

## Newsbriefs

Some of you may have seen the photograph that went out over the wire services during the Democratic Convention. It showed a priest riding a bicycle equipped with a "Port-O-Fess" confessional.

Although the Catholics were quick to disclaim any knowledge of this, and of the priest, I think it's about time someone saw the true nature of religion for what it is - no different than what goes in the "Port-O-Johns" so prevalent at outdoor events.

I've noticed a disturbing trend in these "throwaway" type newspapers that clutter our lawns. Many of them have embraced the so-called "New Age" movement, and feature columns written by self-described psychics, ESP experts, and spiritualists.

Posing as "informational" columns, these little blurbs usually include some story about the "psychic" - or psychotic - experiences they are "reporting" on. Usually the writer just happens to run some Tarot Card/fortunetelling/psychic advisory service, and this is a way of promoting this hogwash to the general public.

Write the editors. Tell them in no uncertain terms that passing this garbage off as news is fraudulent, and they can either denote such columns as advertisements or you'll consider their paper litter, and treat it as such.

Even worse are the programs on television. Two recent ones were a pseudo-scientific program called "Ancient Secrets of the Bible" and a parapsychological/UFO promotion called "Visitors



from the Unknown - both on CBS.

These shows featured supposed skeptics arguing about the Bible, psychics, and UFO's, then showed their "conversions" to babbling believers, or destroyed their specious arguments. One example claimed that the main argument against "God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah" rested on the claim that the cities never existed. ??? No intelligent person I know has made that claim, but the proving existence of a city is a far cry from proving it was destroyed by God.

Another example showed a man convinced of a psychic's "gift" because she fed him information from his past that he couldn't believe she knew. As if finding out such things is impossible without spiritual help. I can only recommend James Randi's book *Flim Flam!*, and suggest sending letters to your local stations requesting equal time for the soon-to-be-produced AOF videos. Barring that, they could at least pre-empt the program with an old cartoon rerun, which doubtless would make more sense to an intelligent adult!

Another news event is a Miami Metro inspector being paid with public funds to determine whether food conforms to religious regulations - Dade's "Kosher Kop." Next thing you know, we'll have federal employees checking Bibles to make sure they only tell the accepted lies!

**AOF, INC.**  
**P O BOX 130753**  
**TAMPA FL 33681-0753**

**Address Correction Requested**



# ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA

"A school prayer amendment would confer upon public school boards a power the First Amendment now denies to Congress and the states, that is, the power to establish religion."  
 — Senator Sam Ervin, Jr.

"Dedicated to the absolute  
 separation of State and Church"

Newsletter of Atheists of Florida, Inc.  
 Volume I Number 07

Chapters in Miami and Tampa Bay  
 August, 1992

## Atheists Of Florida Board Meets

**MIAMI** - The Board of Directors meeting was held Sunday, August 9, 1992 in the offices of Mark Trop, attorney for the organization. The first order of business was to elect the officers of the board.

Dr. Albert Lyngzeidston was elected Chairman of the Board. He will be responsible for chairing any meetings of the Board. President of Atheists Of Florida is Christos Tzanetakos, and Vice-President is Ed Golly. Celia Glantz was elected Secretary in absentia, and subsequently accepted the position. And our Treasurer is Charles A. Ross, a CPA.

A motion was approved to grant chapter status to the chapter in Tampa Bay. The geographic area covered by the chapter includes the region within a boundary encompassed by Clearwater to Lakeland to Sarasota. The Tampa Chapter's address is P.O. Box 130753 / Tampa, FL 33681-0753. Since the newsletter is edited in Tampa, it is suggested that any submissions be sent to this address.

Next, approval was voted for Atheists Of Florida to join the Atheist Alliance. We will publish a synopsis of the Alliance, what it is and what our involvement with it means in the next newsletter. The Miami Bookfair is an event in which the Miami chapter of American Atheists had participated in previous years. Consideration was given to participating this year. But the fee is now \$300 and the Board decided it is not prudent to expend the funds at this time. It is expected that by next year, we will have a wide selection of literature to present at such a bookfair and be better able financially to handle the expense. For the present,

we would rather spend that money preparing literature which would represent our organization and be useable for prospective members and inquiries.

Other ideas discussed at the meeting were to investigate production of a 30-minute cable TV program. The Tampa Bay and Miami chapters could each produce just one program a month and exchange the programs in the middle of the month thereby showing each show twice in each market. Also, we plan to publicize the chapters in free newspapers in our respective areas and in local universities. A motion was passed to fund the production of a small amount of T-shirts displaying the Atheists Of Florida logo to see if they could be sold, and another motion was passed to allow paid advertising in our newsletter. We will offer a business-card size (1/8 page) ad for \$50 a year.

