

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

June 2009

Special Points of Interest

Summer Sizzler Returns!
(page 1)

A Gaping Chasm, by
Mynga Futrell (page 2)

Darwin Day Comedian
Brian Malow Returns to
UC-Davis June 1 (page
3)

The Rainbow Man, by
Ken Nahigian (page 4)

AOF Bowling Team Con-
tinues (page 7)

Sunday, June 14, 1:30-4:00PM Author and Historian Richard Carrier Discusses His New Book



AOF is very pleased to be hosting historian and atheist philosopher Richard Carrier at our June 14 meeting. He will be traveling from San Francisco to talk to us about his new book, *Not the Impossible Faith: Why Christianity Didn't Need a Miracle to Succeed*. Dr. Carrier describes his talk as “an amusing tour of my latest book, which exposes the lousy scholarship and probable dishonesty of the infamous online Christian apologist J.P. Holding. In the process, you’ll learn all kinds of useful and interesting things about the ancient world and the earliest Christians, and why their religion was a natural success—all contradicting Holding’s book, *The Impossible Faith*, which argued Christianity was so badly conceived it could never have succeeded unless it had irrefutable proof that Jesus had risen from the dead. Poppycock! There will also be some sidelines on J.P. Holding and Christian apologetics in general, beyond the treatment of the book.”

(Continued on page 3)

Standard Fare

Membership Form 6

AOF Family News 6

AOF Upcoming Events 8

Hot Speeches + Cool Eats to Beat Summer's Heat Save the Date! AOF Summer Sizzler Coming Back: August 9th

HOT MINI-SPEECHES! (whatever is topmost in members' minds)

COOL FOOD TOO! (a potluck of salads, beverages, and desserts).

All this, and jovial camaraderie, are to be found at AOF's August meeting! This annual event promises to fill your belly and excite your brain.



(Continued on page 5)

Neutrality in Public Education

A Gaping Chasm

By Mynga Futrell

Public schools, like any governmental entity, are supposed to be impartial with respect to the array of belief systems present in America's diverse landscape.

The schools are *not to privilege* any religion, no matter how widespread or influential it may be. This means treating religion in curricula with academic accuracy and detachment. It means teachers being impartial regarding the various beliefs they may encounter in their students.

The idea that schools are not to privilege one religion over another grows out of the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court since 1947. That was the year the Court first set forth the *neutrality concept* (in the case of *Everson v. Board of Education*), and that concept has since been the criterion of settling court cases on the relationship of religion to government and to the public schools.

In general, public school administrators and teachers know about their legal responsibility to be neutral. Of course there are those who fail to take this responsibility to heart. (Exceptions are usually where one religion holds strong sway in a homogeneous community.)

What teachers often don't know about, however, is another pairing that derived from *Everson*: the one between "faith and no faith." Public schools are expected to be *neutral* there, too. That is, just as the schools are not to privilege any religion over another, they aren't to privilege religion generally over nonreligion either.

To teachers, this necessity for religion/nonreligion neutrality can be, and frequently is, a startling and disquieting notion!

The constitutional guarantee of religious freedom for "all faiths or none" presents an unmistakable chasm for many teachers. Why? Because there's a yawning cultural gap that rests right at the "or" in that phrase.

The "faith/no faith" fissure in society is robust. Frankly, it's not an easy crevice for educators to bridge.

The legal and social ideal may be neutrality, but the linguistic and cultural terrain on the two sides is simply *not* the same. And a teacher will typically live on one side or other of that chasm. (*Part 3 in this mini-series will focus on the terrain on either side.*)

 "A Gaping Chasm" is the second in a series of mini-commentaries on society and education by Mynga Futrell, Ph.D., director of OABITAR (*Objectivity, Accuracy, and Balance In Teaching About Religion*). They are adapted from an article published in the quarterly of the California 3Rs (*Rights, Respect, Responsibility*) Religious Liberty Project in May 2008.

AOF Board (2009)

President: Beverly Church

Board Chair: Don Knutson

Vice President: Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Jillian Stanley

Treasurer: Ken Nahigian

Directors at large:

Steve Campbell, Tom Nicolette,

Debora Smith, Jillian Stanley

AOF Committees

Want to serve AOF? Volunteer to a team! You can contact the chair of any of these at aofboard@aofonline.org or phone AOF's voice-mail at 916-447-3589 and ask for a return call to discuss your interests.

Program Planning (Debora Smith, Chair)

Meeting Matters/Logistics (Tom Nicolette, Chair)

Social Activities (Vacancy—We Need You!)

