

# AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

November 2005

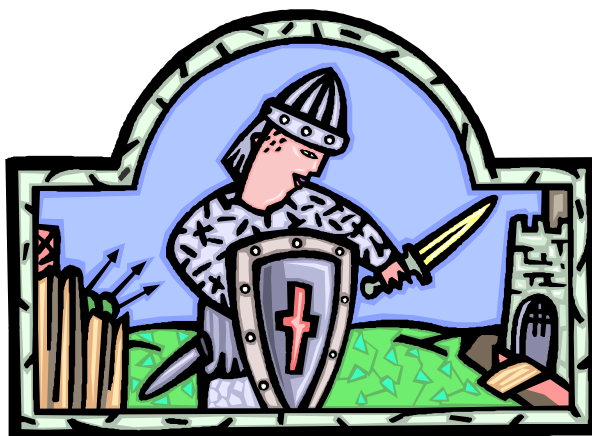
## Sunday, November 11 Religion & Barbarism (Again)

### *Special Points of Interest*

- Dr. Newdow's Road Show (page 1)
- Special Report and Pictorials from the Freethought Day Fair (pages 3-5)
- Report of 10th Anniversary Highway Cleanup (page 6)
- Lobbyist for Nonreligious Hired in DC (page 7)
- Religion in the very air we breathe (page 7)

George W. Bush and Osama have more in common than you might think. And here to tell us the specifics at the November meeting is Arthur Williamson, who teaches history at California State University-Sacramento.

Dr. Williamson's remarks will suggest that a deep sense of political failure underwrites the contemporary religious revival, both here and abroad. He sums up the gist of it when he offered the above title for his presentation, Religion and Barbarism (again), which he subtitled: The Decline of Public Life and the Re-Emergence of Transcendent Religions, 1975-2005." You surely won't want to miss this talk! [Details on page 2]



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## Atheist takes on teaching role; plans "exciting history lesson" for all Newdow's Educational Evening By Carla Corbett

To educate the public about the historical foundation for the "Pledge of Allegiance" case that he argued before the Supreme Court last year, local attorney/ER physician Mike Newdow will be performing "Our Coruscating Constitution" at the Sheldon High School Performing Arts Center in Elk Grove on Tuesday, November 22, 2005. (Yes, I had to look it up: "Coruscate: 1 : to give off or reflect light in bright beams or flashes : sparkle. 2 : to be brilliant or showy in technique or style.")

The performance provides "a joyous celebration of the broad ideals underlying the Constitution" through musical numbers, humor and visuals. Advance reviews promise that "history has never been so entertaining." Though the focus is not on the specifics of Pledge case, there will be a question and answer session afterwards for those wanting to ask about it.

Mike was a featured performer at last year's Freethought Day, where he surprised the crowd with his

(Continued on page 2)

## AOF Line Religion and Barbarism (Again)

As we all are well aware, during the past 30 years religion, in its most traditional and authoritarian forms, has made an extraordinary resurgence. To-day, it increasingly informs the whole of public culture. Why in the world has this happened? What has made these old and often primitive mythologies so compelling? -- and in ways unlike anything since the 1920s, or perhaps even since the 19th century?

Modern science has never been more powerful than it is today, yet it has never been more under attack, or at least not since about 1750.

AOF's speaker in November will argue that the decline of politics after the 1960s and a preoccupation with "identity" provide the key. Integral to the latter is the rise of



strands of thought broadly called "post-modernism."

The speaker on November 13, 2005 is Professor Arthur H. Williamson. He is a Professor of History at CSUS, where he also served as the Dean of Graduate Studies, 1988-91. He has taught at

NYU, the University of Chicago, and Washington University in St. Louis and has lectured in the US, Europe, and the Middle East.

Professor Williamson's main research interest is early modern Europe (16th and 17th centuries), and the origins of modern secular culture. He teaches and lectures extensively on post-war Europe. His most widely-read publication in this area is: "Images of Blood: Ethnic Identity and the Destruction of the Left in Europe and America, 1972-1992."

### Newdow's Educational Evening

(Continued from page 1)

musical talent and wit. As a reviewer in the Oct. 20 *News & Review* stated, "Every time he appears on TV or in the newspaper, he comes off as some sort of atheist sourpuss who just wants to steal the joy of Jesus Christ's love from our children's hearts. Which is weird, because...[he] is actually a total cut-up." His roadshow is "part Schoolhouse Rock and part Raffi for the civil-liberties set."

Newdow is quoted in the same article as saying, "I'm just trying to show that I'm not some maniac out there trying to get God out of society. It's about someone who is trying to fight for equality for everyone, which the Constitution is clearly all about."

