

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

September 2009

Special Points of Interest

Freethought Day 2009!
(page 1)

Upcoming AOF Community Service Events, by Don Knutson (page 2)

AOF August Summer Sizzler Recap, by Jillian Stanley (page 3)

Waiting for the Space Brothers, by Ken Nahigian (page 4)

Secularist Shy at School, by Mynga Futrell (page 5)

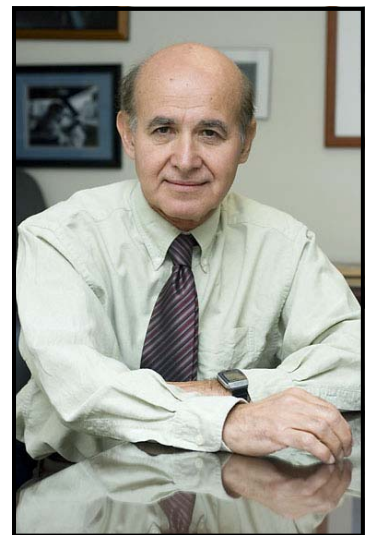
Freethought Day Yogurt on a Spoon Promotion (page 7)

Adopt-A-Highway Pictures, by Don Knutson (page 7)

Sunday, September 13, 1:30-4:00PM Iran's Flawed 2009 Presidential Elections: Domestic and International Fallout

This month we are fortunate to have as our speaker CSUS professor Dr. Bahman Fozouni. His talk is titled "Iran's Flawed 2009 Presidential Election: Domestic and International Fallouts." Dr. Fozouni will give an informed perspective on the aftermath of Ahmadinejad's disputed election, and the ensuing "Green Revolution."

Dr. Fozouni is a native of Iran. He came to the US for high school and college and then returned to Iran for a few years. Shortly after the Iranian revolution he returned to the US to teach at the University of Pittsburgh. From 1987 to



Standard Fare

Membership Form 6

AOF Family News 6

AOF Upcoming Events 8

A Celebration of Reason and Church-State Separation Freethought Day 2009 is Coming! October 11, Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Due to the eighth annual Freethought Day celebration at Waterfront Park in Old Sacramento, there will be NO AOF GENERAL MEETING in October. Please see the enclosed insert for more details, or, if you receive the online newsletter, go to <http://freethoughtday.org> for information about this year's gala freethought event.

Where: Waterfront Park in Old Sacramento (Front and L Streets)

When: noon to 5 PM Sunday, October 11, 2009



All AOF Members Welcome and Encouraged to Participate

AOF Upcoming Community Service Events

By Don Knutson

CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY CLEANUP DAY SATURDAY, SEP 19, 8:00-10:00 A.M.

California Highway Cleanup Day to greet the Autumn Equinox on the 22nd is Saturday, September 19, and AOF will be participating. Preventing trash and debris from clogging our waterways is a big favor we do for the environment and area wildlife.

As AOF has regularly done for the last 14 years, we will clean the 2-mile stretch of Highway 99 north of Elkhorn Blvd.(one mile north of the 99, I-5 split) @ 8a.m. on Saturday, the 19th. We meet at the Elkhorn Park & Ride west of 99 and we meet so early to avoid unsafe heavy traffic. We provide hard hat, gloves, picker, trash bags and brand new vests! It is a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny pack so that you can carry 3 or 4 trash bags with you. Generally, we are done within two hours. Those who participate will have a chance at winning the Caltrans T-shirt we are awarded for our involvement in California Highway Cleanup Day. For any questions, call the AOF 24-hour voicemail at (916) 447-3589.

AOF SERVES THE NEEDY TUESDAY, SEP 29, 4:00-7:15 P.M.

September has 5 Tuesdays this year which means that AOF will be serving the needy of Davis the last Tuesday of September, the 29th.

AOF volunteers, as always, will be doing setup/serve & cleanup beginning at 4p.m. in Davis at St. Martin's Church on Hawthorne Drive. The food is always high quality with entertainment to match. We are normally out of there no later than 7:15. We will have available the requisite AOF badges to let everyone know that they are dealing with atheists or, at least, freethinkers. For carpool information, call the AOF 24-hour voicemail at (916) 447-3589



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, Debora Smith, Jillian Stanley

AOF Standing Committees

All AOF members are urged to volunteer in the organization. There are openings in every committee listed here. Please contact the chair or coordinator of any area of interest to you to learn details of getting involved. We would love to have your participation! Phone AOF 916-447-3589 or e-mail aofboard@aofonline.org for direct contact to relevant personnel.

