

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

October 2005

Sunday, October 9 - Noon to 5 Freethought Day Fair 2005!

Special Points of Interest

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Things seem to be shaping up for us to have the best Freethought Day ever. The speakers, the entertainment, the vendors are all top notch.

Our *Stand Up for Reason* theme will be conveyed throughout the run of the Fair, which culminates in an Old Time Revival (of Reason, of course). There'll be more diversity in the program this year. We have added more participants at the vendor tables and a larger dose of humor, all around.

Please go to page 4 for details about the great afternoon of entertainment and public education that lies ahead.



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AAI Press Release Salutes Ruling in "Under God" Pledge Case Upholding American Values

AOF is an Atheist Alliance member society. Here is the text of the Alliance's latest press release, showing AAI's position on the recent court ruling in our district.

The Atheist Alliance International celebrates U.S. District Judge Lawrence Karlton's decision, which prohibits school districts from coercing children to recite the religious oath in the Pledge of Allegiance, as a victory for all Americans. "All children need to learn that we are indeed 'one nation indivisible,' that tolerance and inclusiveness are important American

values," said Bobbie Kirkhart, AAI president.

The organization notes that the 1954 insertion, "under God," excluded not only atheists but also children whose families follow Hinduism, the Native American Church, Wicca, Buddhism, and many other worldviews.

Parents who believe that this nation operates under the god of Christianity, Judaism and Islam have ample opportunity to teach

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AOF Line Freethought Day Champagne Reception (Friday, October 7)

By Carla Corbett

AOF members are invited to attend a champagne reception to welcome Freethought Day 2005 artist Joel Pelletier and to honor local free-thinker Rena Lowry.

The suggested \$20 donation for this event not only gives you the opportunity to personally meet our featured guests, it allows you to show your support for Freethought Day. Your donation helps us to finance the cost involved in bringing nationally-known freethinkers to our local event.

Joel Pelletier, of Los Angeles, will be displaying a large replica of his "American Fundamentalists (Christ's Entry into Washington in 2008)" painting at Freethought Day. This large mural features over 200 men and women the artist describes as "American religious, political and/or corporate Fundamentalists, whose combined actions (intentional or otherwise) could be leading us to possible planetary destruction. Most troubling is that many of these same people actually think this is a good thing, and are happy to admit it publicly." Visit www.joelp.com and



www.americanfundamentalists.com for more on Joel's work and the reaction it has generated. The replica will be on display at the reception as well, and those who attend will have the opportunity to discuss the painting and have their picture taken with the mural, the artist, or both.

Many will recall Rena's standing up in her community soon after 9-11 to protest to the administration of her daughter's elementary school what she saw as an unconstitutional action—the placement of a "God Bless America" statement on the marquee. Those who attend the reception will be able to chat with Rena and meet her daughter, Brieta.

Please help us welcome this year's exciting participants and show your support for Freethought Day.

The reception will be held at the home of Beverly Church on Friday, October 7, 2005 from 7 to 9 pm.

Hors d'oeuvres and wine and cheese will be served.

Suggested donation: \$20.

RSVP: 916.359.5423.

AOF Board (2005-6)

President: Don Knutson

Vice President: Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Kevin Schultz

Treasurer: Ken Nahigian

Directors at large:

Carla Corbett, Beverly Church

Dave Flanders, Phil Lazier

Vincent Wales

AOF Committees

Newsletter: Mynga Futrell (Editor)

Kay Dickey (Submissions Editor)

Jerry Sloan (Mailing)

Freethought Day, Oct. 9, 2005:

Beverly Church, Mynga Futrell, Carla Corbett, Kay Dickey, Jerry Sloan, Tom Ikelman, Kevin Schultz, Brian Krofchok

Darwin Day, Feb. 12, 2006:

Bronda Silva, Mynga Futrell,

Dave Henderson, Ed McConnell,

Kay Dickey, Ken Nahigian,

Ad Hoc Committees:

Web Portal (Kevin Schultz, Richard

Langley); Alternate Meeting Place/

Time (Jerry Sloan, Ken Nahigian,

Kevin Schultz); Youth Outreach

(Jerry Sloan, Tina Burgess, Mynga

Futrell); Connections (Kevin

Schultz, Betty Simonsma); Growing

AOF Membership (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:

Ken Nahigian

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@aofonline.org

The purpose of the organization,
AOF, is to promote the civic
understanding and acceptance of
atheism in our community.

