# AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California March 2005

## Special Points of Interest

- AOF Meeting Features: Dramatic Performance (page 1)
- A "Cliff's Notes" Coverage of the Darwin Day Presentation (page 3)
- AOF Fits CalTrans' Definition of "Long-Termers" (page 5)
- Seeking Members to Run for Board Election (page 7)

## Sunday, March 13

## **AOF Presents: A Play About Clarence Darrow**

Yes! You read correctly—a *play*! AOF is pleased to announce that as our March 13 program, actor Paul Hauck will perform his play, "The Trials of Clarence **Darrow**," showcasing an overview of Darrow's incredible life.

Clarence Darrow was a household name at the turn of the 20th century. People of all walks of life recognized him as a defender of the defenseless, a man of compassion and of "horse sense," a champion of reason, a lifelong agnostic and atheist, and a tireless advocate for liberty and justice.

Mr. Hauck has adapted and performed this one-man play most recently at the T-Street Theater (in Jan., 2004) and at the Thistle Dew Dessert Theater on (November, 2004). The playbill for the latter performance reads:

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#### Standard Fare

Nevt Meeting

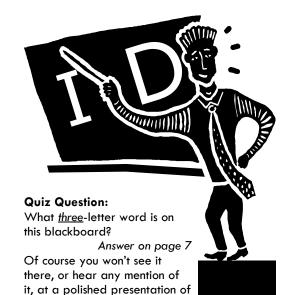
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## A Non-Forum / Non-Debate at UC-Davis Slick Proselytizing of Intelligent Design on Campus By Jerry Bachman

On February 2, the University of California at Davis hosted a soldout event in its large, on-campus Freeborn Hall. At five dollars a seat, over five hundred attended the "evolution or intelligent design?" function sponsored by a student group known as the Campus Crusade for Christ.

Billed as "A Skeptics Forum and Scientific Scholar Panel Debate," the two featured speakers were Dr. Hugh Ross and Dr. Fazale Rana, both from Reasons to Believe, a Christian "ministry established to

(Continued on page 6)



Intelligent Design creationism.

## The AOF Line

### **By Kevin Schultz**

This month, I continue exploring the American Humanist Association's Grassroots Manual (AHAGM) by sharing information from section five, "Building Community."

AOF's regular meetings offer some of our best opportunities for community building. AOF has a greeter to welcome new and returning members. The organization supplies name tags to assist with recognition of members, provides new attendees with information packets, and welcomes all new persons publicly with a general greeting prior to each meeting's main program event.

The AHAGM recommends putting the following community building materials into a monthly newsletter to keep members involved: meeting and event summaries or minutes, as well as member-focused information. One suggestion is to announce life milestones in an organization's newsletter. Examples include births, deaths, weddings, graduations, recovery from illness, job promotions, and members' involvement with the local community (perhaps through volunteering or politics). One

suggestion is also to announce new members in the newsletter.

Group dynamics is a topic the manual suggests the following principles

found in the book, "Community Building: What Makes It Work:"... having self-awareness and self-understanding within the group; coalition efforts and connections with outside groups; democracy and open leadership; training (specifically assigning a mentor to each new volunteer to show them the ropes to running the group); and

having a focus on performing tasks that benefit the members.

Several projects are suggested to help build community. The "Humanist Communities" program serves the functions of a local group, but also provides a stronger focus on issues affecting families and community aspects of the group.

The intention of Humanists
Communities is also to provide an
environment for children to feel
normal, and to learn practical,
positive aspects of what it means to
be an atheist. The manual also
recommends establishing a
subgroup focused on families, where
families (who already have tight
schedules) can participate. Perhaps
families could rotate babysitting
duties, or even pursue a "Sunday
school" to teach ethics and provide
identity.

