

AOF News & Views

Sacramento, California

August 2007

Special Points of Interest

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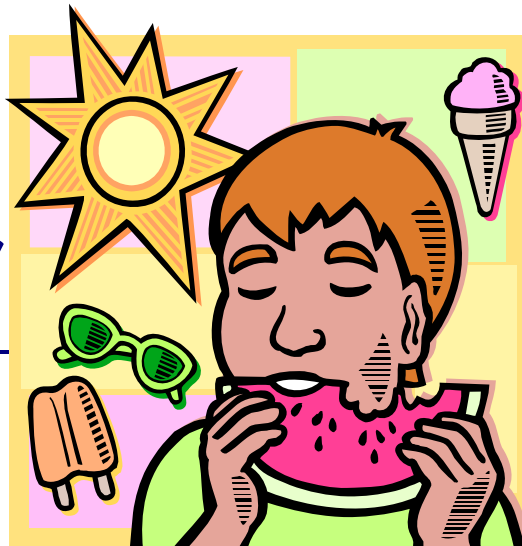
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Sunday, August 12 Annual Summer Sizzler



FORCEFUL SPEECHES! (*whatever is topmost in members' minds*) — **HOT DEALS!** (*annual silent auction of member-donated articles*) — **COOL FOOD too!** (*a potluck of salads, beverages, and desserts*).

All this, and jovial camaraderie, are to be found at AOF's August meeting! This annual event promises to fill your belly and excite your brain. It also offers a marvelous opportunity for you to do your part to boost AOF's sagging treasury and perhaps even acquire for yourself an unexpected "something to treasure"! With so much going on, you may even need a planning list! Details on each aspect of the event follow below.

Silent Auction — Whereas we have previously donated to other endeavors, the AOF board chose to use proceeds of the 2007 auction to give a "summertime boost" to the

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Award Winning Adopt-A-Highway: Sunday, August 26

Calling all able-bodied AOF volunteers! Please come out and enjoy the early pre-heat weather and support AOF's thirteenth year!

Date: Sunday, August 26, 8-10AM

Directions: Travel north from Sacramento on I-5, past Arco Arena, to the "Highway 99—Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Take that exit, and less than one mile north, exit at Elkhorn Boulevard. We meet at the CalTrans Park-and-Ride parking lot, west of the Elkhorn exit.

Questions/Comments? Please call 916-447-3589. Thanks!



June volunteers (from left): Al Ludtke, Richard Prowse, Kevin Schultz, Robert Poeschel, Don Knutson. CalTrans awarded AOF the 2003 District Three and North Region Adopt-A-Highway Volunteer of the Year Award in recognition of (then) eight years of service.

(Continued from page 1)

organization itself. You can help us to maintain our low membership fee just a bit longer! Please bring along a few items to contribute to the auction. *Possibilities:* gift certificates to local eateries or museums, books, music, artwork, collector's items.. (A donor may assign a minimum bid to an item.) Previous years have shown freethought-related items to be the most popular, but donate articles you think will appeal to an attendee of any bent. We encourage you to bring *at least 3* items to make the auction worthwhile, but don't forget also to be discriminating, as this is *not* a garage sale, and you *must* be prepared to take all items home right away if they are not sold.

Potluck — Bring along an enticing item for the salads/desserts table. Rather than the usual light refreshments of a regular meeting, the ideal for the August Sizzler is to jointly assemble a simple and refreshing "summery" meal for all. AOF will supply cold beverages, ice, and setups. Members supply the fare with their favorite hot weather dishes. When it comes to the food, think "cool"! (Note: the room has no means to

maintain any hot items.)

Oratory — No such limits on the heat of the oratory! Members are warmly invited to prepare and present speech contributions to the August program. *What is on your mind?!! Let us know, by preparing in advance a small speech (or two) for delivery at the meeting.* You will qualify for the drawing of a special prize in each of our two time-limited categories, A and B. Category **A** is a brief "sound-off" of just a minute or so (*2-minute maximum*), and **B** is an actual short speech (*5-minute maximum*). Abide by the time limits and follow the "rules" in order to qualify for the prize(s). *Do you have LOTS on your mind?* If so inclined, you can sign up to talk in both categories.