Please attend and support Freethought Day 2005! This outdoor event is AOF's best opportunity all year to bring our key concepts to the attention of the public. Have fun while helping to shed light on (1) how freethinking has contributed to human progress and (2) the importance of secular government.

Censorship Alive and Thriving Book Banning Meeting Recap by Dave Flanders

John Milton spoke of his first freedom: "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience..."



Carolyn Rokke, a librarian, was the featured speaker at AOF's September meeting. She spoke of censorship of important ideas and truths accepted by many, yet offensive to a vocal few. She brought numerous examples to show the audience.

Carolyn said it is fortunate that the U.S. Constitution states that congress shall not abridge the freedom of the press. The founding fathers realized that the only way the kinds of lives that free people ought to have is to allow those words and



thought to be heard, in all their danger. Get them out in the open, where they can be challenged, endorsed, and to the extent that they pose social and political riddles, solved. Every other avenue involves deception. And that leads to corruption, and that leads to worse lives for all of us, even for those whose job it is to keep the lid on.

For centuries, books have been banned, suppressed and censored because of political, religious, sexual and social reasons, according to the tastes and beliefs of an era or a locale. As times change, formerly banned books become acceptable or even "classics," or sometimes books that were previously accepted are banned. Books do not change, but the social climate does. Society's view of sex in the West has

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their children in home and church. Parents who believe this nation operates under the principles of law have a right not to have the schools contradicting our Constitution. All children have a right to be taught how to live in a pluralistic society with respect for our common values of freedom and responsibility.

The organization deplores the hyperbole of some religious leaders who see the absence of religion in the classroom as an attack on religion. "Certainly," says Ms. Kirkhart, "most religious people have enough faith in their god that they don't need their beliefs constantly reinforced by the state, yet the idea that the absence of religion is somehow anti-religious suggests the opposite. No atheist is calling for a daily oath, 'one nation, without God, indivisible.' I hope that we can soon return to the pledge we recited when we fought and won the two world wars and become 'one nation indivisible' again."

changed, and many books that would once have been condemned as pornographic or obscene now have become best sellers. The threat of censorship continues in both the public sector and the private industry. Carolyn encouraged the audience to read "100 Banned Books," to get comprehensive information about books that have been banned, suppressed or censored for varied reasons across 20 centuries and in many nations.

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Atheists and Other Freethinkers



AOF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. It is one of 50 member societies of the Atheist Alliance International ("a positive voice for atheism"). AOF

also 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.

Freethought Day 2005 - See Ya There!

By Jerry Sloan

Here's a brief overview of what is planned for the on-stage program. There's also the exposition, too, remember, with many exhibits that focus on freethought. There will also be critical thinking activities for children. We anticipate more vendor booths this year, too. — Ed

Live Music

Afternoon entertainment includes encore appearances and the robust music of *Roberta Chevrette*, and the rollicking sounds of Comic Press News publisher *James Israel*. And, as very special treat this year, Renaissance man and multi-media artist and composer *Joel Pelletier* be coming from Los Angeles and will round out the musical program.

Entertainment

For adults of all ages, we will have the talents of magician *Richard Kowaleski*, who entertained us so well last year. Then San Jose ventriloquist *Chris Lindstrom* and her special rabble-rousing friend,

Derrick, will be present to delight together in Freethought Day (and probably harangue us about *Camp Quest, West*, a secular summer camp for children of freethinkers).

American Humanist Association president *Mel Lipman* has agreed to return from Las Vegas, this time as our Coordinator of Ceremonies, giving him ample opportunity to revive his stand up comic routine.

Education and Veneration

Joel Pelletier, already mentioned, will be explaining the featured artistic exhibit, which is a full-sized facsimile of his huge (8 x 14 foot) provocative painting titled, *American Fundamentalists: Christ's Entry into Washington 2008*.

We are also more than pleased to have scheduled to appear with us some people at the forefront of fighting for religious liberty and free expression locally, to wit, Rena Lowry (who started an uproar in Rocklin with her objection to the slogan "God Bless America" on the

sign of her daughter's elementary school right after 9-11), and Stephen and Virginia Percy (who set off a firestorm locally that reached national news when they hung a soldier effigy "Bush lied, I died" at their home to express political dissent to the war in Iraq).

