their time, and for this very reason alone we have true freedom for our soul, no matter the subject! So

the hell with these self-righteous people and their 'me only' Gods.

Unfortunately, those who believe that the Orthodox God rules are, too often, unwilling to let people be free! We see this in their attempt to have prayer in public institutions, thereby affecting young people in so many damnable ways, those who just happen to be outside their particular perverted self-righteous God's way.

As long as we live by society's fair laws as free Americans, we shouldn't have to defend ourselves to other 'free' Americans about anything in this land of the free[?]! But also as a free American, I want to make it clear that those who want to believe also have this right, just so long as they stay off my free back! Bob Erickson



Re "How Drug Laws Failed" (presentation at July AOF meeting):

Dear Editor

I attended the Sunday, July 11th meeting of AOF to hear Art Tuma speak on "How our nation's drug laws have failed," and I came away sadly disappointed. I wanted to find out why the government has not legalized many "outlaw" drugs such as marijuana, heroin, and cocaine for medical purposes in relieving chronic pain, etc. All I got, though, was a history of how the government has failed to act, not the reasons why the government has not passed a law that would benefit both the government and the people.

In the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt

repealed Prohibition and made the sale of alcoholic beverages legal. Before that time, alcohol was "bootlegged" and sold in "speakeasies" resulting in big crime (Al Capone, etc.), big profits for the criminals, shootings, killings and St. Valentine's Day massacres. Afterward, alcohol was sold legally in stores, and the government derived a lot of money in taxes while the criminals went broke. Also, cigarettes (nicotine drugs) are sold legally, resulting in the same.

Today, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana are sold illegally on the streets at absorbitant prices, making criminals rich, and resulting in shootings, drug wars, and no tax money for "Uncle Sam."

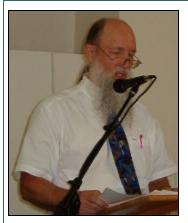
The reason for this, I believe, is that the criminals are making *billions* in illegal profits and want to keep it that way. There are drug lords all over the world—Columbia, Afghanistan, etc.—who are "paying off" our politicians to *not* change the laws, and the politicians are corruptly turning their heads and putting the bribery money in their pockets, pretending that they are fighting a "War on Drugs." The politicians are to blame

The people of our country should write Congress and demand we legalize drugs. Everyone would benefit. The drug addicts would receive much-needed treatments, crime would be eliminated, and the government would receive *taxes*.

AOFers, write your senators and representative and demand they legalize drugs and put an end to this hypocrisy and corruption. The country will be much better off than it is now.

Respectfully submitted,
Paul W (last name withheld)

--Ed. Paul is a frequent visitor to AOF meetings





Art Tuma offers a perspective on the ongoing "War on Drugs." **Mynga** offers her thanks to Don Shirley for his year of service on the AOF board..

Betty Simonsma, Beth Johnson, and Tom Nicolette were deep in conversation when interrupted and asked to pose for better lighting after an attempted "casual shot" failed







Davis Community Meal Tuesday, August 17, 4 PM

This month AOF is in charge of the "set up and serve" aspect while another group will do the cleanup. We welcome volunteers to help AOF carry out this always rewarding contribution to the community. Phone the 24-hr. number (447-3589) to inquire about specifics. To volunteer, sign up at a monthly meeting or phone and leave your number, asking for a callback.

HAGSA Summer Picnics

Interested AOF members are welcome at these potluck events. Call ahead to inform the host and agree upon your food item to complement the gathering.

This month:

Sunday, August 1 at 3:00 PM

Hosted by: Diana Ruth

Address: 5720 Laguna Park Drive

Elk Grove Phone: 684-1650

Sunday, August 22 at 3 PM

Hosted by: Bill and Elaine Potts Address: 1848 Hidden Hills Drive

Roseville

Phone: 773-3865

Descriptions of all the upcoming AOF events scheduled through October are available on the Web.:

http://ourtown.sacbee.com/250

A Freethought "COMMUNITY"?