Programs and Events Committee

Program Planning (Team Coordinator, Debora Smith)

Meeting Matters / Logistics (Team Coordinator, Open)

Social Activities (Team Coordinator, Open)

Membership Committee

Members Tracking (Team Coordinator, Ken Nahigian)

"Freethought Friends" (Team Coordinator, Jillian Stanley)

Outreach / Recruiting (Team Coordinator, Steve Campbell)

Communications Committee

Beverly Church, Chair

AOF News Team (newsletter editor, events editor, public editor, postmaster, webmaster)

Education, Activism and Service Committee

Service Projects Coordinator: Don Knutson

Education/Action Coordinator: Mynga Futrell

Freethought Day 2009: Sunday, October 11

Beverly Church, Chair. (Save the date! – It's a celebration of reason and church/state separation)

Darwin Day 2010: Sunday, February 7

Mynga Futrell and Bronda Silva, Co-Chairs

(Save the date! – It's a celebration of science and humanity)

AOF Voluntariat

Affiliation Liaisons

Mynga Futrell (AAI)

Kevin Schultz (AA)

Beverly Church (AHA/HAGSA)

Hank Kocol (CSH)

AOF News Team

Newsletter Editor: Kevin Schultz

Postmaster: Jerry Sloan; Ruth Rezos and Ken Nahigian (temporary for this month—thanks!!!)

Webpeoples: Pat Kelley, Robert Poeschel, Kevin Schultz (Openings for Events Editor and Public Editor)

ISSN: 1936-4229

AOF BloodSource ID#: 4857

AOF Federal Tax ID#: 68-0325762

AOF Voice Mail: 916-447-3589

Food, Fun, Sizzling Speeches August Summer Sizzler Recap

By Jillian Stanley

The annual Summer Sizzler on August 9th began with a potluck social hour. Then the process for the two and five minutes speeches was explained by Mynga, after which Deborah announced each speaker. These two and four-minute (sometimes edging into overtime) talks on a variety of topics are an opportunity for members to express their brilliant ideas or nagging worries, personal anecdotes or global concerns, to a "live" and lively audience while providing everyone in attendance with much to think and talk about.

Bill Potts spoke about his positive experiences with the health care system in Canada during his twenty years there. (Note: The very next day, NPR featured a report on the Canadian system...)

Anna Andrews related an incident when a sudden violent noise led her to believe her computer was about to explode, when actually the bleeping was her kitchen smoke alarm signaling that her supper was burning. Anna attributed the error to her hearing problems (inability to identify direction), but frankly, some of us technophobes who can hear would still be quite ready to believe that a sudden blaring alarm

has to mean "Now you've done it—you've destroyed your computer!"

Mynga Futrell's "rant" (as she called it) on the topic "Are We Tribal?" asked AOF members to consider whether we are turning into a "cranky subculture," allowing ourselves to be defined by the very thing we decry (religion), rather than countering social distrust of atheists by aligning with those people who, though religious, also believe in separation of church and state.

Allen Demo asked us to consider the uniqueness of our situation as residents of Earth, "an oasis in the universe," and how remarkable it is that so far astronomers have not identified any other planet with life such as Earth has.

In "My Solution to the Middle East Crisis," Don Knutson opined that the U.S.A. is actually fighting for "empire" (influence and control) around the world just as much as Britain did a century ago, and suggested that the secular community work to bring about a better solution.

(Continued on page 5)

AOF Program Continuation

(Continued from page 1)

1989 he was Director of the Project for Political Strategy in International Politics. In 1990 he came to CSUS, and is currently Professor and Chair of the Department of Government. He teaches courses in international politics, nationalism, the Middle East, and research methods.

AOF meetings are free and open to the general public. Light refreshments will be provided.