Laced in between will be more freethought and religious liberty quotes, delivered with aplomb by *Jerry Bachman* and geared to remind us about important freedoms. Also, two notables from the past will be honored and added to our pictorial Gallery of Free and Independent Thinkers with the assistance of Ted Webb, Mynga Futrell, and Rena Lowry.

So, the reader is invited, yea, *urged* to attend the Freethought Day Fair as proclaimed by Mayor Heather Fargo on Sunday, October 9, 2005, at Waterfront Park (Front and L Streets) in Old Sacramento from Noon until 5:00 pm.

Come early, stay late, and bring a friend.



Even More Live Music at Freethought Day?

You may or may not count it as all that *musical*, but one thing is certain:

"The Reason Revival Choir"
will be appearing *live*

Surely you'll want to be there to witness (if not to hear) the Freethought Day Planning Committee's own joyous rendering of the event's theme melody, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Reason," accompanied by some instruments appropriate to the occasion of the very first (at least as we know of) "Reason Revival."

Look for familiar faces on recorder, guitar, and tambourine. Besides the theme tune, it is possible that a few other old-time gospel melodies may make an appearance in secular versions, this time all in reverence of Reason. **Praise be!** — M.F.



Now, she's the *real deal!*

Roberta Chevrette came to AOF's September meeting and gave a delightful preview performance.

See her **LIVE and IN CONCERT** at *Sacramento's Freethought Day!*

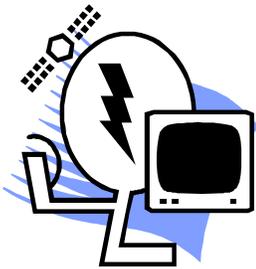
Location, Location, Location

Editor's Note: Kevin Schultz prepared a full feedback report, but unfortunately this newsletter was too crowded to contain it. Here is the pertinent nitty-gritty from the more quantitative and detailed material Kevin submitted.

Thanks to those of you who responded to the board's September newsletter request for feedback on general meeting location/time options. The response represents but four percent of the total membership, and five percent of members plus subscribers. This was a very small response, but using the associated comments and some board members' own information from visits, the board removed the sheriff station community room (just off Florin Road) from any further consideration. It also postponed further action on this issue due to preparations for Freethought Day. Have you responded? *If not, please refer to your September newsletter for pros and cons of the remaining two locations (our current location at Sierra 2, and the Coloma Community Center auditorium on T Street).* The board welcomes continued input on this issue via voice-mail, e-mail, postal mail, or in-person.



Get in on the Action!



Movie Night
October 14, 7 PM
An Award-Winning Film

"Schindler's List"
Running Time: 195 minutes

Schindler's List (1993) is Steven Spielberg's masterpiece - a profoundly shocking, unsparring, fact-based, three-hour long epic of the nightmarish Holocaust. [Italian-American catholic Martin Scorsese was originally slated to direct the film, but turned down the chance - claiming the film needed a director of Jewish descent and turning it over to Spielberg.] It authentically and vividly re-creates a dark, frightening period during World War II, when Jews in Nazi-occupied Krakow were first dispossessed of their businesses and homes, then placed in ghettos and forced labor camps in Plaszow, and finally resettled in concentration camps for execution. The violence and brutality of their treatment in a series of matter-of-fact (horrific) incidents is indelible and brilliantly orchestrated.

Most of the film is shot in crisp black and white. The film is marvelous for the way in which it crafts its story without contrived, manipulative Hollywood-ish flourishes - it is also skillfully rendered with overlapping dialogue, parallel editing, sharp and bold characterizations, contrasting compositions of the two main characters (Oskar Schindler and Amon Goeth), cinematographic beauty detailing shadows and light with film-noirish tones, jerky hand-held cameras (*cinema verite*), a beautifully selected and composed musical score (including Itzhak Perlman's violin), and gripping performances. The screenplay by Steven Zaillian was adapted from Thomas Keneally's 1982 biographic novel (*Schindler's Ark*), constructed by interviews with 50 Schindler survivors found in many nations, and other wartime associates of the title character, as well as other written testimonies and sources. Oskar Schindler was an enterprising, womanizing Nazi Sudeten-German industrialist/opportunist and war profiteer, who first exploited the cheap labor of Jewish/Polish workers in a successful enamelware factory, and eventually rescued more than one thousand of them from certain extinction in labor/death camps.