Whenever we spot in newspapers editorial letters written by readers who appear sympathetic to our viewpoint, we will attempt to contact them with a letter describing Atheists Of Florida and seek their support and membership. People who take the time and interest to write to newspapers are the kind of activists we want to attract. Finally, a motion was passed to establish a legal fund and solicit contributions to it from the membership. Although we plan to very carefully discuss and analyze any ideas for legal action before proceeding with them, it is highly likely we will in fact be involved in some form of action in the near future which cannot be done without adequate funding. A scholarship fund will be discussed at the next Board of Directors meeting which we are hoping to have in conjunction with a state convention, date as yet undetermined.

## Tampa Bay to elect local officers

The next meeting of the Tampa Bay Chapter will have repercussions for at least the coming year: officers will be elected, and strategies for increasing membership and media exposure will be discussed. Make sure to be there!

Offices open in the chapter include President, Vice-President, and Secretary. Since it was decided that all funds and expenses will be handled through Miami at this time, a Treasurer will not be needed. Quarterly financial reports will appear in the newsletter.

The Chapter President will preside at local meetings, and direct the efforts of the chapter in accordance with the goals set by the state board. Additional duties, with the assistance of the Vice-President, will include media relations and other activities concerning the basic functioning of the chapter.

The Vice-President will be responsible for maintaining publicity for the chapter, and arranging meeting locations. In the

event the President cannot perform his duties, the Vice-President will assume those as well.

The Secretary will maintain all records of the chapter, and will be responsible for informing the organization treasurer of expenses incurred or funds received. Additionally, the Secretary will be primarily responsible for the chapter's written communications with the state organization or other entities.

Another important decision to be made at this meeting will be the future location of meetings. Some members prefer a restaurant, such as Chi-Chi's, where the room is provided free, but members are expected to purchase dinner. Others have indicated a preference for "meeting rooms," where the cost is paid directly by the members attending or from chapter funds, and members may provide their own food and refreshments if they so desire.

It's certain to be a lively discussion between the "eaters" and "non-eaters," so plan to be there!

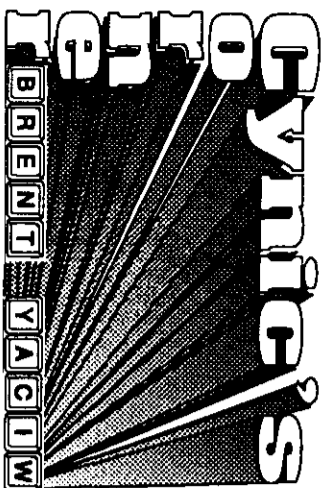
## Chapter Meetings

### Tampa Bay

The Tampa Bay chapter's next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 26, at Chi-Chi's Restaurant in Pinellas Park. Members only will be admitted at 6:00 p.m., since we will be electing officers this evening. Guests may attend after 7:00 for dinner and general discussion. The following meeting, on Sunday, September 12, will be held in the clubhouse of the Meadows apartment complex, located on 9th St. N. and 116th Ave. If you need directions or further information, please call Ed Golly at 839-7567 or Brent Yaciv at 393-6321.

### Miami

The Miami Chapter usually meets the second Sunday of each month at the Main Library of Ft. Lauderdale, 100 S. Andrews Ave. This month's meeting is a special event: a joint meeting with the Secular Humanists. The date is Sunday, September 20th, at 2:00, in Rooms A & B of the library. No particular topic has been selected for this meeting, to allow the members of both groups to "meet and greet" others and initiate individual discussions on topics of mutual interest.



Atheists Of Florida, Inc. is a non-profit, educational organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and atheism, and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts for the membership.

Membership dues should be sent to the chapter of interest. General correspondence should be directed to the Miami Chapter, P.O. Box 530102, Miami, FL 33153-0102. Contact Phone is (305) 936-0210. Annual dues are: \$30.00 - 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 and chapter inquiries should be sent to the Tampa Bay Chapter, P.O. Box 130753, Tampa, FL 33681-0753. Deadline for newsletter items is the 15th of each month. The A.O.F. newsletter is provided free of charge to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters are published from members on a space-available basis, in general accord with guidelines set out in Vol. 1, No. 6.