Oratory Instructions: Note: although you may quote briefly from other people, your oral contribution should be your own creation. *Priorities:* If there are more willing speakers than time to allot, then we assign priority to speak as follows: 1) to AOFers who have already submitted - or who mail in by August 5 - the "entry form" that was distributed at the July meeting.

(Continued on page 3)

Why Hasn't KVIE Aired BBC's A Brief History of Disbelief?

By Hank Kocol

PBS, nationwide, aired the BBC series, "A Brief History of Disbelief" in May. Local PBS affiliates telecast the show on stations in San Francisco and the Los Angeles areas—even in Hawaii, a very conservative state!

Though KVIE-2 (available on Comcast cable 7 and digital cable 190, SureWest cable 7, and over the air on digital 6.2) aired the show, KVIE has no plans as yet to run the show. KVIE seems unresponsive to queries about airing this program. I suggest that AOF members call/write KVIE to complain that no plans are in place to air the show here. As always, please stay polite when requesting the show air on KVIE—and if you support KVIE through financial contributions, please say so!

E-mail: member@kvie.org
Phone: 800-347-KVIE (5843)
Address: PO Box 6, Sacramento, CA 95812

AOF Board (2007)

President: Don Knutson

Vice President: Mynga Futrell

Secretary: Jerry Sloan

Treasurer: Ken Nahigian

Directors at large:

Beverly Church, Kay Dickey, Kevin Schultz, Paul Storey, Susan Vergne

AOF Committees

Newsletter: Kevin Schultz (Editor)

Tom Nicolette (Mailing)

Freethought Day, Oct. 7, 2007

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

Darwin Day, Feb. 10, 2008:

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, Mynga Futrell); Connections (Kevin Schultz, Betty Simonsma); Growing AOF Membership (Jerry Sloan, Kevin Schultz)

Archive: 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

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

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Global Warming— Carl Zichella Confronts Climate Crisis

By Kevin Schultz

“[Inaction on global warming] is absolutely unacceptable. We know we’re creating this problem, we know we have the solutions at hand. To allow future generations to live greatly diminished lives knowing the things that we know—that we have the tools to solve this problem—I believe is profoundly immoral and profoundly unethical.”

From misters at the Eiffel Tower to retreating glaciers along the Himalayan plateau to 120° Fahrenheit summers in South Dakota, Sierra Club Regional Staff Director Carl Zichella described the current global climate situations.

He listed a canary in the coal mine as the melting of the ice shelves in Antarctica.

He asserted that scientific and technological revolution combines old habits with new technologies, allowing us to become more and more efficient with habits contributing to

environmental change.

Near the end, Mr. Zichella debunked several misconceptions about the science behind global warming.



Carl Zichella, Sierra Club Regional Staff Director for California, Nevada, and Hawaii Office

Mr. Zichella listed several ideas and resources to help reduce global warming: realclimate.org, new hybrid car engines, wind technologies, compact fluorescents, and biofuels. He noted 20% of all energy in California is used to move water.

Listen to Carl Zichella's talk online

at: <http://media.aofonline.org/aof-july-general-meeting-carl-zichella.mp3>. Mr. Zichella declined to release the slides used in the presentation because *The Climate Project* prefers interpretation of the slides from trained presenters. He can be reached at carl.zichella@sierraclub.org or 916-557-1100 x104.

AOF Program Continuation

(Continued from page 2)

2) to those who phone in to the voice mail number (916-447-3589) on **Aug 11** with their name, phone #, and exact title and category (A or B) of each planned contribution (speak clearly!) We will be able to print a small “program” of these advance planners. Of course, you can wait and sign up on the day of event, but beware: these last comers will be added to the program only *if there is time*.

Oh yes, besides the auction items, favorite cool dish, and text of your speech(s), please don't forget to bring your checkbook or stuff your wallet with a bit of cash so you can do some shopping!

