

search for "hands-on" solutions that will correct society's ills, not mystical, supernatural reliance on prayer.

Greg Simpson
Clearwater

During the first week of May, Judge Terrell Hodges ruled that a Duval County school policy allowing student-led messages at graduation didn't violate the Constitution, and the messages could include prayer.

Gray Thomas, an attorney representing some high school students opposed to the prayers, has filed a notice of appeal.

The ruling led the attorney who filed it, Matt Stayer, to conclude that it was unnecessary to pursue the measure to allow nonsectarian student-led prayer at noncompulsory events.

With that, the whole issue simply died.

Where is it all heading?

I see vs. Weisman. In June 1992, the Supreme Court ruled that the school district of Providence, R.I. had violated the Constitution by inviting a cleric to deliver a graduation prayer. The court said a non-religious student should not be forced to hear a religious message as a condition of receiving a diploma.

But federal courts have found that student-initiated prayer is another matter.

The current wildfire of litigation seems to be centered in Texas. Twenty-two lawsuits in that state alone nitpick over the conditions of prayer at school events. And pouring gasoline on the fires is none other than Ayatollah Pat Robertson.

His American Center for Law and Justice (ACLI) is taking the movement nationwide. Based on the "free speech" concept allowing the right to pray, his group is spending millions of dollars to persuade school officials across the nation that students have a constitutional right to pray.

Jay A. Sekulow, chief counsel of the ACLI,

threatened to send "legal SWAT teams" to communities that blocked a prayer or "censored" its contents.

In opposition, the ACLU stresses the separation of state and church. "They don't know who to believe," claims Gwendolyn Gregory, deputy general counsel for the National School Boards Association. "They get these missives from the ACLU and the ACLI, and they are totally contradictory."

Editor:

It seems that the Florida Legislature has missed the real point of the problem of prayer in public schools.

I was a teacher in public school systems at the high school and community college level in Michigan and Florida. I saw the discomfort on faces of Jewish, Hindu and Atheist students when they were subjected to this behavior during athletic events and graduation ceremonies. The people that are against prayer in public school have a point when we are reminded of these students, but hurt feelings about forced prayer are not as serious as giving legitimacy to superstition. There are no scientific facts to support the existence of any god or gods. Every religion must turn to faith. No one disagrees with that, but public praying to a supernatural being for guidance or even worse to ask that the laws of nature be broken for personal convenience goes against every scientific principle and law.

Once the public schools allow prayer, then we throw science out and superstition comes in. Make room for angels, spirits, witches, sacrifices and contacts with the dead.

The students in a science class can take a vote, then tell the teacher that the chapter on astronomy is incorrect. "After all, it says right here in Genesis..."

Perhaps the legislature should open their dictionaries and look up miracle, superstition, religion and faith before they make any final decisions on this matter.

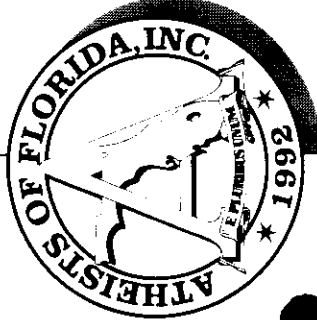
Jim Strayer

Ormond by the Sea, FL



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Fire Drill

WHERE WE DREAMING or screaming? The latter, it turns out as atheists in Florida awoke March 2 to discover that the House Education Committee had passed a bill that would allow a "non-sectarian" voluntary prayer before assemblies, graduations, football games and other voluntary attendance events, if a majority of students agree.

The vote was 13 to 5. Legislators voting in favor included: Larcenia Bullard, D-Miami; Josephus Eggelcton, D-Lauderdale Lakes; Tim Ireland, R-Cape Coral; and Tracy Upchurch, D-St. Augustine. Opposing: Mary Brennan, D-Pinellas Park; Shirley Brown, D-Sarasota; Ron Glickman, D-Tampa; and John Rayson, D-Pompano Beach. You might want your legislators know what you think of their vote.

Rep. Beryl Burke, D-Miami was a co-sponsor of the bill along with Randy Mackey, D-Lake City. Specifically, HB 1679 would allow prayer if "planned and led by students and if a majority of the students support the use of school property for the prayer."

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Where do the courts stand?
A moment of silent meditation in public school has been legal for two decades. In 1989, a federal appeals court in Atlanta struck down prayer at school sports events as unconstitutional. That ruling is binding in Florida. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1992 that a prayer at a graduation is unconstitutional even when it is nonsectarian and takes place at a voluntary event!

So what were these Legislators hanging their hats on? A ruling by a federal appeals court for a southeastern district had allowed prayer at non-classroom events if it is nonsectarian and does not "proselytize".

But get this: Rep. Charlie Roberts, D Titusville, actually acknowledged atheists, maintaining that they would be uncomfortable if the rest of a class voted to pray. Said Roberts, "The majority's not always right, and unless you're willing to say that, you shouldn't sit in this seat."