With regards to owning a building, the AHAGM recognizes that most organizations (and AOF is no exception) do not have the funds to immediately purchase property. Instead, they suggest putting the ownership of a building into a strategic plan and budget. Set a target of how much money to raise

The purpose of the organization,

AOF, is to promote the civic

understanding and acceptance of

atheism in our community.

each year for a building fund. This means a longer time period for collection of funds, but it also points the group down the right path. The manual cautions, however, that groups

shouldn't buy property in order to create community. Rather, buying property should be the natural outcome of an already strong and healthy community.

That's all for this month. In April, we'll investigate Educational Development.

#### **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 (Submissions Editor) Jerry Sloan (Mailing)

Darwin Day, Feb. 12, 2005:

Bronda Silva, Mynga Futrell, KenNahigian, Ed McConnell, Kay Dickey Dave Henderson

#### Freethought Day, Oct. 9, 2005:

Beverly Church, Mynga Futrell, KenNahigian, Kay Dickey, Jerry Sloan, Tom Ikelman

#### Ad Hoc:

Web Portal (Kevin Schultz, Richard Langley); Alternate Meeting Place/ Time (Jerry Sloan, Ken Nahigian, Kevin Schultz); Youth Outreach (Kevin Schultz, Jerry Sloan, Tina Burgess); Connections (Kevin Schultz, Betty Simonsma); Growing AOF Membership (Tina Burgess, Jerry Sloan, Kevin Schultz)

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

#### **AOF's Voluntariat**

#### **Affiliation Liaisons:**

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

## **Community Service Projects:**Don Knutson

Internet Website: Pat Kelley

**Meetings:** Dave Flanders, Ken Nahigian Jerry Sloan, Betty Simonsma

#### Membership Database:

Betty Simonsma

We welcome additional involvement from AOF members. Right now we need volunteers to perform very small tasks at our meetings. Just phone the voice mail at **447-3589** if you can help us out. Or, send an e-mail to us at

aofboard@rthoughtsrfree.org

### A Brief Conceptual Reiteration

## **Experimental Study of Evolution** By Paul Geisert

For those of you who had a bit of trouble catching all the biology that Dr. Krubitzer presented, here is a brief recap.

Darwin and Wallace presented to the world the naturalistic description of the pathway of life leading to humans, and for a long time afterwards, the largest fraction of work on evolution was observation fol-

lowed by *explanations* and theories regarding what was observed. This work was sufficient to firmly establish Darwin's Theory of Evolution through Natural Selection as a very powerful and accurate description of how current life forms (and humanity) developed from lower forms of life.

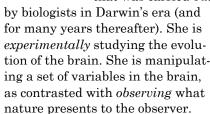
Here are a couple of ba-Brain power! sic ideas. Evolution, the change of species over time, is a fact. The amount of evidence in fossil forms, biochemistry, genetics, and so forth is overwhelmingly substantial. Once evolution as a fact was established, the next scientific step was to explain how evolution hap-

"how" question was his proposition of natural selection.

In every species, the number of individuals reproduced each general far exceeds the carrying capacity of the environment. Thus, each generation, many offspring die and few carry onwards. Darwin also noted that all individuals in a given species demonstrate individ-

> ual traits, and that some traits help individuals to live and some don't help as much. Thus a culling from the many offspring sometimes results in systematic changes over many generations.

Dr. Krubitzer's work is quite different from the work that was carried out



(Continued on page 5)

## By Dave Flanders

Recap

The featured speaker for this year's Darwin Day, Dr. Leah Krubitzer, said she was brought up as a Catholic and that at age 20 she read "The Origin of Species" by Charles Darwin. In the book, Darwin at times seemed more interested in the similarities of various animals than in the differences. When studying the brains of certain animals, Darwin noted similarities in their cortexes. Leah was taken with the insights Darwin shared in the book and so, with sophisticated brain-imaging techniques, she did some of her own research. During her time in Australia she dissected every animal that was on a coin. She said she changed from a believer in God, to an agnostic, to an angry atheist, to (now) an atheist. It does appear to me that science is the superior type of knowledge that is helping scientists gain an improved mechanistic model of how evolution built the brain Darwin started us thinking about that, and Leah shared a part of where that history is now on Darwin Day. After she spoke, in order to "evolve into" a more casual atmosphere, Paul and Mynga sang a song from the Wizard of Oz ("If I Only Had a Brain") to the delight of the audience. Evolution-related T-shirts and other paraphernalia were for sale. Evolution vs. creationism literature was also available. Refreshments were served. Hopefully, one day creationism will be retired to the graveyard of bad ideas, but until then, Freethought groups in Sacramento and elsewhere will continue to host a Darwin Day each year.