Come see why even the more modest version of the show has received rave reviews at this one time only area performance. *Details:* Tuesday, November, 22, 2005, 7 p.m. Sheldon High School Performing Arts Center, 8333 Kingsbridge Drive, Sacramento 95829.

COST: Adults-\$5, Students-\$3. For more information go to: [www.restorethepledge.com](http://www.restorethepledge.com).

Dr. Newdow is seeking volunteers to assist with the event!!! Please contact volunteer coordinator Beverly Church at 916.359.5423 or [bchurchrnc@aol.com](mailto:bchurchrnc@aol.com) if you can help out with telephoning, ushering, setting up refreshments, and other opportunities.

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

### 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](mailto:aofboard@aofonline.org)

## Standing Up for Reason! Freethought Day 2005

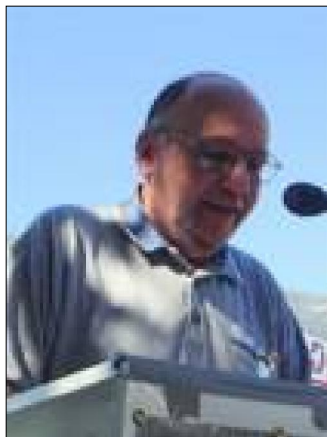
Report by Jerry Bachman

The Fourth Annual Freethought Day celebration was held at charming Waterfront Park in the heart of historic Old Sacramento on Sunday, October 9. The annual event commemorates the end of "spectral evidence" in the 1692 Salem witch trials. But the spirited program was not without its own magic. The audience was spellbound as the many performers mixed a cauldron of joyous entertainment, including inspiring speakers, talented musicians, comedic skits...even a magician and a ventriloquist.

Event Chair Beverly Church energetically opened the program at noon with a warm welcome to the visitors. Mel Lipman, nationally renowned president of the American Humanist Association (AHA), broke the ice with an amusing joke and a poem. To a respectfully silent audience, well-known activist Jerry Sloan read with powerful articulation the Mayoral Proclamation declaring October 9, 2005 as Free-

thought Day in Sacramento.

Don Knudsen, president of AOF, appealed to all to "think of life in an optional capacity." HAGSA president, Bill Potts read from the Humanist Manifesto. Freethought Day had officially begun!



AHA President, Mel Lipman  
— *A Joker can set a mood  
that lasts for a day!* —

Music, magic and mirth reigned in Waterfront Park for the remainder of the afternoon. It was something to behold! Local musical talents lit the air on fire with their original works. Ever-popular Roberta Chevrette's opening song was a passionate reminder to "live each moment for what its worth."

Singer-songwriters Joel Pelletier and James Israel each in turn paid folksy lyrical homage to Freethinkers everywhere. Multi-talented Mynga Futrell led the audience in song with her reinterpretations of classic sing-a-longs enhanced with a refreshingly new perspective of rea-

son. A variety of presentations continued seamlessly throughout the afternoon.

Accomplished magician, Richard Kowaleski mystified the audience with a bag of tricks that defied explanation. Karen Scott from the Interfaith Religious Liberty Foundation reminded us of the history of the American tradition of Church-State separation established by Rhode Island colonist, Roger Williams. Ventriloquist Chris Lindstrom and her friend Derrick talked about Camp Quest, a summer camp that emphasizes critical thinking for kids 8-12. A young mid-town couple who have been harassed for their outspokenness against the war in Iraq shared their shocking experiences in a community that sometimes allows blind patriotism to ignore civil liberty. Local activist, Rena Lowry introduced her young daughter, Brieta, who has been subject to unconscionable discrimination by her public school for being a Freethinker.

Against the backdrop of artist Joel Pelletier's huge painting, *American Fundamentalists*, were many exhib-

*(Continued on page 4)*

### 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 - You Had to Be There!

(Continued from page 3)

its and booths. Popular booths included the Progressive Freethought Exchange, a newly formed Internet social club (represented by Al Ludtke); Sacramento Atheists and Independent Thinkers Alliance, an online think-tank which meets over pizza twice a month (dutifully manned by Brian Jones); and the Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking, a monthly round-table discussion club (headed by husband and wife science writers, Kit Moser and Ray Spangenburg).

Of course, local mainstays, AOF and HAGSA had a potpourri of Freethought merchandise distributed by the usual suspects, Ken Nahigian and Wayne Luney, respectively. Notable participants were the Sacramento County Voter Registration, Kid's Science Center, and various organizations too numerous to mention. There was literally something for everybody.

The non-stop hubbub of well-organized activity was powerfully effective in reaching out to the community. A well-orchestrated *Reason Revival* invited everyone to "Stand up for Reason!" Curious passing tourists gravitated to the booths and activities, happily surprised to discover that a large constituency of positive rationality exists right here in River City.