EDITOR:

There is one nation under God and it has school prayer. It is Iran. There the majority have imposed their religious views, practices and prayers on everyone.

Church and state must be kept separate in America. A school prayer bill is being shepherded through the Florida Legislature. It will allow student-led prayer at school events.

Our founding fathers sought freedom of religion, not only the freedom to practice one's own religion of choice, but also the freedom not to be forced to practice a religion one doesn't believe in.

A prayer cannot be nonsectarian. It will always be exclusionary to some minority groups and divisive rather than unifying. To whose god is the prayer said? Students will

(continued page 9)

"There's no difference between God and Satan—it's just P. R."

—Brent Yachio

10 April / May 1994



P.O. Box 530102
Miami, FL 33153-0102

ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED

I'S BEEN, PARDON THE EXPRESSION, a helluva month.

As I'm sure most of you are aware by now, on March 12th I received the Florida Humanist of the Year award from the Humanists of Florida. I'd be remiss if I didn't take some time to thank a few people who made my journey from an unknown, inactive atheist in 1989 to "possibly Florida's most famous atheist" (more on that later). First on my list is Victor St. John. If Victor had not taken the time

and invested the cash from his own pocket to run the "Atheists Wanted" ads in the *St. Petersburg Times*, I might still be a typical closet atheist, feeling alone and unappreciated, if not reviled. Thanks, Victor.

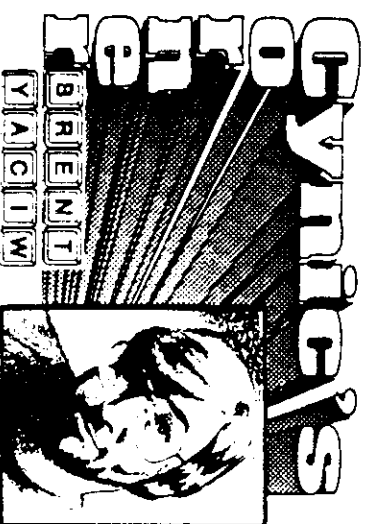
Next up is Ken Poulsen. Ken built the Humanists of the Suncoast from a nearly-defunct group to a strong organization in large part the same way he recruited me: he contacts everyone he hears about with a sympathetic viewpoint. Not one to haggle over semantic differences between atheist, humanist, freethinker, or agnostic, Ken opens the doors to all

and says, "Let's work together." Many AOF members in the Tampa area are now HOIS members as well, and our membership has swelled from his support and promotion. It's been a long time since we had as many attendees as we had at our last meeting at Chi-Chi's.

Of course, I'd's tireless work for our group (especially on this newsletter), as well as the efforts of Christos and others in Miami, are due for credit as well. Without that support, I would have no AOF Forums to appear on and receive no complimentary letters from as far as New York on my columns and other efforts. Certainly, it would be much harder to justify the "famous" appellation.

Of fame, without the fortune.

I said I'd get back to the "most famous atheist" comment.



A Few Words on a Few Topics

Here's where I add more gratitude to a man named Hugh Paulk. He's not a member. I'm not even sure he's an atheist. (He declines to discuss the subject.) However, he's been of greater assistance to me personally, than thus to our media efforts, than most of you know. Hugh is one of my chief cheerleaders in the newspaper section. He has

written letters in my support, called editors and backed me up, and was at least a large part of getting an article published about yours truly that appeared in the Largo-Seminole, Clearwater, North Pinellas, and City regional editions of the *St. Petersburg Times*. The editor interviewed me for about two hours, resulting in about a one-third page article that was generally complimentary. This is the article that termed me "possibly Florida's most famous atheist," which, depending on how you measure fame, might even be true. I'm relatively certain that more of my letters have been published in the last three years, especially since I send them to many different papers. The Forum adds to my fame, as does newsletter distribution (AOF, HOIS, HOI, MIA) and other writings. However, the goal here is not personal fame, but the widest possible distribution of a rationalist viewpoint. In this light, for example, I've had twenty-six letters in the *Tallahassee Democrat* so far this year, though only four have been in my own name. (Can you believe no one recognizes "Robert G. Ingersoll" or "Bert Russell"?) Alas, I'm not paid for these efforts, nor getting rich from pure fame (this is not a plea for donations!).

Video Vanguard

Along the lines of "spreading the words," I include my videotaping and copying service, which allows more people to see speakers and AOF Forums than would normally be possible. At the rate I'm going, I figure by about 2009 I'll have recouped my equipment investment . . .

Prayer

continued from page 1

be stigmatized and isolated for not participating.

Morality and family values do not come from prayer, from Christianity, from religion, or even necessarily from a belief in a god. The notion that school prayer will solve societal problems is absurd and a cop-out. In time we tackled these problems head on rather than busying ourselves with irrelevant nonissues such as school prayer.

Presently no student is prohibited from praying in school; he or she can pray silently at any time. Why must certain students insist that their religious practices and prayer, even if in the majority, be forced on everyone else. This is not fair.