AOF 2010 Elections

*Consider Running to
Support Freethought in
the Greater Sacramento
Community
Contact
board@aofonline.org
For more info!*

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

Waiting for the Space Brothers

By Ken Nahigian

Stop giggling. Unarius, u-*nar*-i-us, the UNiversal ARtificate Interdimensional Understanding of Science, is our last best hope. When poisons sludge our rivers, when the sky is smoke and ash, when rain burns and the hot zones of new disease bloom like terrible flowers, 32 Great White Brothers will come in their saucer ships, from planets such as Zeton, Severus, Endinite, Kallium, Yessu and Brundage, to woo us into the Confederated Planets. Earth will agree, of course. It will then become the host and home of the Universal Star Center, and all our problems will be over.

Trust the Unarius Academy, founded in 1954 by Ernest L. Norman and his wife Ruth E. Norman: the arrival, originally slated for 2001 but somehow delayed, is due any day. Devoted to a “new interdimensional science of life based upon fourth dimensional physics principles,” early Unarian teachings were not far off from other spiritual groups then budding in Los Angeles: a light swirl of theosophy, spiritual Christianity, Buddhism and space opera. Membership was modest at first, but grew after Ernest’s death in 1971 when Ruth took charge. She had charisma, *joi de vivre*, a bright sense of drama, and a love of costumes of gold lamé and silver mylar. It was just the right mix.

Who was Ernest? Born in 1904, son of a Scandinavian physician and an alleged prodigy, he read through his father’s vast library in addition to his formal schooling, awing his family, friends and teachers. During World War II he worked in a war plant, but his psychic prescience of loved ones dying on the battlelines brought unfortunate misunderstandings. So he quit to tour theosophical circles and lecture on metaphysics. He met Ruth in 1954.

Ruth Norman, born 1900, had known many trades: motel owner, restaurant manager, cannery worker and more. In the 1950s, at a psychic fair, mystics described a vision of long-bearded wise men following her, bearing the many books she would bring into the world. Ernest received the same report at the same convention. The two met, and married within weeks. Immediately Ernest began channeling the first Unarian tome, *The Voice of Venus* (of a series of seven).

Core teachings are not easy to distill. The seven planes of Shamballa are spirit-worlds beyond our atomic spectrum, each

representing a spiritual ideal. Later lore, developed under Ruth Norman, is even more flamboyant. “Higher Beings, living on higher physical worlds, have been building the 33 spacecraft that will form a gigantic city when attached one atop the other!” she gushed. “The Star Center, a gigantic college or city, will descend and remain on Earth! [It] will serve as a gigan-



Ruth Norman, co-founder of Unarius

tic university, where people can come all over the world to visit and study!” In 1967, on channeled orders, the Academy purchased and prepared the Star Center landing site near El Cajon (67 acres). A sign there reads, “WELCOME SPACE BROTHERS!”

Alas, our spirit is weak; only Unarian teaching can raise our vibrations enough to draw the Space Brothers here. In 2001, apparently, they came near earth, then fled from our violent nature. Since then they have beamed “high-energy love oscillations” at us. Why the stunted spiritual growth? In the Orion Constellation was the evil planet Tyron, led by Satan. Ages ago his psychic controls crippled our higher mind. Ruth herself, in an earlier life, wrestled with Satan and tamed him; he is now a true Light Bringer (“If Satan can be changed so can any soul!”). But the

evil psychic bonds have a kind of self-persistence; we cannot break them alone. Hence, Unarius.

It is *not* a religion—Ernest Norman was quite emphatic on that. He agreed with Marx that religion is the opiate of the masses, though many are at a level where they still require opiates. But Unarius is something else, an *interdimensional science*.

Before her demise (1994), Unarian students knew Ruth better as the Archangel Uriel, even as Ernest was the Archangel Raphael. They were in fact true astral voyagers, with thousands of identities and past lives. Ruth had been Isis, Socrates, Confucius, Charlemagne, Mary of Bethany (aka Magdalene), and Queen Elizabeth I, whose fashion sense she kept. Ernest had been Osiris, Anaxagoras and Jesus. It was they who originally brought human life to Earth from their home planet of Lemuria. Together they channeled almost 125 volumes of wisdom and poetry.

Unarian conventions (or Conclaves of Light) are pageants where students gather to hear news of the Space Brothers (the Muons) and celebrate their pending arrival. The main event is a parade. Draped in sparkling gowns, tiaras and gold-trimmed capes, bearing planetary Banners, they march and sing. At the finale, a cloud of white doves rises from a *faux* space ship.