?

Hmm... Let's see... We are AOF, HAGSA, SAITA and now the SI. Having all these "freely-thinking" **individuals**, will it *ever* be possible to get *consensus* among them—to coordinate *together*, perhaps have a *gathering* or a *project* that would involve several hundred people—something large enough that might possibly *be noticed* in Sacramento?

Who's [Old/New] in Town?

By Mynga Futrell

Persons who attend AOF meetings or are readers AOF News & Views are probably not strangers to the "established" freethought scene in Sacramento. Here below is a "refresher" on a number of groups to which we give frequent mention, followed by news of two recent additions to what is so often termed, the "Sacramento Freethought"

H.A.G.S.A. (Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area)

Community."

HAGSA presents programs twice a month during the "academic year" It has a very nice Web site at: hagsa.org

S.O.R.T. (Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking)

SORT is more casually organized. Many freethinkers (and others as well) attend its monthly discussions of contemporary topics. The site address is: quicknet.com/~kitray/index1.html,

Both HAGSA and SORT publish regular newsletters and often cosponsor activities with AOF, such as the annual Darwin Days and Freethought Days. These groups have formal memberships and have exhibited considerable longevity. Newer on the scene is *Sun City Humanists*, initiated about a couple of years ago by two AOF members, Hank and Cleo Kocol. It serves an area closer to Roseville. Other groups that draw many freethinkers are Sacramento Skeptics and, for its focus on separation of church and state, Americans United: au-sac.org For casual get-togethers over a meal, there are the *Atheist Meetups* (third Tuesdays) and the Brights Meetups (fourth Mondays). These are organized via a commercial venture: meetup.com

And now for those "start-up" groups, which we "advertise" at right: →

These new groups do many of the types of activities some of us "oldsters" recall AOF arranging in years past. You may be interested in attending some of their happenings.

S.A.I.T.A. (Sacramento Atheists & Independent Thinkers Alliance)

SAITA. began forming last year and so is a fairly new group in the area. We currently have "get-togethers" twice per month for discussion and food. We also recently had a picnic, a movie day and have plans on doing various other activities including hikes. If interested, you can go to: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sacramentals/ Meetings are on the 1st Thursday and 3rd Tuesday (coinciding with Atheists MeetUp) of every month. Please check out the website for more information on the meeting locations.

—submitted by Tina Burgess (peanut95765@yahoo.com)

Sacramento Infidels

Sacramento Infidels is a social group for atheists/agnostics/freethinkers." We have a message board and calendar on Yahoo Groups http:/groups.yahoo.com/group/ sacatheist/ to coordinate events, share information, links, keep in touch and such. Typically we meet every few weeks for drinks, dinner, hiking, etc. The focus of our group is purely social. We're here for likeminded individuals to hang out. Not to discuss, argue or ponder theological, philosophical or political topics—although such discussion on the group page or at events is certainly not prohibited and frequently does occur - it's just not the focus of the social group. Nor is it a "singles" group, although many of the members, including myself are single. We are however considering a subgroup for that purpose. We're totally free to join, there are no dues of any sort and we're open to everyone - including theists (so long as they aren't there to make trouble: i.e.: convert, name call, etc.)

—submitted by Shawn Riggins, moderator (shawn@sacramentoshawn.com)

Check the question box at left!

AOF Subscription / Membership Form

Mail to: AOF, P O Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851-0182 (Attn: Membership)

Name(s)	Phone ()
Street		Apt. #
City	State	
E-mail address (print legibly!)		
Check your preference:		
Low-income Member (\$10)	Family Membership (\$30) Patron (\$50) Donation (\$)	☐ Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to organizations similar to AOF.
Please check your preference. We can deliver your mo .pdf file to your e-mail address above.		☐ Please check here if you DO want to be on our AOF activist list.

