

AOF Board of Directors Election

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
David Herbert	90.91%	20
Pamella Rivera	95.45%	21
Fran Evanisko	95.45%	21
Ruth Rezos	90.91%	20
Roger Zabkie	100.00%	22
Ken Nahigian	95.45%	21
Mynga Futrell	95.45%	21
Total Respondents: 22		

Thanks to all who participated in the recent Board election. And congratulations to new AOF Director David Herbert!

❖ ❖ This Month's Headliner Event ❖ ❖

➤ Origin of the American Medicine Show – Andrei Pischalnikoff aka Dr R Snick

Sunday, January 26, 2025, 2 pm – 4 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, see map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

● Prepare to be shocked, amazed, entertained, and possibly grossed out. The good Doctor R. Snick will be back to shed light on the origins of the patent medicine shows that began in England then spread in the US like an unfortunate rash.

You'll learn of operations ranging from small time to sophisticated shows that made outrageous profits using slick marketing and performances to sell "Snake Oil" and certain unspeakable devices. These medicines and devices offered false cures. False, we stress. Please don't try these. But they were especially entertaining to a gullible nation before the arrival of radio, film and the FDA.

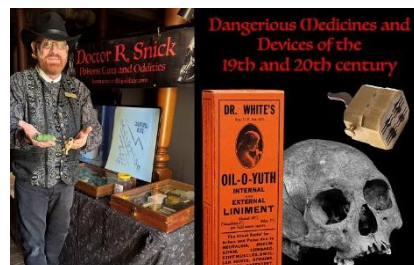
Andrei Pischalnikoff, AKA Doctor R. Snick, has been a storyteller using various media for several years. He began his journey speaking about 19th and 20th century quackery (fake medicine) and oddities in 2022. He delivers captivating shows about patent medicines, snake oils, medicine shows, sticky oddities and Memento Mori while focusing on the audience's interests.

This event is our holiday gift to you. You don't need to get us anything.

Discover much more about Andrei at WWW.DoctorRSnick.com.

Contact for details: See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

A free event with free parking. Bring snacks or a beverage to share if you can, and maybe crinkled old bills for the donation jug. AOF will provide cool, clear water.



❖ ❖ Other Upcoming AOF Events ❖ ❖

➤ Free Movie and Discussion

Friday, January 10, 2025, 7 pm – 9 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

● It's a free in-person Movie Night at Sacramento's Reason Center, in a quiet room with cozy seating and a huge screen and refreshments right at hand. The movie name is a secret because of our MPLC License and certain legal folderol -- but we can slip hints. From 1980, it's a comedy starring Dan Ackroyd and John Belushi, in which Blues-singing brothers reunite



their old R&B band to save the Catholic home where they grew up, outrunning the police and Nazis as they tear through Chicago. It holds a critical approval rating of 7.9/10, and is a cult classic.

AOF and Reason Center co-sponsor. The team provides popcorn and other munchies - feel free to bring your own snacks as well. We also encourage a post-film discussion, which makes this educational if you stretch the word a bit. No fee to attend. But we always appreciate donations.

Contact for details: See <http://reasoncenter.com/contact/>

Free Movie Night is a joint venture of AOF and Reason Center. Suggest your own fave film for next time!

➤ Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, January 11, 2025, 9 am – 11 am

Location: Near W. Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

● Out on Highway 99, for two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road, runs a lonely stretch -- our stretch! Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. We have cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. One of our more successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So join us! Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures.

As usual, the stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The cleanup takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

To get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5 past the Natomas area. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Park in the park-&-ride lot if possible, or somewhere near it.

This is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home. Also please review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-a-highway/covid19>.

Contact: 916-805-9337 (Don Knutson), or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

In case of rain, fog, excessive mud, rapture or locust plague, the Cleanup will be rescheduled. If unsure, call the Activity Captain (Don).



➤ Board of Directors Meeting

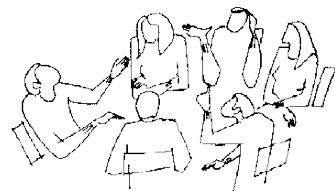
Tuesday, Jan 14, 2025, 7 pm – 8 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>

● An AOF planning meeting, mainly for AOF directors & officers but open to all. These happen as required, and are a lot more fun than they sound. Join us, meet the Board, keep an eye on the shenanigans. We love visitors. We often have goodies. And maybe you'll have some good ideas, hm?

Note, this will be an in-person meeting, so be sure vaccinations are current, or wear a mask, or just don't cough.

Contact for details: See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.



❖ ❖ Other Upcoming (non-AOF) Events ❖ ❖

Here are local *non*-AOF events worthy of attention. We won't list them all, just highlights. For more, please check the calendar links below.

