

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

DADE&BROWARD: Third Sunday of each month, 2:00 pm on the eighth floor of the Broward County Main Library, 100 S. Andrews Ave. Ft. Lauderdale. Our next meeting is scheduled for March 16. Topic: Review of new books followed by video presentation of a Dateline NBC undercover report on Benny Hinn.
Third Tuesday each month, 8:00 am, Breakfast meetings at Denny's Restaurant, 16751 NW 67th Ave, Hialeah. Specific meeting information and activities published in **NEWSNOTES**, included in all newsletters, or listen 24/7 to the message on 305/940-0442. patceil@bellsouth.net

TAMPA BAY: Pinellas County—First Sunday of each odd-numbered month (Jan., Mar., etc.), 1:00-3:30 at the Pinellas Park Public Library, 78th Ave N & 52nd Street.
Tampa—First Sunday of each even-numbered month, 1:00-3:30, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa. Optional dinners follow all meetings at nearby cafeterias. FMI: Ed Golly, 813/835-1500, AthALFLE@aol.com.
SARASOTA: Sunday, 1:30-3:30 at the Selby Library, 1331 First Street, Sarasota. Scheduled meetings: March 23, April 13, and May 18. FMI—813/835-1500, AthALFLE@aol.com.

MAD *continued from page 5*

America at home, and who is to be ruled by America abroad. The most charitable interpretation of Tony Blair's part in all this is that he believed that, by riding the tiger, he could steer it. He can't. Instead, he gave it a phoney legitimacy, and a smooth voice. Now I fear, the same tiger has him penned into a corner, and he can't get out. It is utterly laughable that, at a time when Blair has talked himself against the ropes, neither of Britain's opposition leaders can lay a glove on him. But that's Britain's tragedy, as it is America's: as our Governments spin, lie and lose their credibility, the electorate simply shrugs and looks the other way. Blair's best chance of personal survival must be that, at the eleventh hour, world protest and an improbably emboldened UN will force Bush to put his gun back in his holster unfired. But what happens when the world's greatest cowboy rides back into town without a tyrant's head to wave at the boys? Blair's worst chance is that, with or without the UN, he will drag us into a war that, if the will to negotiate energetically had ever been there, could have been avoided; a war that has been no more democratically debated in Britain than it has in America or at the UN. By doing so, Blair will have set back our relations with Europe and the Middle East for decades to come. He will have helped to provoke unforeseeable retaliation, great domestic unrest, and regional chaos in the Middle East. Welcome to the party of the ethical foreign policy. There is a middle way, but it's a tough one: Bush dives in

without UN approval and Blair stays on the bank. Goodbye to the special relationship. I cringe when I hear my Prime Minister lend his head prefect's sophistries to this colonialist adventure. His very real anxieties about terror are shared by all sane men. What he can't explain is how he reconciles a global assault on al-Qaeda with a territorial assault on Iraq. We are in this war, if it takes place, to secure the fig leaf of our special relationship, to grab our share of the oil pot, and because, after all the public hand-holding in Washington and Camp David, Blair has to show up at the altar. "But will we win, Daddy?" "Of course, child. It will all be over while you're still in bed." "Why?" "Because otherwise Mr. Bush's voters will get terribly impatient and may decide not to vote for him." "But will people be killed, Daddy?" "Nobody you know, darling. Just foreign people." "Can I watch it on television?" "Only if Mr. Bush says you can." "And afterwards, will everything be normal again? Nobody will do anything horrid any more?" "Hush child, and go to sleep." Last Friday a friend of mine in California drove to his local supermarket with a sticker on his car saying: "Peace is also Patriotic". It was gone by the time he'd finished shopping. *The author has also contributed to an open Democracy debate on Iraq at www.openDemocracy.net* **A**

Atheists of Florida
Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church
www.atheists.org/florida
A Member Society of Atheist Alliance International, the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies

Atheist Alliance International to Give Annual Dawkins Award
Convention promises to be best ever!

Richard Dawkins * "The Amazing" James Randi
Michael Shermer * Michael Newdow
*Margaret Downey * John Patrick Michael Murphy*
*Darrell Lambert * Chris Harper—Landover Baptist Church... and more!*

TAMPA—IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING BETTER TO do, don't do it. Atheists of Florida has put together the very best convention in the history of the Alliance and you don't want to miss it. This year's convention of the Atheist Alliance International will be held April 18—20 at the Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore hotel near Tampa International Airport.

For the Alliance's ninth convention, we've decided to think a little outside the box. Instead of seated banquets, buffet style meals allow for better mingling among conventioners. Our Hospitality Suite is poolside, and wine & cheese receptions will be held Friday and Saturday nights, with complimentary breakfast on Saturday morning. The entire convention will be video taped and available on DVD or video.

Registration form on page 7

Who are they?

World-renowned scientist and atheist advocate Richard Dawkins has authorized the Atheist Alliance International (AAI) to present an annual award in his name to an atheist who has made outstanding contributions to the cause of rationalism. Dr. Dawkins will personally present the award at this year's AAI annual convention. He is gifting the recipient with a complete collection of his books, autographed to the honoree.

Dawkins is a world-renowned popularizer and advocate of rationalism—a refreshing and badly needed antidote to the "pseudoscience" and "religious fervor" that is often marketed to a public craving for fantasy. This is all the more ironic since the natural world offers wonders that few religious myths can ever match. In the vein of authors like Carl Sagan, he has an infectious enthusiasm for the scientific method and the romance of science, which almost invariably "infects" the readers of his books. In recognition of Dawkins' work and services in this regard, he has held the prestigious Charles Simonyi Chair of Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University since it was instituted in 1995.

Dawkins taught at the University of California at Berkeley as Assistant Professor of Zoology from 1967 to 1969 after which he returned to England to start lecturing on Zoology at Oxford. He published his first book, *The Selfish Gene*, in 1976, which was an immediate inter-

national best-seller (see *Sirover*, page 2). Since then Dawkins has published numerous books on evolution which include: *The Extended Phenotype*, *The Blind Watchmaker*, *River Out of Eden*, *Climbing Mount Improbable*, and his latest book, *Unweaving the Rainbow*. He essentially summarized the "Selfish Gene Theory" as a restatement of the great evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin, using concepts not available to Darwin. Dawkins is one of the key Darwinists today and his emphasis is on how genes communicate with one another and how they change over time to keep pace with the external environment. He is also interested in the nature of machines and artificial intelligence.