Atheists Of Florida, Inc., is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

Chairman Albert E. Lyngzeidson  
 President Christos Zaneakos  
 Vice-President Ed Golly  
 Secretary Celia Glantz  
 Treasurer Charles A. Ross  
 State Board of Directors  
 Kyoko Brogdon  
 John J. Diamond  
 Steven Miller  
 Louis Miller  
 Florence Morgenthau  
 Daniel Street  
 Brent Yaciv  
 Newsletter Editor Ed Golly  
 Assistant/Letters Editor Brent Yaciv

## Home Schooling: The Biggest Threat to the Future of Atheism

It sounds like an All-American (whatever that means) idea - send your kids to the school of your choice, or teach them at home. As long as they can pass certain standardized tests, the children are considered to be receiving an adequate education by the government agencies that regulate home and private schooling. The children get at least as good of an education as they would in public schools, and parents have more control over the materials and atmosphere in which learning takes place.

Ah, but there's the rub - exactly how much control should a parent have over education? What else is being taught besides the "three Rs," and what is the effect on and responsibility of society regarding children? Are children the property of the parents, to be treated as they will?

We must answer with a resounding "NO," or face a future society in which the gains we have made against bigotry, intolerance, and superstition are negated, even regressed. The facts are simple: most private and home schools are organized around a religious theme, and often reinforce parental beliefs and prejudices.

Even in public schools, pressures to promote religion and keep children in ignorance are high. I'll use an example from my own past, when I interned at a Hillsborough County public school last fall.

One incident revolved around the teaching of Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. I had chosen the book because I was familiar with the work, and it was listed on the county's list of approved works for a junior-level "skills" class. The story is about a Catholic boy's school raising funds by selling chocolates, and the terror and ostracism suffered by one new student who refuses to participate in this activity. The book is considered an equivalent work to *Lord of the Flies*. One girl, who received the book at the same time as the rest of the class but was "sick" for part of the four weeks she had to read it, announces to me on the last day before the test that her grandmother (guardian) and preacher said she can't read the book, because it has "dirty words" in it.

Yes, it sounds like a ploy to me too, but the county - wisely - has procedures to deal with this type of challenge. I'll mention right now that the support I received from school personnel was fantastic. Hillsborough County takes a dim view of censorship.

The county supplies a form, to be filled out by the parent, guardian, or whoever was responsible for the complaint. The answers on the form were a reminder of how far we have to go in educating the public. Besides the misspellings and other grammatical errors, mistakes which anyone could make, the attitude that clearly shone through was, "I'm ignorant, I'm proud to be ignorant, and I intend for my granddaughter to be ignorant too!" Answers like "Don't know and don't care were typical when asked about her familiarity with the work. Grandma was unable to point out any specific objectionable words or passages. In short, her granddaughter had told her it had bad words, and that was good enough. No doubt the granddaughter was hoping that she would simply get out of doing the work.

(continued next page)

Dear Editors:

Since you say that "one sure way to gain exposure is getting 'Atheists of Florida' into your letters whenever practical," it occurred to me that a good way would perhaps be the attached acronym. (see graphic at right)

I am also enclosing copy of a page of *American Atheist Magazine* of approximately one year ago, and a capsule on Genesis 3:15 and pious (?) fraud.

Your idea seems excellent. I hope it encourages communication among Atheists and promotes truth searching.

Sincerely,  
 Mike Perdomo

The following letter appeared in *Ebony's* August 1992 issue. That's international exposure in a non-Atheist publication, folks!

Your articles, "Present And Accounted For: The Other Side Of The Black Father Myth" and "What Do Black Men Really Want In A Woman," have highlighted some interesting points. The time is past due for us to expose the myths that prevail in our society concerning Black men, and show the world that we Black men are indeed responsible, intelligent, honest and committed.

As an African-American male and men's rights/father's rights activist, I am dedicated to speaking out against the perpetual male-bashing (especially Black males) that is so prevalent in our society today.

I must strongly differ concerning the area of "spiritual grounding." As an atheist myself, I recognize that there are many Black men and women who are also free thinkers, atheists, agnostics and humanists, and have the moral and dedicated commitment to family and civic duty as the most staunch religionist. Our race has a vast diversity of philosophies and to allege that not embracing a Christian religious doctrine as being the primary cause of divorce is totally false.

If persons want to commit themselves to a religion, that is their personal business and perception, but to suggest that we all must take this point of view is completely absurd.

George Starkes  
 President  
 Tampa Bay Mens Association  
 St. Petersburg, Fla.

Not to mention a member of the Tampa Bay Chapter of Atheists Of Florida! George also had this letter published in the conservative-oriented Tampa Tribune, on May 5, 1992. Unfortunately, I misplaced the copy of it for the last newsletter, so here it is.