AAI Project—Books for Nigeria

(Continued from page 2)

therefore has a nice selection of books published by Prometheus, but they have little other literature. (I'm certain that any duplicates of Prometheus books would be put to good use.) Most of the people we met were highly educated, so no book would be too sophisticated, although there are those just beginning their study of rationalism, so basic books are also useful.

They are happy to have used books, so long as they are in useable condition.

I am asking all readers to search their homes for science and philosophy books which are no longer needed and send them to Nigeria. It would be a simple matter to make this a group effort, with a sturdy mailing box at your next few meetings collecting the books. Mailing by economy rate is not expensive: \$21.75 for the first five pounds. The per-pound rate decreases as the pounds increase. Twenty pounds costs \$46, and fifty pounds, \$83.50.

Books should be mailed to:

The Nigerian Humanist Movement 77 Ososami Road Ibadan, Oyo State Nigeria

Thank you for doing this.

Best regards, Bobbie Kirkhart

AOF Line

(Continued from page 2)

projector and a laptop PC powered Jim Ashmore's presentation, "The Fed and You." Art Fay followed Mr. Ashmore by playing videos of two musicians, Poco and Neil Young. Nancy Fay then delivered a moving essay on the life work of Galileo Galilei. Anthony Scott concluded the meeting by reading upcoming announcements.

The HCOF bulletin listed a variety of local Houston activities. The church operates a Freethought lending library. Members may request books via the Internet, and pick them up at the next meeting. The Houston Atheist Society (HAS) has recently initiated a "Secular Helping Hands" project, spearheaded by member Jennifer Early. The group provides community service to people in need around the Houston area: blood drives, highway clean up, Christmas children's hospital visits, and more. Other Houston groups recognized were the Humanists of Houston, Atheists MeetUp, and the delightfully specific "Humanist Association of Montgomery County, Isaac Asimov Chapter" (HAMCIAC).

Directors Art and Nancy Fay were delighted to meet this Houston so-journer. Following the meeting, a group of ten to fifteen of us Easter Sunday skeptics sequestered ourselves at a local Fuddruckers. I displayed a clipping from a recent *USA*

Today, boldly advertising an upcoming Easter FOX program with the message, "Watch an Atheist Convert!" I truly had arrived in the Bible Belt.

Our stomachs filled to capacity, and my heart full of cheer from meeting my new-found friends, I left the members of the HCOF and journeyed back into the wet and gray Houston afternoon. I encourage everyone, make time during your next trip outside Sacramento to visit, and support, other local groups. And, when you do, be sure to share with us your travel experiences.



Kay Dickey really couldn't help but laugh while presenting one of AOF's (rare and precious) "OZ" awards to **Betty Simonsma**. This surprise acknowledgement recognizes Betty for her many "behind-the-scenes" actions throughout the previous year, all on behalf of AOF.

AOF Board Meeting

At a Glimpse—June 20

<u>Minutes</u> – The minutes of the May 16, 2004 meeting were approved.

Reports – Upcoming Highway Cleanup on July 17 and Davis Dinner on August 17 projects were discussed.

<u>Liaison Reports</u> – Liaisons with various freethought organizations gave reports.

Treasury – The board approved the May 2004 treasury report. AOF purchased a portable CD player. AOF received a sizable donation for the legal education fund. \$200 from the education fund was sent to Michael Newdow. Money was collected and a KVIE brick will be

purchased.

<u>Archive Committee</u> – Mynga has compiled a scrapbook documenting her two years as AOF president.

Freethought Day – Featured speaker will be Darrell Lambert, and Michael Newdow and several local singers will perform. Bev will investigate a grant from AHA for Freethought Day. The board voted to donate a table at FTDay to Interfaith Religious Alliance in honor of Walt Pontenyn.

<u>Upcoming Programs</u> - The August program will be the annual Summer Sizzler featuring food and speeches.

Newsletter Submissions

Submit your newsletter items to the *N&V* submissions editor, Kay Dickey, at this email address:

frethnkr@ mindspring.com

or mail item to the AOF mailbox: PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182. Attn: Submissions Editor

Preference is given to material that is submitted online in a PC-compatible word processing format such as *Word, Wordpad,* or *Notepad.* (To submit, attach your file to the e-mail and send.)