Being a practical atheist (though a philosophical agnostic), it was encouraging to find Dawkins' description of nature that did not require any supernatural being. The prime question that now remains to be answered (and cosmologists like Stephen Hawking are making much headway in this area) is how and why did the universe form about 15 billion years ago: at the risk of appearing flippant, everything else is detail that will eventually be filled in!

James Randi is a professional magician and debunker of various forms of fraud including the unscrupulous "faith healers" and psychics who bilk millions of dollars each year from the gullible and superstitious. His performances always astound and intrigue and are sure to delight those who belong to the community of reason.

Michael Shermer is the publisher of *Skeptical* magazine, the director of the Skeptics Society, the host of the Skeptics Lecture Series at Caltech, and an adjunct professor at Occidental College. Shermer is also a Contributing Editor/Columnist for *Scientific American*. He is the author of *Why People Believe Weird Things* that was widely and positively reviewed and was on the Los Angeles Times bestseller list as well as nominated as one of the top (*turn page*)

"America is a land which fought for freedom and then began passing laws to get rid of it!" —Alfred E. Neuman

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I WAS A YOUNG BIOLOGY TEACHER when the Masters and Johnson book, *Human Sexual Response* came out. It forever changed the way biology was taught.

I was also very young when Jane Goodall and her chimpanzee research changed the way biology was taught.

The reason that Charles Darwin so ef-

THE GREATEST TEACHER,

RICHARD DAWKINS

—*Jim Strayer*



fected the world was that his writing could be understood by any reader. There are very few people in the history of science who have had the ability to change thinking by going directly to common people. To the list of Masters and Johnson, Jane Goodall, and Charles Darwin we must add the name of Richard Dawkins.

When *The Selfish Gene* was published in 1976 it was not just a best seller, it was the answer that people who were teaching evolution needed. Even though the creationists were not so vocal at that time there was still the perception that adults make genes in order to make more adults. This is, of course, the Genesis view. Dawkins and *The Selfish Gene* did for

Strayer's series The Solution is Evolution will continue in the next newsletter. Strayer is a retired biology teacher living with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea.

Convention continued from page 1

100 notable books of 1997. Dr. Shermer is also the host of "Science Talk" on Wednesdays from 6-7pm on KPCC, 89.3FM, the NPR affiliate for Southern California.

Why We Are Moral presents a scientific theory for how humans evolved from social primates to moral primates, and how the foundation of moral principles can be built upon empirical evidence and logical reasoning. This lecture, based on the book, tackles two deep and essential problems: (1) The origins of morality and (2) the foundations of moral principles. This is the why and the how of morality. Embedded within these are questions that have occupied the greatest minds in human history.

evolution the same thing that Darwin had done. *Origin of Species* showed that natural selection is a route by which certain phenomena were reached and others rejected. Dawkins showed that genes rather than individuals are the force of evolution. It gives natural selection the scientific authority it truly needed.

Dawkins put the house in order, genes make adults to make more genes. The process of evolution started with simple life not with complex life as Genesis teaches.

There were some scientists who were critics of *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins answered them in his next book, *The Extended Phenotype*. This book was not written for the general public, but for evolutionary biologists.

It silenced most of his critics. Not all, because that is not the way science works. *The Blind Watchmaker*, published in 1986, was so well received there were some colleges that offer class just to discuss it.

There is no doubt in my mind that Richard Dawkins is the leading spokesman for evolutionary thought in the world today. The AAI and the Atheists Of Florida have put together a conference that all of us can be proud of and one we can all support.



Michael Newdow is well remembered as the atheist who brought a case before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals which found the "Prayer of Allegiance" unconstitutional because it contains the phrase "Under God" (see *NEWSFILES*, page 6).

Darrell Lambert, 19, will come from his home in Seattle where this Eagle Scout was disqualified from the rank he had earned because he would not deny his atheism. Curiously, Scout Law requires honesty, but expels those who engage the in intellectual integrity to admit they are not superstitious.

For more information about the Tampa convention, go to www.atheistalliance.org/florida/conventionflyer. *Deepak Doraiswamy and Bobbie Kirkhart contributed to this article.*

Atheist Alliance International Ninth Annual Convention

April 18-20, 2003

Please register me/us for _____ people @

- \$ 199 per person for full program, including all meals—2 dinners, 1 lunch, 1 Sunday brunch, or
- \$ 100 per person for meetings only—no meals
- \$ 150 program and meals — or \$ 75 program only.

Student Fees: for full-time students with Student ID only:

Name(s) [as you want them to appear on your name tags]: _____

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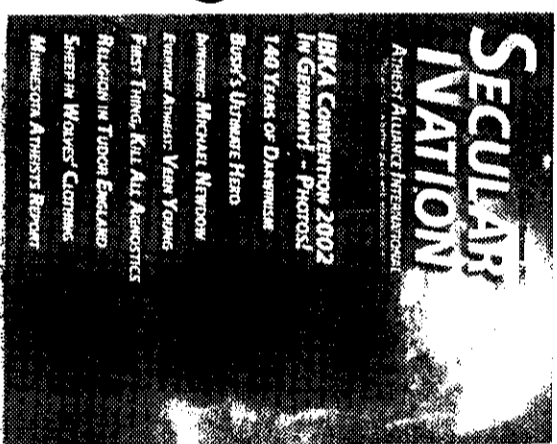
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Mail to: AA1 CONVENTION / P O BOX 130753 / TAMPA FL 33681 —or— call (813) 835-1500

New look for *Secular Nation*

Now sporting a full-color slick cover and an entire new design inside, *Secular Nation*, the quarterly publication of the Atheist Alliance International, is impressive both in appearance and content. Your membership in the Alliance helps realize our vision of a society where we are free to be religion-free by helping more local groups get started, providing funds to help them grow, and provide funds for local outreach projects.



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS		MULTI-YEAR MEMBERSHIPS	
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Atheist Alliance International AAI vouchers support for freethought education

By Mynga Furell

Simulated in part by last June's Supreme Court decision in support of the Cleveland, OH voucher scheme, the Board of Directors of the Atheist Alliance recently voted to establish a special fund to be used exclusively for freethought or secular education, and to invite donors. To seed this religion-free education fund, AAI committed ten thousand dollars from the treasury. The organization set a goal of raising at least \$100,000 in the very near future. Interested donors can contact Bobbie Kirkhart, AAI President to indicate their interest.