—Mynga Futrell

Sacramento Community Events Calendar for Freethinkers



<http://sacportal.humanists.net/calendar>

Subscribe to all the local happenings online!

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 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.

Historical Figures Series

Holes In Their Heads: *The Pseudoscience of Trepanation*

By Ken Nahigian

Editors note: Squeamish stomachs beware!

The things I've done. Weekends with fans in garish costumes and plastic pointed ears, debating continuity lapses of a TV science fiction series. Earnest, disconsolate deconstructions of a comic-book hero's fictional "origin." Forums of enthusiastic living-history recreationists, dissecting the minutiae of garb, art, etiquette and language. I have listened, interacted, even sympathized, until my eyes glaze like polystyrene marbles and the pupils contract to mere dots.

I confess and admit: at heart I am a crank, with a penchant and love for crankism. In the boiler room of sub-cultural obsession, I've stood in the fulminous chemical bath, and even enjoyed it.

But I have my limits.

"Dr." Bart Hughes, a Dutch savant, apparently did not. In the 1960's his obsession was infant mentality. Children, he noted, are enthusiastic for life, flexible and joyous, creative and open to possibility. Adults are brittle, pessimistic, self-limiting, stodgy. Why? It was a fair question, but his answer was odd. It's all a matter of *Brainbloodvolume*, Hughes decided, our ability to deliver oxygen to the brain. The young have softer skulls, flexing slightly with each heartbeat; the old do not. As the cranial sutures close, as the brainpan calcifies, we slowly starve for oxygen, until our sense of life withdraws, diminishes, to a narrow and blinkered focus we call "maturity."

The solution? Bore a hole.

Following his intuition, Hughes trepanned himself (i.e., opened his skull) under local anesthesia. Recov-

ering, he felt he had found a kind of spiritual ecstasy, an enhanced consciousness. He preached and wrote. The ensuing publicity cost him his medical degree, plus a stint in a lunatic asylum, but he gained a disciple: namely Joey Mellen, Oxford graduate and bohemian proponent of LSD therapy (remember, it was the 60's). Convinced that the "third eye" of yogic mysticism was more than a metaphor, Mellen was sure trepanation would open his own at last. But how to proceed? Curiously, British surgeons were unsympathetic to the plan.

An undaunted Mellen found an antique trepan instrument in a surgical store, a kind of hand-worked auger or corkscrew. With this, an anesthetic syringe, his girlfriend's help, but absolutely *no* medical training, he went to work.

The first two efforts were dismal failures. His 1972 book, *Bore Hole*, described the successful third attempt. "After some time there was an ominous sounding *schlurp* and the sound of bubbling. I drew the trepan out and the gurgling continued. It sounded like air bubbles running under the skull as they were pressed out. I looked at the trepan and there was a bit of bone in it. At last! ... Amanda was sure I was through. There seemed no other explanation of the schlurping noises. I decided to call it a day. At that time I thought that any hole would do, no matter what size. I bandaged up my head and cleared away the mess."

The surgery left a sense of well being, but Mellen wondered: was a bigger hole better? Later, alone, he tried again—with a power drill. "This time I was not in any doubt. The drill head went at least an inch deep through the hole. A great gush

of blood followed my withdrawal of the drill. In the mirror I could see the blood in the hole rising and falling with the pulsation of the brain."

It was all he had hoped. During the next four hours his spirits rose and rose, until he found a state of freedom and serenity which, he claims, has been with him ever since.

His impressed girlfriend subsequently followed suit, even filming the process. Released as "Heartbeat in the Brain," the film became a cult classic, which you will sometimes see at movie art houses. It shows Amanda at work in a blood-spattered white robe. Calmly, as the soundtrack floats with soft music, she shaves her hair, makes the dermal incision, and drills. Blood spurts as she penetrates the skull. She sets down the drill with a triumphant smile. But be warned—the film has been cause for fainting. At one London showing a critic described the audience "dropping off their seats one by one like ripe plums."