A Brief Darwin Day



Photo by Bill Potts

#### **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**

pened. Darwin's answer to this

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.

#### "AOF Presents: Darrow"

(Continued from page 1)

"This one-man play recounts the life of the famous trial lawyer, known best for the defense of a teacher charged with teaching the theory of evolution in a case that became known as the 'Scopes Monkey Trial.'

Darrow was, like all of us, a product of his times. For him, it was a time of social conflict. The radical left was at its peak of influence, conflicting with the power of the Klu Klux Klan, Jim Crow laws, lynchings, union unrest and xenophobia. He spoke to the hearts and minds of the American people to win the case for legal and social justice on issues still challenging us in our own times. Recommended for General Audiences."

Tickets normally run up to \$20 for this play, but Mr. Hauck graciously has agreed to perform a one-timeonly show for AOF members as our general meeting program. It's free!

Paul Hauck has performed as Elwood P. Dowd in *Harvey* with the St. Michael's Actors Guild. In the intervening five years he has been seen with the T Street Players in such roles as Scrooge in *A* 

Christmas Carol. Prof. Von Helsing in Dracula, Mr. Green in Visiting Mr. Green, John Ruffing in Ravenscroft, and most recently as Nick Flanagan in The Guys. Paul returned to St. Michael's to play Detective Trotter in Mousetrap and Samuel in The Curious Savage. He has also appeared as Porter Milgram in the Main Street Theater Works production of *Deathtrap*. This is Paul's first attempt at writing for the stage. In his spare time Paul works as a child clinical psychologist and maintains a vintage thirty-three year marriage.

Paul writes, "I can still remember being a young boy and being excited when I would read in the TV Guide that 'Inherit the Wind' would be on. I can still see Spencer Tracy taunting Fredric March with 'Brady, Brady!' as he paced the courtroom on our black and white set... As I have lived with the stories of this man's life I have been awed at the resonance of the issues of his era and ours. The continuous tension between labor and management as they compete for resources. The relationship of industrial wealth and government power. The constant effects of racism. The struggle to protect

individual rights when national security is threatened. The debate over what our children should be taught in school and how society should respond to the perpetrators of the most unspeakable crimes.

I hope this play will in some small measure serve to further Darrow's goals, in his words, 'to improve human understanding, to temper justice with mercy, to overcome hate with love."



## Looking for a Few Good Volunteers Here



Hello, Everyone! We have another KVIE phone volunteer commitment on **Sunday April 3** from **11:15** to about **4:00** p.m.

We need to know if you can volunteer ASAP. KVIE has given us a deadline of **Friday, March 11** to recruit 16 volunteers under the banner of "Sacramento Community of Reason." This time it will include AOF, HAGSA, SAITA, and SORT. If we don't get a minimum of 16 volunteers by March 11, we will have to sadly cancel our participation in the event.

What we want is to get as many of us old seasoned battle tested veterans of the last KVIE phone effort to sign up again. I know I personally had a lot of fun and never felt pressured in any way which helped me to take my time with each person phoning in and to treat them as well as I would a good friend.

I realize that April 3rd is a long way off for many of you and much can happen in your lives that might interrupt your plans. Also some of us have steady ways in our lives and others have constant fluctuations in their schedules with many competing demands on your time. But we do need a head count and to see how many people are a "definite yes" and how many are a "provisional maybe" because being short-handed on the 3rd is NOT an option.

