

he did not want to be associated with hippies.

Barry A. Rowe  
Indianapolis

Responding to the article on our front page, *Atheists of Florida* member Jim Strayer was published in the *Orlando Sentinel* on September 4

### The Bible as history

Regarding the Vista, Calif. school board's decision to introduce creationism into the curriculum, the fundamentalist-dominated Lake County School Board should note that this decision opens the door for history classes to study the Bible as a history book, and not view it as "dogmatic." Discussion on the existence of God could now be accepted because criticism of history is as important as criticism of science. It should even be possible to introduce books like Issac Asimov's *Guide to the Bible* in literature classes, and writings by atheists should be acceptable readings.

Scientific challenges to evolution have been common long before Darwin. That is what science is about. Science can support evolution with evidence. Any school board that follows the Vista school board plan should now be required to defend creationism and any religion or religious practice

that takes place in public schools. I cannot imagine that they would try to use the Bible, which has no accurate science and almost no accurate history. It would be interesting to see their evidence.

If they intend to break the law of separation of church and state, they should be prepared to accept the consequences of opening that can of worms.

Jim Strayer  
Ormond Beach

offensive because the KKK has been saying it for so long!

We atheists have always recognized that the word "God" has no real significance, representing merely a fantasy. However, forcing or coercing children to engage in rote repetition of a meaningless phrase is equally objectionable, especially when done under the auspices of "education." No wonder kids today can't think; look at the role models they have!

Brent Yaciw  
Seminole



Thank you, Father. And now, Chief Running Bear will explain to us how the Earth began when the Wind God's daughter married.

### Court Jester

Dear Editor:  
Our Supreme Court has become a joke, as evidenced by their latest absurdity. Saying that the words "under God" have no significant content due to rote repetition is like saying the words "die nigger" are no longer racially

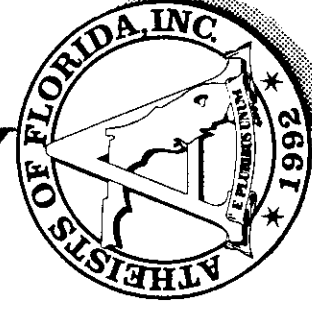
You may fax letters or comments to the newsletter. Our fax is open weekdays during normal business hours at (813)839-7567. Tell the operator you have an Atheists of Florida newsletter fax.

# Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Volume II Number 8

September / October, 1993



### Christian right wrong again

Vista California turns 180 degrees...heads straight for the Dark Ages

AN ARTICLE FROM THE *New York Times* showed us what will happen if the "stealth candidates" of the Christian right continue to gain political power.

Following a stunning defeat in the national elections last year, their tactics were changed to theocracize this nation by controlling it locally rather than nationally. The development in Vista shows that they can succeed.

Since becoming the first county school board in the nation to be controlled by fundamentalist Christians last November, the Vista panel of five has focused on biblical teachings rather than on budgeting and relevant educational issues.

In August the board adopted a policy which specifies that teachers discussing evolution may not be dogmatic about it and must cover scientific criticism of the theory, and creationism must be discussed when appropriate in history and literature classes.

Some teachers said they were prepared for a confrontation with the board while the head of the association which represents most of Vista's teachers said, "I think they expect there to be dramatic changes in curriculum in this district.

There will be no change." It has been a very hotly debated issue. The vote was 3-2 in a crowded, noisy meeting. The result has likely set the stage for a court challenge.

Atheists of Florida member Jim Strayer was first to respond to this issue with a letter in the *Orlando Sentinel* which appears in our "Letters" section this issue (back page).

### From the Editor...

You may have noticed that this and the previous newsletters represented two months of coverage each. This is not a sign of things to come. Our normal production schedule is ten newsletters per year and since summer generally is a slower time of year, it becomes the ideal time to combine letters. November and December will each see a separate letter for our total of ten in 1993.

I'm not sure what it is with Joan of Arc this month...we seem to be enamored with her act. Both Yaciw and Quirindongo rake her, you should pardon the expression, over the coals. Might as well get it out of our system.

A of F President Tzanetakos is looking for some imagination from you on page 2 while Flo Morgenroth peeks into the bizarre world of the Moron, er, Mormon Church with a review of the Laake book on page 6. And if you are sufficiently motivated to join Atheists of Florida, note the pro-rated dues schedule in the masthead on page 2.

Next month, Weatherly Tempts Temptation while Quirindongo seeks contempt, and we'll catch up on all the state/church news compiled through the summer. Watch for us in a mailbox near you.