The use of the initial \$100,000 accumulated in the freethought education fund will, for the coming five years, be limited to giving grants to U.S. freethought groups that are establishing schools in states where voucher money is available to private schools. Pointing out that local supporters will have to come up with most of the resources for such schools, Kirkhart says,

"Because many donations on the local level are in kind, land and labor, a relatively small amount of money is the ingredient which can make these schools happen." In the AAI-adopted plan, proposed schools may apply for preliminary approval in advance of voucher approval in their state, with fund money released when vouchers come into effect. A committee of education experts has formed to set AAI's standards for grant recipients and to evaluate any specific requests.

Atheists in general support our system of secular public schools. They oppose vouchers. With the Cleveland decision, though, vouchers have become an option to the states. It is likely that proponents of government funding for religious schools are moving ahead at state levels. Emboldened by the Cleveland decision, some already have vowed to also push for voucher programs on the federal level (e.g., for the District of Columbia). Many states, having strict constitutional wording and or strong loyalty to public education, will not pass voucher schemes. The public may benefit from awareness that, if it approves religious and nonsectarian voucher schools, it approves atheist voucher schools as well.

Court refuses to reconsider Pledge decision

SAN FRANCISCO—On March 1st, a federal appeals court rejected the Bush administration's request to reconsider its decision that the Prayer of Allegiance is unconstitutional because of the phrase "under God."

The ruling means the case could go to the Supreme Court. In Washington, a Justice Department spokesman said no decision has been made about whether to appeal the ruling there.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said it would not accept any other petitions to reconsider last June's ruling by a three-judge panel that the pledge is unconstitutional when recited in public classrooms.

Ruling on a lawsuit brought by Sacramento atheist Michael Newdow, the court panel decided 2-1 that Newdow's daughter should not be subjected to the words "under God" at her public school. The court said the phrase was an endorsement of God, and the Constitution forbids public schools or other governmental entities from endorsing religion.

President Bush and Congress immediately condemned the decision, which would prevent public schoolchildren from reciting the pledge in the nine western states covered by the nation's largest and, critics charge, most liberal appeals court.



O'Hair killer dies in federal prison

Tuesday, February 4, 2003

BUTNER, N.C.—The man who masterminded the plot to rob and kill national atheist leader Madalyn O'Hair and two members of her family in Austin has died in federal prison.

David Roland Waters, 55, died of lung cancer Jan. 27 at the Federal Medical Center in Butner, N.C. He had been sent there in late December from Leavenworth, Kan., where he was serving 20 years for the O'Hair crimes.

After reaching a plea bargain with federal prosecutors in January 2001, Waters led authorities to the dismembered bodies of O'Hair, her son Jon Garth Murray and granddaughter Robin Murray-O'Hair on a ranch in Real County, southwest of Austin. Waters pleaded

guilty to extorting \$600,000, the American Atheist Sustaining Trust Fund, from O'Hair and was sentenced to 20 years at Leavenworth. He avoided being prosecuted for the murders by agreeing to lead investigators to the bodies and to plead guilty to the extortion charges. Waters had been an office manager for O'Hair in Austin at the American Atheist headquarters.

Investigators thought Waters had kidnapped the O'Hairs and held them hostage in a San Antonio hotel. Aided by two friends, Gary Paul Karr and Danny Fry, Waters extorted \$600,000 from the family, investigators said. The victims were then killed, dismembered in a North Austin storage unit and buried on the Camp Wood ranch.

Waters already had a bloody criminal history before working for the O'Hairs. He pleaded guilty to helping three other men beat David Gibbs to death in a roadside ditch in Illinois in 1964. He was paroled in 1976 and arrested a year later for severely beating his mother.

In 1980, Waters' wife, Ann Waters, and her friend Cheryl Jo Block were murdered in Illinois. Block's boyfriend was convicted of the crime, but court records showed that Waters later told a prison cellmate that he had the women killed.

Waters confessed in 2001 to murdering a lifelong friend, Billy King, in Peoria, Ill., in 1984 and stuffing his body under a van seat.

If Waters had completed the federal sentence for the O'Hair crimes, he was supposed to serve eight more years in federal prison on an illegal weapons conviction and then 60 years in state prison for a theft conviction in Travis County.

Abortion appeal denied

WASHINGTON—The Supreme Court cleared the way on February 24 for an Indiana state law that places some of the nation's most severe restrictions on abortions, including requirements that a woman be counseled face-to-face about the risks and offered pictures of what her fetus might look like. The action means that Indiana can begin fully enforcing a law passed eight years ago that requires counseling and an 18-hour waiting period before a woman can get an abortion.

In practice the law requires women to make two trips to an abortion clinic which will make the procedure especially difficult to get for poor women.

Washington pays to boost marriage

In step with President Bush's faith-based initiative, the government on January 2 sent money from its child support programs to religious and nonprofit organizations so they can promote marriage.

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson announced more than \$2.2-million in grants to 12 states and a variety of religious, nonprofit and tribal organizations to advance the nation's child support enforcement system.

WHEN 68-YEAR-OLD EMMA MARIA MILIAN opened El Nuevo Herald, she noticed an article about Bishop Augustin Román, the auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Miami that pinched her attention. El Nuevo reported that the Bishop had signed a letter to the President of Panama, demanding her to pardon four men, including the terrorist indicted for trying to murder her husband with a car bomb. Emilio Milian, the former news director of WQBA, survived that cowardly 1976 attack but lost both his legs in the explosion. Until his death last year, he remained a very popular Spanish-language talk show host.

Is the Roman Catholic Church sponsoring terrorism in Miami?

—Op-Ed by Patrick Bens



it seemed unbelievable that the Catholic Church would support terrorist villains who have such a nasty rap sheet.

1. **Guillermo Novo**, who was convicted for the bombing murder of former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C. in 1976.

2. **Gaspar Jiménez**, indicted for blowing up her husband Emilio Milian's car in 1976. For reasons unknown, the charges were later dropped by the U.S. attorney's office. (Did the powerful Catholic Church interfere?) The widow believes Jiménez was involved in

FREDERICKSBURG, VA—Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia complained that courts have gone overboard in keeping God out of government.

Scalia, speaking at a religious ceremony on January 12, said the constitutional wall between church and state has been misinterpreted both by the Supreme Court and lower courts.

