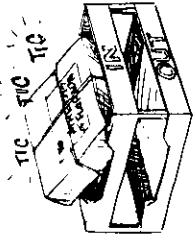


A USA TODAY editorial on Thursday, August 19, maintained that those who support teaching creationism in our public schools are crossing the line between church and state. On the other side of the debate, Beverly LaHaye, president of Concerned Women for America, said let pupils think for themselves among alternative ideas about the origins of life.

Our prolific letter-writer Brent Yaciw was

Letters



published in USA TODAY on Tuesday, August 24 among a collection of responses to the editorial. His letter:

Many myths about origins of the universe

Even if there were a valid secular purpose to teaching creationist beliefs, the next problem would be choosing which belief.

A Moment of Grief...

Our condolences to AOF member (Miami chapter) John Diamond, who is recovering from recent open-heart surgery and the tragic death of his 39-year-old son, Eric, last month.

Eric Diamond of Fort Lauderdale was struck by a car on July 11 at 1:15 a.m. while riding his bicycle to a nearby store. The hit-and-run driver fled the scene of the

Since there are at least 20 different creation myths I am personally aware of, teaching them all would be necessary to avoid showing government favoritism to any one religion. American children spend far too little time on science education; teaching Beverly LaHaye's beliefs as science accelerates our decline in the eyes of the worldwide scientific community. **A**

Dope continued from page 1

humble, confident prayer. America needs much prayer — lest it lose its soul.
Interpretation: We're gonna ignore the problem.

In view of the 20,000 people who sought medical treatment during the two day Pope-a-thon, a headline writer capped it with "Pope's visit brings medical emergency". So a few people got dehydrated. They refused to drink anything because the lines to the port-a-johns were a half-a-mile long. Big deal. The real headline should have read, "Pope's visit brings mental emergency." How do these people ever get through life? **A**

accident.

The young man remained in a coma on a life-support system at Broward General Medical Center for five days, until doctors determined there was no brain activity. A secular memorial service was held for Eric on July 20, with plans to scatter his ashes at sea.

The family has offered a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the driver's arrest.

Meanwhile, the elder Diamond was in intensive care last week following open-heart surgery. Again, our thoughts and support are with the Diamond family.

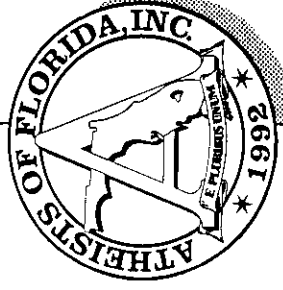
8 July / August 1993

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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Atheists of Florida

Volume II Number 7



America's youth: Still on Dope...

It wasn't the heat, it was the stupidity

An estimated 40 tons of trash was left behind at Cherry Creek Park in Denver following the Mass conducted by Pope John Paul II... just about the exact equivalent of the mental trash spewed by this medievalist. By now, we all know that his message remains predictably unchanged and totally out of touch with the twentieth century—completely incapable of responding to the nature of difficulties endured from individuals to nations to the entire world. His message serves simply to remind us of the total uselessness of religion and its belonging in our past rather than in our present.

To demonstrate its inability to deal with even its own adherents, a Gallup survey taken last year revealed that among American Catholics: 75% say priests should be allowed to marry. 67% say women should be ordained priests. 87% say couples should make their own decisions about birth control.

68% say premarital sex between two people committed to each other is morally acceptable. 81% say it is possible to reject some church teachings and still be a good Catholic.

This last statistic reveals an all-too-common

An atheist is a man with no invisible means of support.

— E. Stanley Moore

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

July / August, 1993

phenomenon among all but the most feared right-wing fundamentalists of today—designer religion. In order to embrace any religion while living any semblance of a normal life, one must "reinterpret" his religion to mean whatever the believer wants while ignoring the totalitarianism of the superstition.

It remains a curiosity how a nation which prides itself on the (albeit false) image of self-government by democracy still clings to the anonymous idea of authoritarian Christianity. The message of the Pope underscores the conflict of ideologies. Look at what he said:

■ **On abortion:** "...the Catholic Church is unambiguously committed to protecting and cherishing every human life, including the life of the unborn." Abortion will always be with us. Period. Although our nation has decided through its courts to preserve the legality of a woman's right to choose, the Pope recruits our youth to alter and reverse what we have already decided to condone.