➤ Atheists Community video clips & discussion

Monday, Jan 6, 2025, 7:30 pm – 10:30 pm

Location: An online event. To attend, wait for the meeting time, then click

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81807086862?pwd=ZjUyamt1b2dlc1N5bEZ6Q0w1Um00QT09>.

A fun teleconference about Atheism, Logic, Reason, Thoughtfulness - accentuated by videos and of course, by you.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/305141567/>.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts and a Brunch

Saturday, January 11, 2025, 10 am – 11:30 am, at Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305214711/>.

Sunday, January 12, 2025, 9:30 am – 11:30 am, at Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMWmTanVP7>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305230007/>.

Sunday, January 19, 2025, 9:30 am – 11 am, at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gq72KkmcC4bU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305142846/>.

• Like to hang with like-minded people? Want to meet freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get the morning munchies? Join us for our "Blasphemy Breakfast." We don't blaspheme all that much, but dark mutterings may emerge ... be warned. A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups. Please RSVP (see the links).



➤ Saturday Night Hangouts

Saturdays, January 11 and January 25, 2025, 6 pm – 9 pm

Location: Online events! Meet by teleconference; to attend, just click the attendance link at the event time: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83092441353?pwd=Wmp6RVIUR1Q0dFZZMIFQUIVodTN0dz09>.

• An online meetup on various Saturdays, at 6:00 PM Pacific Time. The first half hour is for greeting friends, catching up, welcoming newcomers and having fun. No politics please! Then games, trivia, movies. Options may grow.

Details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305220813/> and <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/hprbjtyhccbhc/>.

➤ Sunday Assembly & Potluck

Sunday, January 12, 2025, 11 am – 1 pm (doors open 10:30am, presentation at 11)

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Suite 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

• Sunday Assembly is a secular celebration of *you*, with music, readings, food and speakers, plus entertainment for children. Featured presenter is **Amanda McCarthy**, representing [River City Food Bank](#). A champion for food security, she has led hunger relief efforts across California and Washington. Bring a food dish to share if you wish – it's a potluck too!

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305231312/>.

➤ Celebrate the New Year with the Sunday Reason Band

Friday, January 17, 2025, 7 pm – 8:30 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>

• Come celebrate the New Year with Sunday Reason, a secular spirit rock band born at the Reason Center! We play classic, country and folk rock hits by bands like the America, the Beatles, the Eagles, CCR and many more. Many of our songs have a positive non-religious spiritual or emotional message, and/or are about life in California and the West. We'll provide intro comments for those songs to let everyone know why we chose to share them with our "RC" friends.

Doors will open at 6:30 pm. Please feel free to BYO snacks and non-alcoholic beverages. We look forward to seeing you!

Note, a \$10 cover charge applies.

Details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305318025/>.



➤ Ancient Christian Study Group

Sunday, January 19, 2025, 12 pm – 11:30 am

Location: Mast Coffee, 1430 28th Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ngQJLoXkR7YzBtCZ9>.

• The history of ancient Christianity is endlessly fascinating. Don Fox and Steve Thoreson are facilitating this meet up to review the history of Rome, religions of the Roman Empire, Gnosticism, Mystery cults, history of Christian persecutions, biographies of major Christians, the history of the Bible and many other related topics. If you ever wanted to sort out Eusebius from Clement, or Constantine from Diocletian, or the Vulgate from the Septuagint, then this group is for you. Previous biblical knowledge is not required to participate.

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/305173582/>.

➤ Coffee and Community at Reason Center

Sunday, January 26, 2025, 10 am – 11:30 am

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac., map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

• Come to the Reason Center Library for coffee, tea and treats. This event is just a casual conversation on topics of the day, and newcomers are welcome. Hope to see you soon!

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/ptsxktyhccbjc/>.

➤ BHNBS New Years Bash

Sunday, January 26, 2025, 4 pm – 6 pm

Location: Dubplate Kitchen & Jamaican Cuisine, 3419 El Camino Ave, Sacramento, see map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/QsTVPG7SngJHVaUm6>.

• Start the new year right. Please join the Black Humanists and Nonbelievers at the bi-monthly dinner this January. This is a great opportunity for new people trying out BHNBS events. This month we are trying Jamaican Cuisine, yum!

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/305390017/>.

Note: Please RSVP and honor your RSVP. The group must have 3 RSVPs to move forward.

➤ More Events – So many Calendars!

