

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

December 2008

Special Points of Interest

HumanLight/Winter Solstice Potluck (page 1)

AOF Dues Changing Effective Jan 1 (page 2)

Mynga Futrell Receives Prestigious AAI Award (page 3)

"Selling Satan" by Ken Nahigian (page 4)

Regional Author Requests (Tax-Deductible) Financial Help to Complete Work (page 5)

AOF Business Meeting Recap (page 6)

Save the Date! Darwin Day 2009 Hosts Michael Shermer (page 7)

Sunday, December 14, 1:30—4:00 PM AOF Soapbox Social (A Potluck Lunch and a Not-So-Silent Auction)

Do not miss December 14th annual fundraiser meeting. Plan on relaxing, getting to know some other members, enjoying the auction items and food. Please, plan on bringing and buying. Your jobs?

1. Bring some interesting media (books, tapes, CD's and so forth, that you enjoyed, but can now part with. Think of absolute minimum prices that should be accepted for your items, and what you can say about them to sell them. They do not have to be free-thought related. Non-media that is of value and small can be accepted, but please do not bring "garage sale junk". A chance at the 'mic' will be provided to all, to comment on auction items to increase interest and sale prices (a very short review or rave).
2. Bring a dish for the potluck. This may be a true "potluck". But, if you wish to try to coordinate what you will bring, call Nancy at 916-974-7922. The more that call, the better variety of foods we may get.
3. Bring your wallet. This is, after all, our only annual fundraiser. Keep AOF going and

(Continued on page 3)

Standard Fare

AOF Line 2

Adopt-A-Highway 2

Membership Form 6

AOF Upcoming Events 8

Sunday, December 21, 12:00 - 4:00 p.m. HumanLight/Winter Solstice Potluck

Where: Southside Park Cohousing's Community Room, southwest corner of T Street and 5th Avenue, Sacramento. The Common House is within the complex.

When: Sunday, December 21, 12:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Why: Because we like you!

How: Admission is free. Bring a dish to share or come empty-handed and share your time.

What (shamelessly grabbed from Wikipedia, "The Free Encyclopedia"):

HumanLight is a Humanist winter holiday celebrated in late December of each year. HumanLight was established by the New Jersey Humanist Net-

(Continued on page 7)

Member Dues Changing Jan 1 AOF Line By Ken Nahigian

Change is coming. On Jan 1, 2009, AOF will have new membership and newsletter subscription rates. And for some, fees will actually decrease.

In a nutshell, basic per-year membership levels will be the same (\$10 low-income, \$20 individual, \$30 family, \$50 patron) but will no longer include a newsletter subscription.

A newsletter subscription will be **\$12 per year** for mailed hardcopy, **free** for the electronic version.

Non-members may still subscribe, of course. To be an "e-subscriber," you must provide an email address. And you can still join, renew or subscribe via the AOF website, link <http://www.aofonline.org/support>.

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

In all cases, AOF will continue to accept membership and subscription renewals at the old rate until Jan 1st. So to save big bucks, check your mailing label, renew or extend your membership *now*.



Nine AOF volunteers hit the highway November 8 to carry out our cleanup of the two-mile stretch of Highway 99 north of Elkhorn Blvd we've been cleaning for 13 years: **Don Knutson, Robert Poeschel and Richard & Debbie Prowse** were joined by newcomers, **John Harrington, Anne Jeanette Harris, Wendy Hoffspiegel, Carolyn Llanos and Nick Johnson**. Despite a filthy highway, Robert, as usual, found money amongst the debris, turning in a five-dollar bill which went into the AOF Treasury. Volunteers apprehended 25 bags of refuse, saving it from reaching various California tributaries. Special commendation goes to Debbie & Richard Prowse for the use of their van. Next clean-up: **Saturday, January 10, 8 a.m. —Don Knutson**

AOF Board (2007-2008)

President: Paul Storey

Vice President: Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Nancy Gilbert

Treasurer: Ken Nahigian

Directors at large:

Don Knutson, Kevin Schultz,

Debora Smith, (two vacancies)

AOF Committees

Newsletter: Kevin Schultz (Editor)