Scalia clueless re: state/church separation

As an example, he pointed to an appeals court decision in California that barred students from saying the Pledge of Allegiance with the phrase "one nation under God." That ruling is on hold pending further consideration by the same court, but the Supreme Court could eventually be asked to review the case.

Scalia, the main speaker at an event for Religious Freedom Day, said decisions by his own court gave the judges in the Pledge case "plausible support to reach that decision."

the attempted murder.

3. **Luis Posada Carriles** took part in a dozen bombings throughout Havana in 1997, one of them killing an Italian tourist. He is the mastermind of the bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people in the 1976.

4. Former Kendall truck salesman **Pedro Remon**, who spent 10 years in federal prison for the 1986 attempted murder of Castro's former delegate to the United Nations. Remon murdered a Cuban U.N. diplomat and is involved in the attempted bombing of Castro's U.N. mission in December 1979.

At this moment, the four terrorists are in a Panamanian jail cell for illegally entering the country with a cache of explosives. Authorities in Panama found the foursome in possession of bombs and weapons. The terrorists deny that their intent was to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro, arguing it was Castro who tried to frame them instead. Strange as it may sound, the charges of attempting to assassinate Fidel were dropped earlier this year against all four. Did the strong-arm of the Catholic Church interfere?

"These four men embody the desperate efforts and persistence of Cubans in diaspora to liberate themselves of a despotic tyranny. They have suffered enough having lived practically all of their lives without a country. Cuba would be further aggrieved if these old and unwell men had to die without their freedom. We request a pardon for these four freedom fighters," writes Bishop Román in the letter to the Panamanian president.

Stunned by this statement, the widow Milian is appalled at the Church's position. For Bishop Román to come out and ask for a pardon for these thugs seems so blatantly naive. Does the Roman Catholic Church truly believe that four terrorists embody the spirit of the exile community of Miami or is the Church just playing the same sinister game it has played for half a century in Northern Ireland?

However, the justice said he believes such decisions should be done legislatively, not by courts. If critics of the Pledge of Allegiance persuaded the public it should be changed "then we could eliminate 'under God' from the Pledge of Allegiance, that could be democratically done," said Scalia.

The court's most conservative member was warmly received in Fredericksburg where his son, Paul, is a priest at an area Catholic church.

Several hundred people joined him in singing *God Bless America* after a brief parade through downtown. Scalia used the event to repeat familiar criticisms that the Constitution is being liberally interpreted.

"It is a Constitution that morphs while you look at it like Plasticman," contending that the framers of the Constitution did not intend for God to be stripped from the government.

"That is contrary to our whole tradition, to 'in God we trust' on the coins, to Thanksgiving proclamations, to (Congressional) chaplains, to tax exemption for places of worship, which has always existed in America."

Jeff Wather, *Naturalist Guide*, publishes GREEN LIGHT, the newsletter of the International Naturalist Church. The December 2002 issue contained some statistics we thought were worth noting. As Joe Reinhardt said on the Atheist Forum, "The Vatican doesn't ease poverty in the world, its policies (on birth control) increase it."

Reprinted by permission.

Green Light newsletter Earth condition —Jeff Wather

1. Child poverty rate in the U.S. is 20%. Child poverty rate in Europe—7%.
2. One B-2 Stealth bomber costs as much as the entire federal budget for housing and urban development.
3. One Trident submarine can fire 200 nuclear warheads—each one of which can deliver very many more times the destructive power of the Hiroshima bomb.
4. There are 35,000 nuclear weapons worldwide.
5. The U.S. dollar has experienced an 825% devaluation over the past 50 years.
6. The United States currently houses approximately 40,000 state and federal prisoners ONLY for possessing or smoking marijuana. Cost: \$900-million annually.
7. The average cost of incarcerating a state prisoner is \$22,000, more than the cost of an education at Stanford University.
8. The U.S. national forests provide only 14% of U.S. wood products, comprise only 8.5% of the U.S. land area, and make up the last remaining 5% of old growth forest in the continental United States. These forests contain 50% of the remaining large game habitat in the U.S. and supply 50% of the cold water fisheries habitat in the U.S.
9. There are currently 100 million Americans living in areas of high air pollution. There is a 26% higher risk of early death in areas with high level of air pollution.
10. Non-smokers living in areas with high levels of pollution can have 50-75% of the lung damage as a 1-pack-a-day smoker.
11. For the ten year period from 1982-1992, there was a 36% increase in the number of asthma cases reported nationwide; there was a 67% increase in asthma deaths during the same period.
12. At the current rate of extinction, one fifth of the world's species could be lost forever within the next 25 years.
13. Number of species that have vanished from the U.S. since 1980—250.
14. One third of all species currently on Earth could be extinct by 2050.
15. At least 70 species become extinct worldwide each day.
16. Over 40% of pharmaceutical products are derived from natural substances. Many of these lifesaving substances are obtained from species facing extinction.
17. The annual net world-wide population growth is 95 to 100 million, equivalent to the current population of the country of Mexico.
18. During the previous decade, the equivalent of another China has been added to the world's population. If all the people in China (1.2 billion people) were lined up along the equator allowing 18 inches for each person, the line would circle the earth over 14½ times. The world's human population currently stands at about 6.2-billion people.
19. In 1991, 4-million babies were born in the U.S., more than in any year since 1964, the end of the "baby boom."
20. The current time required to double the world's population is 39 years.
21. One billion people in the world have no potable water readily available.
22. Eighty percent of the countries in the U.S. have no abortion service available.
23. One third of the world's population entered their reproductive years in the '90s and less than half have access to contraceptives.
24. In the time it takes you to read this sentence, 24 people will be added to the Earth's population. Before you've finished this newsletter, that number will reach 1,000. Within an hour... 11,000. By day's end, 260,000.

Before you go to bed two nights from now, the NET growth in human numbers will be enough to fill a city the size of San Francisco (760,000).

The Earth's population has a net increase of 95 million every single year.

25. One out of every 117 males in the U.S. is in jail or prison; one out of every 1,852 females is in jail or prison; that's about 16 times as many males as females.

26. The average sentence served for murder in the U.S. is 6.5 years. Eight years with no possibility of parole is the mandatory minimum sentence for possession of 700 marijuana plants.