Fred D. Poplin
University Park

The plot sickens

On March 15, the Senate Education Committee found the bill on its agenda. Sit down. They voted nine to one in favor. The lone Senator in opposition was William Turner, D-Hialeah. He was the single Florida State Senator in the committee who understood the constitutional aspects of the issue.

Impressively, on a single day, the Opinion page of the *St. Petersburg Times* inked not one but three letters on the subject penned by members of Atheists of Florida. Some examples:

■ ■ ■
The voice of our state legislators in passing the so-called "voluntary" prayer school bill is stupid, craven and anti-American.

Anti-American? Yes, anti-American. It's anti-American to knowingly pass a law that contravenes the U.S. Constitution, as interpreted by the highest court in the land -- the U.S. Supreme Court. It's anti-American to attempt to subvert the law of the land by using false and tricky language in an effort to "get around" the constitutional prohibition against intermingling of church and state.

Let us hope that Gov. Chiles will speak as clearly and forcibly in rejecting this patently unconstitutional bill and thereby save us taxpayers the cost of litigating the issue in the courts.

Sidney M. Ginzert
Gullport

■ ■ ■
Not many Americans understand that the separation of church and state provided a democratic environment that permitted all religions to grow and prosper, while allowing freedom to those who chose to question, to follow their conscience through the multitude of options that exist in this unknowable universe.

Most of the religious leaders who push for prayers in the schools know this, but they have a hidden agenda. Their ultimate goal is to make this country a theocracy and,

although they keep the pressure on for school prayers, they are also now involved in pushing for school vouchers and electing their "stealth" candidates to public office without declaring their secret objectives. These people are very dangerous. They threaten our basic freedoms and democratic institutions.

Florence Morgenroth
St. Petersburg

If only the bill could be kept off the agenda of the Legislature, it would never come up for a vote. This meant it was time to start playing politics.

The controversy became enormous. The next thing you know, it expanded to debates over bills requiring students to be taught about the Holocaust (H 1077) and slavery (H 2665). So knotted up was the entanglement, House leaders turned to Rep. Art Simon of Kendall since he is a lawyer.

Simon wrote a revised version which required the decision to allow nonsectarian prayer to be made by students and the prayer must be led by a student volunteer.

As we sat back watching the story unfold in a sort of stunned amusement, it became clear that the reason the education standards are slipping so sharply in Florida is not because of a lack of forced religious training, but because it is being dictated by politicians instead of professional educators.

■ ■ ■
Our state representatives should be ashamed of themselves! Bowing to the demands of the so-called "religious right" to allow organized prayer, student-led or not, in our public schools is unconscionable as well as unconstitutional. It is indeed a sorry state of affairs when our elected officials "don't have the spine to oppose" such nonsense.

The sponsor of the bill, Sen. Charles Williams of Tallahassee, throws up a smoke-screen when he claims that the main reason for such legislation is that school prayer will alleviate "crime" and "immorality." The "true" sponsors of such laws are the Christian fundamentalists who will stop at nothing to impose their narrow brand of theology on all of us. They claim that they speak for a majority of Americans in their attempts to "Christianize" our country. This claim is simply false. Millions of Christians among the mainline denominations (such as the Presbyterian Church USA, the National Council of Churches and others) as well as those of other faiths do not support such tactics. And the same goes for the millions of humanists, atheists, agnostics, etc., in our country as well.

If our representatives are truly interested in fighting crime, drugs and violence among today's youth, they should be looking for rational, logical methods to deal with such problems. Ultimately it is reason and the



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Newspaper correspondence should be sent to Tampa Bay Chapter.

Membership dues (under 25 yrs.)
Student: 5.00
Individual: 25.00
Couple: 30.00
Sustaining: \$50.00

Annual dues are pro-rated on a four-month basis with annual renewals due by January 1.

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Atheists of Florida, Inc. is a non-profit educational organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts for the membership. Membership dues should be sent to the chapter of interest. Direct general correspondence to Miami Chapter: P.O. Box 530102 / Miami, FL 33153 0102. Contact phone is (305) 936 0210.

The A. of F. newsletter, published ten times per year, is provided free of charge to our members as a medium of exchanging views. May be edited for clarity or length. Atheists of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

The Accidental Tourist

written by Anne Tyler



Plans for the future?



John Quirindongo



YOU WON'T HAVE TIME for two books. One will be enough," advises the protagonist and writer of the *Accidental Tourist* guidebook. Life is a voyage and we must be prepared to make plans, infers the author, Anne Tyler. We must have minimum baggage. One love at a time is all we can handle.

The protagonist and his wife have suffered a loss of an only son who was an innocent customer killed in a holdup at a local store. The loss affected the marriage and their feelings towards each other. They decide to separate. The wife decides to move out and the protagonist decides to keep the dog who reminds him of his son and the thought of the death haunts him every day.