— Ed

Atheism is freedom from religion  
Health is freedom from disease  
To say atheism is a religion  
Is like calling health a disease.

— Thought of unknown

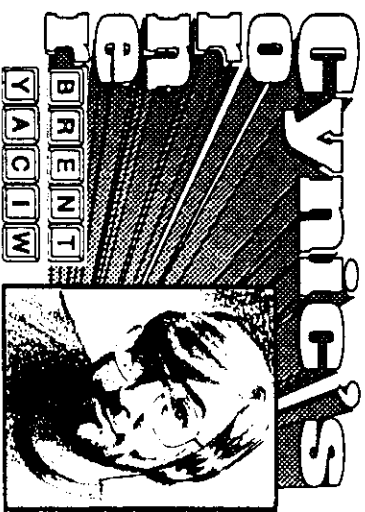
8 September / October 1993

Atheists of Florida

Atheists of Florida, Inc.  
P.O. Box 530102  
Miami, FL 33153-0102

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**D**ID YOU EVER NOTICE the profound lack of scientific understanding on those who are believers? It is reminiscent of a remark made by George Bernard Shaw in his book *St. Joan* concerning the views of believers vs. skeptics: "To the believers, apparent 'miracles' were proof that Joan was backed by God; to the skeptics, it proved that she was Satan's tool. However, to a *true* skeptic, it proves nothing at all, for no legitimate cause-and-effect relationship is demonstrated."



## The burden of proof

"This is the difficulty in the so-called scientific examination of biblical events. Proving that such events did happen is *not* proof that a deity was responsible for them, nor vice versa. It is *not* proof that a deity exists. The only thing proven is that it happened. If I write a book claiming that I caused Hurricane Andrew, and researchers 2,000 years from now determine that Andrew happened, that does *not* prove that I caused it!"

This ignorance of the principles of cause-and-effect, one of the basics of science, only makes people appear ignorant as they attempt to prove or disprove their beliefs. My disbelief in deities is not based on such illogical concepts. Rather, I find the actions attributed to deities illogical in themselves. Considering the many irrational concepts inherent in the Bible, proof that the events actually happened would only strengthen the conclusion drawn by Herman Melville and countless others, including myself: If a God exists, he is surely mad. If I were to pray at all, I would pray that such a wicked, sadistic and irrational creature is non-existent.

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

Jan - Apr	\$50.00	May - Aug	\$40.00	Sep - Dec	\$20.00
Individual	30.00	Couple	24.00	Individual	20.00
Student (under 25 yrs)	5.00		4.00		2.00

Newsletter correspondence should be sent to: Tampa Bay Chapter / P.O. Box 130753 / Tampa, FL 33681-0753. The A.O.F. newsletter, published ten times per year, is provided free of charge to our members as a medium of exchange. Atheists of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

## From the President - Christos Tzanetakis



### Is there Intelligent Life?

On June 6th, 1993, an article appeared in the Sunday Newspaper Magazine *PARADE* titled, "Is there Intelligent Life on Earth?"

In it, astronomy professor Carl Sagan very succinctly narrates the findings of imaginary aliens who, upon entering the solar system, discover our blue planet. From their orbital point they witness with utter dismay that the dominant organisms are "simultaneously destroying their ozone layer and their forests, eroding their topsoil, and performing massive, uncontrolled experiments on their planet's climate."

Dr. Sagan concludes that "perhaps it is time to re-assess the hypothesis that there is intelligent life on Earth."

He stops short, however, of imagining that these visitors, curious to decipher the reasons of this peculiar behavior of the dominant organisms, decide to land their spaceship and further investigate the poisoning and degradation of the planet's life.

The leader of the "Blue Planet Expedition" entered the following in her log: \_\_\_\_\_

This is where we would like to hear from you. So put on your thinking cap, fill in the report and send us a copy.

Please send your typed entries by November 1st, 1993 to either P.O. Box of Atheists of Florida (see masthead, this page).

The best log entry will receive an award to be determined by the Board of Directors at the November annual meeting. And watch for the logbooks in a future newsletter.

through the invisible jail of her Mormon conscience. During the course of her personal saga, Laake relates her initiation into some of the secret nauseating rituals and ceremonies that classify the Mormon church as a cult. As an atheist, I was very disappointed at the end of the book. It seemed so obvious to me that, following a natural progression of rational thought, Laake should realize that there is no God. Only by eschewing God, as well as her religion, can she free herself. Instead, she declares, "As my relationship with my family members have necessarily narrowed, my relationship with God has only broadened. I see him everywhere and am content for his true

nature and purpose to be a mystery... I am just grateful to feel His strength whenever I feel my own." *Secret Ceremonies* is still worth reading. It is an insider's view of a cult religion that few people are aware of. A religion that has tremendous power to influence legislation in many areas of our everyday lives... abortion, prayer in the schools, vouchers for private schools, to mention a few. *Secret Ceremonies* also is an overview of the harm that can be perpetrated on unsuspecting victims of so-called mainstream religions which use the same brain-washing, mind-bending techniques associated with cults.