As for me. I am a definite YES!! Join me, by calling the AOF voice-mail, 916-447-3589 and adding your name..

Thank You

Thomas E. Nicolette, Co-Coordinator

#### **Conceptual Reiteration**

(Continued from page 3)

Dr.. Krubitzer uses the areas of the brain connected with the senses. Vision, smell, hearing, and taste all have specific identifiable portions of the brain dedicated to their work.

Using dyes and imaging equipment, one can "see" how these four sensory aspects of the brain develop under experimental treatments.

For example, Ms. Krubitzer studied blinded rodent brains to determine the answer to a question such as: "if a rodent is blind from before birth, will the 'seeing' portion of the brain be missing or smaller? She found through this experiment that the brain always produces the nerves and circuits for seeing, even when there is no sight. This indicates that the brain is genetically preprogrammed to produce the processing centers of the senses, regardless of their functionality.

Other of Ms. Krubitzer's experiments relate to how a brain develops if a given brain has less tissue than normal for the species. For example, if a portion of a brain of a young rodent is removed, how will the brain tissue of the four senses deal with that loss? This experimental result showed that brains have a considerable capacity to make the best out of a very bad situation, by rearranging the size and locations of the normal functions of the brain to correspond to the lesser amount of brain tissue.

If one then compares the brains of animals with tissue loss with other species which *normally* have smaller brains, one finds great similarity of structure.

Ms. Krubitzer's work is much larger than simply comparing various aspects of the brain. Her work is in conduction experiments to tease out the patterns of how brains have evolved in response to various evolutionary challenges.

It should be noted that Dr. Krubitzer was accompanied to the talk by a number of members of her project staff. That is, she has a laboratory and a number of graduate and post graduate students working on understanding how the brain has developed from a simple structure of just a few neurons (e.g. snails) into the very complex human brain.

As a final word, note that Dr. Krubitzer is busy answering "how" questions. That is what scientists do. Science never touches "why" questions. Philosophers, supernaturalists, psychologists, parents, and lawyers are major players in the "why" area. Scientists focus on how.

## **AOF** in Action! — With You?

#### March 8 - 6 PM

2005 marks AOF's fourth year of our partnership with the Davis Community Meals (DCM). We need volunteers for the first event of the season, on Tuesday, March 8, from 18:00-19:00, in Davis. For the four DCM events in 2005, (Mar 8, Jun 14, Sep 17, Dec 27) AOF has cleanup responsibility. Volunteers who arrive can help themselves to a hot meal prior to helping.

Work is easy and light, DCM volunteers are knowledgeable and friendly, your time and energy makes a direct impact on lives in the Davis Community, and you get to spend time with fellow AOFers! To volunteer, call the AOF voice-mail: 916-447-3589.

Thanks for considering!

Don Knutson

#### **March 19 - 8 AM**

Volunteers will start at 8 AM on Saturday, March 19 for a two-hour venture, scooping up a winter's accumulation of (?) on our stretch of Highway 99. Every hand is needed because there will be almost three months of trash accumulation out there. CalTrans has informed Don, our service projects coordinator, that acknowledging the 15th year of operation of the Adopt-a-Highway program, it will be providing a certificate to all groups that have been long-time volunteers. AOF started in 1995!

Perhaps some of the "old hands" from years past will show up for this particular pickup so we can take a picture and share stories of our "anthropology collections."

Mynga Futrell



## Freethought Day 2005 Planning Committee

Waterfront Park is now reserved for **Sunday, October 9** so mark your calendars now for **Sacramento's 2005 Freethought Day!** We are forming the Planning Committee and all AOFers are invited to play a role.

#### Yes, we DO... want YOU!

AOF is the *only* organization (as far as we know) that has a Freethought Day program geared to *education* and a public celebration. Last year's event was great fun, and we'd like this one to be even more so (yes, more fun!). Please contact **Bev Church** at **359-5423** to join the Committee and work with us to make a marvelous event for everyone! —m.f.

