

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

August 2006

Sunday, August 13

Summer Sizzler Potpourri Extravaganza

By Carla Corbett

Special Points of Interest

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- Women's Equality Day (page 4)
- Mel Gibson and the Roots of Anti-Semitism (page 5)
- Camp Quest West a Success!!! (pages 5)

We will start with the popular “**Have Your Say**,” oratory competition, where participants present (timed) hot summer speeches on freethought topics. We invite everyone to participate. In the background, the **Silent Auction** will be taking place, with proceeds this year going toward the support of AOF. Bring items in good condition, and remember that the owners must take any items not sold home.

We will also take this opportunity to recognize the folks who work hard to keep AOF thriving, as we present this year's **Volunteer Awards**. Join us in thanking them for their efforts. Then to chill down from those sizzling speeches, we will enjoy a cool **summer salad potluck**. Bring your favorite to share. (Note that **no** heating or cooking amenities are available.)

This month's meeting truly is a “potpourri extravaganza!”

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Meeting Recap

Buying God's Kingdom On Earth **by Dave Flanders**

Jerry Sloan, AOF's July speaker, said a coalition of fundamentalist Christian leaders with the assistance of very wealthy individuals is trying to turn America into a theocracy. This brand of religion, like others around the world is monopolistic, expansionist, and predatory. It wants to be the sole truth and the sole law and, given the opportunity and power, will attempt to drive others to extinction.

Fundamentalism is born of refusal to compromise and, while it has made some strategic compromises (like allowing Catholics and other non-Protestants into the Moral Majority), at heart it remains exclusivist. They

are intolerant of gays, atheists, feminists, etc. Conservative Barry Goldwater lost the presidential election to a democrat. A mailing list of those conservatives who voted for Goldwater was saved and expanded over the years to insure conservatives would win future elections. Jerry provided a history of the money and the political maneuvers of some authoritarian religious evangelists in America including Jerry Fallwell. We are visual animals. When Jerry Fallwell offered \$5000 to Jerry Sloan on TV if he caught him in a particular lie, Jerry Sloan took Fallwell to court. Jerry

(Continued on page 4)

China, Part II

AOF Line

By Don Knutson

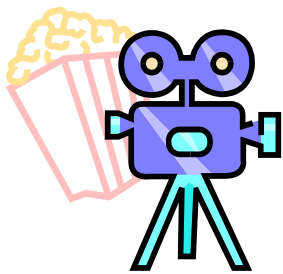
In my most recent trip to China last month, I departed feeling less enamored of the country and its people. On this trip, it appeared to me they tolerate their illegitimate totalitarian government because to do otherwise would jeopardize their economic position and the egalitarian collectivity experiments imposed upon them by Mao Zedong has left little or no resonance at all.

This was evidenced by how the village of Lijiang in the Himalayas became a tourist Mecca of south-western China. The village founded by Tibetan migrants called "Naxi" (pronounced na-chee) in about 700A.D. served as the capital of their kingdom and they became well known for their written language more than 1,000 years ago using a combination of symbols and pictographs. The area was largely forgotten by China until an earthquake in 1996 devastated a significant portion. The Naxi community attributed the quake to the wrath of one of their gods, Saddo, who had not been recently appeased.

So the Chinese government, in a well-publicized event surrounding the construction of a chair lift system in the area, hired two Naxi priests to perform the traditional sacrifices to the mountains at the beginning and the end of the project. This apparently was all it took to make Lijiang the destination of the younger set. Today, the old town of Lijiang with its cobblestone streets closed to vehicular traffic contains countless shops selling tea to silk to the sea of tourists amidst regular displays of Naxi traditions in character and costume. To their credit, the Naxi have used the windfall of tourist money to invest in schools where their youth are educated about their culture and language.

Though today, the Chinese line up for hours on end to view Mao's body in his mausoleum in Tianenmen Square in Beijing, it is clear their leaders no longer subscribe to his disdain for religion.

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



Movie Night
August 11, 7:00 PM—9:00 PM
PBS Evolution Series, Episodes 4 & 5

The Evolutionary Arms Race
Why Sex?

For those who haven't seen the earlier episodes, these are in wide-screen mode with surround sound. 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 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

The Inverted World of Cyrus Teed

By Ken Nahigian

You know of the Flat Earth Society, the one opposed to atheistic round-earth cosmology, or you should. Its history goes back to 1849. After its last evangelical leader, the Rev. Charles K. Johnson, died in March 2001, it may or may not still exist – no one seems sure. It *is/was* one of my favorite cults. But not my *most* favorite.

