

# AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

September 2006

## Sunday, September 10 Women and Islam

### Special Points of Interest

- Calling All Freethought Day Supporters! (See Insert)
- Fantastic Freethought Day Ahead of Us (See Insert)
- AOF Recognition Program (page 4)
- Ken's Musical Musings (page 5)
- AAI Has New President (page 6)

Those who attend AOF's September general meeting will be hearing from Parvin Darabi on the topic, "**Women and Islam.**" The speaker, who was born in Tehran, has been interviewed by numerous newspapers, radio and television stations on the oppressive conditions faced by women, religious minorities, and political dissidents of Islam and Iran. This is a very pertinent topic for today's world, so we hope to see many AOFers at the meeting.

Ms. Darabi will be traveling to Sacramento from Truckee, where she directs the Dr. Homa Darabi Foundation. The Foundation is named for Parvin's sister Homa, a medical doctor who ended her own life protesting the oppression of women of Iran. On February 21, 1994, Homa set herself on fire in a crowded square in northern Tehran, crying: "Death to Tyranny. Long Live Liberty. Long Live Iran."

Stunned by her sister's death, Parvin left her prior profession as a consulting engineer and dedicated her life to the betterment of women's life in the Islamic world. She and her son wrote a biography of Homa entitled, *Rage Against the Veil: The Courageous Life and Death of an Islamic Dissident.* The book was published in

*(Continued on page 4)*

### Votes For Women!!!

## Women's Equality Day by Hank Kocol

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On Saturday, August 26th, an enthusiastic crowd, estimated at 300, marched from 6th and T Streets in Sacramento to the West Steps of the Capitol where a rally was held celebrating the 86th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment granting women the right to vote in the USA. Marchers represented Sacramento NOW, CA-NOW, AAUW, Coalition of Labor Union Women, National Women's History Project, Planned Parenthood, Sacramento Labor Council and other local, state, and national groups. Several speakers extolling the



Ken Nahigian and Ruth Rezos

Amendment reminded all of us that the Amendment must be honored through its constant use.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## AOF Line

# From China To Freethought

By Don Knutson

As I mentioned in last month's column, I found in my recent trip to China that the Communist Party had profoundly relaxed its prohibition on established religion since Mao's reign provided, of course, that the worshiper worshipped within the context of the accepted religions of Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism.

To be frank, this really is not dramatically different from the status quo the Freethought community faces in this country. Of course, the First Amend-

ment prohibits the government's establishment of a religion and the persecution of particular religions but it is quite clear in American society that there are consequences for those wandering outside the realm of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

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

Take the well-publicized recent firing of Tom Cruise by Paramount, for instance. The superstar actor had been a bit too smug and proud of his Church of Scientology teachings, particularly in his rejection of the legitimacy of psychiatry, as he made the rounds promoting his "Mission Impossible III" movie release earlier this year. As a result, the movie only realized about \$300 million domestically, just a fraction of the take of each of its two predecessors. Therefore, he strayed outside the realm of "normalcy" and paid

the price of rejection from a significant percentage of the movie-going public. This is just another chilling reminder for those of us in the Freethought community who may wander too far from normalcy in our disbelief here in American society.

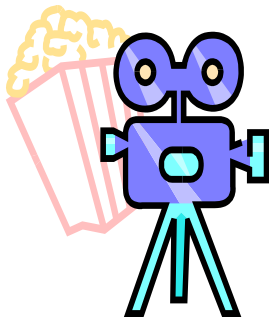
## Women's Equality Day

(Continued from page 1)

Senator Debra Bowen (D-Redondo Beach) emphasized social equality in her talk and pointed to a time when the Texas Constitution specified that idiots, imbeciles, convicts and women could not vote. Another featured speaker was Aileen Hernandez, Chair of the California Women's Agenda and recipient of the Humanist Heroine Award in 2004 at the American Humanist Association Conference in Las Vegas.

Supporting groups staffing tables with information included Rob Haswell, candidate for Tim Leslie's seat in the Assembly, and petitioners for the state health care initiative and against Proposition 85, which we voted down in the last election. The inspiring event was attended by AOFers Mynga Futrell, Don Knutson, Cleo and Hank Kocol, Ken Nahigian,

## September Movie Night



Friday, September 8, 7:00pm

### The Last Supper

Every Sunday, a group of five college buddies (Cameron Diaz, Annabeth Gish, Courtney B. Vance, Ron Eldard and Jonathan Penner) invite a guest over—and exchange views on various topics. When a heated discussion during one gathering leads to the death of a racist visitor, it gives the quintet a warped idea: They'll invite an undesirable person each week—and then kill and bury him! But exactly how long can the friends get away with murder? This will be at 24 Adkinson Court, Sacramento 95835. Call Bev at 916-359-5423 for more information.