More Volunteers Needed To Staff Tables On Freethought Day

Can you sit and "mind a table" for a 2-hour shift at the Freethought Day Fair? We need you! The Committee is seeking additional people to oversee materials (so they don't walk off) and hoping more persons will step forward to take a turn. Ideally, no one should have to put in more than two hours, but we are running short. If you have not already signed up to help, please do so. We still need helpers at the [AOF Information Table](#), the [Freethinker's Bookshelf display](#), the [Youth Education display](#), the [Children's Activities table](#), and the [Freethought Day Merchandise tables](#). For flexibility across the afternoon, it would be nice to have *three* people per table and thereby enable us to have a complete range of displays. Please call the AOF voice-mail at 447-3589 to indicate your willingness to help.



***We are depending on our members to enable AOF
to co-produce a marvelous outdoor event.
We gladly accept donations in any amount.
Please give what you can. Thank you!***

Directions to Movie Night: The film will be shown at the home of Bill and Elaine Potts, 1848 Hidden Hills Drive, in Roseville. Their phone number is 773-3865. *Note: The hosts can better plan for the number of guests if each person who plans to go will phone a couple of days ahead of time. (If you decide at the last minute, though, feel free to come ahead; bring your favorite microwave popcorn and beverage.)*

AOF Subscription / Membership Form

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

Name(s) _____ Phone () _____

Street _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address (print legibly!) _____

Check your preference:

Newsletter Subscriber Only (\$12) Family Membership (\$30)

Low-income Member (\$10) Patron (\$50)

Single Membership (\$20) Donation (\$ _____)

Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to organizations similar to AOF.

Please check here if you DO want to be on our AOF activist list.

Please check your preference. We can deliver your monthly newsletter via an attached .pdf file to your e-mail address above. E-mail newsletter Postal mail

AOFers Help Out Again At Davis Community Meals

By Carla Corbett

In September AOF once again volunteered its services to Davis Community Meals, which serves a free meal to needy individuals every Tuesday evening from 5:45 to 6:30 PM and on Saturdays from 11:30 AM to 12:15 PM at St. Martin Episcopal Church in Davis. The program is aimed at aiding homeless and low-income individuals and families. We have been part of this community service since 1999.

AOF participates in Davis Community Meals every three months, and this time we provided a three-member clean-up crew. All volunteers are invited to eat, so after a tasty, home cooked meal and some lively conversation with

their table-mates, Kevin Schultz, Jerry Bachman, and Carla Corbett wielded mops and sponges, folded and stacked tables and chairs, and performed other cleanup duties. Volunteer activities are well-coordinated, so everything from setup to cleanup goes smoothly and quickly. Our members report that the return from volunteering for

this event is worth the effort. Carla, who participated for the first time, said: "It was a lot of fun, it felt good to help, and the chocolate cake was decadent."

Our next opportunity to volunteer with Davis Community Meals is Tuesday, December 27. Contact AOF if you would like to participate in this worthwhile, rewarding service to our community.



AOF's 9/13 Cleanup Crew
(Carla isn't short — Jerry and Kevin are just tall)

AOF Board Meeting Summary

September 18, 2005

Home of Ken Nahigian

Minutes and Treasury reports for August both approved by consensus.

Mynga (Vince) moved AOF spending \$35 on the 10th anniversary onsite celebration for highway clean-up. Approved by consensus.

Carla (Ken) moved including the draft wording of proposed non-discrimination statement in the proposed bylaws changes. Approved by acclamation. Dave abstained (as away from meeting temporarily).

Carla (Vince) moved approving the proposed bylaws changes as recommended by the review committee, with the addition of the non-discrimination clause. Approved by acclamation. Dave abstained (as away from meeting temporarily).

After discussion of various factors, including feedback received from members/subscribers, Board dropped sheriff station from further consideration as meeting place due to location/lack of positive feedback.