Really, there's more. And plans often change, because we're human. So don't trust the list above. To learn of all those other events, please bookmark & follow these links:

- Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>
- The Reason Center calendar, <https://www.meetup.com/ReasonCenterEvents/events/calendar/>
- Black Humanists of Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Recovery from Religion Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Skeptics events, <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/calendar/>
- Sunday Assembly Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Central Valley Alliance of Atheists & Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/calendar/>

You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it has hosted hundreds of events and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission: to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government. All good work.

But to continue, "RC" relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To join or donate (or learn about RC), visit ReasonCenter.org.

Suggest a Meeting

Know a compelling speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell the AOF Program Committee! Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click "Program Committee" in the drop-down line, and enter your thoughtful suggestion. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

We suggest it meekly. See <http://www.aofonline.org/learn/committees.html> for opportunities.

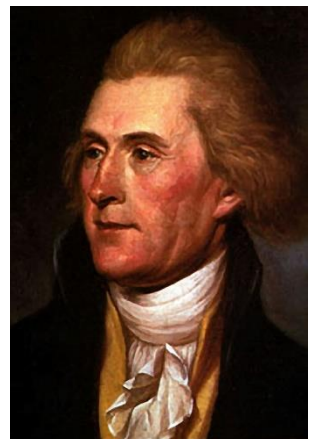
❖ ❖ Secular Holidays ❖ ❖

➤ Religious Freedom Day

Thursday, January 16, 2025

[National Religious Freedom Day](#) is in the truest sense both a religious *and* a secular holiday. It marks the anniversary of the passage of the Virginia [Statute of Religious Freedom](#), the 1786 colonial statute that disestablished the Anglican Church in Virginia and set the foundation for Separation of Church and State. Thomas Jefferson marked this statute as one of his greatest achievements. Among other things it declared the following:

- "that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical,
- "that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions any more than our opinions in physics or geometry,
- "that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of Religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities."



Congress first marked Religious Freedom Day in 1993. It is a day to reflect on the hard-won separation of civic and religious life, and to refresh our resolve to inform fellow citizen about liberty of conscience in matters of faith, a liberty which must include both freedom *of* and *from* religion. Because otherwise, it is no freedom at all.

➤ Thomas Paine Day Wednesday, January 29, 2025

Thomas Paine Day, also called Freethinkers Day, promotes appreciation of freethought through the life and works of American patriot Thomas Paine. Paine (1737-1809) was a courageous freethinker whose life and work inspired great social and political advancement across world. Raised in England, Paine played a vital role in the American and French Revolutions. His books and pamphlets, including *The Age of Reason*, *The Rights of Man*, and *Common Sense*, gained a mass audience for the liberating philosophy of the Enlightenment.



Paine arrived in America in 1774 at Benjamin Franklin's request. On January 10, 1776, he published *Common Sense*, a remarkable and powerful republican pamphlet which had an immediate success. He served in the Revolutionary War under General Greene and later in official positions appointed by congress and in the Pennsylvania legislature. In his later publication, *Age of Reason*, Paine expressed that "all religions are in their nature mild and benign" when not associated with political systems. Paine was the quintessential Deist of the 18th century.

Between March 1791 and February 1792 he published numerous editions of his *Rights of Man*, in which he defended the French Revolution. The words of Thomas Paine inspired many to strive for political, economic and social advancement. He was among the first to call for an end to slavery and the establishment of human rights around the world.

In the 1990s, the *Truth Seeker* magazine began celebrating Freethinkers Day on Thomas Paine's birthday in order to educate the public on the importance of Thomas Paine in the history of freedom. Its poetic description of the day, on [this webpage](#), is worthy to repeat:

This day honors Thomas Paine and is on his birthday, January 29. This is a global holiday and is simply celebrated by giving and displaying a White Rose with Thorns. The simple beauty and purity, the fragility and yet not without the danger of drawing blood by a thorn prick, makes this an excellent icon for those Freethinkers who want to reflect on Freedom and promote the ideas of personal liberty as expressed by Paine in The Declaration of Independence.

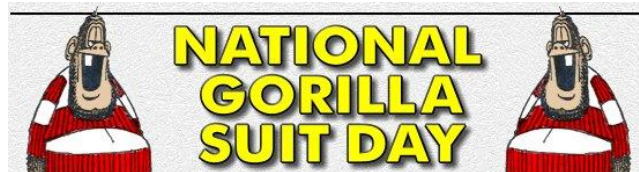
This is a holiday that celebrates the concept of Freedom by honoring the man who declared our Independence by giving us Common Sense and The Declaration. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Thomas Paine.

So you are welcome to celebrate with us. Just remember a White Rose with Thorns.

Also in the 1990s, the Thomas Paine Foundation began celebrating the birthday of Thomas Paine on January 29th, a Thomas Paine Day proclamation on June 8 and other Paine theme events during the year.