## **AOF Subscription / Membership Form**

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

a to. 7.0., . 0 Box 15102, 5ac. a		
Name(s)	Phone (	)
Street		Apt.#
City		Zip
E-mail address (print legibly!)		
Check your preference:		
<ul><li>Newsletter Subscriber Only (\$12)</li><li>Low-income Member (\$10)</li><li>Single Membership (\$20)</li></ul>	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 you .pdf file to your e-mail address above.	-	☐ Please check here if you DO want to be on our AOF activist list.

#### Intelligent Design at UC-D

(Continued from page 1) communicate the uniquely factual basis for belief in the Bible as the wholly true Word of God and for personal faith in Jesus Christ."

The two high profile keynote speakers took turns demonstrating that an intelligent creator is responsible for all existence. Representing the academic community were two UCD science professors, Dr. Andreas Albrecht (Cosmology) and Dr. Dan Potter (Plant Sciences).

The evening began with a lengthy power point presentation by "internationally renowned astronomer and author," Dr. Hugh Ross, founder of Reasons to Believe. Referencing scriptures, Dr. Ross utilized scientific terminology to support his belief in "biblical cosmology." Dr. Ross suggested that Genesis 1:1 ("Let there be light.") describes an ex nihilo, "Big Bang" beginning and that Zechariah 12:1 ("The Lord...stretches out the heavens...") supports the expanding universe theory. The speaker demonstrated that hard-won scientific knowledge was divinely revealed in the bible many years ago. Dr. Ross believes that it is statistically improbable for life to exist without a

miracle. "The cosmos were (sic) designed for life," said Dr. Ross as he turned the podium over to his colleague, Dr. Rana. (During this short break, about one hundred audience members left the hall.)

Dr. Fazale Rana, who has a Ph.D. in chemistry, quoted Richard Dawkins' book, "The Blind Watchmaker." Dr. Rana claimed that Dawkins' definition of biology as "the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose" is evidence that even award-winning atheists concede to the "irreducible complexity" of life forms, thereby reinforcing intelligent design theory.

The two patient UCD scientists had an opportunity to participate in the dialogue near the end of the program. Cosmology Professor Andreas Albrecht, commented that he had "a very high regard for the role religion plays in society." As a member of the UCD science faculty, Dr. Albrecht pointed out that "the hallmark of science is to put a prediction in a position to falsify it." Dr. Albrecht respectfully stated that there was no science in any of the evening's program. He said frankly that "science is precise; biblical references are not. I don't see qualitative data or error bars."

Plant Sciences Professor Dan Potter had concerns that the "one true religion" claim of the Reason to Believe ministry may be dangerous to religious freedom of other beliefs. Dr. Potter mentioned, "The bible may be the one religious text that breeds intolerance."

As evidenced by UCD's serving as a venue for the proselytizing of creationism, the Intelligent Design Creationism campaign is alive and well in our nation's upper level educational institutions.

(www.reasons.org)



Have you remembered to renew your annual membership or subscription?

Please help AOF save the cost of mailing out reminders to renew. Check the date on your newsletter right now (It's on the address label.) Send in your renewal in advance using the form above. Thanks!

If you get your newsletter electronically you may be in doubt about renewal date. Ask your status by e-mail to aofboard@aofonline.org and we will let you know.

#### **AAI** Convention Ahead

At least three AOF board members have already signed up to attend the annual convention of the Atheist Alliance International in Los Angeles, March 25-27. Two others are considering the trip. Anyone interested in carpooling to LA, let Mynga know. The convention is a bargain (even lower cost than 10 years ago!). This promises to be an exciting gathering. World-renowned evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, atheist activists Mike Newdow and Dr. Bruce Flamm, and performers Penn and Teller and Julia Sweeney are among the program participants. AAI liaisons Kay Dickey and Mynga Futrell will be arriving early in order to attend the business meeting on March 24. At its February board meeting, AOF voted to give some travel assistance to local students who register for and attend the LA convention.

