

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

June 2006

Sunday, June 11 Natural Atheism

Special Points of Interest

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Larry Hicok, Coordinator of East Bay Atheists, will present a video of David Eller, PhD speaking about his book, *Natural Atheism*. Eller, a Professor of Cultural Anthropology, combines a grasp of logic and empiricism rarely seen, with a solid conviction that Atheists must frame their concepts in secular terms, rather than those of our Judeo-Christian culture. He thus argues against using terms like "spirituality" and "belief."

His book on Atheism has been hailed by prominent Atheist thinkers, and his presentation contains a vast wealth of stimulating ideas. Dr. Eller considers Larry Hicok a major supporter of his ideas. The Q & A afterwards, led by Larry, will provide an opportunity for clarification and discussion.

Copies of the book will be available at a discounted price of \$16, cash only.

EMBRACE REALITY!!!

5th Annual Freethought Day

Planning well under way . . .

Standard Fare

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Sunday, October 8, 2006 marks the celebration of Sacramento's 5th Annual Freethought Day.

The Committee has scheduled a stellar cast of characters to speak and entertain at this year's event.

Lori Lipman Brown, lobbyist and Director of The Secular Coalition for America will make her first appearance in Sacramento. Lori is the first ever (and only) registered lobbyist in Washington, DC representing atheists, humanists, freethinkers, and other nontheistic Americans.

Mike Newdow will entertain (and maybe even educate) us with his original songs—often with a First Amendment theme.

Roberta Chevrette will enchant us once again with her political-feminist, folksy tunes.

And **Mel Lipman**, president of the American Humanist Association, will serve as emcee—sometimes known as the Freethought Funny Man.

Please save this date and plan to join us. —BC.

China, As Seen Through Secular Eyes

AOF Line By Don Knutson

One of the things I appreciated most in my first trip to China in the Spring was the lack of overt religious display which is so common in this country.

Approaching Davis at Mace Blvd. from the east or Rocklin from the west, for instance, you are met with gargantuan in-your-face crosses with similarly sized sanctuaries so emblematic of the boyish immaturity we see in the Bush Administration who wish to impose their will upon the rest of us. I believe that if the religious right could install a cross in the sky for us to see every time we looked up, it would be a done deal.

Among the many reasons I went to China in the first place was to explore a truly secular country and I plan on continuing that in my return visit this summer. Of course, China over its 5,000 years has had an abundance of deities who were responsible for such things as fertility

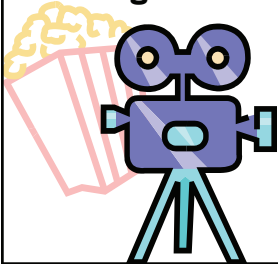
and the weather. And I was pleased to venture to Repulse Bay on the southern tip of Hong Kong Island to view a display of figurines of those gods from antiquity. Though they were all works of flamboyant art, these gods (some masculine and others feminine) all had human feet and faces confirming for me that just about every religion involves the creation of deities in one's own image.

Of course, Buddhism and Taoism have widespread adherents in today's China but Mao Zeon's secular teachings remain. Mao's rein from 1949-76 proved to be cataclysmic for the Chinese with the economic failures of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution but the influence of his efforts to relegate the ancient religions as vestiges of bourgeois culture endures.

Don is president of AOF and a frequent world traveler.

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

June Movie Night



PBS Evolution Series, Episodes 2 and 3 Great Transformations Extinction!

7:00PM, Friday, June 9

This will be at the home of Bill and Elaine Potts, 1848 Hidden Hills Drive, Roseville. If you haven't been there before, please call Bill or Elaine at 916-773-3865 for driving directions.

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, Vincent Wales

AOF Committees

Newsletter: Beverly Church and Kevin Schultz (Interim Editors for June Issue); Kay Dickey (Submissions Editor) Tom Nicolette (Mailing)

Freethought Day, Oct. 8, 2006:

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

Darwin Day, Feb. 11, 2007:

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, Kevin Schultz); AOF Finances Evaluation (Carla Corbett, Beverly Church, Ken Nahigian)

Archive: Jody Craig, Kay Dickey, 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, Carla Corbett

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

Meeting Recap

Metaphysical Naturalism

By Dave Flanders

"Imagine the naturalist's worldview as a ship. The first plank, what we might call the very keel of our beliefs about the universe, is the whole body of conclusions that we call science, which is itself built from mathematics and logic applied to careful observation. Upon this foundation we fit everything else. First, our own personal experiences, which form the hull. Then, the body of conclusions most agreed upon by those expertly employing critical-historical methods, which is like the deck. The trusted claims of experts form the superstructure. And the sea in which the whole edifice floats is what we conclude through the application of reason and evidence to everything altogether--our metaphysics." The above quote is from



Richard Carrier addresses May meeting.