## A "Rush" of lunacy

*Our Vice-President and prolific letter-writer Brent Yacow is in Tallahassee securing his Doctorate. This is his first appearance in the Florida Flambeau*

the common man as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful." This is why we have the Ten Commandments, not the Ten Suggestions. Napoleon commented, "We have religion to keep the poor from murdering the rich."

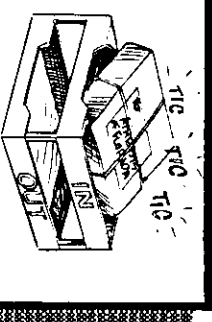
Thomas Edison noted, "Religion is all bunk." Fanatics through ancient history, from Charlemagne to Hitler to Khomeini to Koresh, have turned to religion as a basis for their abuses.

## Tooling with religion

Editor: I'm afraid that, despite your good intentions and sincere desire to improve the world, you have committed what I call the "Rush Limbaugh fallacy: Seeing The Way Things Ought to Be" instead of the way things are, in the Sept. 7 editorial "Religious intolerance."

Religion has never been about love, recognition of rights, or questing for spiritual things. Only the most naive believers have ever considered it to be so; realists and rationalists have recognized its true shape for ages. This applies especially to Christianity, but generally to other religions.

As Seneca (The Younger) stated in the first century B.C., "Religion is regarded by



## Court Jester

Published July 12 in Florida Today, *Indianapolis, Florida*

If there was ever any doubt that we live in an irrational world, one need only consider the fact that Rush Limbaugh has written what may well be the biggest selling book in history.

Why is the message of intolerance appealing to so many?

Sadly, my grand illusion of a civilization that relies on reason has been shattered, perhaps only temporarily, by the recent success of a publication that espouses a theocratic state.

What ever happened to egalitarianism and individualism?

For the benefit of Limbaugh cynics, here is a bit of vintage Rush:

In a recent interview he stated, paraphrasing, that to this day, he has never owned a pair of blue-jeans because (continued next page)

## Secret Ceremonies: A Mormon Intimate Diary of Marriage and Beyond

written by Deborah Laake  
published by William Morrow

book & film  
**REVIEW**

### Cultivating Cults

review by  
Florence Morgenroth

**F**or months the news from Waco, Texas, home of Messianic leader David Koresh and his followers in the Branch Davidian cult, dominated the news. Who will ever forget watching the compound explode in flames, killing more than 80 men, women and children in a sacrificial act of commitment to their religious teacher and his demented ideas?

Other gruesome scenes of former cult tragedies were revived:

- \* Jim Jones and his 900 followers who committed suicide en masse by drinking poisoned Kool Aid in Jonestown, Guyana.

- \* Charles Manson, whose "family" murdered eight people in a killing binge at his orders.

- \* The Philadelphia police who bombed a radical group killing eleven and leveling two city blocks.

Suddenly, everyone is talking about cults! What are they? Who belongs to them? How do they operate? Are they dangerous?

Some of the answers to these important questions are revealed

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

in Deborah Laake's book, *Secret Ceremonies: A Mormon Intimate Diary of Marriage and Beyond*, a must-read for feminists and those who wish to learn more about what makes them tick.

Laake's personal knowledge and painful experiences were acquired in the Mormon church, one of the fastest growing cults in American and the world. It has a membership of 8.2-million and is currently increasing its membership by 300,000 a year.

Unless one is an atheist and realizes that all religions were once cults, and still remain cults based on superstition and the supernatural, few people believe the large, well-financed churches such as the Mormon church with an annual estimated income of \$4.3-billion from its members, and another \$4-billion from retail sales, broadcasting, insurance and real estate holdings, could possibly be a cult practicing secret voodoo mumbo-jumbo religious rites and rituals.