Suppose the world is not flat, but we live on a concave surface within a hollow sphere, like a beach ball's interior, with all the stars and galaxies floating within, intsy-tiny, the farthest ones mere dust specs only 4000 miles away – and the true external universe (under our feet) consisting of solid matter going out forever, what then? Such was the inside-out view of Cyrus Teed, an eccentric doctor (herbalist) from upstate New York.

In 1869, Cyrus had a vision: a beautiful woman appeared and explained the true, divine form of the world. Taking the name Koresh (do not confuse with David Koresh of Waco), he published *The Cellular*

Cosmology, his *opus magnum*, in which he breathlessly explained Earth's concavity. "All that is opposed to Koreshanity is antichrist," proclaimed the new prophet.

The sun is in the center, dark on one side, which explains day and night. Tricks of optics produce the illusions of sunrise, sunset and a horizon, and also prevent us from seeing the antipodal continents directly above. The moon is some kind of reflection of the Earth (Koresh even thought he could see outlines of the continents on it).

Besides astronomy and geology, Koresh also denounced the scientific method, Copernican theory, atomic theory, chemistry, conventional surveying, and of course optics. Everything you know is not just wrong, but *damn* wrong.

He toured, preached, and started a communal society in Chicago, the Koreshan Unity, and a periodical, *The Flaming Sword*, and eventually a political party (no, not the libertarians, shut up). At its height,

"Koreshanity" had a several thousand followers. In the 1890s he founded the town of Estero in Florida, near Ft. Meyers, declaring it the coming capital of the world. He prepared for eight million settlers. Only 250 came.

Koresh also taught that after his death he would rise to heaven and take his followers with him. Alas, he died in 1908, and the county health officer eventually had to force the colony to bury his rotting body. They placed him in a tomb which a 1921 hurricane washed out to sea. And *The Flaming Sword* continued to publish until 1949, never admitting the divine leader was gone.

Now all his followers are sadly gone too. Florida preserves the main colony as a historic site in Estero.

If curious, and with patience, you can read his revelation at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/earth/cc/cc00.htm>.

Rest well, Cyrus.

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.

Davis Dinner

Tuesday, Aug 29th is the date for the next Davis Dinner. AOF is responsible for set-up, serve, and clean-up. Carpooling departure for Davis is at 3:45p.m

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.



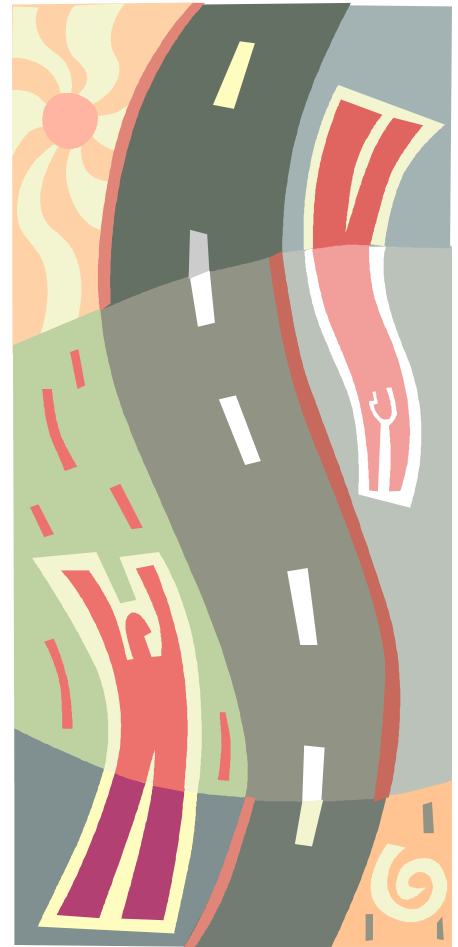
Highway Clean-up

Sunday, September 17th, is the next date scheduled for clean-up of the AOF sponsored stretch of highway. 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. Don 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 Don at 916-447-2169.



Meeting Recap

(continued from page 1)

Sloan won the \$5000 in court plus an additional \$4000 from an appeal ruling thanks to a video tape showing Fallwell in the act of lying. Fallwell's top obscurantist word game lawyers lost to the video tapes. The advance of western civilization has been partly a story of gradual victory over oppressive religion.

Jerry advised freethinkers to become activists to counteract the fundamentalist in America. It is good to promote rationality and anti-authoritarianism. Being an atheist in America has never been easy, and will possibly continue to be difficult, but that does not make it any less correct or noble.

Remember Women's Equality Day

They were spit upon, beaten, jailed, vilified in the pulpit and sometimes scorned by their own sex. They were courageous risk takers who took on the government and the president of the most powerful nation in the world for a democratic principle, the right to vote.