Members (Ken Nahigian, Chair)

Freethought Friends (Jillian Stanley, Chair)

Outreach and Recruiting (Steve Campbell, Chair)

Communications (Bev Church, Chair)

Education, Activism, and Service (Mynga Futrell & Don Knutson, Co-Chairs)

AOF's Voluntariat

Newsletter: Kevin Schultz (Editor)
Tom Nicolette (Mailing)

Affiliation Liaisons:

Mynga Futrell (AAI) Hank Kocol (CSH), Kevin Schultz (AA), Beverly Church (AHA/HAGSA)

Community Service Projects:

Don Knutson

Internet Website: Kevin Schultz, 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

AOF Voice Mail: 916-447-3589

UC-Davis AGASA Group Hosts Event Monday, June 1, 8:30 p.m.: Science Comedian Brian Malow on “Rational Comedy For an Irrational Planet”

By Catalina Chao

On Monday, June 1, science comedian Brian Malow will present a one-man comedy show at UC-Davis.

Billed as “An evening of science-flavored stand-up from Brian Malow, Earth’s premier science comedian,” the event is sponsored by the Agnostic and Atheist Student Association (AGASA) of UC Davis.

Tickets are \$6 via pre-sale, and \$8 at the door.

The event will be held at the UC-Davis Varsity Theater, 616 Second Street, in downtown Davis.

For directions and other questions, please call the theatre directly at



(530)758-5264. If no one answers, please leave a message at the tone, or call back during business hours.

For fastest response email at staff@thedavisvarsity.com.

The AGASA group is accepting donations to help offset the cost of Mr. Malow’s speaker fees. To help underwrite this event, please contact the AOF board at 916-447-3589, or

AOF Program Continuation

(Continued from page 1)

Dr. Carrier is a graduate of UC Berkeley and Columbia University, and is the author of *Sense and Goodness without God*, and a contributor to *The Empty Tomb*, and has authored numerous monographs and articles on religious history, the origins of Christianity, and the defense of naturalism. He is on the advisory board of Internet Infidels, an educational organization which owns and maintains the Secular Web, “the most comprehensive freethought resource on the Internet,” for the purpose of promoting the naturalistic worldview. He gives his time generously to the freethought community, such as his appearance at Camp Quest West to do a presentation on how the scientific method can be applied to the field of history. He is an experienced debater on a number of topics, and was interviewed in *The God Who Wasn’t There*, a documentary questioning the historical existence of Jesus.

Mark your calendars for what is sure to be an interesting and informative program. Dr. Carrier will have copies of his new book available for purchase after the meeting.

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 of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.

AOF News & Views: Copyright © 2009 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.

Print subscription \$12 per year, e-mail subscription free to all on request.

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 Figures Series

The Rainbow Man

By Ken Nahigian

Rollen F. Stewart did love Jesus, at first with a modest, low-key, church-on-Sundays love. But when life took a bad turn, the love grew madder, deeper, more frenetic; and it got tangled with a hunger for attention, a desperate drive and a mutant hysteria that showered pinwheel sparks and left scorches all around him. For Rollen, it was a very bad mix.

Born in Spokane, WA, in 1945, he had a troubled childhood. His parents were alcoholics. His father died when he was seven, his mother died in a house fire when he was 15; his sister died, strangled by her boyfriend, the same year. He grew into a shy, subdued man, prone to moods. When he married his first love and opened a racing shop, his fortunes seemed to change. But she left him. Devastated, Rollen sold the shop and moved to a mountain ranch to farm marijuana, try to grow the world's longest mustache, and watch television. *Lots* of television.

TV gave him ideas. At some point he decided to find fame by donning a loincloth and rainbow-Afro wig, and popping up at televised sporting events. His plan was to parlay notoriety into a commercial career and riches. Rollen worked at it for four years. But beyond a brief spot in one Anheuser-Busch commercial, and a few token party gigs, it didn't happen.