Richard Carrier's book--- "Sense and Goodness Without God." Richard spoke on his book to a packed room of AOFers May 14th. Continuing on that ship at sea metaphor: But it is the sea on which the ship floats that distinguishes us the most. For we do not fill it with anything not justified by the rest. And the only thing we see justified is that the natural world exist. Thus, all metaphysical naturalist believe that if anything exist in our universe, it is part of nature, and has a natural cause or origin, and there is no need of any other explanation. This belief is not asserted or assumed as a first principal, but is arrived at from a careful and open-minded investigation of all evidence and reason. It is unfortunate that many accept a "religion" -- a factory made commodity, sold off the shelf to the masses, who assume it must be a good buy (8 out of 10 ex-

perts recommend Christian brand Salvation!). People think they can just plug such a goody into their lives, maybe with a few unskilled adjustments of their own, and never have to think about whether it is a well-constructed, well-thought-out, or even true. Richard read the entire bible and did not find it to say anything about democracy or science or technology--the three things that most defined the world he lived in. Instead of demonstrations of evidence he found assertions--and vague ones at that. He became a seeker and eventually developed Metaphysical Naturalism. Eventually for a time he became the editor-in Chief of The Secular Web (www.infidels.org). Richard said metaphysical naturalism is a complete worldview, covering every subject from knowledge to art, from metaphysics to morality, from theology to politics. Richard also spoke on the meaning of life, and much more, arguing from scientific evidence that there is only a physical, natural, world without gods or spirits, but that we can still live a life of love, meaning, and joy.

Atheists and Other Freethinkers



AOF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. It is one of the 50 member societies of the **Atheist Alliance International** ("a positive voice for atheism").

AOF is also affiliated with the American Humanist Association, American Atheists, and the Council for Secular Humanism.

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.

Highway Clean-up

Sunday, June 4th, UN World Environment Day, is the next date scheduled for clean-up of the AOF sponsored stretch of highway. CalTrans has made some general complaints (not AOF specific) about litter. So, anyone who can pitch in will be a welcome addition to the crew. We can show the community that we atheists and freethinkers are interested in doing our part to serve the community.



All necessary equipment is provided at the site. However, you might want to consider bringing a bottle of drinking water.

Keep in mind that AOF's name is on the sign designating that area as being maintained by us. We were the CalTrans Adopt-A-Highway Volunteer of the Year Award for 2003. Mynga is captaining this event and may be calling to enlist help.

If you are willing and able, meet at the Park and Ride lot at Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99 Sunday, June 4th, at 8:00am. For more information call 916-447-3589.

Davis Dinner

Tuesday, Aug 29th is the date for the next Davis Dinner. AOF is responsible for set-up, serve, and clean-up.

AOF has been involved in this activity for six years. It is an opportunity for us to give something back and put a positive public face on atheists and freethinkers.

Don is captaining this event and volunteers are welcomed, needed, and appreciated. Please contact him at 916-447-3589 to volunteer.



American Humanist Association Nominates Two AOFers

At its annual conference in Tampa, May 11-14, the American Humanist Association's (AHA) nominating committee announced their slate of nominees for the upcoming board of directors election. Two active AOFers, Beverly Church and Mynga Futrell, were included among the eight individuals nominated.



Request for Help: AOF Newsletter Production By Kevin Schultz

On behalf of the AOF Board, I would like to wish Mynga Futrell relaxation and energy as she takes a temporary hiatus from newsletter editor and layout duties to focus on other projects and a European vacation.

As you can imagine, when Mynga announced her temporary resignation in January, I felt nervous and anxious about finding someone to fill the roles she performed. We want an attractive, content-rich newsletter to provide to our members. In my opinion, Mynga has upheld this ideal since she began assisting with the newsletter production in 2002. First with the assistance of Kay Dickey for two years, then primarily on her own.

So, at the board's request I would like to request help from the AOF membership over the next six months in producing the monthly AOF newsletter.