Yes, these were the "suffragettes." These brave women, who gave so much, would shudder to learn that 22 million single women failed to vote in the 2004 Presidential election.

Women's Equality Day is Saturday, August 26th. Come show your sup-

port and join the Suffrage Parade, a grand parade down the avenue of the State Capitol in Sacramento. March or ride on floats to the West Steps of the Capitol and take part in a rally with advocates, activists and public officials.

The Parade will assemble at 9:30 am at Southside Park (8th & T Sts.) in Sacramento, and will march to the Capitol Steps.

For more information, please call 916-435-9760. Help commemorate Women's Equality Day on Saturday, August 26th.

Something to Say...

Mel Gibson and the Roots of Anti-Semitism

By Vince Wales

By now, most everyone has heard about Mel Gibson's drunken rant against Jews when he was arrested on a DUI charge recently.

Among the many things Gibson has said following this arrest is this gem: "Please know from my heart I am not an anti-Semite. I am not a bigot. Hatred of any kind goes against my faith," he said. "I am in the process of understanding where those vicious words came from during that drunken display."

(Well, I'll give you a hint, Mel...)

One of these days, perhaps people will open their eyes to the truth about the roots of anti-Semitism. Almost no one really looks at it. Almost no one really cares, unfortunately.

In many cases, it's due to a lack of exposure. In the tiny town in which I grew up, I'd never heard of anti-Semitism. I'm sure there must have

been some Jewish people there, but I never knew them as such. Certainly, there were no synagogues in town.

When I was in college, though, I met plenty. Some of my closest friends were Jewish. My first girlfriend was raised Jewish, in fact. And she told me stories of being in elementary school and other kids throwing pennies at her. This is due to the stereotype of Jews being money-grubbing penny-pinchers. I found this sad beyond words.

There are three types of anti-Semitism, according to scholars: Classical, Christian, and Modern. Classical anti-Semitism appears to extend as far back as the 5th century B.C.E. The first recorded instance of it seems to be the biblical account of the Purim story in the Book of Esther. It tells of how the Jews were targeted for annihilation because one Jewish official refused to bow to the top aide of the king. They were saved

as a result of the intervention of the queen, who happened to be Jewish, who pleaded for the lives of her people. And it appears that all pre-Christian anti-Semitism followed along similar lines to this story. In other words, it's not what people think of as anti-Semitism. It's really much like any group of people being hated for one reason or another, varying according to circumstances.

So-called "Modern" anti-Semitism is based on the idea that Jews comprise an inferior race. It is a completely unfounded principle that asserts that Jews are, literally, genetically inferior than other races. Hardly a "modern" concept, given that science can easily dispel this idiocy.

But the really insidious form of anti-Semitism is the Christian form. In my opinion, this is the one that truly lingers today, not the "modern," genetic-based version, and certainly not the "classical" version, which doesn't even

Camp Quest West a Success!!!

By Beverly Church

Camp Quest West enjoyed a successful first year. Fourteen campers along with counselors assembled at the rented site just north of Nevada City for the weeklong (July 14-21) occasion. All were exhausted by the end of the week.

My visit there on Monday, July 17, was quite a treat. I was assigned to be the "psychic" in a critical thinking exercise. So with a skill (Breita Lowry-Carpenter) in the audience, I proceeded to "WOW" the campers with my psychic ability and discovered that, remarkably, Breita had psychic powers, too. After repeating the demonstration a number of times, a few kids started to get the

idea that something was amiss. And eventually, I revealed how the trick was accomplished. What fun to see the light come on.

Mike Newdow explained the Lemon test (formulated by Chief Justice Warren Burger to determine when a law has the effect of establishing religion) by teaching the kids to juggle real lemons. Jerry Bachman presented his Ladybugs and Peter Bishop came from Palo Alto to help the campers write their camp song.

Camp Director, Chris Linstrom, expressed her gratitude for the generous financial support of AOF. And, a terrific article appeared in

USA Today http://www.usatoday.com/life/2006-07-26-camp_x.htm.

Next year promises to be even better yet.



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

Gibson & Anti-Semitism

(Continued from page 5)

really appear to be anti-Semitism, but mere relationship problems between cultures and countries.

When it comes right down to it, the reason Jews have been reviled through history is because the Jews rejected Jesus as the messiah.

That's it. Nothing more.

The Jews rejected Jesus as the messiah.

It bears repeating because the next question is obvious: Who cares?

And the answer is: Christians care.