Next meeting: Sunday, October 23, 2005 (unless raining on the 16th, in which case board meeting will take place on that day) at the home of Carla Corbett, 8264 Lime Cove Ct. 95828. Phone: 698-1090

President's Thoughts

By Don Knutson

Word is that the Vatican will issue a rule within a matter of weeks prohibiting even celibate gay males from enrolling in seminaries. An obvious instance of clear scapegoating in response to the extreme wealth lost by the church through the enduring priest pedophilia scandal both in monetary terms and in credibility. So the Vatican will soon regard gay men as no better than women.

Speaking of the Vatican, when I was in London this past summer, I picked up a copy of the *Daily Mail*,

which mentioned that Ratzki, when he was merely a Cardinal, had verbally attacked J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. The *Mail* quoted him as saying, "Harry Potter (brings) subtle seductions which act unnoticed and by this deeply distort Christianity in the soul before it can grow properly." Apparently, he is afraid that the superstition of Christianity will become confused with other superstitions in the minds of the young before they can be "properly" socialized into the faith.

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.



Did You Know?

By Cleo Kocol

Today we brand the Religious Right fanatics, and they are. But did you know that Eric Hoffer painted atheists with the same brush?

Hoffer, a self-educated manual laborer, read voraciously because he was blind from age seven to fifteen and feared a recurrence. He went on to become a recognized philosopher author.

In his most famous book, *The True Believer*, Hoffer wrote: "The opposite of the religious fanatic is not the atheist but the gentle cynic who cares not whether there is a god or not." He decries atheists who treat atheism as a religion. Fanatics, he wrote, come mostly from noncrea-

tive men of words. Creative people look for reform not complete change.

Today, most freethinkers do not care whether our neighbors worship a god or not. We do care deeply, though, in the separation of state and church.

Hoffer said that the fanatic (or the fanatical movement), in order to set up his/her/their brand of belief, must first discredit the opposition. We see this today in world-wide movements. Islamic terrorists target people and countries world-wide. Christian right wingers attack separation of church and state in the United States. US corporations plant seeds of doubt in the populace against workers' rights. Women are denigrated. And of course atheists have been discredited for generations. In all instances individual rights are curtailed.

As Hoffer points out, fanatical power falls in the hands of the people who have no respect for or faith in the individual. The bottom line? Fanaticism comes in all guises.

Censorship Today

(Continued from page 3)

Banning books--an endeavor to restrict thought, can form a treacherous current. Its undertow can ensnare the mind in a sea of ignorance and irrationality. For democracy to work, the right of fundamental inquiry, the ebb and flow of thought must be allowed to occur.

Science also flourishes best in a liberal democracy, as opposed to an authoritarian government. The single most important thing one could do is speak out against censorship. Carolyn said it is good to read banned books--she has been doing it since age three.

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!



P.O. Box 15182
 Sacramento, CA 95851-0182

*Freethought Day
 Is Sunday, October 9*

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

October Calendar of Events

- Freethought Day Fundraising Reception (see p. 2) Friday, October 7, 7 to 9 PM
- 4th Freethought Day Fair (see p. 4 and insert)* *Sunday, October 9, Noon to 5*
- Movie Social (see p. 5) Friday, October 14, 7 PM
- 10th Anniversary of AOF's Highway Cleanup Sunday, October 16, 8 - 10:30 AM
This is a special celebration event (see insert) – Enjoy a continental breakfast preceding the cleanup
- AOF Board meeting Sunday, October 23, 9:30 AM

Directions to Freethought Day

To find out bus routes/schedules, phone 321-2877 (Sundays, 8 AM - 5: 30 PM). By car, you can travel west on Capital Mall and turn right onto Front Street (just before Tower Bridge). When you do, you see a multi-level parking garage. (There is no long-term street parking in Old Sacramento.) Walk northward from the garage, and Waterfront Park is soon on your left. Save a bit on garage costs with a purchase while in Old Town (ask for ticket validation). You can reach Capitol Mall from I-5 (north- or southbound) via J Street, heading south on 3rd Street. If you are up for a walk, park downtown (it's free on Sundays), and use the tunnel from the mall.

Directions to Backup Location—In Event of Rainy Day Only

The Sierra 2 Center is located at 2791 24th Street in Sacramento, just two blocks south of Broadway. Parking is available on the street or in the rear, off 4th Avenue. You can double check about any location change the morning of the scheduled event by calling 447-3589.