■ **On euthanasia:** "There is spreading...an anti-life mentality—an attitude of hostility to life in the womb and life in its last stages..." Great! Let's just continue to rely on that time-honored solution of suffering to deal with a hopelessly lingering illness while medical expenses drive families to bankruptcy. Or maybe just prayer.

■ **On artificial birth control:** "The church calls married couples to responsible parenthood by acting as 'ministers'—and not 'arbiters'—of God's saving plan." Interpretation: Let's continue to breed and multiply until we are literally standing on top of one another...just as long as we're all Catholics!

■ **On sexual abuse by clergy:** "...While every human means for responding to this evil must be implemented, we cannot forget that the first and most important means is prayer: ardent, (continued back page)

Despite claims to the contrary, I know that real truth rarely occurs in books, magazines, or newspapers, except in one place: the comic page(s). There's more truth to be found on that one page than in the entire rest of the paper together. Let me give you an example.

In just two comic strips, we find not only the

COMICS



The Comics... no laughing matter

origin of religion, but its purpose. Strip number one, Hi & Lois, shows son Ditto's reaction to news of his favorite baseball player's suspension: "From now on, all my heroes are going to be MAKE-BELIEVE!"

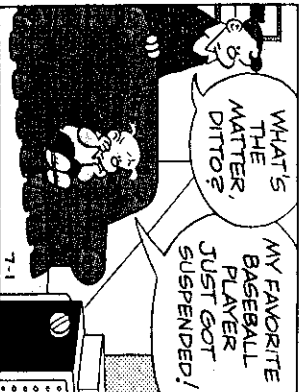
There you have it: the origin of religion. When the reality of life failed those childlike savages in our past, they decided to invent

heroes that wouldn't fail. At first, these heroes were too human, and still failed, since their actions were supposedly effective here in the real world: thunder, rain, etc. Eventually, the mystery religions were invented, and despite the fact that to us atheists, the mystery is that anyone can fall for this nonsense, in truth the original mysteries were secret rituals and spiritual prophecies that only the initiated believers were told, presumably because anyone who hadn't left their senses behind might not swallow the so-called

mysterious (as in irrational) plans these deities had for Earth.

This childthink is still germaine to retaining faith: when some disaster happens that makes no rational sense, such as Hurricane Andrew, or the Mississippi River flood, the believer must simply accept that they are too stupid to understand God's mysterious ways. Part of this self-deprecation comes from the overwhelming drive to seek a purpose for life, which brings us to our next strip.

Calvin wonders what will provide humans assurance of remaining at their current "top of the food chain" level if machines that think are invented. Hobbes expounds upon the uniquely human ability to behave irrationally, which makes Calvin wonder about the invention of a psychotic (religious?) computer. Indeed, this theme has been explored both seriously and humorously by science fiction writers: on one episode of *Red Dwarf*, the robot character believes in "Silicon Heaven, where all the calculators go when they die." Yet I doubt that any machine based on logic, even "fuzzy logic," will ever approach the human capacity for irrational beliefs. Thus as long as we retain religions, our unique position in the universe is guaranteed. Unless of course there are other races on other planets with similar fantasies, which I suppose might well happen. After all, religion developed out of a curiosity, not uniquely human, about explanations for the unexplainable. Religion slays because of a fear of change, also not uniquely human.



HI & LOIS

CALVIN & HOBBS



Atheists of Florida

repeatedly denied that the Mob existed at all while having Mob connections himself. The list goes on past surprise, past horror, to outrage. Although Summers' book was five years in the researching and is extremely carefully annotated, there will be those who refuse to accept that Hoover was anything less than a demigod.

So be it. As fond of gossip and superstition as we Americans are, we draw the line at our heroes. Don't confuse us with the facts. We love comfortable "beliefs" (e.g., religion). It's too much trouble to go to the public library and do our own studies. And who wants to go

to school? Booooooiiiiiiiiiii!