Bart Hughes, the guru who began it, died in 2004. Joey and Amanda, now separated, continue to preach the trepanation gospel. Old friends describe them as pleasant, serene and normal. They have lectured widely, even to doctors, and support the International Trepanation Advocacy Group (trepan.com). ITAG boasts about twenty cases of voluntarily skull-boring, all claiming to be happy with the results. And of course, it sells T-shirts.

A 1998 documentary, "A Hole in the Head," occasionally shows on educational networks, and is available on DVD. For entertainment and educational purposes only. Please.

Pillosophy – A New Branch of Philosophy?

By Paul Geisert

Pillosophy is a branch of philosophy wherein the pillosophers administer verbal pills to cure deviations from what they firmly know is in the best interests of others. Currently pillosophy is focused on the concept of religion.

Three pillosophers who are currently getting a lot of press are Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens. Their pillosophy pills are simple. Properly administered, everyone in the world would instantly understand that it is ridiculous to be religious. However, the pills would need to be administered on a gigantic scale, since there are over 4 billion religious individuals who hold concepts that pillosophers deem wrong, ill advised, bordering on mentally ill, and/or dangerous.

Critics of pillosophy claim that lumping all religious individuals under the term “religious” presents serious problems. For example, many individuals are barely religious, some are sort of religious, some are barking bonkers religious, and so on. That calls for small, medium, and large pills. Currently all types of people are simply lumped under “religious” and prescribed a pill. The direction on the label states: I know what is best for you, so take this pill and

live happy in truth.

There is the problem that “normal philosophy” has great difficulty even identifying what “religion” is! (see Jeffrey Brodd, AOF speaker in 2004)

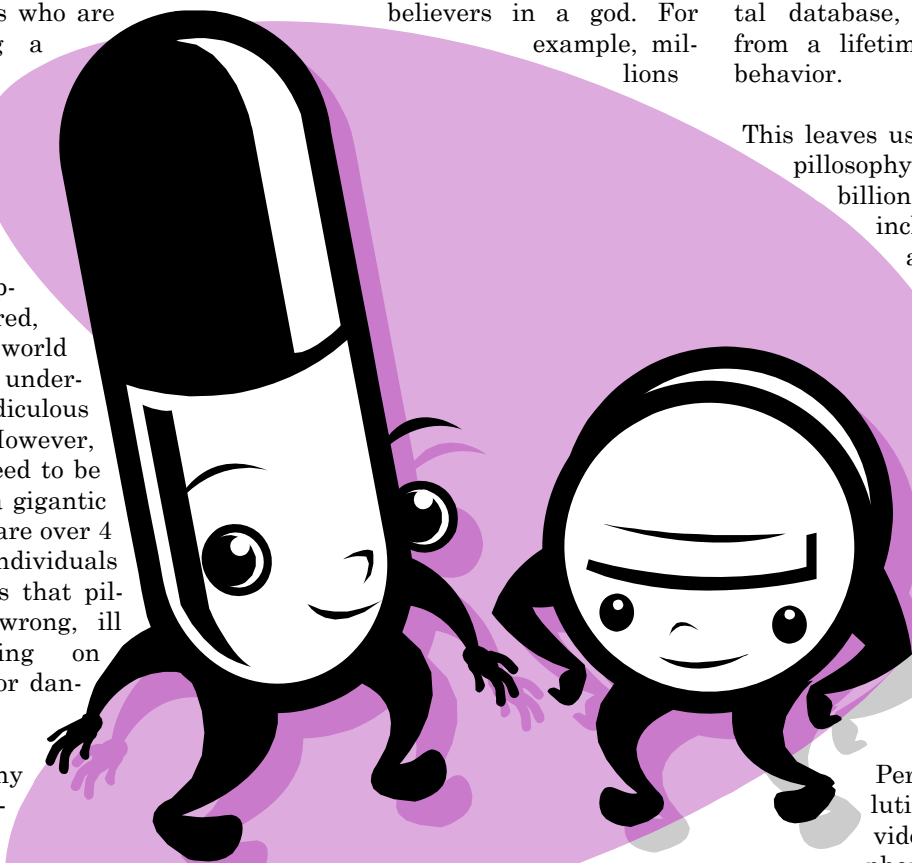
Many religious individuals are not believers in a god. For example, millions

live their time thinking and talking about non-existent gods they don't believe in (atheists). This will be a tough one for the pillosophers since the behavior is widespread but not viewed by them to be very deviant. Perhaps a pill would simply erase the concept of “god” from their mental database, thus freeing them from a lifetime of non-productive behavior.