27. Almost 60% of all pregnancies in the U.S. are "unintended."

28. In 1970, 37% of California's rivers, bays and streams were unsafe. By 1976, 74% were unsafe.

29. Eight out of ten Americans have had no significant improvement or experienced a marked decline in their relative income and/or standard of living since the early '70's.

30. CEOs of major U.S. corporations pay and compensation now averages \$15,000 per day.

31. Less than 1% of Americans make \$282,000 or more annually. Michael Eisner, CEO of Disney, gets \$282,000 an hour.

32. For each one percent decrease in atmospheric ozone, there is a 6% increase in skin cancer cases.

33. Seven of the last ten years have been the hottest in the last 187 years (since standardized records have begun being kept).

January 15, 2003
AMERICA HAS ENTERED one of its periods of historical madness, but this is the worst I can remember: worse than McCarthyism, worse than the Bay of Pigs and in the long term potentially more disastrous than the Vietnam War.

The reaction to 9/11 is beyond anything Osama bin Laden could have hoped for in his nastiest dreams. As in McCarthy times, the freedoms that have made America the envy of the world are being systematically

eroded. The combination of compliant US media and vested corporate interests is once more ensuring that a debate that should be ringing out in every town square is confined to the loftier columns of the East Coast press.

The imminent war was planned years before bin Laden struck, but it was he who made it possible. Without bin Laden, the Bush junta would still be trying to explain such tricky matters as how it came to be elected in the first place: Enron, its shameless favouring of the already-too-rich; its reckless disregard for the world's poor, the ecology and a raft of unilaterally abrogated international treaties. They might also have to be telling us why they support Israel in its continuing disregard for UN resolutions.

But bin Laden conveniently swept all that under the carpet. The Bushies are riding high. Now 81 per cent of Americans want the war, we are told. The US defence budget has been raised by another \$60 billion to around \$360 billion. A splendid new generation of nuclear weapons is in the pipeline, so we can all breathe easy. Quite what war 81 per cent of Americans think they are supporting is a lot less clear. A war for how long, please? At what cost in American lives? At what cost to the American taxpayer's pocket? At what cost—because most of those 81 per cent are thoroughly decent and humane people—in Iraqi lives?

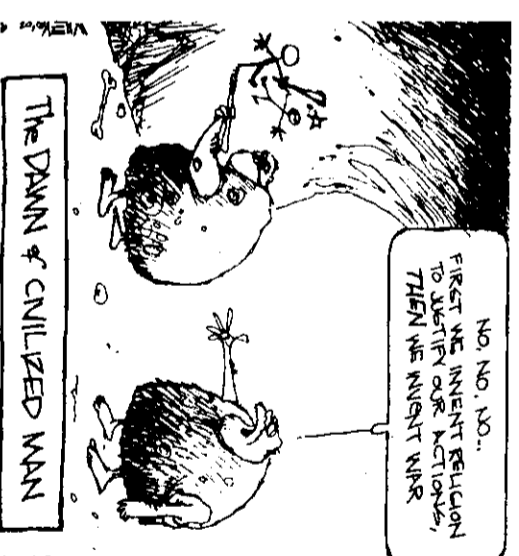
How Bush and his junta succeeded in deflating America's anger from bin Laden to Saddam Hussein is one of the great public relations conjuring tricks of history. But they swung it. A recent poll tells us that one in two Americans now believe Saddam was responsible for the attack on the World Trade Center. But the American public is not merely being misled. It is being browbeaten and kept in a state of ignorance and fear. The carefully orchestrated neurosis should carry Bush and his fellow conspirators nicely into the next election.

Those who are not with Mr. Bush are against him. Worse, they are

with the enemy. Which is odd, because I'm dead against Bush, but I would love to see Saddam's downfall—just not on Bush's terms and not by his methods. And not under the banner of such outrageous hypocrisy.

The religious cant that will send American troops into battle is perhaps the most sickening aspect of this surreal war-to-be. Bush has an arm-lock on God. And God has very particular political opinions. God appointed America to save the world in any way that suits America. God appointed Israel to be the nexus of America's Middle Eastern policy, and anyone who wants to mess with that idea is a) anti-Semitic, b) anti-American, c) with the enemy, and d) a terrorist.

NON SECUITUR



visiting the ever-democratic Kingdom of Kuwait. In 1993, while ex-President George Bush was receiving thanks for liberating them, somebody kill him. The CIA believes that "somebody Saddam. Hence Bush Jr.'s cry: "That man tried to kill my Daddy." But it's still not personal, this war. It's still necessary. It's still God's work. It's still about bringing freedom and democracy to oppressed Iraqi people.

To be a member of the team you must also believe in Absolute Good and Absolute Evil, and Bush, with a lot of help from his friends, family and God, is there to tell us which is which. What Bush won't tell us is the truth about why we're going to war. What is at stake is not an Axis of Evil—but oil, money and people's lives. Saddam's misfortune is to sit on the second biggest oilfield in the world. Bush wants it, and who helps him get it will receive a piece of the cake. And who doesn't, won't.

If Saddam didn't have the oil, he could torture his citizens to his heart's content. Other leaders do it every day—think Saudi Arabia, think Pakistan, think Turkey, think Syria, think Egypt.

Baghdad represents no clear and present danger to its neighbours, and none to the US or Britain. Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, if he's still got them, will be peanuts by comparison with the stuff Israel or America could hurl at him at five minutes' notice. What is at stake is not an imminent military or terrorist threat, but the economic imperative of US growth. What is at stake is America's need to demonstrate its military power to all of us—to Europe and Russia and China, and poor mad little North Korea, as well as the Middle East; to show who rules (see MAD, back page)

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Oddlygaily

A sampling of interesting internet news blurbs from the last few weeks. If you do not receive them yet, send your email address to atheist1@BELL SOUTH.net.

Jesus Christ as trial attorney

GAINESVILLE, Mo. (AP)—A southwest Missouri man can have Jesus Christ as his attorney during trial on charges of tampering with a judge. He faces a maximum of 14 years in prison if convicted. The case began when he was ticketed in Howell County for failing to wear a seat belt. Defendant Richard John Adams Branson, who described himself as a patriot and a Christian, told the Ozark County judge presiding that he refers to lawyers as "devils."

Adams was ordered removed from the court after he became antagonistic to the effect that he was unable to reason and to receive and evaluate information or to communicate decisions. Adams, whose age was not available, formerly associated himself with a Christian militia and requested Jesus Christ as his trial attorney during a hearing. Ozark County Circuit Judge John Moody told Adams it was fine for Jesus Christ to be his chief counsel. Adams replied that his choice of lawyers was "religious in nature."

