

# May 1997

## Contents

- [AU Executive Director Speaks in Sacramento](#)
- [April Highway Clean-up](#)
- [President's Desk](#)
- [May AOF Program](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)
- [March 31, 1997](#)
- [\(Physics Story\)](#)
- [April 4, 1997](#)
- [Dinner For The Needy](#)
- [Atheist Programming For Your Viewing Pleasure](#)
- [April Program Speakers](#)
- [Cast your Ballot!](#)

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## AU Executive Director Speaks in Sacramento

by Karen Abbe

On April 29th, Sacramentans were treated to an excellent presentation by Reverend Barry Lynn who serves as Executive Director of the national organization Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU). The speech/gathering was held at the First Christian Church on Folsom Boulevard, thus requiring us to enter a church in order to participate. Atheist attendees emerged unscathed, however, I did feel an overwhelming urge to genuflect on several occasions.

The focus of Reverend Lynn's comments related to recent legislation introduced in Congress regarding school vouchers and parental rights. He also spoke about AU and invited audience members to form an AU chapter in Sacramento. This event was coordinated by a myriad of local activists including our Jerry Sloane.

The presentation was very informative and interesting and there were several pointed questions asked of Reverend Lynn. Later, a smaller group gathered to formally initiate the new chapter of AU in Sacramento. It appeared that they would have no trouble gathering enough participants to get the chapter off to a good start.

For more information about AU, call their national headquarters at (202) 466-3234. Or write to them at 1816 Jefferson Place, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Or send an e-mail to [www.au.org](http://www.au.org).

For other first-hand accounts and commentaries on Reverend Lynn's presentation, please speak to the other AOF members who attended: Ed McConnell, Paul Storey, Dave Flanders, Jody Craig, Jerry Sloane, Jon Pedersen, and Kay Dickey.

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## **April Highway Clean-up**

**by Hank Kocol**

AOF had another highway clean-up on Saturday, April 19th , at 10:00 a.m. We had a very nice day, cool with a breeze, making for a very pleasant outing. The highway was also relatively clean, so that the work seemed like a walk in the park. Ten AOFers appeared for the project: Karen Abbe, Janet Borchers, Steve Borchers, Jason Borchers, Kevin Borchers, Steve Knapp, Don Massy, Ed McConnell, Lia Posey, and I. After the clean-up, nine of us spent a delightful hour at Lyon's Restaurant on Richards Boulevard for lunch and visiting and discussing possible projects for AOF for the next year.

Because of the coming warm weather, we must begin the next clean-up earlier in the morning, finishing the work before the heat of the day. Also, we will switch again between Saturday and Sunday. Thus, **THE NEXT CLEAN-UP DAY WILL BE ON SUNDAY, JUNE 29th at 8:00 a.m.** The date and time will also be announced at the AOF meetings, in upcoming "News and Views", and on the AOF voice mail.

Since I may be taking on more responsibilities with AOF beginning in May, I need to resign from the highway clean-up coordinator position at that time. If anyone is willing to assume that position, please contact me. The project is a very enjoyable one, enabling participants to get to know each other better, provide a community service, and get the name of AOF before the public. If you are interested in more information, or to volunteer, please contact me at 327- 6214 (weekdays) or 771-5231 (evenings and weekends).

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## **President's Desk**

**by Karen Abbe**

Oh, but parting is such sweet sorrow! Actually I'm not really going anywhere. I'm just handing the proverbial baton to our upcoming President, Hank Kocol, during our meeting on May 11th.

With Hank's blessing next term, I'll still be very involved in AOF and will work on a committee to find good speakers for our meetings, participate in highway cleanups and dinners for the needy, maintain our voice mail system, set up our public address system at meetings, and work on the various freethought cable access programming shows. If an able-bodied volunteer presents himself or herself to do the desktop publishing of the newsletter, I'll be happy to relieve myself of that time consuming task. Until then, I'll continue that commitment as well.

I'll also attend our Board meetings as immediate past President. Hank will do a superb job and I'm really looking forward to his fair and impartial leadership style as we embark upon our fifth year in Sacramento.

I'll use our May 11th general meeting as an opportunity to recognize all of our members that have been donating so much time and energy to our cause of "reason" during these past four years. You'll hear thank-yous that have been so long overdue.

What have I learned during this past year? For one thing, I learned I have a lot to learn. For another thing, I learned that people are forgiving when I make mistakes. And one last thing, I learned that working for a cause can get frustrating and feel futile at times, but I have to keep working on the cause which celebrates reason over irrationality. What we're doing is too important to let the Jerry Fallwells and Ralph Reeds speak on behalf of all good Americans.

I'm very proud to say that I am a die-hard atheist which separates me from all the ridiculous religious rituals known to man. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to promote AOF during this past year, and thank you for working so hard as a team to keep AOF alive and well.