In a larger sense, we are all like dogs trained to be useful by immediate reward. Is death best handled as dogs do...by a short grieving period? Is marriage and children necessarily a combination for happiness? Is divorce or separation another way of saying that death has entered the relationship?

Anne Tyler answers this question by having the protagonist's older sister, who has spent her life keeping house for her brothers, marry a lonely younger man. She

leaves her husband after a brief period to go back to keeping house for her brothers. The protagonist suggests to the grieving husband, "Call and tell her 'I just can't get things under control on my job. Help me get things under control.'" The woman's estrangement is solved by giving her a sense of self worth, usefulness and a job. The marriage is saved.

When the protagonist and a dog trainer are in a full blown relationship, he suggests, "You should send your kid to a better school. He does not know his math." The dog trainer replies with, "Don't suggest anything that you can't back up with money for a full education. Not for a full term." She wants a full-time relationship. She's in love.

In Paris, the protagonist comes to a final decision. He tells his wife that he loves her but it isn't who you love that is important, "but who you are when you're with the one you love" that makes all the difference. The dog trainer mother makes him happy and he chooses her.

The protagonist starts home...his back hurts...the baggage is too heavy. He is one of the walking wounded and his days of quiet desperation are over. He leaves his baggage on the Paris street. A son-look-alike hails a taxi and helps him in. After a U-turn, the taxi rides down the winding streets. The protagonist looks at the "son" and the "son" does not look back. Accidentally he sees the dog trainer who is hailing a taxi and is surrounded by baggage. He welcomes her aboard.

Are we emotionally like dogs? Do we need love? Do we need to be touched? Do we need praise? Do we abhor criticism? Do we feel better in our relationships when we are useful? Do we need to give as well as get love? Must we deal with death, divorce and loss of friendship by leaving our baggage behind? The answer to all these questions, Anne Tyler tells us, is yes. Do men and women view happiness the same? The answer is yes.

Anne Tyler is not only an author but she is a poet with a discerning eye and most of all a thinking woman who has struck responsive chords that are universal and apply to all cultures and all races...men as well as women, thus elevating a simple story to a work of art. "You can't just make plans. Things just happen." There is no God and no one can control the future. We must handle our lives looking forward towards the future in a singular fashion and let the emotionally depressing past die as quickly as possible. **A**

Atheists of Florida
charter member
John Quirindongo
lives in Miami

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI

The Miami Chapter will hold a lecture-meeting on May 22nd at the Main Library of Ft. Lauderdale at 2:00 pm, Rooms A&B. The topic by Dr. John Xanthopoulos will be: "The Philosophical Approach to Multiculturalism".

TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will meet Saturday, May at the Clearwater East Public Library from 10:30 am to noon. For more information: Ed Golly 839-7567.

MANA-SOTA

Mana-Sota Chapter will meet on May 29th from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Marie Selby Public Library, 1001 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota.

Directions: I-75 south to exit 39. West on Fruitville Rd. to N. Tamiami Tr. (U.S. 41). Right on U.S. 41 to the first traffic light (Blvd. of The Arts). Left turn, and the Library is at the end of the Blvd. on the right. There is a large parking lot next to the library.

legislators if that's your bag; call them if it's easier. Make noise. Support others who are making noise. If you see a letter attacking an atheist's viewpoint, write in to defend him or her, even if you don't know the writer.

Danger Approaches

I'm not trying to sound paranoid here, but the attacks on atheism are taking new forms and getting stronger. I'd like to note a particularly dangerous trend here, and suggest arguments to address the issue.

Defining us out of existence. This is a side result of secularizing many religious terms: "soul" used for consciousness, "spirit" for emotional enthusiasm, "angel" for a good person, "religion" for any belief or thought system, even "god" for the sum of all human aspirations. Thus writers can claim that anyone having a strong ethical system is religious whether or not he believes in a god, or that we all have "souls" that require "care and feeding." This is semantic strategy at its worst: if we allow, even endorse, such usage, we clear a path for such false accusations as calling atheism a religion, saying everyone believes in a god, or using "fulfillment of spiritual needs" to describe the entire spectrum of human behavioral modification.

We have no "spiritual needs" because we have no spirit; even the "sum of human aspirations" is a false unity since human aspirations differ as greatly as the gods they invented to describe them, and to borrow a phrase, "atheism is a religion like good health is a disease." We must call to task anyone who lets fly with these non-terms as if they were acceptable to all. **A**

Ed McDougall reports —

THE MANA-SOTA CHAPTER of A of F held its April meeting on May 1st at the Selby Public Library. The meeting was attended by only four persons (including myself) but I was successful in signing up two of them as new members. Our meetings will be held regularly from now on at the Marie Selby Public Library, 1001 Boulevard of The Arts, Sarasota. We will meet from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month. Our chapter now has five dues-paying members and I expect to sign up at least two more at the next meeting. It was a pleasure to again visit with my fellow atheists at the Tampa Bay Chapter on April 30th. I hope, in the near future, to plan a field trip by the Mana-Sota Chapter to one of the Tampa meetings.