How religious are the Simpsons?

In last Sunday's episode, Homer won a personal injury lawsuit against the First Church of Springfield. He was awarded the deed to the church and took up residence. Havoc ensued. Among the eye-popping bits involving Christianity's most sacred symbols: An underwear-clad Homer grabs a cross for an air-guitar solo a la Tom Cruise in "Risky Business," and the chalice is turned into a cocktail cup, complete with tiny umbrella. The bars cut across denominational lines. When the jury issued its million-dollar verdict for Homer, the stricken Homer exclaimed: "Your honor, we don't have that kind of money. We're not a synagogue!" In the end, Homer provoked the wrath of God and was forced to repent. Faith prevailed again in "The Simpsons," which has been praised by some religious commentators for its realistic depiction of American devotion.

Rome like in Romance

GAINESVILLE, Mo. (AP)—Every year, for the most devout Catholics from around the world, Rome is the city of choice to marry.

"Rome was ideal because of the Catholic connection, the Vatican and the Pope being there," said Lisa Connolly, from Belfast in Northern Ireland.

Connolly and her husband were married last year in St. Patrick's, an Irish church in Rome. Father Michael Brennock, the rector, said demand was so high that the church was turning couples away.

Rome has its perks for the pious: meeting the pope at his regular Wednesday audience is high on the list of things to do for most couples. But some churches host nonreligious foreigners' weddings in exchange for generous donations. Some Italian priests have come to suspect that the beauty of the surroundings are a greater lure than a return to piety.

The Catholic cathedral in Fiesole, a village overlooking Florence, used to organize a "blessing of the rings" ceremony for Japanese couples who were not Christian but attracted to the ritual of the white dress and exchange of vows.

Father Roberto Pagliuzzi said: "I would talk to the couples about the Christian faith and the meaning of marriage before the ceremony, but their awe for Christianity was very short-lived. As soon as they were back in Japan they lost interest."

Sacrificial Rights

Houston police officers removed 11 goats, some chickens and some pigeons from a home after neighbors complained the animals were being killed, which the family admits but said that it was part of a religious sacrifice. Authorities said: "It's OK."

"In most animal cruelty cases, it's a simple animal cruelty case, but in this case there's a religious ceremony being practiced and because of freedom of religion we have to handle it a little differently; we cannot press criminal charges," HPD Officer Terry Starkey said. The family told police that they were practicing Santeria, which is

Pope's stamp on EU

VATICAN CITY—In his weekly appearance in St. Peter's Square, Pope JP II renewed his appeal for the future European constitution to cite the continent's Christian heritage, saying such recognition would in no way diminish the secular nature of the EU. "On the contrary, it will help guard the continent against the double risk of ideological secularism (*atheism?*), on the one hand, and sectarian integralism (*Islam?*) on the other," the pope said.

Tithing with Mastercard

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Worshippers can now pay their church collection with a charge card—at least in Sweden. The church is offering its worshippers "a modern opportunity" to make a contribution.

"Many of the churchgoers are young people who do not carry with them any cash, but use cards," Pastor Karin Sandlund told The Associated Press. "We thought it was time to give the younger generation an alternative," she added.

Rabbi nabbed in kiddie cybersex sting

By MARTIN MBUGUA
DAILY NEWS POLICE BUREAU
A city rabbi, Israel Kestenbaum, 54, director of the Jewish Center for Spiritual Care at the New York Board of Rabbis, was busted after he tried to arrange a sexual encounter with a 13-year-old girl over the Internet, police said.

Kestenbaum, a father of six, allegedly initiated an online chat with a male detective posing as a teenage girl and eventually arranged to meet the "girl" in a Manhattan Starbucks coffee shop.

The rabbi, who engaged the cops in at least a dozen raunchy computer chat sessions, was charged with multiple counts of attempted endangerment of a child. The New York Board of Rabbis Web site states that its chaplains "serve men, women and children in scores of institutions throughout New York State" and offer "solace, comfort, compassion—and a taste of love."

Big Bang

STOCKHOLM (Reuters)—The Swedish church newspaper, Kyrkans Tidning reported a growing number of explosions in caskets during cremations, sparked by undetected items including heart pacemakers, whose batteries ignite in the intense heat. Next of kin add to the problem by leaving explosive farewell tokens such as bottles of alcohol, ammunition cartridges and pieces of fireworks in the coffins. Silicon breast implants in women were also known to have exploded during cremation.

NEWSNOTES

EXPOSING THE DANGERS OF RELIGION

The Atheism of Madalyn O'Hair

Book Review by Patrick Bens

Hot from the presses and flying off the shelf at Borders book merchants comes a brand new and entirely different biography of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, undisputedly the most activist atheist of the twentieth century.

The queen of American atheism is dead, so someone cries "Long live the queen." That's one no stranger to history or religion. He other than professor Bryan LeBeau.

Bryan LeBeau, Ph.D., author of "The A: Madalyn Murray O'Hair," was professor of history at Creighton University. Creighton University is a 500-year old Catholic university of the Jesuits, who have a tradition of a focus on education. Creighton enrolls more than 6,200 students of diverse faiths and races from across the United States and 65 countries.

In July 2002, LeBeau accepted the position of Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. He was at Creighton since 1983, most recently serving as the interim associate dean of the Graduate School. LeBeau, a specialist in religious and early American history, was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society and received numerous awards for teaching, scholarship and service. The author of 11 books, which include "Story of the Salem Witch Trials," and "Religion in America to 1865," he is the host and co-producer of the public radio program *Talking History*, which airs in Omaha on KIOS 91.5 FM.

LeBeau's wife, Chris, helped with "The Atheist" and worked at Creighton for 18 years in the Reinert Alumni Library as a research librarian and coordinator of electronic resources.

Dr. LeBeau confesses that he did not intend to write a biography. He didn't. Instead, he used his skills as history professor to relay a fascinating story of a restless time in which a restless atheist made her mark. His writing style reads as a fast paced novel with sudden spurts of short sentences that evoke that restlessness. *The Atheist* reads like a novel, informs like a map and entices like a manifesto.