## 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

## AOF Committees

**Newsletter:** Beverly Church (Interim Editor); 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

# Small Crowd Still Sizzles

By Mynga Futrell

Persons who attended the August “Summer Sizzler” found plenty going on. There was a beautiful “spread” of items for the silent auction, and the salad potluck “spread” was equally diverse. The awards program (*see separate article*) pointed out some of the movers and shakers behind AOF, and then there was the annual “oratory contest” as well. Quite a potpourri!

After the awards and the meal, a series of speakers took to the lectern to mete out their “wisdom” and vie for the “prizes” (a “silvery” cup, and a button that said, “I think, therefore I’m dangerous.”) It should be pointed out here that, actually, speakers earn raffle tickets for each minute of *speaking within the set time limit* for their category (2 or 5 minutes). Only speakers can enter the drawing. **Allan Demo** and **Cleo Kocol** were the lucky winners at

this year’s program. For those who missed it, here’s a brief glimpse of the offerings.

**Cleo** kicked off the five-minute entries with a segment on *Elizabeth Cady Stanton* in acknowledgment of the forthcoming August 26 parade event commemorating the march for suffrage. **Mynga Futrell** followed with “Bragging on AOF,” a short piece excerpted from the full presentation on positive atheist activism she had delivered at the AAI conference in Iceland in June. Drawing from her prior experiences, **Liz Purcell** ruminated with lucidity on the meaning of “Freedom of Thought.” **Mei Lin Chu** concluded the program by describing some of her experiences traveling in different places. Those vivid descriptions of traveling as a woman alone in Afghanistan (which she loved) and Pakistan (which she didn’t) con-

cluded the program. Interspersed were two-minute commentaries by Allan (“Playing God”) and **Don Knutson** (“The Nazi People”).

AOF having moved its silent auction from springtime to mid-August may not have been a good idea, as this meeting drew a much smaller set of “shoppers” than in past years.

Last year’s auction was in May, and it brought in \$400 for the Children’s Receiving Home of Sacramento, whereas this year’s topped out at just \$175. Four hundred dollars had been committed in advance to Camp Quest West as AOF’s support for CQW’s inaugural season, and so the expected income to recoup the treasury was as absent as the oft-announced forthcoming return of Jesus.

## Cleo’s Good Things—Poetically Speaking

As many of us already know, Cleo Fellers Kocol was the Grand Prize winner of Artists Embassy International Danc-ing Poetry contest in 2003. However, many of us may not know she is the First Place winner this year. Cleo will read her poem at the Festival of Music, Dance and Poetry at the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco Saturday, October 7. Cleo is also doing a broadside (8 to 10 poems) for Rattlesnake Press of Sacramento that they will distribute at bookstores and like venues in November. Cleo was a finalist at the Placer Arts Council Poetry Contest and that poem will appear in a book they are publishing. Way to go, Cleo!!!

### 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.

## Something to Say...

# Hard-working AOF Members Receive Recognition

Though the operation of our organization seems to move along with little effort, it really takes some hard work on the part of many members to keep things flowing seamlessly. At the August meeting, AOF took a few minutes to recognize and thank those members who have contributed their time and energy this past year to keep AOF thriving. Listed below are those members and the awards bestowed upon them.

**Tom Nicolette, Postmaster General Award.** Faithful member who stepped in to fill a crucial role in providing newsletters to our members, but also has done little extras all along.

**Betty Simonsma, Esprit des Corps Award.** Member who staffs the hospitality table to provide a genuinely welcoming place for atheists.

**Paul Storey, Freethought Cannon Award.** Member who issues forceful messages and sends his atheist

point of view on religion in a great many directions.

**Ken Nahigian, Humor and Hats Award.** Long-suffering officer who keeps a sense of humor along with our money, sticks with us as treasurer through financial highs and gloomy lows never running off with the \$ on holiday).