The book should be at least a wake up call. Some recent writers have suggested that we, as a nation, are going through a great transition, moving away from the intolerant 19th century with all its inherited (Biblical) absolutes, all its blind prejudices and acceptance of the shield of hypocrisy. They think, and I certainly hope, that we are emerging from that 19th century closet of preience into the light of tolerance and openness and the Real Freedom.

"It is a consummation devoutly to be wished," to quote a long ago English playwright.

Continuing saga of Miller and the Military

The readers of our little publication who have been following my efforts to get a straight reply about the expenditure of \$200,000 for the purchase of bibles for servicemen may remember that when I wrote to Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney protesting this expenditure, I received *no* reply. When I had someone else write him a letter of praise "about his sterling performance" in another vein, we immediately got a bubbling and effusive letter in reply.

After the November election, President Clinton appointed a new Secretary of Defense and I wrote him a letter similar to what I had sent Mr. Cheney, and this time, Hallelujah, I received a reply.

Here is the letter I received from Mr. Aspin's designee:

Dear Mr. Miller:

I have been asked to respond to your letter of March 8, 1993, to Mr. Aspin regarding the purchase of Bibles.

The Bibles distributed to United States service members in Desert Shield/Desert Storm and in Operation Restore Hope were not purchased with taxpayer's money. The special Bibles were furnished to the Military Departments by the various Bible Societies. No federal monies were used to purchase these Bibles.

Sincerely,
Herman Keizer, Jr.
Chaplain (Colonel), U.S. Army
Executive Director
Armed Forces Chaplains Board

Footnotes

Hope for the future

Survey consensus: *Respondents are about evenly split on whether an atheist in public office will do as good a job as someone who believes in a god.*

A survey inquiring of this issue was conducted both by phone and write-in. In the former, 44 percent agreed that an atheist would do as well as someone who believes in God, apparently specifically the Judeo-Christian god, while 46% disagreed? Virtually a statistical tie. Among write-ins, slightly *more* agreed that an atheist would do as well as those who disagreed, and both sides felt strongly about their view.

The strongest to disagree: those age 65 and over and religious conservatives, naturally.

This is my second experience or encounter with an army Chaplain Colonel. During my first experience, which happened in Germany during World War II, (and which involved an Atheist dog) I almost got court-martialed because of what the Atheist dog did to the Colonel.

Of course, good Colonel Keizer has not commented on the letter that the Freedom from Religion Foundation protested about which seems to indicate an actual purchase with taxpayer money. (previous newsletter article)

He has also not commented on the implication of distribution of Bibles which is that if you are in the military you had better be a believer.

However, I look on the whole episode in an optimistic way. We started with Secretary Dick Cheney who arrogantly would not even deign to reply to what certainly is a clear-cut constitutional question. Then we come to Mr. Aspin's good Colonel Keizer who seems to recognize, albeit through a cloud of obfuscation, that the military does not have the right to spend taxpayer dollars for the purchase of Bibles.

Atheists of Florida, Inc., is a non-profit, educational organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and atheists, 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) 956-0210.

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

Dues are pro-rated quarterly, with annual renewals due by January 1.

Newsletter correspondence should be sent to: Tampa Bay Chapter, P.O. Box 139753, Tampa, FL 33681-0753. The A.O.F. newsletter is provided free of charge to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters from members are published on a space-available basis. Atheists Of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

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Hoover vacuumed

— review by Max Weatherly
 have just finished reading and digesting a remarkable and even shocking book by Irish writer Anthony Summers.

B & FILM



Official & Confidential

by Anthony Summers
 published by G. P. Putnam's
 528 pages, \$25.95

Official & Confidential, an unbiased and unrelenting exploration of the life and times of J. (for John) Edgar Hoover, the nearly deified director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1918 when he went to work for the then Bureau of Investigation to 1972 when he was found dead in his Washington D.C. home of undetermined causes. (In case my gentle reader missed the irony in my title above, Hoover was an occasional transvestite!)