Cynic continued

By now, you're probably wondering if this is all just self-aggrandizement, etc. There is a point that has to do with you. I mentioned in my acceptance speech at the Humanist Conference that one reason I received the award was to give an incentive to all the rest of the "normal" atheists and humanists out there. I obviously don't have years in the field as an activist. I'm certainly not rich. I'm not retired with oodles of free time; in fact, I'm working the equivalent of a sixty-hour a week job. Yet I'm getting noticed, and all for doing things any one of you could do with a little time and effort. Set a goal of at least three letters per week, to as many publications as possible. Show up at meetings whenever you can. Write

Violations

—Florence Morgenroth

FOLLOWING ARE A NUMBER of state/church violations found last year in an evangelical magazine called *Christianity Today*. As you can see, they happen all over at every level of government.

Until now, Atheists of Florida and other free-thinker organizations were too small and underfunded to challenge the state and the church.

With the advent of a coalition of free-thinker's organizations such as Atheist Alliance and CODESH, we may have the potential to effect a difference.

At the coming CODESH meeting in Toronto, I suggest we introduce the idea that as a project of the coalition each separate organization research the state/church violations that are occurring in their local and state areas. The facts can then be pooled, exposed, and litigated in class action suits. As a coalition, each individual organization is emboldened with more power and resources. Also, as a coalition, we may be able to draw on the resources of the more prestigious organizations which are better equipped to go into court. I speak of Common Cause, Ralph Nader, ACT-U, Americans United, and Americans for the Progressive Way. There are many law professors teaching in the Universities who are willing to lend a hand with their own services and their students.

Here are some typical transgressions in the state/church Wall of Separation:

* In 1991 Senator Robert C. Byrd funnelled \$41 million in federal research project funds into obscure Wheeling Jesuit College. This windfall was almost three times the yearly college budget of \$14 million. Byrd slipped this huge grant into the fine print of an unrelated bill.

* Millions of dollars are given away every year by the National Science Foundation and other scientific panels which are not reviewed, or subject to scrutiny by the National Science Foundation or any other scientific body. About \$700 million in federal grants were given away in 1992 without review. Is anyone checking where these funds are going today and with what results?

Atheists of Florida member Flo Morgenroth was a former mediator for the Dade County Justice Department and is a member of the ACLU. She lives in St. Petersburg.

million for its parochial schools.

It wasn't enough. The church asked for more. Sister Christine Vladimiroff, Superintendent of Schools for the Cleveland diocese told the *Plain Dealer* that state tax funds should be used to pay for the entire cost of Catholic school education.

* In the 1980's the CIA funnelled money to the Roman Catholic Church in Nicaragua. The money was used by Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo and the Church to support their radio station and newspaper's efforts to topple the Sandanista government. This was a covert CIA operation against our declared Congressional policy.

Our taxes also paid for more than \$12 million worth of school text books we sent to Nicaragua which contained explicit support for Roman Catholicism.

* In 1990, in Ipswich, New Hampshire, the Board of Selectmen enacted a law that gave a \$1,000 property tax abatement to anyone who pays tuition to parochial or other private schools. As a consequence, everyone's taxes were raised.

* When Connecticut governor Lowell Weicher tried to eliminate the \$3.3 million in state subsidies for parochial school transportation, Sister Linda Jones, principal of St. Mary's/St. Michael's School in Derby said she would pray that the governor would burn forever in the fires of hell!

* In many areas of the country, taxpayers pay to bus children to religious schools. In a Minnesota case, the parents of a Lutheran student filed a lawsuit when public education officials stopped providing bus service to the Lutheran school. The parents lost, but why the bus service in the first place?

* In 1991 the Virginia Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Liberty University, founded by Jerry Falwell, was a pervasively sectarian institution since students were forced to meet special religious requirements to enroll, and had to attend all chapel, convocation and religious services. Yet, Liberty received a total of \$2,670,332 during the years 1991 and 1992 from financial aid programs for students ...namely the Tuition Assistance Grant Program and the College Scholarship Assistance Program.

There are at least 15 other religious colleges in Virginia, including Pat Robertson's Regent University and Christendom College — a Roman Catholic institution. How much public funds are going into these religious schools, and elsewhere, in violation of the first amendment?

There are countless incidents going on all the

Report from the Atheist Centre

Vijayawada, India

—LAVANAM

IT IS MORE THAN TWO YEARS since I have visited North America. In these two years, much water has flowed under every bridge in the world. Many changes have taken place in every society. Whether these changes would lead us to a better future or a grim one depends on our own perceptions, as well as efforts — both individually and collectively. Though the technological revolution has brought the world physically closer, politically, socially, culturally, and emotionally, humanity as a whole is suffering from a loss of identity and is torn asunder with hatred and violence, maximizing the agony and suffering. The individual human is lost in the vast jungle of sectarian collectivism, and exploitation.