Thanks to the hard work of all those involved, the success of Freethought Day 2005 demonstrated that the Rational Community is alive and thriving in Sacramento!



(Above) Kevin Schultz can relax now that the planning of FTD is coming to fruition. (Right) Cleo Kocol is happy to help Joy Fisher at the Banned Books table..



(Above) That is a look of satisfaction on the face of Tom Ikelman, who sweated out the setup of the exposition area at FTD (gallery is in background)

## Smiles All Around!



(Above) It looks as if Tom Fields just couldn't be any happier to be here at FTD.



(Middle) Entertainment Chair Carla Corbett and Event Chair Bev Church are pretty satisfied at this point, which happens to be at the very end !

(Right) Jerry Bachman's reading of "religious liberty quotations from history" help reinforce the rationale.

(Far right) Busy at their job of regulating the sound system for the stage are Kevin Schultz and David Henderson.

(Lower left) Zazee Stanley and Mike Davis in a relaxed pose.



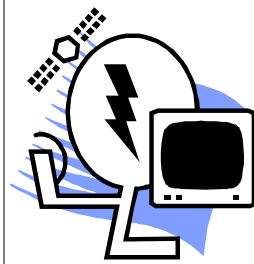
## Some Serious Stuff, Too !

(Above) Liam McDaid is a skeptic who turns out to be a staunch FTD supporter.





(Left) Rena Lowry in skit (A TV Interview with Ms. Wollstonecraft) in which Rena plays the disparaged "hyena in petticoats." (Above) Chris Lindstrom (ventriloquist from San Jose) and her buddy, "Derrick."



Friday  
Nov. 18  
7 PM

## Movie Night at Bev's

### "The Contender"

Running Time: 126 minutes

Sen. Laine Hanson (Joan Allen) is nominated to be America's first female vice president. Right-wing powerhouse Gary Oldman seizes on a 20-year-old sex scandal to discredit her. Hanson refuses to confirm or deny the accusation, sending Washington, D.C., into a high-stakes crisis. The first-rate cast includes Christian Slater, Sam Elliott and Jeff Bridges as a refreshingly opportunistic (and believable) president.

#### Directions to Movie Night

The film will be shown at the home of Beverly Church, 24 Adkinson Court, North Natomas. Her phone number is 916-359-5423

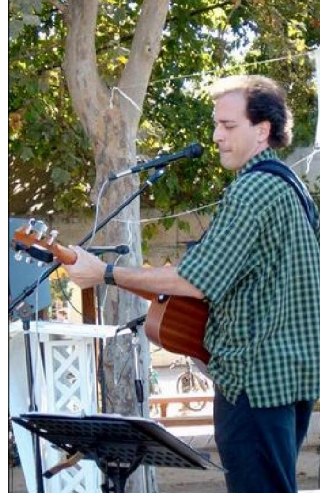
*Note: The host can better plan for the number of guests if each person who plans to go will phone a couple of days ahead of time. (If you decide at the last minute, though, feel free to come ahead; bring your favorite microwave popcorn and beverage.)*

## Much Variety in Entertainment



(Left) Roberta Chevrette is a favorite of the AOFers who have heard her.

(Right) Joel Pelletier proves himself to be an artist in more ways than one!



(Below left) Ruth Rezos and Ken Nahigian play the tune that is the theme of this year's Freethought Day.

(Below right) The "Reason Revivalists" belt out their theme song: Sister Carla Corbett (tambourine), Sister Ruth and Brother Ken (recorders), Sister Mynga (tenor guitar), and Brother Paul (scientific authority)

## Time to Stand Up For Reason !



# 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.

We can arrange to deliver your monthly newsletter electronically via the e-mail address you print above. Please check the mode you prefer.    ☐ E-mail    ☐ Postal mail

## Ten Years of Highway Cleanup by AOFers

By Don Knutson

A bright and windy Sunday morning and a filthy highway greeted 9 AOF volunteers as we gathered for the umpteenth time to affirm our commitment to our stretch of Cal-Trans Adopt-A-Highway on Highway 99 north of Elkhorn Blvd. But this time was special because it marked the 10th year to the month that Hank Kocol had led an AOF crew to first begin this venture.

Old, crusty and grizzled AOF veterans like Mynga Futrell, Paul Geisert, Michael House, Don Knutson, Ken Nahigian and Kevin Schultz were joined by newcomers-to-the-wars, Carla Corbett and Debra and Richard Prowse at the Elkhorn Park & Ride to enjoy a breakfast prepared by Carla in observance of the special day.