However, Laake cites some off-the-wall ceremonies she participated in, as well as some ludicrous passages from the *Book of Mormon*, the Mormon bible written by Joseph Smith, founder of the religion. Laake has a great deal to say about the role of men. "All Mormon men are ordained priests...where the patriarchal order is of divine origin and will continue throughout time and eternity." In Mormonism men go to heaven "where they become gods, capable of creating and ruling over other worlds." Women, who are subordinate to men, can only go to heaven if their Mormon husbands allow them to pass through the veil.

Although polygamy is now outlawed, it still exists as part of Mormon dogma since it can be practiced after death when a man can have as many wives as he pleases.

Mormons are taught that when Christ visited the American Indians, the vast crowd of Indians dropped to their knees before Christ, weeping and praying aloud. (A geographical and historical impossibility!) The religion itself is based upon a set of ancient gold tablets that were delivered to Smith by the angel Moroni, an early inhabitant of the American continent. Smith then translated the tablets into the *Book of Mormon*.

Deborah Laake was born into this religious system and grew up a devout Mormon seeking only to fulfill her destiny of an early marriage to a devout young Mormon man and bearing him many Mormon children.

Following the rules, Laake learned, did not lead to the idealized promised life, no matter how hard she tried. She found herself in constant conflict with herself, her husband(s), her family, her friends, her religious beliefs and her beloved church. Eventually, she had to undergo institutionalized therapy to break

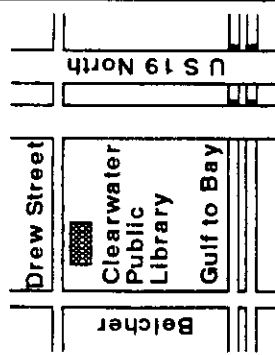
## Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

### MIAMI

The Miami Chapter will meet **Sunday, October 17** in the Board Room of the Ft. Lauderdale Main Library, 100 South Andrews, beginning at 2:00. One of the *Forum* programs will be shown. For more information, call the Atheist Hotline at (305) 936-0210.

### TAMPA

The Tampa Bay Chapter will meet **Saturday, October 30** at the Clearwater Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, 10:30 a.m. to noon. Following our business meeting, one of the *Forum* programs will be shown. For more information: Ed Golly 839-7567.



**W**HO WAS THIS FRENCH GIRL, called Jeanne D'Arc of whom so much has been written and little is known? The *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us that "there is no truly definitive biography" of her. One thing is certain — she heard voices and not only claimed visitations by Michael, Margaret and Catherine, all patron saints of France, but claimed a "Mission from God" to expel the English from the continent. The question remains — why would *El Supremo* take sides in a battle between two Catholic countries? If an American sixteen year-old girl who heard voices

asked for the command of Desert Storm she would have been summarily put away in a safe place until all hostilities were over. Desert Storm had appeals from Saddam and by George Bush and Billy Graham and *El Supremo* never showed up. We know that women as clergy existed before Christianity in Northern Europe and that they were burned regularly at the stake along with heretics during the middle ages. The Druids had a religion of which Halloween is still celebrated today. Easter is Oestre which was incorporated into Christianity together with rabbits and eggs. The Yule log and Christmas tree were also adapted to pacify northern Europe. Can it be that history was conveniently changed during the Protestant reformation by the Catholics to reflect god-ly intervention by a

## John Quirindongo Queuing Up: Jeanne D'Arc: Magnificent Legend or Fraud?



god who "knew" that England would stray from the "true" faith? Jeanne D'Arc was canonized in 1920 and appears in history books as an odd anomaly similar to the Shroud of Turin that could not withstand scientific scrutiny and has been declared a fake.

It is difficult to expunge the obvious religiosity of the Jeanne D'Arc story from countries that insist on its veracity despite gaping flaws in the logic. Regrettably, we must live with his-tory as its writers want to write it rather than history as it was.

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Atheist of Florida charter member John Quirindongo lives in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

# Foxhole Atheists

by Max Weatherly



**N**o Atheists in foxholes? Don't bet on it! I'm absolutely certain that shallow premise can be disproved, but I want to tell you about a near-death experience this Atheist had.

I dwell, in the early Fifties, in the city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on the fabled Red Sea. It was my habit each late afternoon to drive a few kilometers south on the Mecca Road (it was paved from Mecca, north of Jeddah, to Medina on the south) to a sandy spot at the edge of the Sea that we "foreigners" called "South Beach," where we swam. After my swim I thought to drive back to the City across the desert. It seemed an adventure, and I reasoned that if I just kept the sea on my left I couldn't miss the City. (I was not blessed with any sense of direction whatever.) Thinking myself very brave indeed, I had driven only about a kilometre when my little Morris Minor convertible spun almost a hundred and eighty degrees and stopped. I had driven into a *sabaha*, an oil seepage which has crusted over under the blowtorch Middle Eastern sun. I was faced with spending the night (quite cold) in the car or walking to Jeddah. I elected to walk and set out with never a fear — and I might even enjoy the walk.