**Cleo and Hank Kocol, Appleseed Award.** Members admired for their founding of another freethought group in the Sacramento area, but who continue to roll back to the tree.

**Jerry Sloan, Outspoken Atheist Award.** Member who makes no bones about his atheism while involved in doing all sorts of activism within the community.

**Beverly Church, FTD With Exuberance Award.** Member whose enthusiasm for the Freethought Day celebration is contagious and

who spreads word of the event with megaphonic exuberance.

**Carla Corbett, Triple V\* Award.** Member who streaked into participation and assuming responsibility, valued for her organizational skills and contributions. (\*Visitor to volunteer to valued member)

**Kevin Schultz, Technical Contributions Award.** Member who keeps the sound system, the web site, and the e-tree functioning so that AOFers can indeed hear, see, and speak...the ongoing activities.

**Mynga Futrell, Lifetime Achievement Award.** Indefatigable co-founder, member and officer whose countless contributions and efforts have formed the backbone of not only AOF, but the entire freethought community.



Betty Simonsma & Carla Corbett



Carla Corbrtt & Mynga Futrell



Cleo & Hank Kocol

## Women and Islam

(Continued from page 1)

1999 by Prometheus Books. It describes what it was like for girls to grow up in a Muslim family and to eventually become accomplished feminists in an Islamic patriarchal society.

Parvin has lectured and been guest speaker at Iranian and other

international organizations in many locations around the world, and the Dr. Homa Darabi Foundation has provided information that has enabled many Iranians to gain political asylum in the United States and Canada. Parvin's objective throughout her activities is to inform people in general and the Western society in particular on the horrors of

blindly following religious taboos and tenets. She speaks on the injustices done to women living under the Islamic laws. This is a meeting not to be missed.

*Note: She will be bringing copies of her book and will be pleased to provide a copy to anyone who wants one. [The cost is \$30.] If you think you*

## Musings by Ken Nahigian

# The Ballad of Silver Jack

The roots of this long-favorite bit of Freethought Folk Americana are a mystery—author, original tune, date of composition all unknown. In fact about all we know are the words, which first appeared in *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* by John A. Lomax (1910). Dr. Fred Whitehead, freethought historian, recited it at the Freethinkers United Conference in Orlando, 1997. It sings well to *When the Work's All Done this Fall* (as scored below), but if you're a non-traditionalist, you can fit it to *Wabash Cannonball* or even *Puff the Magic Dragon*.

*Musically-challenged readers can hear this tune at <http://sniff.numachi.com/~rickheit/dtrad/midi/WORKDONE.midi>*



A group of jol- ly cow- boys, dis- cus- sing plans at ease. Says



one, "I'll tell you some- thing, boys, if you will lis- ten, please. I am an old cow- pun- cher, and



here I'm dressed in rags, I used to be a tough one, and go on great big jags.

### Silver Jack

A group of jolly cowboys,  
discussing plans at ease.  
Says one, I'll tell you something, boys,  
if you will listen, please.  
I am an old cowpuncher,  
and here I'm dressed in rags.  
I used to be a tough one,  
and go on great big jags

I was on the drive in Eighty  
Working under Silver Jack  
Which the same is now in Jackson  
And ain't soon expected back,  
And there was a fellow 'mongst us  
By the name of Robert Waite,  
Kind of cute and smart and tonguey  
Guess he was a grad-u-ate.

He could talk on any subject  
From the Bible down to Hoyle,  
And his words flowed out so easy,  
Just as smooth and slick as oil.  
He was what they call a sceptic,

And he loved to sit and weave  
Hifalutin' words together  
Tellin' what he din't believe.

One day beside the campfire  
We all were sittin' round  
Smokin' niggerhead tobacco  
And hearing Bob expound  
Hell, he said, was all a humbug  
And he made it plain as day  
That the Bible was a fable.  
We all 'lowed it looked that way.

Miracles and such like  
Were too rank for him to stand,  
And as for him they called the Savior,  
He was just a common man.  
"You're a liar," someone shouted,  
"And you've got to take it back."  
Then everybody started --  
'Twas the words of Silver Jack.

And he cracked his fists together,  
And he stacked his duds and cried,  
"'Twas in that thar religion  
That my mother lived and died;

And though I haven't always  
Used the Lord exactly right,  
Yet when I hear a chump abuse him  
He's got to eat his words or fight."