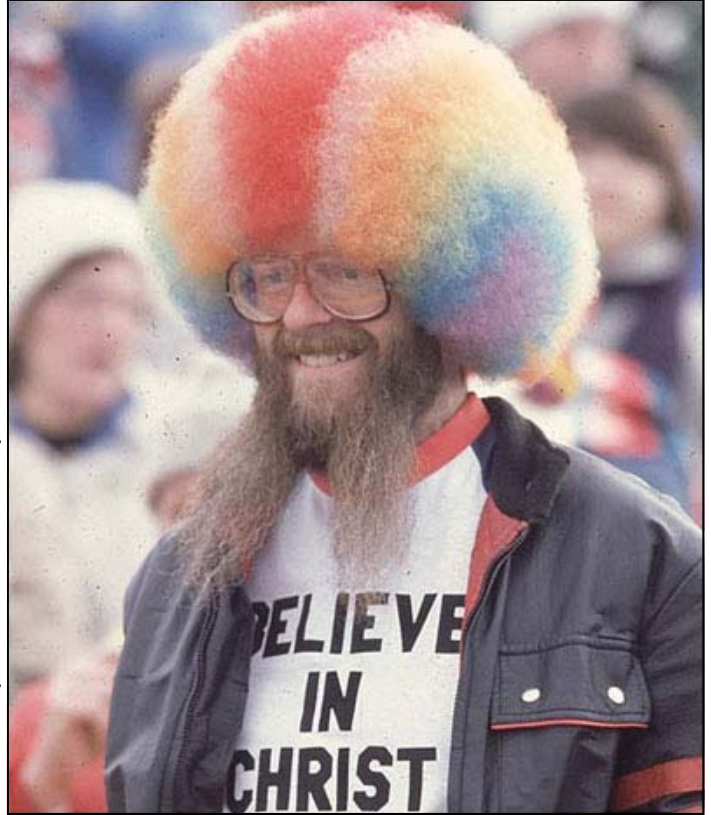
Instead he became a figure of fun. The 1980 Super Bowl in Pasadena was a sea change. "I had gone in my fur loincloth and wig," as he wrote later. "The girls loved it. Everywhere I walked, they were patting my butt. I could have held a thousand women in my arms that day, yet I walked out of there sad. It was the shallowness. I was being seen

all over the world, but never as myself."

That night in his hotel room, watching a televangelist show, he found his epiphany. "I fell to my knees there in that room and allowed Jesus to take control of my life..."

And so, driven by Jesus, subsisting on donations, a meal a day and massive doses of pot, Rollen began his mission. He hit an average of twelve sporting events per month. Gone was the loincloth, gone the goofy and raucous antics. But he kept the rainbow wig and chrome-bright manic grin, and he added new accoutrements: T-shirts blazoned with Christian mottos, and placards reading JOHN 3:16 ("For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life").

The Rainbow Man or "Rockin' Rollen" Stewart, as he was soon known, drove up to 50,000 miles a year to pop up at baseball and football games, golf tourneys, the Olympics, the Indy 500, the Kentucky Derby, NBA and NCAA basketball finals, the Stanley Cup, political conventions, even the wedding of Princess Di and Prince Charles. He refined



Rollen F. Stewart at a sporting event after his epiphany.

techniques for grabbing the television limelight. Fame grew, of a sort. Shows such as "Saturday Night Live", "St. Elsewhere" and "The Tonight Show" featured caricatures of him; cartoonist Charles Shultz even put him in a "Peanuts" comic strip. Officials came to regard Rollen as a pest, often sending security guards to eject him.

In 1984, in Virginia, he met Margaret Hockridge, a school teacher. She was in awe. The couple married in St. Louis ten months later. She wore mauve, he a JESUS IS COMING t-shirt. Together they continued the blitzkrieg for God.

But his instability, the crests and
(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

troughs of mania and despair, soon wore on Margaret. At the 1986 World Series, when she stood in the wrong spot with her placard, an enraged Rollen tried to choke her. By 1990 she had filed for divorce. Rollen began an emotional freefall.

To draw more attention, he tried threats, smoke bombs, stink bombs, buzzers and a remote-controlled air horn. He planted a stink bomb in the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove. At the 1990 American Music Awards, he tried to toss skunk sacs into the audience. Police arrested, detained and released him with warnings, thinking him a mostly harmless crank. But he went too far in September 1992. Sure the Rapture was due within days, he took a house-maid hostage at a Los Angeles Hyatt Hotel, lit two small fires, and held off a police SWAT team for 10 hours. The motive: "To get the word out."

Courts sentenced Rollen to three life terms for the kidnapping, plus five years for the stink bombs. Sympathizers found it excessive; others thought it overdue. "This is not Bozo the Clown," said the District Attorney; "He is a very sick and dangerous man." In fact the *LA Times* reported he had plotted assassinations of Presidents Bush and Clinton. A showman to the end, Rollen punctuated the sentencing with a wild, rolling end-of-the-world rant.