GENESIS 1:11	- "And God said,...."
EXODUS 5:15	- Then the....
LEVITICUS 7:30	- His own hands....
NUMBERS 18:14	- Everything that....
DEUTERONOMY 4:26	- I call heaven and....
JOSHUA 6:20	- So the people....
JUDGES 4:21	- Then Jael....
I SAMUEL 4:4	- So the....
PSALMS 14:7	- Oh that the....
PROVERBS 3:12	- For whom the....
MATTHEW 4:17	- From that time....
MARK 15:31	- Likewise....
LUKE 14:31	- Or what king....
JOHN 15:20	- Remember the word....
ACTS 4:9	- If we....
I CORINTHIANS 9:13	- Do you not....
ROMANS 1:6	- Among whom...."

### Religion

This is in regard to the April 24 letter, "Christians," the April 26 article, "Yahweh religion becomes issue in 'racketeering trial'" and the April 26 letter, "How science, religion can work together."

It is evident that religionists are incapable of separating fact from fiction. Science has nothing in common with religion. Religion is nothing more than superstition, while science deals with facts, proof, reason, logic and common sense. Praying (talking to oneself), as a public function, is a vulgar display of an exclusively personal matter and is a humiliating spectacle.

Praying has no place in a public building or event since there are so many diverse perceptions toward such rituals. It violates our U.S. Constitution, which guarantees us separation of church and state.

The Founding Fathers did not come to America to promote religion. The Founding Fathers fled religious tyranny in Europe and were not theists but deists. Even Adolf Hitler was a religious fanatic. The Nazi soldiers during the days of the Third Reich wore inscriptions on their belt buckles that read in German "God is with us."

It is religious tyranny here in America that results in blue laws, censor-

ship and religious subjugation upon those who have no interest in such fairy tale philosophy.

It is religionists and not atheists who are the true bigots. Christians continue to force their religious mythology upon mainstream America and denigrate the free-thinkers of America.

Religious dictators will stop at nothing short of telling everyone what they can see, hear, believe and enjoy. The people who should seek another country to dictate should be the religious zealots who want to dictate their fraudulent beliefs on everyone.

American freedom not only means freedom of religion but also freedom from religion. Our government is not founded upon the rights of gods, but upon the rights of people. It is the only nation with which the gods have had nothing to do. I do not need to be born again. I got it right the first time. I am a freethinking atheist and proud of it.

George Starkes

Once again, thanks to all our contributors. Remember that all letters should be mailed to the Tampa P.O. box, and must be received by the 15th of each month for inclusion in next month's newsletter. Let's see more from everyone!  
 Brent Yaciv

that George Bush was similarly trapped into exposing the hypocrisy of his anti-abortion stance. Now his wife is trying to make it a non-issue by saying it's a personal thing. She's absolutely right - it's the personal choice of the woman, which is what I and many others have been saying for years. Now if only George and his cronies will listen to her....

From the *St. Petersburg Times*, 8/1/92.

Re: Don Wright cartoon, July 27

They say a picture is worth a thousand words; in that case, Wright's cartoon is surely worth 10,000. In one 5-by-7-inch space, he has summed up the hypocrisy of the religious "moralist," exemplified by the Vatican, in this case.

Another recent example is Dan Quayle, applying the "do as I say, not as I do" standard of morality. It's so easy for the anti-abortion crowd to say no one should be allowed to have an abortion - until it hits home. Of course, individual atheists and groups like Atheists of Florida or the Humanists of the Suncoast have been pointing this hypocrisy out for years; it finally seems that the mainstream is catching up to us...

Now if only we can get people to see how the tax exemptions that churches enjoy allow them to grow rich at taxpayer expense... Maybe someday.

Brent Yaciv

This letter appeared in the *St. Petersburg Times Religion Section* on 7/25/92

### Government should be prayer-free

In answer to the July 11 letter in which the writer states that he is most confused as to the reasoning of the Supreme Court in its recent ruling continuing the ban on prayer in public schools and, in particular, at school graduations, maybe this person is too young, or too old, to remember that day -- June 17, 1963 -- when the Supreme Court ruled in an 8-1 verdict that religious ceremony in schools was improper. The free people of our nation owe a resounding vote of thanks to those five justices who recently supported the 1963 ruling. My faith in our system was somewhat restored when these five brave, hand-picked members of the court had the fortitude to bite the hands that picked them.