Unarius has even had its own film studio since 1978; you can view some of its fairly high-quality videos online. Sadly, the group is unpopular with other UFO organizations, who think it makes them look silly (we wonder why). Also sadly, as the ailing Ruth withdrew from active leadership in the 1990’s, a power struggle and schism rift the Academy. Membership fell; many students turned to “home study.” But more recent years have seen a revival and return to the metaphysical roots of Norman’s teachings. The current official website (www.unarius.org) is full of uplifting wisdom. Ruth is less visible, though you can still see an image of her crowned, with a wide sparkling collar and a scepter. She is with the Space Brothers now, beaming us good vibrations.

Neutrality: The Educational Goal; Part 5 in a Series

Secularist Shy At School

By Mynga Futrell

Without doubt, America's teachers are encountering greater diversity in family backgrounds. The upbringing of the youngsters in their classroom may span an increasingly broad spectrum: not only the religious of varied faiths and degrees of observance, but also the "cafeteria religious," the not-so-religious and the entirely secular. And it is the secular side of the nation's liberty of conscience coin with which teachers are the least familiar.

Secularism is simply not familiar territory for a great many educators, even those who are themselves not very religious. There is a dearth of solid information to help even the most liberal of teachers. And, amidst quite a bit of stereotyping, there is lots of confusion.

Teachers who can easily and impartially navigate even the most nontraditional or unfamiliar of a religious parent's beliefs may be discomfited by a secularist's points of view. Even teachers who have only the mildest of a religious outlook can end up ill at ease with parents or students who take a decidedly secularist stance.

Despite earnestly striving to be neutral, a teacher may feel as if she or he is walking on marbles! And if disparate views are strongly held or stridently delivered, the teacher's assuming a posture of defensiveness is quite possible. In fact, this is not at all uncommon.

Might the problem be, in some sense, linguistic? There is, in fact, massive societal confusion in understanding in how we use the word "secular." And, I do think that how the word is employed can play a role in the problem. The term has, after all, different common meanings, and educators need to be aware of the variants.

The generic form of secular simply connotes an absence of connection with religion, as ice cream and ocean views are secular. Another secular has a lot to do with religion, in that it points to people whose ideas depart from religion, such as is the case with those who decide they are atheists or agnostics. A third form of secular is something for every American to value, because it describes the form of governance that is at the heart of the American take on civic equality and law. (The constitutional documents of the United States set the nation on a secular course.)

A solid sense of at least these "three variants of secular" renders a teacher more astute. This, in turn can make the teacher more comfortable in dealing with students and parents whose beliefs depart notably from his/her own. The teacher who is versed in the differences in these different concepts is not as likely to be secularist-shy. S/he can be more even-handed with everyone, too. (Part 6 in this mini-series will offer examples and guidance to help teachers distinguish between three variants of secular.)

 "Secularist-Shy at School" is the fifth 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

(Continued from page 3)

In "Can You Be Jewish and Atheist?" Jetta considered the question of ethnic vs. racial vs. religious identity, and what she ought to say to people who assume, from her appearance or name or family, that she is a practicing Jew.

Roy Seblowski, in "No One Really Believes in God," previewed his forthcoming book and upcoming talk at the AAI convention, as he analyzed the semantics of "Jesus Loves Me," concluding that it is a meaningless sentence.

This was followed by Dave Flanders on "Jesus Loves You, Analyzed." Dave brought electrical props to illustrate his thesis that brain circuits are established early on for certain notions and beliefs.

In "The Sin of Lumping," Paul Geisert argued that we should not speak of "religion" but of "religions," since they vary. Some (such as Buddhism) do not involve belief in a God. Also, many individuals prefer to identify themselves with a particular religion even while holding a naturalistic world view.

After this Phil Lazier spoke briefly. Finally, Paul Storey reported on "The Lodi Prayer Rally," which he, Don, and Deb attended. The rally was spurred by objections to the Lodi city council's persistence in having prayers, many naming Jesus, before meetings. Paul reported that the rally brought together a number of atheists from small surrounding communities who were delighted to meet others of a similar outlook.

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).