Still in prison, last denied parole in 2005, Rollen is sadder, not wiser—sad that he miscalculated the date of Armageddon, sad his daughter has no truck with him. But he has inspired a coterie of born-again exhibitionists to carry on his message. At the next game, scan the lower bleachers, just beyond the goal posts. You might glimpse a rainbow 'fro, a crystal-bright grin and a John 3:3 placard. It is not Rollen. But it is his spirit, radiant and wild, ranting on.

(Continued from page 1)

Potluck — Bring along an enticing item for the salads/desserts table. Rather than the usual light refreshments of a regular meeting, the ideal for the August Sizzler is to jointly assemble a simple and refreshing "summery" meal for all. AOF will supply a few items (to be detailed next month). Members supply the fare with their favorite hot weather dishes. When it comes to the food, think think "cool"! (*Note: the room has no means to maintain any hot items.*)

Oratory — No such limits on the heat of the oratory! Members are warmly invited to prepare and present speech contributions to the August program. *What is on your mind?!! Let us know, by preparing in advance a small speech (or two) for delivery at the meeting.* You will qualify for the drawing of a special prize in each of our two time-limited categories, A and B. Category **A** is a brief "sound-off" of just a minute or so (*2-minute maximum*), and **B** is an actual short speech (*5-minute maximum*). Abide by the time limits and follow the "rules" in order to qualify for the prize(s). *Do you have LOTS on your mind?* If so inclined, you can sign up to talk in both categories.

Oratory Instructions: Note: although you may quote briefly from other people, your oral contribution should be your own creation. *Priorities:* If there are more willing speakers than time to allot, then we assign priority to speak as follows: 1) to AOFers who have already submitted - or who mail in by August 2 - the "entry form" that will be distributed at the July meeting. 2) to those who phone in to the voice mail number (916-447-3589) **on Aug 8** with their name, phone #, and exact title and category (A or B) of each planned contribution (speak clearly!) We will be able to print a small "program" of these advance planners. Of course, you can wait and sign up on the day of event, but beware: these last comers will be added to the program only *if there is time.*

AOF Subscription / Membership Form

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

Name(s) _____ Phone: _____

Street _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP + 4 _____

E-mail address (please print!) _____

Membership Level (please circle one):

Patron (\$50) Family (\$30) Individual (\$20) Low-income (\$10)

Note: Membership does not include a newsletter subscription

Newsletter subscription:

___ Send my printed newsletter by postal mail (\$12 extra)

___ Send my newsletter by email (*Free!*) – my email address is above

Additional Donation: \$ _____

Total enclosed: \$ _____

AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association – Dues & Donations are tax-deductable as

permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter (same rate - \$12 printed, free via email).

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

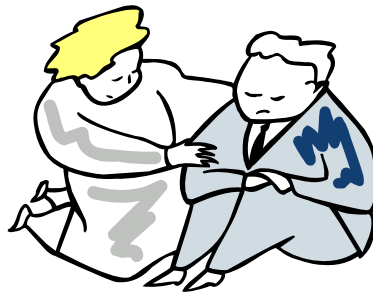
Please check here if you DO want to be an AOF Activist (e-mail address required).

Sharing AOF Member's Noteworthy Life Events Family News

Cleo Fellers Kocol has an article coming out in the July/Aug issue of the HUMANIST, the magazine published by the American Humanist Organization (AHA).

She also was asked by the National Center for Science Education (NCSE) to review the newly re-issued DARWIN'S ARK, poetry by Philip Appleman. The book amazed everyone with its groundbreaking poetry wedding evolution to words debunking creationism. Since 1984 Darwin's Ark has drawn plaudits throughout the thinking world. Appleman is the Distinguished Professor Emeritus from Indiana State University. His book is accompanied by whimsical illustrations by Rudy Pozzati. The NCSE publishes its REPORTS bi-monthly to promote the understanding of evolutionary science. Kocol's review will appear in July or September.

Cleo also reports she is pleased her novel ("Fitzhugh's Woman") is getting great customer reviews on Amazon.com.



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!**

Upcoming Local Events: In Brief

- Humanists of the Greater Sacramento Area (HAGSA): Friday, June 5, 7:00 p.m.: Sir Jonathan Miller, "A Brief History of Disbelief". Room 7/8 of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento, 2425 Sierra Boulevard. Contact: 916-773-3865, president@hagsa.org
- Sacramento Organization for Rational Thinking (SORT): Tuesday, June 30, 7:30-9:30 p.m., La Sierra Community Center, 5325 Engle Road, Carmichael. Contact: (916) 978-0321 kitray2@comcast.net
- Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Sacramento: Monday, June 1, 7:00 p.m., SMUD Building, Headquarters Conference Center, 6201 S Street, Sacramento. Contact: 916-684-4730, Cavelarde@aol.com

Bowl Your Cares Away

Bowling

By Tom Nicolette

Hey!