I write "shocking" not that there were any revelations that any literate observer of national affairs didn't already know or at least suspect, but the shock resulted from having to face the fact that such a man — with the possible exception of Adolph Hitler — could have pulled off the fraud, the hypocrisy and the megalomaniacal power plays without ever being unmasked. And even Hitler did not escape unmasking. For me it was like a double whammy because I, born in 1921, well remember much of the self-serving publicity that insisted on a picture rendered, to me, almost unbelievable by its very excesses. I have followed his career—in my spare time — with a mild fascination because of those very rhetorical excesses.

His bachelorhood was always in question, for back in 1924 people in

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

Bible-swathed Alabama where I grew up looked askance at, sometimes persecuted, unmarried men as if there were something wrong with choosing to remain single. But that was glibly explained away with stories planted in *Ladie Home Journal*, *Liberly* magazines and the Sunday rotogravure section hinting at "lost love." Like most closeted gays, he had a solemnly masculine appearance which was cleverly fortified by pictures of him in his snap brim hat holding a pistol at hip level to suggest shooting "from the hip" as in the movies — but which policemen do not do in professional engagements. He also had the "convenience" of a diseased nose which looked as if it had been broken in, maybe, a fight. When he took agent Clyde Tolson (ten years his junior) as his companion, he promoted him to Assistant Director in less than three years, so their obviously close attachment not only looked professional but also made Hoover appear more important.

An awful lot of people, especially in D.C., didn't buy the deception for a New York minute, so why didn't someone go public with what could have been easily obtained evidence of the liaison? Let me make clear that I have no argument with any non-destructive love-let's have more! But Hoover persecuted other homosexuals which is surely evil raised to the tenth power. And he aided in the deplorable McCarthy viciousness which destroyed careers and even lives. And his investigations into others' private lives, ironically, magnified his reputation as a crime fighter and a valiant and patriotic protector of our nation's security. Being the repugnant person he was, he consciously and purposefully used all the dirt he'd carefully vacuumed up and filed away to blackmail foe — and even "friend". So even Presidents were afraid of him — and said as much to confidants. Thus, it is a sad commentary on leadership that no one, apparently, had the guts to expose him — for fear of being themselves exposed.

So even Presidents were a afraid of him — and said as much to confidants

He had a habit of "sitting" on information as a mother hen sitting on her eggs: There is evidence that he had good reason to believe that the Japanese were planning to attack Pearl Harbor but failed to pass such information along at least to his boss, the then Attorney General. As was the case, apparently, when he had good reason to suspect that John Kennedy was to be assassinated in Dallas and failed to alert the Attorney General, Mr. Kennedy's brother. (After all, he despised Bobby, so why should he tell him anything at all?) He

(continued next page)

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI

The Miami Chapter will meet Sunday, September 19 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, September 18 at 1:00 at the Clearwater Public Library, 2521 Drew Street. One of the *Forum* programs will be shown, followed by our business meeting. For more information: Ed Golly 839-7567.

If there is anything scarier than a Pat Robertson or Buchanan in a position of power, it's got to be an alien race with advanced space travel capabilities and weaponry with a religion. We should all hope that if we ever contact an alien race, they're closer to E.T. than Alien!

At any rate, I'm sure you can see that the comic strips these days are filled with symbolic and metaphorical messages. Remember, many kids read these strips, and are being heavily influenced by characters in *The Family Circle* and similar strips that always seem to be going to church. If you ignore them because you grew up on strips like *Nancy* or *Beetle Bailey*, it might be time to take another look. They're not just the "funny pages" any more!

A

Mort Walker and Dick Browne



Atheist's Creed

I believe in myself as a human being.
 I believe in my neighbor as well.
 I believe in humankind as a whole
 and the whole world as ONE.

I believe in the power of the mind
 which stretched to the utmost
 is almost capable of everything.
 I believe in human kindness.
 I believe in freedom and independence,
 as the epitome of free-flowing affection,
 not as a bondage that ties.

I believe all we have is mind and body,
 -mind in body,
 and through it, and with it, and in it,
 we think, we feel, we act.