The writer asks, "Where is the separation of church and state?" and asks this because Charlotte Sutton's column on the power of prayer boasts that, not

only in Florida but in all states as well as in our federal Congress, all sessions are opened with a prayer. I, too, ask where is the separation of church and state. If prayer has had any effect on our legislators through all these years, I haven't seen it. The writer answers his or her own question in asking if prayer could adversely influence check-kiting, junk-touring, PAC-loving legislators. Evidently not. Even with 12 years of having two religious bigots as presidents, the ethical standards of our government have gone to hell. Doesn't the writer think that young, impressionable students are contaminated by the recent confirmation spectacle of Clarence Thomas as Supreme Court justice? After what I've witnessed in my life, I am certain that my children might be contaminated by "moral, religious, non-denominational prayers" in school or anywhere else, for that matter.

Where is the difference in prayers in schools and prayers in the Congress and legislatures in the context of "separation of church and state"? asks the writer. There is no difference. If prayer is improper in public schools, it is improper in public government. Religionists must be stopped from forcing their mythological superstition upon the free citizens of this free nation. Madalyn O'Hair said that no god ever gave any man anything, nor ever answered any prayer at any time, nor ever will. That's fact, not mythology.

Edward J. McDougall Sr.

This letter appeared in the *Largo Seminole Times* on 8/8/92

### School prayer issue is dead

Re: "Why allow Cop Killer but not school prayer?", by guest columnist William Hale.

This is like comparing chalk to cheese! There is no comparison. I certainly detest "brain dead" pop and rock music. However, school prayer is a different issue. The Supreme Court wisely ruled that school prayer constitutes a "religious ceremony," and that religious ceremonies are not proper in the public schools where all children are required to attend.

Religion is a private affair. All parents can give their children the religious education of their choice in their homes and in their churches or synagogues, but the public school is no place for religious ceremonies. This contravenes the First Amendment principle of state church separation, which is a part of the highest law in the land: the Constitution.

Victor St. John

### CYNIC (continued)

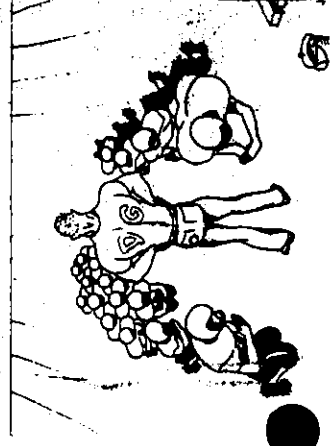
I must say immediately that the report I received from school personnel is fantastic. Hillsborough County takes a dim view of censorship. The county supplies a form, to be filled out by the parent, guardian, or whoever was responsible for the complaint. The answers on the form were a reminder of how far we have to go in educating the public.

Besides the misspellings and other grammatical errors, mistakes which anyone could make, the attitude that clearly shone through was, "I'm ignorant, I'm proud to be ignorant, and I intend for my granddaughter to be ignorant too!" Answers like "Don't know and don't care were typical when asked about her familiarity with the work. Grandma was unable to point out any specific objectionable words or passages. In short, her granddaughter had told her it had bad words, and that was good enough. No doubt that she would simply get out of doing the work.

No such luck. She was given an alternate book from the list, and equivalent assignments - which she also did not do. She failed.

Another sad situation is the formation of religious "private" clubs on school grounds. Thanks to some unfavorable court rulings, groups like the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) are given space and recognition by the schools, as "voluntary" organizations. As you can see by the accompanying drawing of the coach and his team, "voluntary" is often used loosely.

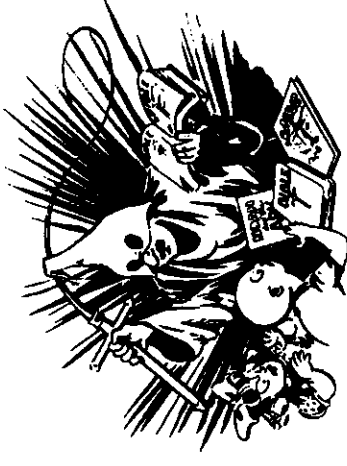
This drawing was done by a student at the high school as part of an assignment to represent an Emerson quote of their choice. He chose, "I am monarch of all I survey, my right there is none to dispute." The writing accompanying it: "As I look out over my loyal players, I see how they idolize me. I am their god. They do as I command. My words are like those of a god to them.... The stadium is my temple, I am the law among my players... If you are on our schedule, we



will destroy you."

Is it merely a coincidence that this coach, also the faculty advisor for the FCA, inspires a reaction that sounds biblical? How many high school kids would dare turn down an "invitation" to join from this coach? Now transfer this same type of coercion into a private school setting, where the coaches need not fear other teachers or administrators will hamper their efforts to ensure 100% participation.