Faithlessly yours,

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## **May AOF Program**

AOF's May 11th general membership meeting will feature several special events. First, we'll formally vote in our officers for the next term. Then we'll hear a presentation from Jerry Sloane regarding the Army of God. Then we'll conduct an awards ceremony, and have cake and entertainment. You'll have to attend the meeting to see what the entertainment will be! Don't miss this special AOF meeting where we will celebrate the end of four years and the beginning of our fifth year together.

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Letters to the Editor (Some edited for space)

**March 31, 1997**

**Dear Editor,** Nestled in among all the verbal hand-wringing and titillated speculation about the Heaven's Gate suicides was an incredibly revealing comment by one religious leader, a representative (whose name and affiliation aren't relevant) of one of our older religious traditions.

When asked what the difference was between a "cult" and mainstream religions he answered, "Tradition."

I couldn't believe my ears. Did he realize the implications of what he had just said? I don't think so. He had just admitted - on national TV - that his, and other traditional religions, were not really that much different. They had just been around longer.

Finally a religious leader I can agree with. Sincerely, John C. Reiger

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**(Physics Story)**

A true story. A thermodynamics professor had written a take home exam for his graduate students. It had one question: Is hell exothermic or endothermic? Support your answer with a proof.

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law or some variant. One student, however, wrote the following:

First, we postulate that if souls exist, then they must have some mass.

If they do, then a mole of souls can also have a mass. So, at what rate are souls moving into hell and at what rate are souls leaving? I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving.

As for souls entering hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today. Some of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to hell. Since there are more than one of these religions and people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all people and all souls go to hell.

With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change in volume in hell. Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in hell to stay the same, the ratio of the mass of souls and volume need to stay constant.

So, if hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter hell, then the temperature and pressure in hell will increase until all hell breaks loose. Of course, if hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until hell freezes over. It was not revealed what grade the student got.

*(Submitted by Bob. This has been circulating on the Internet--we were not able to determine the origin.)*

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April 4, 1997 **Dear Editor,**

Many years ago I participated in a supreme test of the power of prayer. It was called World War II.

I think we can assume that nearly all of those killed were praying or had prayed prior to being killed. They represented all the major religions.

In the German gas chambers, millions prayed but none came out alive. Their names and dates of death were carefully recorded by the Germans.

Last fall, a preacher came to save my soul. He left in tears when I pointed out the foregoing. Being a preacher, he claimed that he had had relatives in the death camps, but admitted none of them went to the gas chambers. Preachers always have relatives to fit any problem. Sincerely,  
John B. Wilson

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## **Dinner For The Needy**

Another fabulous charity dinner was provided by AOF for a very hungry crowd at the Robertson Community Center on April 25th. Kay Stinson orchestrated the event with lots of help from Jody Craig. Big hearty pieces of chicken were the main course with all the fixins to go along. The entire cast of AOF members that volunteered at the dinner were: Kay Stinson, Jody Craig, Ken Nahigian, Eric Brichta, Judy Brichta, Cleo Kocol, Don Knutson, Karen Abbe, Ed McConnell, and Hank Kocol did his imitation of Don Massy as our trusty dishwasher. Thanks go out to all.

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## **Atheist Programming For Your Viewing Pleasure**

There are many freethought shows scheduled for Channel 74 on Sacramento Cable as shown below. The programs for the next few weeks are as follows:

Wednesday May 7th 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Children's Literature

Sunday May 11th 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Panel discussion

Wednesday May 14th 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Wall of Separation

Sunday May 18th 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Panel discussion

Wednesday May 21st 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Freethought issues

Sunday May 25th 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Panel discussion

Wednesday May 28th 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Freethought issues

Sunday June 1st 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Panel discussion

Wednesday June 4th 10:00 pm, [Atheist Alliance](#) Presents (Minneapolis) Freethought issues

Sunday June 8th 6:00 pm, Atheist Viewpoint (American Atheists, NY) Panel discussion

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## April Program Speakers

AOF's April 13th general membership meeting featured presentations from Hank Kocol and George Weber. Unfortunately, Brenda Anthony did not show up to speak about gangster rap, but we had an extremely full meeting just as well with many announcements and important projects to flesh out. Hank used visual aids to complement his presentation regarding the wall of separation between church and state. George gave a very personal account of his childhood and his lifestyle as a gay person. Both speakers were excellent.

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## Cast your ballot!

Per the AOF bylaws, the May general meeting will include the formal election of AOF officers for the next term. The term will run from June '97 through May '98.

We have many fine candidates this year to fill out the slate of officers. The candidates are:

President -- Hank Kocol  
Vice President -- Dave Flanders  
Co-Secretaries -- Lia Posey, Steve Knapp  
Treasurer -- Ed McConnell  
Director at Large -- Kay Dickey  
Director at Large -- Cleo Kocol  
Director at Large -- Paul Storey