Tom Nicolette (Mailing)

Freethought Day, Oct. 5, 2008

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

Darwin Day, Feb. 15, 2009:

Bronda Silva, Mynga Futrell,

Dave Henderson, Ed McConnell,

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: Mynga Futrell, Ken

Nahigian, Betty Simonsma

AOF's Voluntariat

Affiliation Liaisons:

Mynga Futrell, Kay Dickey (AAI)

Hank Kocol (CSH)

Kevin Schultz (AA)

Beverly Church (AHA/HAGSA)

Community Service Projects:

Don Knutson

Internet Website: Kevin Schultz

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

ISSN: 1936-4229

AOF BloodSource ID#: 4857

AOF Federal Tax ID#: 68-0325762

International "World of Thanks" Award AAI's Award Goes to Mynga Futrell



AOF member Mynga Futrell has received the international "World of Thanks" award. This award is presented each year by the Atheist Alliance International to the person whose contributions have taken the organization in a positive direction. Mynga, a science educator and instructional developer, was given the acknowledgment and appreciation for her work in promoting civic pluralism and worldview education. She has served on AAI's Council for 5 years and headed its education committee for 6 years.

Her award was bestowed on the Queen Mary in Long Beach at the annual Atheist Alliance International convention (September 28). In her acceptance talk, Mynga emphasized: "We need to learn to be modern change agents."

We do this by substituting some serious pragmatism for our atheist piety."

Here are excerpts from the press announcement:

"Dr. Futrell's recent work includes developing religion-neutral web-based resources for public school educators. She is also the lead curriculum developer for www.teachingaboutreligion.org ("Worldview Education: Teaching about Religion with a View to Diversity), a religion-neutral professional web resource for social studies educators.

Her materials engender a neutral and academic manner of teaching, thereby aiding educators as they approach oft-touchy subject matter with objectivity, accuracy, and balance, and in ways that are constitutionally sound.

Dr. Futrell sits on the board of a number of nonprofit organizations, including the American Humanist Association, and is the national advisory board of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the local Sacramento planning group for Alzheimer's Education Conference, is the originator of the concept of Sacramento's Freethought Day.

In the educational field, Dr. Futrell is on the national advisory council of the California 3Rs (rights, respect, responsibility) religious liberty project for teachers initiated by the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center.

This month her curriculum materials for "Teaching about Religion with a View to Diversity" were implemented in the public schools of Australia. They have been available to U.S. teachers for eight years."

(Continued from page 1)

improving. Channel your seasonal generosity into support for AOF. This could be a great chance to acquire interesting media or items, build our community by letting others get to know you, and support AOF in the process. Now, practice the mantra: "Bring and buy"!

The "soapbox" part: after all the pitches for items for sale, the 'mic' will pass around to those of you who wish to express your love for AOF, well, maybe for your suggestions for its future, how you want to see it evolve, for your own preferences, and for its contribution to acceptance of atheists in the community. Please keep it related specifically to AOF. We will try to limit each by the amount of time left. Of course, you could also continue afterwards at CrêpeVille over a drink. — Nancy Gilbert

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.

AOF News & Views: Copyright © 2008 by Atheists and Other Freethinkers, PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182. The contents of News & Views are informational and educational. Views expressed via the articles in this publication are not necessarily those of Atheists and Other Freethinkers.

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.

Historical Figure Series

Selling Satan

By Ken Nahigian

Little Howard Stanton Levey did not grow up to be a textbook Satanist—or if Satanists have a text, he forgot to study. He did not believe in the Devil or God. He took no stock in magic. But he grew a sharp mind, a glib tongue, a marketer's eye, a conman's grasp of human nature; and he learned to exploit it. When he found his niche, he knew.

His parents were Michael Levey and Gertrude Coultron. After Howard was born (April 11, 1930), the family moved from Chicago to the San Francisco area, then to Globe, Arizona. His official biography says he left high school to join a circus and carnivals, working first as a roustabout and cage boy, later as a calliope player, and stinting as an organist in nightclubs, lounges and bars. Much of this may be myth, since Howard could be cagey and contradictory about his past. But his story of seeing the same men repeatedly attend the bawdy late-night Saturday shows and the Sunday morning tent revivals, reinforcing a cynical view of religion and people, rings true. It was a view he much enjoyed; he knew he could use it.