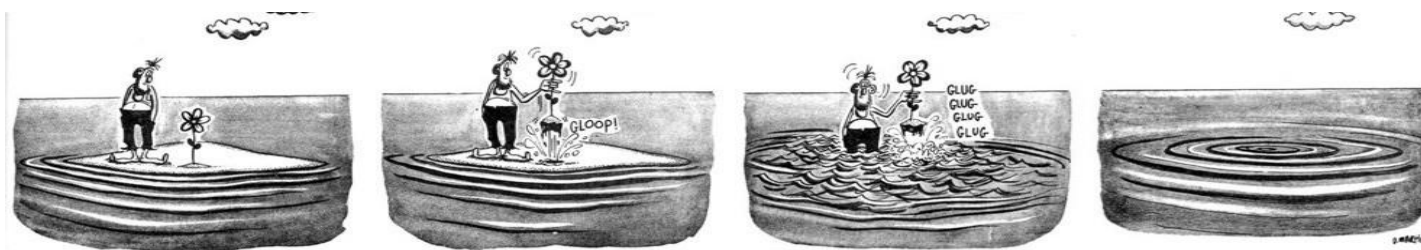
➤ Gorilla Suit Day Friday, January 31, 2025

From the sublime to the ridiculous! Close on the heels of Thomas Paine day comes [National Gorilla Suit Day](#), a pseudo-holiday invented by famed Mad Magazine cartoonist [Don Martin](#). The effluvium of controversy continues to surround this secular celebration: to some it is a blatant conspiracy of gorilla suit manufacturers to promote their wares, others see it as one of America's more important and venerable holidays. Its origins lie in a 1963 comic strip. Don Martin aficionados later evolved the tradition that "NGSD" falls on the last day of January each year.



Whatever your opinion of NGSD, few deny the cartooning genius of Don Martin. Art historian Charles Taylor described Martin's unique style of art and wit:

His people are big-nosed schmoes with sleepy eyes, puffs of wiry hair, and what appear to be life preservers under the waistline of their clothes. Their hands make delicate little mincing gestures and their strangely thin, elongated feet take a 90-degree turn at the toes as they step forward. Whether they're average Joes or headhunters, Martin's people share the same physique: a tottering tower of obloids. Martin puts the bodies of these characters through every kind of permutation, treating them as much like gadgets as the squirting flowers and joy buzzers that populate his gags: glass eyes pop out from a pat on the back; heads are steamrolled into manhole-cover shapes. All of this accompanied by a Dadaist panoply of sound effects found nowhere else: *shtoink! shklorp! fwoba-dap!* It's unlikely Samuel Beckett was aware of Don Martin, but had he been he might have recognized a kindred spirit.



Is no one really an atheist in a foxhole?

By Steve McKerracher, from <https://qr.ae/pYKuCF>



This is my Grandfather, William Neil McKerracher.

This picture was rather famous, and was published internationally. He was wounded in a foxhole by a mortar, went to the field hospital, full of the wounded, screaming, and the dying, and there was nobody to help him. So he wrapped his head wound up himself and went back to his post as an anti-aircraft spotter.

Sounds more like a hell-hole than a fox-hole.

He was on the beach at Normandy, and in WW2 for the duration, then he was in the Korean War, and then a UN peacekeeper for a while.

He also had 8 kids, all 8 of which are successful and productive members of society. He was mayor of his small town for two terms after his distinguished military career.

He was a syndicated columnist for a national gardening magazine.

I've talked to all his kids, and people from the town he lived in, and have literally never heard anything bad said about him while he was living, or after he passed.

He was a lifelong atheist.



Christ's favorite part of the Second Coming was ziplines.



Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at www.aofonline.org.

AOF President: Redoubtable Roger Zabkie
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Event Coordinator: Prolific Pamella Rivera
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Program chair: Super Susan McLean
Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif
Directors at large:
Fran Evanisko, Kaeleigh Pontif, David Herbert

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182
- Or visit <http://www.aofonline.org/contact> to e-message us

How to Join AOF:

Visit <http://www.aofonline.org/join>, or come to a meeting. We have forms.

AOF's Facebook pages (two):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers-AOF-104763721971742>

AOF Mission Statement:

"The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives."

What is a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the best means to protect the liberty and intellectual commerce of citizens. "... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries" (James Madison, 1803).

Our vision: to be a venue where secular and unchurched citizens can socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy shared company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or (*cough*) religion. We welcome the fair-minded of all political persuasions and preferences. Be respectful, and you may join.

Donations to AOF are tax deductible, and the newsletter is free by email. Please share with sympathetic friends.

Your humble editor is Fran Evanisko.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See: <http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.