We would like to request help spe-

cifically for:

- Layout editor position (*Responsibilities: receiving content and placing it into holes in the newsletter template*)
- Submissions Editor position (*Responsibilities: collect, review, then submit content to the layout editor*)
- Original content submissions
- Syndicated content submissions
- Photograph submissions
- Event notifications of interest to our readership

If you feel excitement or curiosity at the idea of helping AOF in any of these capacities, please contact the AOF board (see page two). A mentor board member will work with you so you learn in a safe and comfortable environment.

We appreciate your consideration and participation in our democratically-run AOF.

Saturday, June 24

Special Invitation

WEST COAST REGIONAL ATHEIST MEET 2006

The West Coast Atheist community continues to grow, and it is time for us to meet face-to-face to learn from each other and strategize for our future! If you've never been to a national Atheist convention, this is your chance to experience the excitement in a convenient location. Join us for a day of nationally renowned speakers, networking and planning with fellow Atheists, and of course lots of fun!

We have a stellar lineup of speakers, including:

ELLEN JOHNSON, president of American Atheists and chair of the Godless Americans Political Action Committee. Ms. Johnson will discuss the progress of both organizations and why they are vital to the growth of the Atheist movement.

EDDIE TABASH, constitutional attorney and board member of the Council for Secular Humanism. In 2000, he was the only known Atheist to be a major contender for a seat in the California legislature. Mr. Tabash will speak on "Why There Really is No God."

DR. DAVID ELLER, professor of anthropology and renowned author, will discuss his book *Natural Atheism*, which has been hailed as "the textbook of Atheism."

CLARK ADAMS, president of the Internet Infidels and the Las Vegas Freethought Society, will present "The Increase in Atheism and Religious Satire in Popular Media."

One of the hottest debates raging today is "did Jesus ever exist?" To answer this question, we'll have the unique perspectives of three of the Bay Area's most respected researchers on the subject:

RICHARD CARRIER, doctoral student in ancient history, author of *Sense and Goodness Without God* and contributing author to *The Empty Tomb: Jesus Beyond the Grave*

DAVID FITZGERALD, Bay Area Atheist activist, Director of Student Outreach for the Garrison-Martineau project, and author of the upcoming book *10,000 Christs and the Evaporating Jesus*

DON HAVIS, Bay Area archivist and longtime human rights activist

In addition, a session will be devoted to local activism. We want to hear from YOU! What are the issues in your area? What events and activities would you like to see? Are you interested in running for political office? We'd like to hear your ideas on what direction the Atheist movement should be taking.

Event registration is \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door.

Accommodations are available through Crowne Plaza Hotel, San Francisco Mid-Peninsula.

(Continued on page 7)

May AOF Night at the Movies: "Heaven" or Hell? By Joy Fisher and Kevin Schultz

AOF member Kevin Schultz writes:

The May AOF movie night featured director Diane Keaton's 1987 documentary, "Heaven" (PG-13). Ms. Keaton frames the movie as a series of responses to inquiries about Heaven from people representing a wide variety of worldviews. Questions include, "What is Heaven?", "Are you afraid to die?", "Is there sex in Heaven?", "Is there a Hell?", "Is there love in Heaven?", "Can you prove there's a Heaven?", and so forth. Each question is wrapped in retro 50's stock footage, confronting the viewer with a comical, poignant, or uncomfortable intro, depending on the question. I appreciated the honesty and candidness that Ms.



Keaton captured. The responses helped me understand how the idea of Heaven captures the imagination of people – living in material splendor, reunification with loved ones, a sense of peace regarding the death of a loved one. I recommend this video.

AOF member Joy Fisher

writes:

I like Diane Keaton and I thought I'd like her movie, Heaven. I was very surprised when I arrived and Kevin Schultz was the only other person there. That was before I saw the movie. After I saw it, I understood why nobody else had come! They had either seen it before or had heard about it

and knew better than to waste their time.

The movie had no plot. It was a series of brief vignettes about each character's thoughts, impressions, hopes or fears about life after death. To me (I believe absolutely that there is no life after death, no heaven, no hell) listening to the stream-of-consciousness of people who do believe, or hope, there is a heaven, was like being subjected to the ravings of a series of lunatics.

When the movie ended, I was left with one question: Diane, what-ever were you thinking?

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

Other Meetings

Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area

Sunday, June 25, 15:00 (3:00 pm)

Summer Solstice

POTLUCK



This will be at Bronda and Tony Silva's place, as it has been for the last three years, thanks to the Silvas' generosity.