Moving back to San Francisco in 1951, he married Carol Lansing, a banker's daughter, 15 years old, and adopted the name Anton Szandor LaVey.

Here he supposedly took Criminology courses to work as a police photographer (anecdotally with badge number 666). As a lounge organist and self-styled paranormalist, he worked up some celebrity, hobnobbing with local notables—writers Fritz Leiber and Forrest J. Ackerman among them, and also Jack Parsons, the Cal Tech rocket researcher and occultist who played a role in the founding of Scientology.

Again: you can sprinkle salt on any of this. But from here on, the smoke clears a bit.

In 1952 he sired a daughter, Karla. In 1954 he began giving weekly lectures on arcane topics, forming a group called "The Magic Circle." In 1960 his wife,

"tired of the eccentricities of my husband," divorced him. In 1962 he married again, Diane Hegarty, 17 years old and "explosive." 1963 brought a second daughter, Zeena. By 1966, with Circle membership growing, LaVey knew he was on to something, something that could be profitable and also a platform for his views. So on April 30, *Walpurgisnacht*, he announced the formation of the First Church of Satan.

Another tale: His wife gave him a bad haircut for the event. So he shaved his head, liked the look, and kept it.



"Let us be honest There is no God ... no deity who gives a damn about the fortunes of man. There is no Heaven, there is no Hell, except here on Earth. There is only one redeemer: Your own mind, body, and spirit. *The Satanic Age is upon us. Admit it, take advantage of it and LIVE, which is evil spelled backwards.*" —Anton LaVey (1930-1997)

1966 was Year One, *Anno Satanas*, the year of media orgy. The *Los Angeles Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle* dubbed him "The Black Pope." Painting his house black and a smoky purple, outfitting it with secret passages, LaVey was soon hosting weekly Satanic masses there, as well as baptisms, weddings, even funerals. He even released a record album, *The Satanic Mass*.

LaVey's take on Satanism was a mash of writers he admired: Ayn Rand, Wilhelm Reich, Friedrich Nietzsche, Aleister Crowley, H.L. Mencken and Jack London, all sprinkled with occult argot from H.P. Lovecraft, the English occultist John Dee, and 17th century grimoires such as the *Ars Goetia* and the *Grimoirium Verum*. His breakout testament,

in 1969, was *The Satanic Bible*, followed by *The Satanic Rituals* in 1972 (both mass-market sellers, still in print). In all he put out five books and several "satanic" record albums. He would admit, offhand, that the magic bits were just a kind of psychodrama to help church members build (or feed) their egos.

The public was scandalized. But seeing names of fictional entities such as Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth and Nyarlathotep, horror/fantasy fans sensed LaVey winking slyly at them behind the page.

Over three decades, LaVey crafted a meticulous personal mythology for the tabloids, for mainline journals such as

(Continued on page 5)

Tax-Deductible Donations Are Win-Win

“The Ten Thousand Christs and the Evaporating Jesus” Author Requests Financial Help

By David Fitzgerald



Financial Assistance Needed to Complete Book

Everyone at AOF has been wonderfully supportive of my forthcoming book "The Ten Thousand Christs and the Evaporating Jesus". In fact, it's the enthusiasm and excitement of my extended atheist family that's kept me sane throughout the long, grueling process of researching, writing, re-writing, pitching it, and dealing with prospective publishers. I'm humbly hoping AOF can help me again. In July, I finished the second draft and my agent submitted it to the most interested publishers in New York. The most recent feedback from editors is that the 700+ page manuscript is just too big for a single book, and they want me to break it up into two smaller volumes. For most of this year I have been living off savings and doing odd temp jobs in order to work on the book full time. But now I need funds to keep paying rent while I'm doing the re-write and inevitable follow-up work. I don't know what your group's financial status is, but if you think you can, I'm asking individuals and organizations if they would consider donating \$1000, \$100, or whatever they can afford. I've partnered with Atheists United of Los Angeles so I can offer a full tax-deduction to donors (details below), so hopefully it's a win-win for everybody. On top of that, there are free books & DVDs, as well as the satisfaction of helping bring these ideas to the public. Maybe we really can change the world with this book! What do you say? Thanks, all! Sincerely, -David Fitzgerald P.S. Eleanor Roosevelt said "Do something every day that scares you". You know, asking people for money is surprisingly hard and scary....