So, it seems, it is time for everyone to promote mutual understanding, appreciation, and cooperation at every level with a sense of human responsibility. We must rededicate ourselves and become more active. Instead of cursing the darkness, let us light a candle.

Back at the Atheist Centre all the social work programs are going very well with the help and cooperation of all concerned. Last year, in November, we organized an international conference on "Social Progress and Women" in connection with the 80th birth anniversary of Mrs. Saraswathi Gora (1912-) and the 90th birth anniversary of Mr. Gora (1902-1975).

Since 1970 the Atheist Centre has been in touch with Humanist and Atheist groups in the former USSR and Soviet bloc. Gora visited the USSR in 1974 and I visited three times between 1981-83. These visits also helped Soviet humanists to join the main stream of the international humanist movement. So, after the dissolution of the Soviet system, for the first time, an all European Humanist

Congress was held in Berlin, July 25-30 of 1993. Straight from India I went there. It was a satisfying experience to meet like-minded people from the former warring blocs and try to find the unity and vision and purpose while jointly planning for the future. I am also happy that it was decided to hold the next world Humanist Congress in New Delhi, India in the last week of December, 1995. On behalf of India I extended a hearty welcome.

After the Berlin Congress I visited Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Holland, and England visiting with humanists, atheists, social activists, and personal friends strengthening old contacts and promoting new ones. These visits were refreshing and inspiring. In my tour of Europe one young colleague from the Atheist Centre, Miss Ratna, was with me. Because she was denied a visa to the USA she had to return to India.

In November, 1989 I contested to Lok Sabha from Vijayawada as an Independent candidate with a view that the political parties were looking at problems in their partisan interests and the country needed some strong Independent and People's interests shorn of partisan attitudes.

In 1991 I was honored by the Atheists United of Los Angeles with the "Atheist of the Decade" Award for promoting Atheist Universalism.

I have actively associated with a variety of social work programmes like eradication of Caste, promotion of Inter-Caste Marriages, Criminal Reformation, Cyclone Relief and Rehabilitation, Rural Development, youth and student camps, dispelling superstitious beliefs and counselling for the needy. Chairman of "SAMSKAR", an organization to rehabilitate the socially abandoned. Served as non-official member on many committees appointed by the State and Central Governments. Editor of the English monthly *The Atheist*.

I have delivered guest lectures at various universities both in India and abroad on subjects like social work, Humanism, and Gandhian Thought. Participated in several international conferences and seminars on social problems, peace, non-violence and Humanism.

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time from the local to the federal level. They should all be exposed and attacked. However, the most alarming piece of information I ran across was the following in an evangelical magazine. It referred to the Equal Access Act passed by Congress in 1984 allowing students to meet in voluntary religious clubs in public schools. The article, published in 1993, declared that in Texas, at least 500 secondary schools have Christian clubs and the goal of the Southern Baptist convention is to increase the number of student religious clubs to 1500 secondary schools in the state. Through the clubs, they aim to indoctrinate and convert other students to target three non-Christian classmates during the school year for conversion.

This is a dirty, contemptible, evil outrage and dangerous to all religious denominations and free-thinkers.

It must be stopped.



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Battle stations, everyone

Why don't they just use the flying nun?

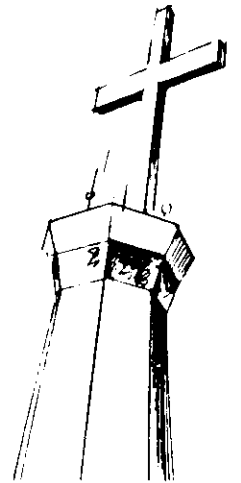
TROUBLE IS, YOU STILL AREN'T saturated with enough images of Chrisinsanity in our culture.

Hillsborough County Aviation Authority to the rescue.

Since the late 1970s, county Commissioner Joe Chillura and Tampa architect Mike Luskey have been trying to establish a chapel somewhere — anywhere — in the airport. Airport Executive Director George Bean has been continually and adamantly opposed to the idea during his full 30-years at the helm, probably most concerned with where it would lead. Bean fears the inevitable avalanche of religious zealots harassing passengers throughout the terminal once a single religious display appears on the grounds.

But once again at the May 5 board meeting the debate was resurrected. Led by Hillsborough County Commissioner and Authority board member Jim Norman, the board has directed that the airport planning consultants look for a site in which to locate a chapel in both the main terminal and airside terminals where airlines have their gates. In its finite wisdom, the board has concluded that prayer cannot be interrupted by such things as paging announcements or boarding calls.

Regrettably, it is expected that Bean will retire next year. Even if he holds out, the fight will likely surface at that time. Atheists of Florida has publicly vowed to fight the issue since it is clearly a public building in which a chapel of any kind has absolutely no place.



*Jews and Seventh-day Adventists,
Saturday avoid their dentists.*

Islamic fundamentalists

On Fridays seldom raise their fists.

Through Sunday's snows and rains and mists,

To church trudge pious Methodists.