I believe in an unknown Universe
 yet beyond our powers of comprehension
 -at least in part,

to which we belong as living specs,
 perhaps not even the only ones,

definitely not the center of its wonder,
 humbly at the top of the evolution ladder,
 -you can call us "big brains",
 in this tiny piece of matter

called Planet Earth.

Surrounded by so much "other"
 so much bigger, grandiose, magnificent,
 we are perfectly lost all on our own.

I believe in growing up, developing, going forth,
 I believe in reality setting us up
 every day, every moment, for a quick answer;
 I believe there is all the truth we know of.

I believe what I see, what I touch,

I believe what I feel,

I believe in the logic of thought,

I believe I am small,

b-u-t

with a mind that stretches off

boundaries,

like a self-directed, ambitious, curious

telescope,

-the mighty wonder of thought.

I have faith in the existent,

and in the existent, hope.

I can live without the love or punishment
 of any given or imagined god.

---Hortensia Valdez

NEWS FILTERS

"Rocking" the boat

DENNIER Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc. of Wisconsin and its Colorado chapter has filed suit to remove a stone monument of the Ten Commandments which sits on state property near the Colorado Capitol. It's an obvious violation of the first Amendment's separation clause. First overruled by a district court, the Colorado state Court of Appeals has overturned that decision for the second time, concluding that the park monument carries "an essential religious message" that would cause most people to believe the state endorses and approves of it. The Colorado attorney general's office, which argued for retention of the monument, had not decided whether to appeal further.

The stone monument is located in Lincoln Park near the state Capitol. It is about 4 feet high and 2.5 feet wide in the form of two tablets. In addition to the commandments it contains Jewish and Christian symbols. A plaque says the monument was placed by the Fraternal Order of Eagles in 1956. There is no record it was authorized by any government body.

Sign of the crimes

"If 100 doctors need to die to save over 1 million babies a year, I see it as a fair trade." These words actually uttered by a Catholic priest from Magnolia Springs, Alabama who tried to run a newspaper ad portraying the death of doctors who perform abortions as "Justifiable homicide". The ad portrayed a man pointing a gun at a doctor holding a knife over a pregnant woman. The words "Justifiable homicide" announce the message of the illustration.

The Archbishop met with the priest and ordered to either recant the ad or resign his job. Regrettably, he chose to recant and withdraw the ad.

Same old story

Once again, the "power of prayer" was demonstrated to be absolutely useless by a Minnesota couple who are Christian Scientists. The woman's 11-year-old son suffered from diabetes and although he had a 99% chance of a normal life with insulin, he was denied any medicine in favor of prayer. Although the mother and stepfather were charged with manslaughter, courts barred prosecution, citing religious freedom. Following his death,

the boy's biological father brought suit against the couple and their church. A Minneapolis jury subsequently awarded a \$5.2 million settlement.

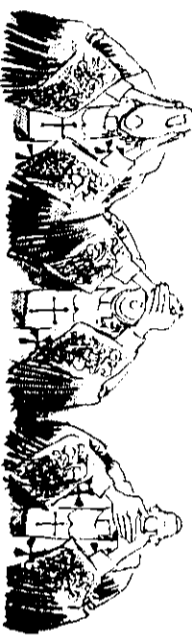
Catholic church finally brought before "Man's" law

After probably centuries of pedophilia and sexual abuse of minors, Catholics will answer in court. JUNIE 10-11 IS NOW WIDELY known that the sexual misuse of children is widely covered-up in the Catholic church and has been going on probably as long as the religion itself.

A Kentucky priest filed a federal racketeering suit in Camden, N.J., charging 16 defendants within several church groups with conspiracy to operate a "sex ring". Included as defendants in the suit are the National Conference on Catholic Bishops, the U.S. Catholic Conference and two New England dioceses. It is the first class-action case against the church invoking the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations act (RICO), which is usually used to bring charges against organized crime groups. Organized crime--organized fraud...what's the difference?

The charges could bring a new wave of sexual abuse claims

Rev. Gary Hayes, 40, of Henderson, Ky., and two others complained to church officials and naturally, the church responded in its customary fashion...



It seems they were among several boys, ages 12 to 16, molested by two priests who operated an East Coast "sex ring" from 1965 to 1972.