How to Contribute Tax-Deductible Assistance to Dave

To get a tax deduction, please mail your check, made out to Atheists United, with "David Fitzgerald RESEARCH GRANT" written in the memo line of the check, to: Atheists United, 4773 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027 NOTE: To help flag the donation and earmark it for the grant, please add seven cents (\$0.07) to the total. Atheists United will also e-mail and snail mail a confirmation notice of your tax-deductible donation for your tax records. All donor information will be kept confidential. Donors for this project will be eligible to receive up to two free copies of the book that is published from this project if they donate more than \$250, or five free copies of the book if they donate more than \$500. (Alternately, donors can also make their donation by PayPal or Credit Card on the [Atheists United.org](http://AtheistsUnited.org) website, but since they take out a 3% bite, so I encourage donors to send a check instead) And if you don't need a tax break and want to just send a check directly to me, please feel free! Here is the address: **David Fitzgerald 2527 44th Ave San Francisco, CA 94116-2634**. E-mail: everybodylovesdave@gmail.com Thank you for your support!

(Continued from page 4)

Look, McCall's, Newsweek and Time, and ultimately for himself. He appeared on talk shows: Joe Pyne, Phil Donahue, Johnny Carson. He starred in a documentary. A showy cynicism and dark humor buoyed his popularity, or infamy—to him, it was all one.

LaVey did not bother to seek a tax exemption for his Church; he figured, religion was a business, why not run it as such? In fact, membership probably peaked at a few thousand (or only 300 by one report). Among “converts” were rock stars such as King Diamond and Marilyn Manson. A sly LaVey even convinced celebrities such as Sammy Davis Jr., Mia Farrow, and Jane Mansfield to pose with him for publicity shots.

But behind the surety and dark elegance was a proneness to mood swings, rages and tantrums. LaVey had allowed church chapters, or “grottoes,” which led to schisms (one follower defected to found the Temple of Set, a rival cult), so he angrily disbanded them. In 1986 an ugly, protracted divorce began; eventually LaVey had to file for bankruptcy and surrender his house. His ex-wife and daughter later related how he had mistreated his family and disciples, and abused his pets.

The Church survived, but income fell. By the 1990's, LaVey was living on public aid and handouts from friends. On October 29, 1997, aged sixty-seven, he died of heart failure. (Someone later forged a false death-date on his certificate of Oct 31, All Hallows Eve.)

At a news conference after the funeral, his daughter Karla had these words: "He said his epitaph should be 'I only regret the times I was too nice.'" How often was that? One wonders.

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 (e-mail address required).

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

Bylaws Amended, 2009 Board Elections Held

AOF Annual Business Meeting Recap

By Kevin Schultz

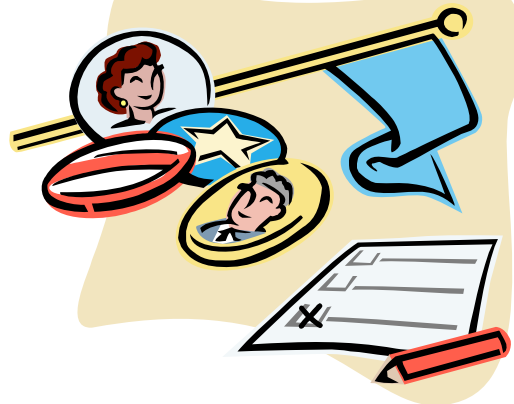
AOF members in attendance at AOF's annual business meeting (held after the November general meeting) took action on two issues:

1. Approved proposed bylaws amendment:

"To put to a vote of the general membership to strike the final sentence from Article 3, Section 4 of the amended bylaws, which states, 'No director shall serve more than three consecutive years.' The 2009 BoD will develop an alternative term limit plan, which will be brought for a vote before next year's election."