Christians accept Jesus as the messiah. They worship Jesus. Jews don't. Oh, the Jewish people respect the man and his teachings. They just don't accept that he was the son of Yahweh. No biggie, right?

Well, yeah. It is a biggie. To Christians, it always has been.

What you've got here is a group of people who were "God's chosen," according to the bible, and they've rejected Jesus as the messiah.

There. I said it again.

Anti-Semitism is a Christian invention, pure and simple. By not accepting Jesus, the Jews effectively denied God. At least, that's how many Christians see it. And that's unforgivable. It makes Jews almost as bad as atheists! But atheists, unlike Jews, don't have certain traits that make them easily identifiable, such as certain surnames, pointy star symbols worn around necks, or funny little caps on the backs of skulls. Jews make much easier targets. And besides, there's more of 'em.

Mel Gibson's rant won't be front-page news in another month, of course. By then, the media's attention will have turned back to the next celebrity and whatever stupid thing they've done that week. But Jews will remember.

But the roots of his racism will probably never be explored by the media, or by most anyone. Heck, some people will buy his claims that he's not really an anti-Semite. They'll ignore the fact that his plotless film, *The Passion of the Christ*, focused on the one single section of the Bible that laid the blame for Jesus' death on the

Jews, ignoring the others that laid it on the Romans. Gibson's star power will prevent him from being labeled a bigot (except for the few who see through that mask). Certainly, he'll never be considered an anti-Semite to the degree of white supremacists or, say, Hitler.

Remember him? The Catholic guy who killed Jews, atheists, homosexuals, etc...? Hitler felt he was doing the Lord's work, and said so several times. Homosexuals were abominations in the eyes of God. Atheists rejected God. And the Jews rejected Jesus as the messiah.

And for that, they all had to die.

Good thing Gibson's power is only at the box office.

AOF Member Vincent M. Wales is the author of ONE NATION UNDER GOD (<http://onenationundergod.info>), a dystopian novel of a future America-turned-theocracy. He was also the founder of the late, lamented Freethought Society of Northern Utah. Parts of this article appear, in another context, in The Atheist Attic (<http://up.to/atheistattic>), which contains over 200 freethought essays.

A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right.

-Thomas Paine

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.

**5TH ANNUAL
FREETHOUGHT DAY**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8

WATERFRONT PARK

OLD SAC

FOR MORE INFO

Contact Bev at 359-5423

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!

OTHER MEETINGS

HAGSA

Early August Potluck

**Sunday, August 6
12:30 pm to 3:30 pm**

With Readings and Skits for your Entertainment

This event is organized by Cleo and Hank Kocol and will be at Sun City's Sierra Pines Recreational Center, at 7600 Whistlestop Way, Roseville. Please let Hank and Cleo know if you'll be coming to this event. They have to make sure they have sufficient chairs.

If you plan to be there, please call them, at 916-771-5231, by Friday, August 4.

HAGSA

Late August Potluck

**Sunday, August 27
3:00 pm**

As it has been for the last five years, this will be at Bill and Elaine Potts' house at 1848 Hidden Hills Drive, Roseville 95661.

You can call Bill or Elaine for directions (916 773-3865)

FACTS

First Amendmist Church of True Science

Wednesday, August 23, 7:00 pm

Sacramento's only Atheist Church

FACTS meets every new moon and has three "Suggestions"

- 1)Question
- 2)Be Honest
- 3)Do What's Right

Come join us in the "Freethink Drink," sing some songs, and have some fun.

24 Adkinson Ct, Sacramento.

Call Bev at 916-359-5423 for more info.



Progressive Freethought Exchange

www.pfexchange.org

Friday, August 18, 6:30 pm

Our topic this month is "Men and Women: Changing Times, Changing Roles," a discussion about how gender roles have transformed over the past 50 years and the rewards and difficulties associated with these changes. Monthly discussion meeting held at Natomas Raley's Meeting Room, 4650 Natomas Blvd., Sacramento, 95835. The meeting room is in the center of the store near the pharmacy. For more info: topics@pfexchange.org.



To have your meeting listed

here, contact Bev at

BChurchRNC@aol.com

By the 25th of the month



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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

August Calendar of Events

Highway Cleanup	Sunday, September 17, 8 - 10 AM
Movie Night Social	Friday, August 11, 7 - 9 PM
AOF General Meeting	Sunday, August 13, 2:30 - 5 PM
AOF Board meeting	Monday, August 21, 6:30 PM
AOF General Meeting	Sunday, September 10, 2:30 - 5 PM
Davis Community Meal	Tuesday, August 29, 3:45 PM

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.