The address is 7095 Murdock Way, Carmichael. You can call Bronda for directions (916 944-7234).

FACTS

First Amendmest Church of True Science

- meets every new moon. A "church in evolution," we need your help to become the most worthwhile, fun and edifying church in town. For information, call Beverly Church (hey - that's an imbegor!) at 359-5423. Come to the next meeting, partake in the Freething Drink and find out what an imbegor is!!!

Next meeting:
Sunday,
June 25



FREETHOUGHT DAY!

OCTOBER 8, 2006

Want to join the Committee?

Contact Bev at 359-5423

AOF Board Meeting Highlights



May 22, 2006—home of Beverly Church

Motion was made (Mynga) to send \$400 to Camp Quest West and use money gained from silent auction replenish the treasury. This was unanimously approved by the board.

The AHA agreed to provide copies of the Humanist magazine for the racks we have in place at American River College, CSUS, Sac City College, and the Lambda Center.

Mynga, true to her word, really is taking a break from editing the newsletter. Kevin and Bev will jointly edit the newsletter on a trial basis for June.

Next meeting: Monday, Jun 19, 2006,

You must be the change you want to see in the world.

- Mahatma Gandhi

West Coast Regional Atheist Meet

(Continued from page 5)

LODGING:

The San Francisco Mid-Peninsula Crowne Plaza Hotel in Foster City, has given us a special rate for this event weekend: \$129 for a single or double room (up to 4 occupants).* Centrally located on the San Francisco Bay Peninsula with easy access from San Francisco, San Jose and the East Bay, the Crowne Plaza is relaxing, elegant and well-equipped.

Rooms are available on a first-come, first-served basis. This room rate is available from June 23 through June 25, and will last only as long as our block of rooms is available (cutoff date June 2, 2006). It is **STRONGLY** recommended that you reserve your accommodations as soon as possible.

To reserve your room, call (800) 381-9553 or visit the hotel's event page at:

<http://events.ichotelsgroup.com/DPRD-6MFUBD/SFOFC>

Ask for the American Atheists San Francisco special rate (group booking code "AAS") at their San Francisco-Peninsula-Airport location.

*Not including \$2.00/night service charge and 8% tax.

EVENT REGISTRATION:

Registration is \$20 in advance and \$25 the day of the event. Space is limited, so advance registration is recommended. Make check or money order payable to San Francisco Atheists. Submit payment and the following form or equivalent information to SFA c/o Jen Hallman, 1004 Forest Run, Hercules, CA 94547. Sorry, we cannot accept credit cards. Cancellations must be made no later than 48 hours prior to the event. For more information, contact: (415) 771-9872 or dksf@atheists.org.

DEADLINE FOR PRE-REGISTRATION IS JUNE 19.



I want to attend the West Coast RAM, featuring Ellen Johnson, Eddie Tabash, Richard Carrier and more!

Saturday, June 24, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Number of attendees _____ x \$20 = \$ _____ Total

Registration fee does not include lunch. Arrangements for lodging should be made directly with Crowne Plaza Hotel. Neither American Atheists California nor its affiliates are responsible for any lodging arrangements whatsoever. Deadline for advance registration is June 19; registration at the door is \$25.00. Cancellations must be made no later than 48 hours prior to the event. Make check or money order payable to San Francisco Atheists (sorry, no credit cards). Mail payment and this form to: SFA c/o Jen Hallman, 1004 Forest Run, Hercules, CA 94547.

Limited seating Act NOW!

Names of attendees:

Contact information:

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Newsletter Submissions

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

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.

Newsletter Freebie Policy

We will be very pleased to send ONE free AOF newsletter to anyone upon request, but after that time, please subscribe to News & Views for only \$12 per year. Or, better yet, why not become an AOF member? That way, you'll then get the newsletter FREE with your membership!



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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

June Calendar of Events

Freethought Day Planning	Saturday, June 3, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Highway Cleanup	Sunday, June 4, 8 - 10 AM
Movie Night Social	Friday, June 9, 7 - 9 PM
AOF General Meeting	Sunday, June 11, 2:30 - 5 PM
AOF Board meeting	Monday, June 19, 6:30 PM
AOF General Meeting	Sunday, July 9, 2:30 - 5 PM
Davis Community Meal	Tuesday, August 29, 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" (10-8-06), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (2-11-07). 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.