This leaves us with the need for a pillosophy pill to cure the four billion whose worldview includes both religion and a belief in god (s). This might be a horrendous task if a unique pill is needed for each god (there are 99 names of god in the Qur'an alone). Clearly various pills will need to be developed to cure those who believe in X god but not Y god.

Perhaps the easiest solution would be to provide a pill to the pillosophers themselves! Then they would stop making sweeping generalizations about religion and religious beliefs, and start focusing on specific social actions (such as separation of religion and government).

Alas, it is probably impossible to get pillosophers to think practically. After all, pillosophy is a branch of philosophy, which after over 2,000 years is discussing the same questions.



of Buddhist, Jain, Confucian, and Jewish individuals do not embrace a god. Furthermore, the Brights movement has many individuals who self-identify as “religious” (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, etc.), but have a naturalistic worldview and register as Brights.

There is also the situation where individuals spend enormous amounts of

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

Tidbits, News, and Events of Interest

AOF Family News

- AOF board member **Jerry Sloan** would like to invite all of his community of reason friends to his **BIG 7 - 0 birthday party**



which will be held on August 17, 2007 (actual bd is the 18th) at the FACES Dance Club, 20th & K Streets from 6:00 pm until 8:30 pm. Please use the 20th St. entrance (back by the swimming pool) where you can use the stairs or elevator to the 2nd floor party room. Jerry says, "Please only your presence not your presents is requested." R.S.V.P. to 916-381-3115 or JerrySloan95828@yahoo.com.

- **The Sacramento Bee** began publishing a poetry column by AOF member **Cleo Fellers Kocol's** on July 26 in the Roseville section: <http://sacbee.com/placer/story/290159.html>. Congratula-



tions!

- AOF board member **Mynga Futrell** appeared in the **Sacramento News and Review's June 28 issue** as part of a panel segment entitled *God and War*: <http://www.newsreview.com/sacramento/Content?oid=344810>



- AOF members **Alice Torley, Richard Kowaleski, Mynga Futrell, Paul Geisert, Kevin Schultz, Ken Nahigian, and Ken Peterson** attended the Tuesday, July 24 Davis Community Meals event where they helped serve a hot meal of honey-barbeque chicken and homemade Boston Yummy Beans (with all the fixings) to a crowd of 60 children, men, and women.



- AOF members **Tom Nicolette, Ken Nahigian (with fiancé**

Ruth Rezos, Mynga Futrell, Dave Flinders, and Kevin Schultz



came together on July 21 to assist AOF board member **Beverly Church** in moving into her new home. Thanks to the movers and thanks to Mynga for organizing on short notice!

- The Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area (**HAGSA**) invites AOF members to their early- and late-**August potlucks: Sat, Aug 5, 3-5PM** at the home of Rena Lowry, 2811 Catalina Drive, Rocklin (916 207-1890; and **Sat, Aug 26, 3-5PM** at the home of Brian Jones, 44669 S. El Macero Drive, El Macero (Davis), 916 765-5987. Everyone's welcome!

Do you have news you'd like to share? If so, please send it to newsletter@aofonline.org. Alternatively, you may submit the news using AOF's voice-mail or postal address (page two). Thanks!

Just As Well

By Anatole Lubovich, Republished Posthumously

Anatole Lubovich's poems and character touched many AOF members during his time in Sacramento. Since his death in November 2005, Do Gentry, Anatole's partner and administrator of his estate, has published a number of his poems in local publications. With Do's permission, AOF continues selected republication of Anatole's poems. After republication, AOF will post the poem to <http://aofonline.org/resources> for public distribution—*Editor*

Just As Well

His name was Yeshua. He walked
on rocky trails of Galilee,
Judea and Samaria;
some even said
he walked on water.