Imagine a child in home schooling, where the parent's views are pushed all day, every day. The child's ability to think and reason independently must be hampered by this pressure. The child has no opportunity to bear thoughts and opinions unless screened by the parents, and you can bet that most of those children will never hear the words of Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Tho-



mas Edison, or any other Tom, Dick, or Harry throughout history unless those words are carefully screened by the overseeing parents. Many of the homeschooled live in rural areas, where there is limited access to public library facilities. These areas are often strongholds of religion, as well as other nonsensical thoughts. Once this thinking is ingrained, overcoming it becomes difficult - if not impossible.

Take for example the words of Pineville, Louisiana legislator Carl Gunter, arguing for an anti-abortion bill that would preclude abortions even in case of incest:

"When I got to thinking, the way we get thoroughbred horses and thoroughbred dogs is through inbreeding. Maybe we would get a supersharp kid."

Perhaps Mr. Gunter has some personal experience we are unaware of, but anyone reasonably versed in genetics knows that inbreeding accentuates defects as well as talents, and that many "purebreds" suffer from debilitating handicaps because the gene pool has been too limited for too long.

Gunter is not an educator, but then, neither are thousands of parents who

consider themselves qualified to teach their own children. One additional problem is the inherent racial prejudices such schooling private school/tax support advocate has promised adherence to federal guidelines designed to promote equal education. The KKK may not run the schools, but you wouldn't know it from looking at the student population. Children need the broadest possible exposure to different ideas and cultures to allow them the intellectual freedom they deserve as adults. Only public schools can fulfill this need. We should promote mandatory public school attendance through at least high school, and consider depriving children of mental sustenance an equal crime to depriving them of food: child abuse.

## Starkes' Remarks

### Even atheists have a diversity of political views

In the June, 1992 issue of the newsletter, Florence Morgenroth wrote a commentary regarding a Constitutional amendment to establish state church separation once and for all. Member George Starkes of St. Petersburg responds:

There are many atheists who feel that simply because we are atheists we should all share the same or similar viewpoints on politics, current events, civic functions, societal concepts and thus form a bond of "commonality" in opinions.

But there are atheists who are liberal and conservative, pro-choice and anti-abortion, feminists and masculinists, etc. Often, when an atheist expresses an opinion or viewpoint that is contrary to popular atheist opinion, he is considered to be misinformed, misguided, rebellious, strange, or simply regarded as wrong.

Personally, there are many liberal groups and liberal individuals which I believe to be extremists in the opposite extreme which sets a dangerous precedent of reverse-bigotry. As an atheist, I have no belief or interest in a religion or god doctrine. However, I have observed that many atheists cling to a political bandwagon simply because they think it is in the best interest of atheism since a particular atheist organization has sanctioned or pushed a certain political viewpoint, person, or organization. Although I am black, I do not and will not support (continued on page 5)

# NEWS LETTERS

## More dead in the name of - what else? - gods

Hindus and Muslims clashed an outburst of violence over a renewed attempt by militant Hindus to build a temple on the site of a 16th-century Muslim mosque. Similar fighting escalated into widespread riots in 1990 that killed at least 1,000 people. The government rushed more federal troops to the Hindu holy town of Ayodhya on Sunday, a day after federal and local politicians failed to reach agreement on how to deal with the resumption of construction work in the town.

Hindus are trying to build the temple at what they say is the birthplace of Ram. They argue that an earlier temple was destroyed to make way for the mosque. The temple's builders appealed to Hindus to join them by the thousands, while fundamentalist Muslim leaders urged their kinsmen to halt the construction. At least 34 people were injured.

The Bharatiya Janata Party -- a Hindu fundamentalist group that is the main opposition group and governs Uttar Pradesh -- was roundly criticized for ignoring orders from a state court to halt the temple construction. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao told the assembled leaders that if the state's government did not follow the court order it would violate the Indian constitution, which guarantees the protection of all religious faiths. The Times of India newspaper called Rao's statement a "veiled threat" to impose federal rule in Uttar Pradesh, a step many analysts say would increase Bharatiya Janata's popularity among the country's majority Hindus. Hindus constitute 82 percent of India's 844-million people, while Muslims make up 12 percent. Bharatiya Janata won power in Uttar Pradesh on a platform promising to build the temple where the mosque stands.

Does this sound anything like our own politicians' attempts to curry favor with the Christian majority in this country? Is there any doubt that the results would be similar?