#### **Notes of Note**

Davis Meal: AOF's assignment this time is short—cleanup duties (only) for the March 8 dinner. This means arrival slightly before 6 pm lets you join in on the meal, and then be gone soon after 7. If you don't want to eat, a 6:30 arrival will be fine. Just a half hour of work! April Meeting: Darien DeLu of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom will be speaker.

May Meeting: Annual elections and silent auction. AOF hopes to provide a program of musical entertainment!

#### Acknowledgements

**Tsunami Donations:** — Additional thanks go to Ute Yates and Lydia Sheridan for their help. We will report on this project in the April issue of News & Views

G-O-D — Answer to the quiz on page 1

#### **Newsletter Submissions**

Submit your newsletter items to the N&V submissions editor, Kay Dickey, at this e-mail address:

frethnkr@mindspring.com or mail item to the AOF mailbox: PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182.

Preference is given to material 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. Note: All letters are prioritized by AOF 's publishing criteria deriving from the organization's Statement of Purpose.

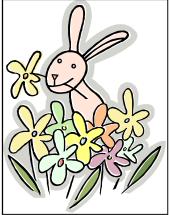
# 2005-6 Nominations Committee Formed Fresh Talents Sought as Nominees for AOF Board By Mynga Futrell

It's that time of year again! Fresh blossoms on the trees and ground, so why not some fresh faces sprouting up on AOF's Board of Directors?

Yes, it won't be long until the annual elections for the AOF are close upon us. The election of new offers and at-large board members (up to 9 total) is part of

the general membership meeting in the month of May.

This year, Kevin Schultz and Ken Nahigian are rolling up their sleeves to serve as our nominations committee. Their role is to gather up as many interested and qualified folks as they can to run for election to what is a very rewarding, quite often fun (and, okay... I admit sometimes it's work) role in directing and sustaining the affairs of AOF



Our organization is now almost 12-years old(!) and, as a member for all that time (and a board member for part of it), I am personally very proud that we have been able to keep rolling right along this length of time (FYI: atheist, freethought, skeptic etc. associations have a reputation for being challenging to sustain.)

Now a 501c3 educational nonprofit, there are certain ways AOF has to proceed and tasks that have to be done. (Meetings are once a month.)

Our board has for some time now operated in quite collegial fashion. The board is open to fresh blood and new ideas, and that's where you as reader of this column just may come in. The Committee is on the lookout for members who are willing to devote some of their time and lots of

their ideas. The timeline for gathering up nominations is the April general membership meeting.

Feel free to make Ken and Kevin's job much easier by nominating yourself! Let either of them know of your interest (or possible interest). If you have questions about the roles and responsibilities, you may talk with any current board member or phone the AOF message phone at 447-3589 and ask to get a callback from any board member.

#### **Newsletter Freebie Policy**

We'll be pleased to send one free newsletter to any person upon request, but after that time, 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

### March Calendar of Events

Davis Community Meals (AOF = Cleanup Crew) Tuesday, March 8, 6 PM (I hr. max)

AOF General Meeting Sunday March 13, 2:30 PM

AOF Highway Cleanup Saturday, March 19, 8 AM

AOF Board Meeting (open to members) Sunday, March 20, 9:30 AM

Next AOF General Meeting Sunday, April 10, 2:30 PM

AOF meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the second Sunday of the month, from 2:30 - 5 PM at the Sierra 2 Community Center, Room 10. Note: The months of February and October are exceptions, since AOF co-produces two public events: (1) an outdoor faire in October ["Sacramento's Freethought Day" (10/9/05)] and (2) a science and humanity celebration, generally around February 12 [Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala"]. Watch the newsletter for times.

## Directions to AOF's General Meetings

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. Leave your name and a number (please repeat for clarity) and someone will phone back to answer your questions about AOF.