Everyone knew about the wild dogs. There were horror stories about babies being snatched. But like a 16-year-old taking chances with his life, I thought, "it couldn't happen to me." It was about sundown (which the Arabs insisted on calling "six o'clock" the year round) but I was sure I could reach the city before "good dark." I hadn't walked very far, however,

when I noticed in the distance a wild dog pull itself out of a moist hole near the water where it had spent the hot



day, shake itself and look in my direction.

That spawned a shock of apprehension and I began to think "don't show fear — don't even feel it if you can manage." Then I saw another dog, and another, and another, and they were walking — but not running — in my direction. I consciously tried to walk faster without seeming to walk faster, all the time losing my battle against fear. I tried to slow my heartbeat. I tried to look straight ahead. I tried to appear to ignore them. I tried to remain calm.

## *I can tell you how it feels to drown in sight of a ship...*

Then more dogs joined the group, possibly half a dozen by now. And they formed a wide arc as they followed me. All my senses seemed to go into overdrive. I thought I could smell them, hear them, touch their filthy bodies, hear them padding along on the stony earth. I could see that they were gaining on me and they were slowly closing the arc. I didn't dare run but it was difficult to control the urge. My dizzying fear now had complete control. I don't think I could have run.

Suddenly I spotted the *barasti*, a small house mounted on truck wheels which was used throughout the area to house engineers and oil well drillers. But now the dogs were upon me. I had barely gained a slight rise in the terrain when they closed the arc. It became a circle. I stopped, wondering through my terror if I should risk a shout — I knew I couldn't run. The dogs stood around maybe twenty or twenty-five

feet from me, panting, tongues hanging, dripping saliva, yellow teeth showing, waiting for one of their pack to begin the kill.

At that moment, an engineer I knew drove up to the *barasti* in a Pontiac convertible with the top down. I decided to risk a shout. Summoning my best drill field voice (polished in WWII) I put it all into "JIM!" And he got out of the car and walked into the house. I can tell you, now, how it feels to drown in sight of a ship.

Silence as thunderous as a tolling bell followed. I knew I was going to die horribly. Then a curious thing happened: I "knew" exactly how it would occur. One of the dogs would charge; I would put out my arm reflexively, and the beast would sink its filthy teeth into my flesh. Then the others would rush in and bring me down. But I "knew" it wouldn't hurt. I "knew" I would not suffer before unconsciousness rescued me. It was as if my mind had gone into neutral.

Standing there, waiting, I never considered calling on God or Jesus for help. (I was out of *that* swamp by then). I do recall feeling resentment, even anger, that I was going to die before I'd ever become the recognized writer I'd always wanted to be. So I waited. And the dogs waited. And the great bell tolled — for me.

Then Jim Morris came out of the small house. I couldn't shout even if I'd wanted to. Terror had probably turned to shock. He saw me, jumped into the car and floorboarded it. He covered the short distance, followed by a high rooster tail of sand and gravel. The dogs fled but I couldn't move. I was even incapable

of feeling relief. Jim pulled up beside me. I couldn't get in the car. He grabbed my belt and pulled me in.

Back in his room he gave me a couple of shots of booze (this was before the prohibition later declared by the King) and I began to relax.

"Jim, whatever made you come out of the house?"

"I don't know," he said. "Something just kept eating at me." Later he drove me into the City, to my apartment.

Nowadays I know that it had to be some kind of subliminal knowledge on his part. He had seen and/or heard me but it hadn't registered sufficiently to arrest his attention. It was serendipity. It was Fate. It was an *Appointment in Samarra*. It was coincidence.

I'm always amused when someone has made a famous escape or a breathless rescue and claims, later, that God was watching out for her/him. I guess it's natural, perhaps said in the absence of something more intelligent — but it seems exceedingly arrogant. Why you? I think. What about the millions of suffering humans (God is not, apparently, watching out for)? I have to laugh when I think of the propaganda all Bible thumping preachers would quickly make out of my experience.

Yes, Virginia, there always have been Atheists in foxholes. And Atheists in countless other perilous situations. We Atheists know that there isn't some mysterious *menage à trois* in the sky "watching out" for us. I think of it as plain, pure, serendipitous Fate.

And that comforts me.

Atheists of Florida charter member Max Weatherly is a writer living in Delray Beach