He taught strange things
that went against the grain
of human nature:
to love your enemies
and turn the other cheek.

His parables made sense,
but promise of God's Kingdom
his twelve Disciples,
Pharisees, and Consuls,
all had misunderstood.

And when his words of nuisance
broke the backs of camels
who couldn't pass through Needle's Eye,
the priests aroused the mob
to ask the Romans that they put him
to painful and disgraceful death.

Those in whose heads his words still lingered,
convinced God's Kingdom was at hand,
spread wide distorted gospel,
established rituals and temples,
and called him Son of God and God.

Then with the sign of fish and cross,
and in the name of truth and love,
they conquered nations, roasted rebels—
those who had dared to question
the right they claimed came from above.

They preached convincing lies to children
of stupid, gullible and simple people,
and taught them fear of life and afterlife
for nigh two thousand years.

* * *

She walked the streets of northern Egypt,
but never claimed to walk on water,
a daughter full of grace and beauty,
and more—of learning and of wisdom.
Hypatia was her name.

She mocked the hypocrites of Yeshua.
The rusty creakings of the priests
were not a match to silver tongue
of Pagan Philosopheress.

And when they could no longer stand
the City's Prelate in her sway,
they wrung their cloaks, they gnashed
their teeth
and plotted to destroy her.

So, Cyril, bishop of the land
(who's now proclaimed to be a saint),
with priests aroused the mob
to pick up oyster tiles and flay her
to painful and disgraceful death.

* * *

The good and truth have not prevailed.
A mob will take up eager arms
to follow those who shout the loudest
to rally them with lies and vengeance
and slanderous alarms.

The Good Man's life was worth a thousand
of mobsters, those who nailed him silent.
And each of those who used perverse
devotion
to him as reason to snuff out
the Light of Alexandria
did not amount to thousandth part of her.

* * *

The Man is worshipped, misremembered;
his name is used in crimes and lies,
but more than a billion silly people
pretend they follow in his ways.

The Woman almost is forgotten,
and maybe that is just as well,
because as human records tell:
intentions and memories are rotten—
a thousand holy wars were fought in
the names of martyrs. All were hell!

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.

AOF Volunteer Opportunities

Calling all volunteers! Send us your ideas for projects and/or volunteer using the contact info on page two. Open positions:

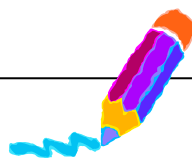
- *Post-meeting lunch coordinator*
- *Archive Committee*
- *AOF Librarian*
- *Program Committee Volunteer(s)*
- *Caring Committee Volunteer(s)*
- *Publicity Volunteer*
- *Freethought Day/Darwin Day*

Interested? Call 916-447-3589!

Newsletter Freebie Policy

We'll be pleased to send one free newsletter to any person upon request, but after that time, please subscribe to AOF's newsletter for only \$12 per year. Or, better yet, why not become a member? That way, you'll get our newsletter FREE as part of your membership!

Want the latest AOF board minutes?
E-mail aofboard@aofonline.org!





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

We're on the Web!
aofonline.org

August Calendar of Events

AOF General Meeting	Sunday, August 12, 1:30 - 4 PM
AOF/HAGSA Joint Movie Night	Friday, August 10, 7 - 9 PM
AOF Board meeting	Sunday, August 19, 9:30 AM
AOF Adopt-A-Highway	Sunday, August 26, 8-10 AM
HAGSA Early August Potluck (see page six)	Sunday, August 5, 3-5 PM
SORT Monthly Meeting (http://home.surewest.net/kitray)	Tuesday, August 28, 7:30-9 PM
HAGSA Late August Potluck (see page six)	Sunday, August 26, 3-5 PM

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" (2007-10-07), and (2) a science and humanity celebration - Sacramento's "Darwin Day Educational Gala" (2008-02-10). 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.