But before we could pack up and address the task at hand, a

writer and photographer from the *Sacramento Bee* arrived to query us as to why AOF could have endured for such a period. I told them that correcting the wrongs or shortcomings of humankind or nature is the purpose of charity work, and AOF is among other things a charitable organization. Paul emphasized that a person doesn't need a deity in order to be to be an advocate of the well-being of society.

The reporters stuck with us for the first hour of our work as we hit the road so expect an article may be

forthcoming, decrying the gradual increase of trash along California's highways in recent years. Likely, it will include pictures and descriptions of our work.

Ultimately, the wind affected our efficiency but we still col-

lected some 30 bagfuls of trash. Much remained to be collected, however.

We will return Sunday, December 4 @ 8 a.m. to try to do a thorough cleanup so that the wildlife which inhabits the area can be relatively free of debris during the coming winter months.



Ken samples Carla's pre-pickup spread 10 years! - Can you believe it?  
(The wind was notably pumped up for the occasion!)

### AOF Board Meeting Summary

October 23, 2005  
Home of Carla Corbett

Motion made by Ken to approve the September minutes with corrections, seconded by Carla.

Treasury report approved by consensus.

Board agreed by consensus to continue supporting Davis Dinner Community Meals Project in 2006

Board agreed by consensus to visit Coloma Community Auditorium at 4623 T Street on Friday, October 28 @ 16:00 (4:00PM) to evaluate the room as a meeting location.

Next meeting: Sunday, November 20, 2005, 09:30, at the home of Beverly Church.



## Lobbyist for Nonreligious Hired by SCA

The Secular Coalition for America has appointed Lori Lipman Brown as its first director and lobbyist in Washington DC. Organized in 2002 as the first full-time lobbying organization for Atheists, the Secular Coalition for America works to increase the visibility of nontheistic viewpoints and to strengthen secular government as the best guarantee of freedom for all.

Brown will direct the Coalition's activities and lobby Congress on separation of religion and civil law.

As a Nevada State Senator from 1992 to 1994, Brown built a strong legislative record in public education, mental health care and the

repeal of consensual sex crimes. She has been a frequent political commentator on television and radio and a regular columnist in print media. A former private practice lawyer, she also taught law at the University of Phoenix.

"I am delighted that Lori Lipman Brown is our first director/lobbyist," said Herb Silverman, president of the Secular Coalition for America. "Bias against nonbelievers is the last civil rights struggle in which blatant discrimination by politicians is viewed as acceptable behavior. That is about to change."

See [www.secular.org](http://www.secular.org) for more info.

### Newsletter Submissions

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

[frethnkr@mindspring.com](mailto: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

In 2006 it will be 200 years since Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery made their epic journey.

During the two years they were gone from "civilization" both Lewis and Clark kept journals of their expedition, and in an age when we hear "Thank God" often, the absence of religious expression in their writing is refreshing. It is not surprising in an era when many of the founding fathers were deists. Before Lewis went west, he was Jefferson's personal secretary.

Today, I'm sure, when Sgt. Floyd died on the trail, a deity would have been mentioned. But it was merely noted that "we buried him with the

honors of war." Again, when they were suffering through the winter at Ft. Clatsop in Oregon, we find the only direct mention of Christianity. They noted that Christmas was the nativity of Jesus and if they had had anything to fix they might have feasted. As it was they ate spoiled elk, spoiled fish and roots.

Today it takes travel in other countries to make us realize the huge intrusion of religion into our everyday lives. Religious expression blares from radios and television, is scripted into television plays and movies, is part of politics and is trying to infiltrate our schools.

No other country, even those with a state religion, has religion "attacking" one's sensibilities so blatantly as evangelical Christianity does today in the United States.

### AOF President's Thoughts



It's my strong presidential opinion that our Freethought Day is pretty darned neat! There'll be another one in 2006. You won't want to miss it!

### 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

We're on the Web!

[www.rthoughtsrfree.org/aof.htm](http://www.rthoughtsrfree.org/aof.htm)

## November Calendar of Events

AOF General Meeting	Sunday, November 13, 2:30 - 5 PM
Movie Social (see p. 5)	Friday, November 18, 7 PM
AOF Board meeting	Sunday, November 20, 9:30 AM
AOF's Highway Cleanup	Sunday, December 4, 8 - 10 AM
AOF General Meeting	Sunday, December 11, 2:30 - 5 PM
Winter Holiday Party	Sunday, December 18 (Time TBA)

*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 education events: (1) an outdoor fair in October - "Sacramento's Freethought Day" (10/8/05), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (2/12/06). Watch the newsletter for details.*

### 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 (repeat for clarity) and someone will phone back to answer your questions about AOF.