"England has 42 religions and only two saucers."  
-Voltaire

## Do you buy these at "Allahed Tire?"

A major Japanese tire maker is recalling automobile tires with a tread pattern that resembles the Arabic word for Allah after receiving protests from Islamic believers. A spokesman for the Tokyo-based Yokohama Rubber Co. said his company had stopped producing the tires, and in Islamic countries it was recalling or replacing them with new tires for free. The company also apologized for its lack of knowledge of Islam. The treads were designed by computer to maximize driving safety, and were used mainly on jeep-like vehicles. Another case of religion impeding the progress of science - I wonder if there are "Elvis" tires too?



## The more they tell us, the wackier it sounds

Vance Davis and five of his friends went AWOL - it was reported that they had gone to a Florida beach to await the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in a UFO.

"No way," says Davis. "How ridiculous can you get? Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ. Why would he come in a flying saucer?"

Expecting a rational explanation? Don't hold your breath. The "real" reason they left their Army intelligence posts was because Ouija Board spirits said they were needed to help lead the world through an impending cataclysm. Right.

For two years, since the six turned up in Gulf Breeze, Fla., they have remained silent. But Davis now says he wants to tell his story to set the record straight and because, according to the Ouija Board, race riots in Los Angeles were to be a signal the group should go public. The others will come forward, one by one, depending on public reaction - in other words, lets see how many gullible fools there are out there. Believe it or not, these six guys were former intelligence analysts, all with top-secret security clearances! Scary, isn't it?

They were arrested after one was stopped for a broken taillight in Gulf Breeze, a Panhandle town known for reported UFO sightings. Two weeks later,

they were honorably discharged after an investigation found no evidence the soldiers from the 701 st Military Intelligence Brigade had been involved in espionage. As punishment, they were reduced to the lowest rank and forfeited half-month's pay.

It all began innocently in November 1989, Davis says. "We decided to do some experimentation," he says. "We wanted to see if there was something actually to it -ESP, parapsychology, ghosts, Tarot cards."

Davis says the group "hit brick walls" until they tried a Ouija Board. "Someone showed up," he says. "I'm talking .... spiritually."

In the months that followed, Davis says, several spirits talked to the group, predicting the Gulf War and the 1990 Iran earthquake. "At the end of May we were told we might think about trying to get out of the service because there's going to be some serious things occurring in the next five years, and being in the service would not help us grow and become what we were supposed to become," Davis says. What they were destined to do, he says, is prepare people for the coming chaos. "This will be the changing of the Earth, and Jesus is involved," Davis says. "He will come back, and Rapture" -- the fundamentalist belief that believers will be swept to heaven before the world ends -- "is real."



Davis says when the group couldn't find a legal way out of the Army, the Ouija Board told them, "Leave, just leave." Stunned, they decided to put their faith in the board's message that "things would work out."

"We had top-secret clearances and never did anything wrong in our life," Davis says. "Being AWOL was the furthest thing from our mind." But on July 3, 1990, they hopped a flight from Munich to Atlanta and went to Gulf Breeze to see friends: a psychic and her (continued on next page)

## Wackier (cont)

housemate, Iris, who became Vance's wife. After their arrest and release from the Army, the group split up. Davis, 27, lives in Albuquerque with his wife and 8-month-old daughter, does odd jobs and gives seminars on "self-sustaining lifestyles." "With everything we were told that's supposed to be occurring in the next five years, we want to be here to help," he says. Some changes, he says, are earthquakes and volcano eruptions, including the eruption of Mount Rainier in Washington; a gas leak that will devastate New York City; and food and race riots in every major U.S. city that will bring martial law and economic collapse. Well, these predictions don't take a Ouija board, just a continuance of the pro-religion mode our government's been in for the last, oh, 200 years.

## Weird Excerpts

(culled from *Creative Loafing's* "News of the Weird" feature)

Princeton University granted Milton Babbitt's doctoral degree in mathematics -- 46 years after it rejected his dissertation (on mathematics of the 12-tone musical system of modern composers). The university recently concluded that, at the time, Babbitt's work was so advanced that no one at Princeton understood it. In the ensuing 46 years, Babbitt won a Pulitzer Prize and developed the first electronic synthesizer. Perhaps someday, the thoughts of Atheists will become recognized by the rest of the world too.

Joe Chagra filed in April for re-admission to the Texas State Bar. He faces long odds. Chagra resigned from the bar in 1983, just in time to avoid being disciplined, after he had been found guilty of conspiracy in the death of the federal judge who was scheduled to hear a drug charge against Chagra's brother. That shouldn't cause a problem - no doubt he'll claim he's had a "religious awakening" and changed his ways. Sure.