Relying entirely on diaries, documented facts, eyewitness reports and interviews with close friends, relatives and office staff, LeBeau reconstructs a vivid, true to life picture of the work, words and worries of what TIME magazine labeled "The most hated woman in America." He tackles early atheism in the colonial states and during the formation of the republic. He describes in detail the influences of the waves of political anarchism that had an impact on young Madalyn. He investigates and sets the record straight on Madalyn's brush with communism and American Marxists. He penetrates the secret deals Madalyn made with the already established but loosely knitted freethought groups.

When Madalyn took America by storm after the Supreme Court sided with her banning Bible reading and recitation of the Christian prayers in the public classrooms, she designed a clear mission of absolute separation of state and church, understandable by all, and fashioned a tight fitting organization to accomplish those specific goals and called her warrior army ostensibly the "American Atheists". Its success was proven repeatedly over decades with hundreds of speaking engagements and debates in universities, thousands of hours on radio shows and television forums and numerous self-published, easy to use books, which have become the umbilical cord for future atheists.

(see LeBeau, page 3)

Monthly Bulletin for the members of ATHEISTS of FLORIDA Inc. Chapter DADE&BROWARD

Our next meeting is planned for



March 16, 2002

at 2pm on the 8th floor of the

BROWARD COUNTY

MAIN LIBRARY

100 S Andrews Ave

Fort Lauderdale

Topic:

Paul Citro will do a book review

also

The scandalous Benny Hinn (video)

Register now for our April Convention in Tampa, FL so you can meet Richard Dawkins (book review on p2)

Our chapter holds a NON-PRAYER BREAKFAST at 8 am on Tuesday March 18 at Denny's Restaurant, 16751 NW 67 Avenue, Hialeah.

13 Questions

An atheist's profile

Shawn H. Shin
 Dywonlung@aol.com

1. Where did you attend school? UCLA.
2. What is your occupation? Executive/Management.
3. What influenced you to choose that occupation? Family and Chairman of my company.
4. In your choice of career, were there any obstacles you had to conquer? From the beginning, I had to decide I value my family more than my selfish interests in selecting this career.
5. If you ever wanted another occupation, what would it be? Photographer.
6. What are your hobbies? Photography, travel, and martial arts.
7. What is your all time favorite book and why? *Can't recall.*
8. What is your all time favorite movie and why? *Can't recall.*

eMail Interviews with atheists across the Internet by *NEWSNOTES* teen reporter Rabiola Bens

Book Review Carl Sagan, Richard Dawkins has stepped in the limelight as the most famous atheist alive. With his first book "Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion and the Appetite for Wonder" he has tried to make the reader better understand and appreciate science. As the first Professor of "The Public Understanding of Science" at Oxford University, a Microsoft endorsement, Dawkins has a unique mission: to teach the poetry of science.

The title "Unweaving the Rainbow" comes from his compatriot poet John Keats, who criticized Isaac Newton for explaining the rainbow as a prosaic, prismatic splitting of bright white light. Keats, a licensed apothecary turned romantic poet, said Newton had destroyed the poetry of a rainbow by unweaving it... Dawkins states and demonstrates that science should not be thought of as an opposite to poetry but rather as an inspiration. The discovery of the scientific facts, the "unweaving of the rainbow". Dawkins maintains, establishes that science has opened our minds to knowledge about the formation of stars, the never ending, ever expanding universe and many other avenues of scientific poetry based upon the physical laws that were harvested from the analysis of a single beam of light.

Dawkins teaches that nature's mysteries don't lose their poetic charm when they are solved. He leads us through numerous examples how the solution becomes often more beautiful than the puzzling question. He challenges Keats to take another look at his own "Ode to the Nightingale" as viewed through the microscope of a lyrical microbiologist. He challenges the reader with problems like: What is more inspiring: to look at a rainbow and just see the colors align themselves or to understand how the light from our sun travels to Earth and then bounces off of suspended water droplets to form such an harmonious artistic sight? Understanding how a rainbow forms takes away none of the inner joy and captivating beauty of the phenomena. Instead it adds poetry to scientific inquiry. Understanding how one nightingale's vocal chords charm another one's heart through intricate chemical revamping adds meaning to the romanticist's verses.

How does professor Dawkins examine the poetry of science? Dawkins looks at several real life examples, primarily his specialty: evolutionary biology as well as DNA fingerprinting to point out how science is being overlooked in the courtroom. We learn that especially lawyers and judges could try to be better citizens if they knew

9. When did you become aware you were an Atheist? Became fully aware sometime in high school.
10. Was there an event or person in your life that influenced your choice of wanting to be an Atheist? Just following the facts.
11. If you were a teacher, what lesson would you teach religious kids? Being religious can be a positive thing, but make sure they understand and evaluate for themselves, and not just blindly follow the preachings of someone or some group.
12. How do you see the future of the Separation of State and Church? I do not know toward what direction we as a country will head, but I hope to see greater separation of Church and State.
13. If you were to be quoted, what would be your quote? **Live, care, and take care.**

more about the laws of science. This concept is widely applauded by science educators but still isn't part of every student's curriculum. While exploring why more and more people are less and less acquainted with the sciences, it dawned on us that the marvel of wonder that drives awestruck people to mysticism also strikes scientists.

Mystics like scientists, hit on questions, search for answers, albeit too often in opposite directions. He compares the "meaningless pap" of astrology to the real beauty in astronomy. He poses the question: Why are professional astrologers and psychics not arrested for fraud? Don't they make false claims repeatedly regarding their product? Shouldn't they be treated like the crooks who sell us the boiler room scams? It clearly upsets the author who spends two entire chapters dissecting those beliefs.

A general lack of proper education leads one person to paranormalism and another to science. What causes the difference? Dawkins suspects it is the effect of natural selection. Simply put: if an adult authority figure tells a child not to play with snakes and the child ignores this advice, the child may not live to reproduce. To sum it up: people have evolved to obey authority figures. If children also obey without questioning things that aren't true when told by the same authority figure, the child is bound to make the wrong decisions throughout life. A child is like a sponge. A child absorbs as much information as possible in order to survive in our knowledge-based society. We know that growing up must include cultivating a healthy amount of skepticism. That, says Dawkins, is where many people fail, perhaps because they long for "the lost securities and comforts of childhood."

Dawkins also discusses the human inclination to discover patterns in nature. Some see a face on the Moon where only a natural geological formation of colorless dust exists. Some believe there is a magical connection when a friend calls shortly after you were thinking about him. What is disregarded, is the numerous times you thought about other friends who didn't call. Some are so enthusiastic during a visit to a psychic, they only remember the few faint "hiss" while forgetting the masses of misses.