AOF also welcomes succinct and substantive letters to the editor. Given our space limitations, general priority will be given to material that is informative, reflective, and civil. All letters are prioritized by AOF 's publishing criteria deriving from the organization's Statement of Purpose.

Our Highway Is Clean!

A veritable army of AOF member-volunteers hit our Adopt-A-Highway two-mile stretch of Highway 99 north of Elkhorn Blvd. on Saturday, July 17 to provide a much needed cleansing. Eleven(!) turned out to fill, according to Kevin's count, 29 bags.

Volunteers included: Betty Simonsma, returning from retirement to provide inspiration, Jerry Bachman, Tom Nicolette, Dave Flanders, Mynga Futrell, Don Knutson, Al Ludtke, Ken Nahigian, Kevin Schultz, Lydia Sheridan and Jeff Sprock. Unlike most previous occasions, nothing of real interest was collected this time though a CHP officer stopped by to offer verbal support to Kevin.

Clearly, the effort did justice to our two AOF signs on the stretch with the over-sized blue ribbon attached (one crew member described the ribbons as "big-assed"!). We will next attempt to do justice on Saturday, September 18 @ 8 AM. We will meet at the "Park & Ride" west of 99 on Elkhorn.

—Submitted by Don Knutson



Pictured above (at the July meeting) are **Sharon Fratepietro** and **Herb Silverman**. They are AOFers who live in South Carolina and summer in Davis, where Herb does research at UCD. In years past, Herb has been our speaker, and both have participated in our "August Summer Sizzler" event

Look carefully. Do you see that twinkle in Herb's eye? Perhaps it is because he knows the answer to the question posed below. He plans to share the answer with us all on August 8. It is the topic of his five-minute oratory at this year's Sizzler.

"Is There Sex After Death?"

Find Out on Aug 8!

Freethought Day

(Continued from page 1)

this opportunity to let his musical talent shine. And, he has very graciously chosen to accept our invitation. So, prepare to be pleasantly surprised by Mike's witty, relevant lyrics and mellifluous voice.

Be further prepared to be contacted by a volunteer AOFer requesting your support for this event. We continue to seek volunteers to assist in many areas and are also more than willing to accept cash (yes, CASH!) donations. Please see the insert in this newsletter for further details. And, please join us on Freethought Day, October 10, 2004 in Waterfront Park, Old Sac. See you there!

—Submitted by Beverly Church

Newsletter Freebie Policy

We will be pleased to send one free newsletter to anyone upon request, but after that, please subscribe to AOF's newsletter for only \$12 per year. Or, better yet, why not become a member? That way, you'll get our newsletter FREE as part of your membership!



We're on the Web!
www.rthoughtsrfree.org/aof.htm

Calendar of Events

Next Freethought Day Planning Committee Meeting

Sunday, August 8, 10:30 AM

AOF General Meeting

Sunday, August 8, 2:30 PM

AOF Board Meeting (open to members)

Sunday, August 15, 9:30 AM

Davis Community Meal (Setup & Serve)

Tuesday, August 17, 4 - 7 PM

Atheist MeetUp (location TBA, phone for Tina at 447-3589)

Tuesday, August 17, 7 PM

Brights MeetUp (location TBA, phone for Paul at 447-3589)

Monday, August 23, 7 PM

Directions to AOF's General Meetings

AOF meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the second Sunday of every month, from 2:30 - 5 PM at the Sierra 2 Community Center, Room 10. The Sierra 2 Center is located at 2791 24th Street in Sacramento, just south of Broadway and the Department of Motor Vehicles. Visitors are welcome. Parking is available on the street or in the rear, off 4th Avenue. AOF Board meetings are held at alternating sites, so please inquire about the location. For AOF's 24-hour Recorder, call 447-3589.