The suit seeks \$50,000 in damages and creation of a national registry of pedophile priests.

Although this newsletter generally refrains from reporting on the heinous crimes and abuses caused by religion, there is occasion to report on such things when they become particularly newsworthy. Our purpose is not to advance our ideology by discrediting opposing views. Atheism is *not* an idea adopted after all other superstitious concepts are exhausted. Rather, it is a completely natural, rational viewpoint which is adopted by those of us who reject all superstition sight unseen.

The Big Bang

IN VOLUME 260 of the 25 June, 1993 issue of *Science Magazine*, an article appeared titled "A Bang by Any Other Name...". In it, Timothy Ferris, author of several books on astronomy, is objecting to the naming of the Big Bang phrase as inaccurate and disrespectful to the universe, because as he stated in an

Message from the President

—Christos Tsanetakis

editorial, "For scientists to have pinned a slangy, irreverent moniker on the birth of the

universe does them no honor." Consequently, he persuaded the editors of the *Sky and Telescope* to hold a competition for a new more appropriate name. Personally, I agree that the name Big Bang is slangy and inappropriate for such an event, but my objection is not only for the name itself, but rather for the characterization of the "Big Bang" as the birth of the universe for the following reason.

The ancient Greeks held that the substance of the universe was Earth, Wind, Fire and Water; today, thanks to Einstein's famous equation $E=MC^2$, we know that the universal substance is the dual form of matter or energy.

Now, according to the first law of thermodynamics and the law of conservation, Energy or Matter can not be created and neither can be destroyed, therefore, one can not refer to the birth of the universe, since its substance has no beginning and no end.

It also requires no god, goddess, creator, or any other supernatural nonsense.

For me, it is this scientific thought that negates the god idea, rather than the absurdities, contradictions and plainly the primitive dogmatic interpretations of all the holy books of religion to whom unfortunately even members of the scientific community still subscribe.

Now, coming back to the "Big Bang", since the universe is not static, and according to the previous scientific thought has no beginning and no end, what we now call the "Big Bang" is just a phase in the infinite continuum of the universe.

Therefore, the appropriate name of this universal phase should be: _____?

Well, for now, I can not reveal my suggestion, since I already submitted it for the competition.

If anyone has a good idea, send your entry to:

The SKY & TELESCOPE
 Re: The "Big Bang" challenge
 P.O. Box 9111
 Belmont, MA 02178-9111
 Phone: (617) 864-7360 Fax: (617) 864-6117
 Harry up...entries should be submitted by August 31st, 1993.

One other note: As you can see by the Financial Statement on this page, a considerable amount of funds went into production of the *Atheists of Florida Forum* this year. While we feel the expenditures were very worthwhile based on reactions we have received from prospective members and the probability of running the series on other cable systems throughout the state, it has placed a strain on our operating budget. Won't you please consider an extra contribution this month to help defray the costs?

Thank you very much.

ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA, INC.

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES

SIX MONTHS ENDED JUNE 30, 1993

General contributions and memberships	\$ 1,851.50	\$ 1,866.87
Interest income	15.37	
Newsletter	568.24	
Service charges	84.74	
Telephone	340.62	
Dues & Subscriptions	50.00	
Office	281.59	
Video Production	430.15	
Licenses & Taxes	70.00	
Reports	75.00	
Loss from Operations	1,900.34	(\$33.47)
SCHOLARSHIP FUND:		
Opening Balance	\$1,000.00	
Contributions	410.00	
Ending Balance	\$1,410.00	
LEGAL FUND:		
Opening Balance	\$220.00	
Contributions	0.00	
Ending Balance	\$220.00	
OPERATING FUND:		
Opening Balance	\$ 192.37	
Transfer from Legal Fund	0.00	
Loan from Scholarship Fund	1,866.87	
Receipts	(1,900.34)	
Disbursements	\$ 158.90	
Ending Balance	\$ 2,155.48	
BANK RECONCILIATION:		
Balance per Bank	366.58	
Outstanding checks	\$1,788.90	
Balance per Checkbook	\$ 2,155.48	