Bad scientific poetry is at the heart of these mythological beliefs: signs Dawkins. While mythology may be entertaining to read, bad poetry has overtaken the science. The science is left out in the cold. While often drenched with poetic intentions, this kind of poetry connects the masses of misses.

(Continued on page 3)

Maria Elvira Confronta

MIAMI - Oct 11 - 8 pm— Studios of Channel 41- AmericaTV. The confrontational show of MARIA ELVIRA SALAZAR invited 3 of our most activist Hispanic atheists, Robert DeLosRios, Maria Nieves and Carlos Coronado to debate on live TV three religionists on the topic of "Where was GOD on 9/11?" Salazar is very clever: she chose as opponents to our eager atheist members an oddly godly assortment of theists: an Anglican bishop (in full purple-red regalia), a blond dyed new-age spiritualist, an agnostic rabbi and a Muslim, a US veteran of the Iraq/Kuwait war. Well prepared by the two intense mini-meetings we had held only days prior to the show, our leader and inspiring orator Roberto attacked with rapid-fire questions: "Where was god on 9/11? Where was god in WWII? The believers were knocked off balance in the first round. Carlos put them an uppercut with accurate precision: "Gods exist, but only in the minds of the gullible," he said. For that wise quote he was later that evening recognized and congratulated by the patrons of the restaurant where he ate supper. His short TV appearance had given him instant fame... With every reply from our side, the theists got more confused. They did all the talking all right, but only to end up contradicting their own argument. Amongst disagreement, setting our members off in uncontrollable spells of laughter. Usually, during debates, theists gang up against the atheists. At this event however they weren't getting along.

Maria Elvira, with her signature intelligent smile, struggled to get straight answers from the religionists, who often had to admit that religion has a history of making mistakes. When during a rare full the comical bishop stated that "god" WAS present on 9/11 because he has always present when death occurs, the host rolled her eyes and shook her head in disbelief right into the camera. Forty one percent of the phone vote supported our atheists, and we think that is a remarkable achievement in this heavily Catholic county. The one member viewers were impressed with most was Maria Nieves, whose charm and quick responses give a clear indication that she will be a perfect spokesperson for our cause in future debates. This was a first for Hispanic atheists. They were heartily congratulated by the host and staff of the station. We can all be proud of their top performance. *Maria Elvira Confronta is aired Monday thru Friday from 8-9pm on Channel 41- AmericaTeve*

MIAMI BEACH, Oct. 12 -02 4-6 pm. RIU Beach Resort. Equally rewarding was our participation at the EXPO BELGIUM in Miami Beach. **FIU South Campus-Feb 18-03** Founder Christo Tzaretakos and Director Roberto DeLosRios spoke at the PEACE AWARENESS EVENT. Chapter Director Patrick Bens staffed a strategically placed table with atheist wares and signed up many prospective members. We were well received and will be re-invited!

From the comfort of your home you can now recommend a book to the Library and do so on the internet.

1. Go to: www.browardlibrary.org
2. click on: "broward county library web page"
3. click on "ask a librarian"
4. click on: "recommend a book"
5. fill out the form and click "submit".

Like a beautiful rainbow is a show for everyone to enjoy and like knowledge brings happiness to every mind science can give rise to good poetry. Science enlightens us. Science excites us. That Dawkins tells the world. We don't have to choose between poetry and science. The two can live happily together, embrace each other and lead each other to greater heights than either can achieve alone. PB

I ain't afraid

Words and music by Holly Near

- I ain't afraid of your Yahweh
- I ain't afraid of your Allah
- I ain't afraid of your Jesus
- Im afraid of what you do in the name of your god
- I ain't afraid of your churches
- I ain't afraid of your temples
- I ain't afraid of your praying
- Im afraid of what you do in the name of your god
- Rise up to your higher power
- Free up from fear, it will devour you
- Watch out for the ego of the hour
- The ones who say they know it
- Ave the ones who will impose it on you
- I ain't afraid of your Yahweh
- I ain't afraid of your Allah
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obscure the spirit of your love-- it's killing us.

- I ain't afraid of your Yahweh
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This great song in on Edge, Holly Near's latest CD. Visit www.hollynear.com for a free download of this song.

Reprinted by Permission Holly Near's latest CD. Visit www.hollynear.com for a free download of this song.

I ain't afraid of your Bible
 I ain't afraid of your Torah
 I ain't afraid of your Koran
 Don't let the letter of the law make a killing off of sin and Satan

Rise up, and see/find/ know/ hear a higher story
 Free up from the gods of war and glory
 Watch out for the threats of purgatory
 The spirit of the wind won't make a killing off of sin and Satan

Rise up to your higher power
 Free up
 Rise up to your higher power
 Free up
 Let's try to be highly evolved
 I ain't afraid...

LeBeau continued from page 1
 Professor LeBeau is candid but fair in his remarks that the explosive growth of her organization inflated the ego of THE atheist, as Madalyn wanted to be known. She became known instead as the undiplomatic, and some say vulgar, tongue that put many of her atheist followers to shame. Regardless of her persona or her personal problems, Bryan LeBeau realizes that it is from her books, radio broadcasts and videos that atheists in America now must find the inspiration and strength to carry on with her grandiose mission after her tragic death. The entire epilogue is dedicated to the atrocious triple murder of Madalyn, her son Jon and her granddaughter Robin.

Why did Bryan LeBeau write this book and why is it published now in the midst of a Christian revival with a fundamentalist president leading his cabinet in prayer every morning and his praying troops into war? These questions taunted me during the period in between ordering and picking up my copy at the Adventure store. After all, no one is likely to make a whole lot of money writing books about atheists.

Could professor Bryan LeBeau be a closet atheist who sees in today's faith-based government the enormous danger of a looming theocracy for America like history has never known? Did he stumble on the idea of the book, knowing that the lack of wisdom of a president like the Bush can foster a wicked marriage between military, might and theology, which only an intelligent activist with a caliber like Madalyn is able to challenge? Repeating throughout the book how determined and determined Madalyn was in battling the forces of religion, the author seems to want to motivate atheists into regrouping and re-attacking. *The Atheist, Madalyn Murray O'Hair* is certainly a timely historic tribute. It is also a timely buoy to warn us of a potential theocratic whirlpool if we forsake the fight.