A keynote speaker at a November international lung cancer conference in Melbourne, Australia, reported that as many as a fourth of the 1,200 delegates were smoking during breaks in the program. I guess they were looking for personal experience in their field.

In April, the daily Nashville Tennessean newspaper disclosed that Domino's pizza dealers in the area had a policy of refusing to deliver pizzas to certain predominantly black neighborhoods. As the weekly Nashville Scene newspaper reported two weeks later, the Tennessean, itself, has a policy of discouraging home delivery subscriptions of the paper to the very same areas. Yet

another case of "Do as I say, not as I do."

The Niagara County, N.Y., sheriff's office reported in March that a 38-year-old man from Wheatfield, N.Y., had been taken to DeGraff Memorial Hospital suffering from the effects of a do-it-yourself castration performed with clamps, a scalpel and a local anesthetic. He said he needed to reduce his sex drive. No doubt a victim of "pornography addiction," ala David Catton.

*The cosmos is a gigantic fly-wheel making 10,000 revolutions a minute. Man is a sick fly taking a dizzy ride on it. Religion is the theory that the wheel was designed and set spinning to give him the ride.*

-H. L. Mencken

## Moralists rampant in Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services

Two cases that have hit the news lately demonstrate religion's grip on our state's HRS. In one case, two lesbians who were caring for a six-year-old child had the child taken away, and were refused a license as a foster home. Why? Because the state does not approve of two unmarried adults - homosexual or heterosexual - sharing a bedroom.

According to a spokesperson, this "would not be a natural setting."

Hub? What could be more natural for two people in love? Remember, it's not even their sexual orientation the HRS objects to (not that that's a reason anyway), but that sex between consenting adults is somehow "unnatural" or "dirty" - clearly the same view foisted on our society from decades of Puritanical influences. This is one of the "traditions" that conservatives love to praise whenever a church-state separation issue is raised.

The second case involves a single lesbian, manager of an AIDS counseling center, who won her license to care for an AIDS-infected infant. This has conservatives in an uproar. Rep. Steven Wise, R-Jacksonville, is quoted as saying:

"That's not the kind of lifestyle children should be exposed to. And I can assure you, that's not what people in North Florida want. That's not the traditional family values. The way we bring kids up to respect that kind of system is not two women in bed with each other."

"Religion is the venerable disease of mankind"

-Henri de Monttherlant

I'm not sure what bothers him most - that two women could be happy together (perhaps he's feeling insecure) or that the child has AIDS (he doubtless feels it's God's punishment to gays). We've all seen plenty of kids raised on the "traditional family values" go wrong, and starting off with loving parents of either sex is better for the child than some sterile *Leave It To Beaver* family.

Speaking of AIDS as God's punishment, let's mention the St Petersburg adult education instructor who told that lgarbage to her health class - and received a reprimand. Rallying to her defense, several Christian letter writers have cried "freedom of speech" and "freedom of religion," concepts most of them are unfamiliar with. Perhaps that's why they're ignoring the main point: neither overrides her employee responsibility as a public school health instructor to present only verifiable facts, not proselytize her uneducated beliefs. No one is keeping her from believing in, participating in, or talking about her religion on her own time. We just don't want her representing her unscientific, unproven theories as fact to a class she is supposed to be helping.

Send her back to school - as a student.

## Starkes (cont)

the NAACP which is a pro-religious black organization. I also have no interest in supporting NOW (National Organization for Women), Gloria Steinem, Jesse Jackson, or other so-called liberals. No atheist should join forces with any person or organization, even if liberal, just to get their political influence. I would rather we struggle alone than be associated with people or organizations which I view as offensive, bigoted, or reverse-extremists. We atheists have a lot of political power if we simply get out of the closet and speak out asserting our rights, and take a rightful stand in the name of atheism. We all should proudly proclaim our atheism publicly, write letters to the local newspapers and magazines, call our political representatives and get active. Only we can bring about the necessary change. Let's put the closet behind us. Come on out. It's a wonderful time to be alive.



## Legal Fund



# Justice May Be Blind— But She Ain't Cheap!

We'd rather avoid the courts altogether, since the deck is stacked against us. But in some cases, legal action is inevitable—and we want to be prepared when the time comes. Even worse, the primary cost of courtroom battle is financial. Your generous donation now will help fund our future costs—ensuring a better future for atheism!

**Mail to:**  
**Atheists Of Florida, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 530102**  
**Miami, FL 33153-0102**