Where you been? We haven't seen you down at the bowling alley. What gives? There are faint rumors of a rumble between us and the Brights. They say they want a grudge match with us.

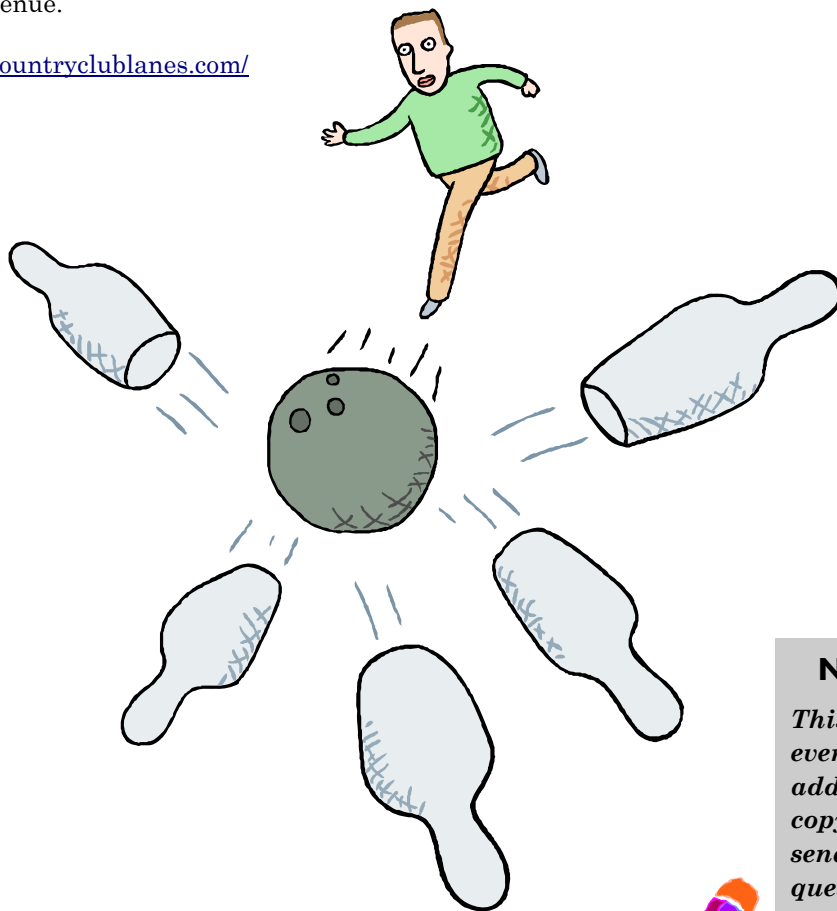
Ah its ok we can whip dem bums any day of the week! Just kidding. One of our guys just got a brand new bowling ball and his score is climbing up to the Stratosphere! Gutter Girl and her husband Bob are becoming deadly powerhouse bowlers. She got two strikes in a row last time out! Bob's Rolls just streak down that alley. I swear he is going to break the sound barrier one day.

Anyhow come on down and join the fun with us or just come on down to tease us. We bowl at 11:30 A.M. on alternate Wednesdays. For June that would be the 3rd, 17th, and the 20th.

Country Club Lanes

Located at 2600 Watt Avenue, Sacramento CA, 95821 Between US-50 and B-80/I-80 by the corner of El Camino ave. and Watt Avenue.

<http://www.countryclublanes.com/>



Newsletter Submissions

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

newsletter@aofonline.org

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

Preference is given to material in a PC-compatible word processing format such as *Word*, *Wordpad*, or *Note-pad*. (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.

Newsletter Freebie Policy

This newsletter is free by e-mail to everyone. Just send your e-mail address. If you prefer printed copy by postal mail, AOF will send one free issue on your request; after that, please subscribe at \$12 per year. For details, see the signup form on page six.

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

June Calendar of Events

AOF Dinner Social @ Buca di Beppo's, 1249 Howe Avenue	Thursday, June 4, 6:30 p.m.
AOF Highway Cleanup	Saturday, June 13, 8:00-10:00 a.m.
AOF June General Meeting	Sunday, June 14, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
June AOF Board Meeting	Sunday, June 21, 9:30-12:00 p.m.
AOF July General Meeting	Sunday, July 12, 1:30-4:00 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" (2010-02-07). 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.