A Wednesday even makes the lists

Of holy days for the Papists.

With ashes they will smear their wrists-

Oops, foreheads! Thanks anatomists.

If to my mind came other twists,

I'd tease still more religionists.

I'm glad no day's ruled out for trysts,

For we romantic atheists.

— Benjamin Hochman

Why Society is Indebted to Non-believers

— Lee Eisler

Insight

NON-BELIEVERS HAVE MADE important contributions to Society's welfare, but Society is largely unaware of it.

Some of the people who have made such contributions have won Nobel Prizes. That's how important their work has been.

Yet Society has not been aware of them as *Non-Believers*. Society would rather not be reminded of the fact that Non-Believers exist.

The inevitable result is, the public is uninformed about Non-Believers.

Does it matter?

Aside from any question of fairness, is it desirable that we remain ignorant of people who are doing us a good turn?

A good turn?

A very good turn! Non-Believers make important contributions to the world's store of useful knowledge in many fields, such as medicine, health, chemistry, economics.

The importance of their work can be judged by the fact that it has earned them Nobel Prizes.

All of the following Nobel Prize winners are Non-Believers.

This is how they

describe their work:

Frederick Sanger, Chemistry 1958, says: "Primarily I have discovered how to read the message in the genes, i.e., the instructions for making living matter."

Arthur Kornberg, Medicine and Physiology 1959, says: "Understanding of how DNA, the hereditary molecule, is made in Nature."

Jan Tinbergen, Economics 1969, says: "My work has been to search for the economic policy that reduces the number of unemployed or badly paid workers or farmers."

Vladimir Prelog, Chemistry 1975, says: "The Nobel Prize was awarded to me for several contributions in stereochemistry, a branch of science about arrangement of atoms in molecules, which is essential for understanding the course of chemical processes including those of living systems."

Milton Friedman, Economics 1976, says: 1) "Formulating a hypothesis to explain the fraction of their income that individuals spend on consumption. 2) Refining the theory of money; studying monetary history; and analyzing monetary policy."

Roald Hoffmann, Chemistry 1981, says: "I have developed a set of rules for allowing chemists to understand which reactions go easily and which are difficult."

Yuan T. Lee, Chemistry 1986, says: "To understand how reactants transform into products through collisional processes."

Donald Cram, Chemistry 1987, says: "We did research on how molecules recognize and complex one another -- the basis of life. The field is known as Host-Guest Chemistry or Molecular Recognition Chemistry."

Those are some of the contributions to Society's welfare that have been made by Non-Believers. And that is why we can say: *Society is indebted to Non-Believers.*

A

Atheists of Florida member Lee Eisler is author of The Quotable Bertrand Russell

Board Elections

Results final

The Atheists of Florida vote to add seven more board members to bring the total to 18 is complete. The following members have been added to the board:

Dr. John Xanthopoulos, Boca Raton

Anthony Schlefstein, Davie

Ken Poulsen, Tarpon Springs

Nan Owens, Tampa

Jim Strayer, Ormond By The Sea

Ed McDougall, Sarasota

Michael Anthony Sturgulewski, Miami

Thanks to all members who participated both by running for office and voting.

Meanwhile, back at the Alliance....

We are pleased to announce that a new society has joined the Alliance. Welcome to Atheist and Other Freethinkers of Sacramento, California.

Videotapes Available

\$10.00 each including shipping - Order from:

Brent Yaciw		(Until July 15, 1994)
6642-122nd St. N.	or	Apt. I-2, 2749 W. Tharpe St.
Seminole, Fl. 34642		Tallahassee, FL 32303
Phone: 813-393-6321		904-385-2989

Individual Lecturers:

Edd Doerr (Americans For Religious Liberty) on Separation of Church and State, January 29, 1993. Doerr is a nationally-known activist who lobbies in Washington D.C.

John Doner "Evolution, Science, and Religion," March 20, 1993. Doner expounds on his unique theories that explain the social role of religion in evolution.

Ed Ericson "Isaac Asimov: The Man and the Mind," November 20, 1993. Ericson draws on his years of personal acquaintance with the late author, scientist, and humanist to provide a unique insight into one of our greatest minds.

Sid Goetz "The Ethics of Humanism," January 29, 1993. Goetz demolishes the claims of religionists who claim to have a lock on "morality."

Roger Greeley "The Pope, Population: Problem #1" February 27, 1993. Greeley shares his insight into the relationship between religious opposition to birth control and abortion and planetary overpopulation.

Delos McKown "Why the Religiously-Liberated Languish and the Fundagelicals Flourish." April 17, 1993. McKown, Head of the philosophy department at Auburn University, examines the psychology underlying the success of the religious in gaining adherents and funds in spite of scientific and social advances.

Jeanne Pugh (Americans United For Separation of Church and State) on Separation of Church and State, February 8, 1993. Pugh reflects on her years as Religion Editor for the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Jim Strayer "The Scopes Trial: 65 Years Later," February 20, 1993. Strayer shows us how little we have advanced despite the support of court decisions and science.