2. Selected nine directors for 2009 (listed in alphabetical order):

1. Steve Campbell
2. Bev Church
3. Rena Davonne
4. Mynga Futrell
5. Tom Nicolette
6. Don Knutson
7. Ken Nahigian
8. Debora Smith
9. Jillian Stanley



The above nine directors will select officers for 2009 at the December 17 AOF board meeting. The 2009 AOF board takes office effective Jan 1.

Thanks to everyone who participated.

(Continued from page 1)

work in 2001 to provide a specifically Humanist seasonal celebration.

Humanists have cast HumanLight as a celebration of "a Humanist's vision of a good future." They celebrate a positive approach to the coming new year, generally through the lens of Humanist (and particularly secular humanist) philosophy—secular as opposed to religious, and with an emphasis on reason, compassion and hope. The December 23 date allows HumanLight to connect itself to the December holiday season without interfering with other winter holidays which many Humanists may also celebrate.



Winter Solstice: The winter solstice occurs at the instant when the Sun's position in the sky is at its greatest angular distance on the other side of the equatorial plane from the observer. Depending on the shift of the calendar, the event of the winter solstice occurs some time between December 20 and December 23 each year in the northern hemisphere, and between June 20 and June 23 in the southern hemisphere, during either the shortest day or the longest night of the year, which is not to be confused with the darkest day or night or the day with the earliest sunset or latest sunrise. Winter is a subjective term, so there is no scientifically established beginning or middle of winter but the winter solstice itself is clearly calculated to within a second. Worldwide, interpretation of the event has varied from culture to culture, but most cultures have held a recognition of rebirth, involving holidays, festivals, gatherings, rituals or other celebrations around that time. —Kevin Schultz

Save the Date! February 8, 2009—Can you help? Darwin Day 2009: Michael Shermer By Nancy Gilbert

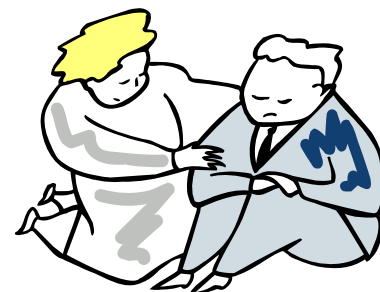
Mr. Shermer is a regular columnist for Scientific American, the publisher of Skeptic Magazine, and author of numerous books.

The freethought community again brings us this festive gathering with refreshments, including the birthday cake, displays and literature from many groups, interesting science-related merchandise, a friendly crowd, AND a great guest speaker.

Last year, the audience was captivated by Seth Shostak, astronomer, of the SETI Institute, an exciting and charming speaker, even for those not into astronomy. We expect Michael Shermer to be a great speaker, also.

Tickets go on sale in December or January. Watch for time, place, and ticket info at <http://HAGSA.org> and click on "Darwin Day".

Freethought community members: Please volunteer to help put this on. Contact Mynga at CKProfessional@aol.com or Bev at BchurchRNC@aol.com. Go ahead and send this notice on to friends and family, or post it, removing this last paragraph.



Do you have any info that you'd like to share with the AOF membership?

Please submit items to:

newsletter@aofonline.org and specify in the e-mail that you'd like to announce the information in the Family News section. **Thanks!**

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!

Want the latest AOF board minutes?
E-mail aofboard@aofonline.org





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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

December Calendar of Events

AOF Dinner Social, Thai Basil, 2431 J Street;
RSVP to shastaseer@sbcglobal.net or 419-2105

Thursday, Dec 4, 5:30 p.m.

**December General Meeting: Soapbox Social (Potluck
and Not-So-Silent Auction)**

Sunday, Dec 14, 1:30 - 4:00 p.m.

HumanLight/Winter Solstice Potluck

Sunday, Dec 21, 12:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Davis Community Meals

Tuesday, Dec 30, 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

AOF meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the second Sunday of the month, from 1:30 - 4 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" (Oct 2009), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (2009-02-08). 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.