Tidbits, News, and Events of Interest

AOF Family News

- Mynga Futrell has a lengthy article in the current issue of Secular Nation magazine. Entitled, "Who Says It's Okay to Teach about Religion?" she answers the question. Her answer is no surprise, in that she wrote the article in her capacity as Director of OABITAR (Objectivity, Accuracy and Balance In Teaching About Religion). The article lays out a multiple-point position statement on "instruction about religion in public schools." Not only is it all right to have academic teaching about religion in the curriculum, OABITAR views doing so as a positive step. Mynga urges freethinkers to get involved in thoughtful and proactive ways, avoiding the types of impulsive and counterproductive actions that have all too often led to exclusion from the mainstream educational process. Concluding the article, Mynga said: "If we are ever to reach a place where freethought and open inquiry are considered part of the picture, and where the right of conscience is adequately protected and citizens who hold various worldviews are treated equally by the government, there's a lot of work for freethinkers to do. I hope they do it."

- A number of AOF members traveled to Lodi, CA to support the Freedom From Re-

ligion Foundation's to **object to prayers at government meetings**. An extensive number of photos can be found online at:

<http://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/photos/681295/#10055555>

- Local freethinker Roberto Leibman wonders, "If you have kids and would like to attend a **kid friendly Meetup** (maybe picnic at a park or something like that) please...drop me a line, perhaps telling me how many kids and what their ages are, so we can plan age appropriate activities." Roberto can be contacted by e-mail at roberto@leibman.net. Thanks Roberto!

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!

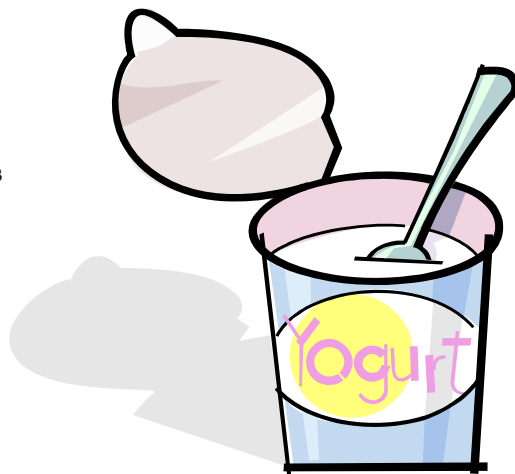


Freethought Day + Yogurt on a Spoon

Freethought Day Promotion: Support By Eating Yogurt on Sep 30, Between Noon and 8:00 p.m.

Here is "a first" for AOFers, their families and friends! An established merchant is assisting our Freethought Day fundraising this year. When you buy treats at any of three Big Spoon Yogurt locations between noon and 8:00 p.m. on September 30, and at least 30% of your purchases will go towards funding the event.

There will be fund raiser cards you and yours can distribute to present, OR a customer can simply mention Freethought Day at the register to have Big Spoon contribute the share towards our event. Tell all your friends! The participating locations are: (1) Arden Way, (2) J Street [between 36th & 37th Streets], and (3) Land Park [Sutterville and Freeport].



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 *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.

Volunteer to Help at Freethought Day!

Staff a table? Help with setup or cleanup? There's lots we need to do. So, phone the AOF voice mail at **447-3589** and find out how you can help make this the best Freethought Day yet!

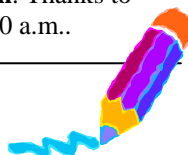
Newsletter Freebie Policy

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.



August 1, 2009 Highway 99 Adopt-A-Highway Volunteer Clean-Up Crew
From left: **Mario Sandri, Josh Lofy, J. Ault, Linda Middlesworth, Robert Poeschel, and Gary Little**. Photo by event organizer **Don Knutson**. Thanks to everyone who participated. The next event is Sep 19, 8:00-10:00 a.m..

Want to send a letter to the Editor?
E-mail newsletter@aofonline.org!





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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

September Calendar of Events

AOF Dinner Social @ La Rosa Blanca, 2813 Fulton Ave (south of Marconi Ave.). Contact: 419-2105 or shastaseer@sbcglobal.net

Thursday, September 3, 6:30 p.m.

AOF August General Meeting Sunday, September 13, 1:30-4:00 p.m.

AOF Highway Cleanup Saturday, September 19, 8:00-10:00 a.m.

September AOF Board Meeting Sunday, September 20, 9:30-12:00 p.m.

Freethought Day: replaces AOF Oct Meeting Sunday, October 11, 12:00-5:00 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.