Now, this Bob he weren't no coward,  
And he answered bold and free:  
"Stack your duds and cut your capers,  
For there ain't no flies on me."  
And they fit for forty minutes  
And the crowd would whoop and cheer  
When Jack spit up a tooth or two  
Or when Bobby lost an ear.

But at last Jack got him under  
And he slugged him oncet or twicet,  
And straightway Bob admitted  
The divinity of Christ.  
But Jack kept reasoning with him  
Till the poor cuss gave a yell  
And 'lowed he'd been mistaken  
In his views concerning hell.

# 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

## The AAI Connection

# Alliance Elects New President

The Atheist Alliance International (AAI), of which AOF is one of the forty-four member societies in the United States and ten in other countries, announced on August 27, 2006 that its board has unanimously elected a new president, Margaret Downey, from Pocopson, Pennsylvania. She replaces Bobbie Kirkhart, who had served as president since 2002.

Downey has been a First Amendment activist for over twenty years. She is founder and president of the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia and the Atheist Anti-Discrimination Support Network, a national watchdog committee that works to protect freedom of conscience.

In assuming the presidency of AAI, Downey said her goal is to help build a strong coalition of Free-thought organizations into an effective national voice for an inclusive society. "This nation was founded with the hope and expectation of

creating one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all," Downey said. "That goal can be realized only if all citizens are treated equally before the law, with no governmental preference shown for skin color, national origin, age, gender or religious opinion," Downey stated.

Downey has a long record of advocacy as well as litigation to establish the civil rights and civil liberties of nontheists citizens. She has been most persistent in opposing government support for the Boy Scouts of America, due to its discriminatory exclusion of Atheists and gays from membership, and has been a continuing voice in defending the First Amendment against government promotion of religious phrases, mottos and icons.

She has served as an Atheist community expert for two conferences of the United Nations Freedom of Religion or Belief Committee

AAI, founded in 1991, is an umbrella



Margaret Downey

organization for local, autonomous, religion-free groups, as well as individual members. Its purposes are to help establish and strengthen the religion-free community at the grassroots level and to achieve visibility and acceptance for Atheists as respected contributors to discussions of public policy.

To learn more about Margaret, check out these Websites:

[www.atheistalliance.org](http://www.atheistalliance.org)

[www.secular-celebrations.com](http://www.secular-celebrations.com)

[www.friggatriskaidekaphobia.com](http://www.friggatriskaidekaphobia.com)

You can email Margaret directly at [downey1@downey1.cnc.net](mailto:downey1@downey1.cnc.net).

## OTHER MEETINGS & EVENTS

### 5TH ANNUAL FREETHOUGHT DAY!

**Sunday, October 8**

**Waterfront Park**

**Front and L Sts**

**12 – 5 PM**

**See the flyer included in  
this newsletter.**

**Call Bev to volunteer**

**916-359-5423**

### HAGSA

**Sunday, September 17**

**15:00 (3:00 pm)**

*Dr. Leigh Johnsen*

**Early American Origins of  
Church/State Separation**

The question of the separation of church and state is of great interest and concern to Humanists. The debate about the proper relationship between religion and government goes back to the early history of the Republic and beyond. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Dr. Johnsen will explore the role the role of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and others in promoting the "wall of separation." Dr. Johnsen has a PhD in Early American History from the University of California at Riverside and is active in Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.

### AOF Highway Clean-Up

AOF's next highway cleanup is **Sunday, September 17h**, at 8:00am.

If you are willing and able, meet at the Park and Ride lot at Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99.

For more information call Don at 916-447-3589.



*To have your meeting listed*

*here, notify Bev at*

*BChurchRNC@aol.com*

*By the 25th of the month*

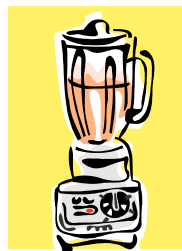
### FACTS

**First Amendmest Church of True  
Science**

**Friday, September 22,  
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.

### Newsletter Submissions

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

**[frethnkr@mindspring.com](mailto: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**

## September Calendar of Events

Highway Cleanup    Sunday, September 17, 8 - 10 AM

Movie Night Social    Friday, September 8, 7 - 9 PM

**AOF General Meeting    Sunday, September 10, 2:30 - 5 PM**

AOF Board meeting    Sunday, September 17, 10:30 AM

Freethought Day    October 8, 12:00 - 5 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.