Jim Strayer "Animals are Sexist, Too (With a Creationist View)." October 30, 1993. Entertaining and informative, this talk exemplifies why Strayer earned the 1994 Humanist Speaker Award.

If there is a speaker appearing that anyone would like to have on video, please let me know the pertinent information, (Who, Where, When, etc.) and I will try to get there and tape it! Obviously, I am mostly taping in the St. Petersburg/Tampa/Clearwater area, but sometimes I can travel if the demand is there and the speaker is worthwhile.

Humanists of Florida Conference, March 1993:

Bette Chambers "The Irreducible Tenets of Modern Humanism," and Luncheon Awards (Blanche Fearn, Helen Gordon Davis). Chambers reflects on the history and future of humanism and the American Humanist Association.

Kathy Freeperson/Ron Mazur/Robert Blume (moderator) "Emerging Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity." A spirited debate between two humanists who see the battle of the sexes nearing a cease-fire: or is it?

Sid Goetz "Is Separation of Church and State Politically Correct," plus two Winter Park H.S. students debating "Should the Influence of Religion in Public Schools be Increased?" Goetz discusses the repressing effects of political correctness, and the student debate provides an insight into how religion is viewed by those still ensconced in the halls of academe.

Skipp Porteous, (Institute for First Amendment Studies), "Challenging the Christian Right." Porteous, a former preacher and leader in defending the First Amendment, describes strategies for protecting our rights interspersed with anecdotes from his years as a religious activist.

Humanists of Florida Conference, 1994:

Ed Ericson, Frank Prah, and Sid Goetz "Opening Sessions." After the welcome from Ericson, Prah,

talks on "Introducing Freethought Literature to the Public." Goetz follows with an address on "Banned Books and Censorship."

Brent Yaciw, Dom Nozzi, and Bill Lazarus "How to be an Effective Humanist Activist." Yaciw and Nozzi share their techniques for getting humanism into the media; Lazarus shares the benefits of his experience as a journalist.

Roger Greeley "Robert G. Ingersoll." Greeley dons the makeup and clothing to transform himself into the famous orator known as "The Great Agnostic."

Robert Hall "Strong Attacks on the First Amendment." Hall, Professor of English at the University of South Florida, discusses the censorship and political correctness issues on campuses today, especially as applied to the study of literature.

Bill Baird "Politics of God, Government, and Sex: Should Birth Control and Abortion be Legal?" Baird, called "The Father of the Abortion Movement" by UPI, shares tales from his three Supreme Court cases, eight arrests, and thirty-one year history in the reproductive rights movement. Included is a segment of the Charles Kuralt show, filming Baird's arrests and other background.

Luncheon Awards: Humanist Pioneer (Esther Nighbert), Humanist of the Year (Brent Yaciw), Outstanding Florida Humanist Lecturer (Jim Strayer) followed by **Roger Greeley** "Let's Hear It for Secularism!," a rousing sendoff the exhorts us to become positive advocates for humanism.

The following tapes are \$15.00 per tape; part of the cost is donated to the sponsoring organizations to defray production costs and guest expenses.

Atheists of Florida Forum These are professionally-produced (in March, April, and May of 1993) television shows through Miami-Dade Public Access, also occasionally shown in Tampa, St. Augustine, Atlanta, Wisconsin and other areas. Each tape includes **four ½-hour shows**, as follows:

Tape 1: (Forums 1-4) Atheism: Not a Religion; Separation of Church and State; Women, Religion, and Power; The Religious Right in Today's Political Arena.

Tape 2: (Forums 5-8) Religion and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Soul: The Cornerstone of Religious Deception; Society: Decline or Change?; Taxation Without Representation.

Tape 3: (Forums 9-12) The Psychology of Religious Belief: Mental Illness or Addiction?; Effects of Religious Schools on our Public School System; The Insidious Influence of Religion in Public Education; The Big Bang: Cosmology vs. Creationism.

The shows are hosted by Dr. Albert E. Lyngzeidseton, a visiting philosophy professor at both FAU and U of M. Guests include philosophy specialists Dr. John Xanthopoulos(2) and Dr. Mano Daniel(2), science experts Jim Strayer(3), Dr. Martin Solomon(3), and Michael Sturgulewski(3), English instructors Dr. Peter Hargitai(3), Marilyn Schneider(3), Florence Morgenroth(1,2), and Brent Yaciw(1,2,3), Lawyer Santiago Leon(1), and longtime atheism activists Ed Golly(1,2,3) and Christos Tzanetakos(1,2). (Numbers following indicate tape numbers on which the guest appears).

Thomas Jefferson Society (and others): A Banned Books Reading, December 10, 1993. Reading selections from various famous and not-so-famous books that have been banned or censored over the ages. Held at the University of South Florida, Bayboro Campus. Emceed by Sid Goetz, featuring readers from USF, the *St. Petersburg Times*, Florida State University, and various local activist groups.