

Atheists of Florida

DADE&BROWARD: Third Sunday of each month, 2:00 alternating between Broward County Main Library, 100 S. Andrews Ave. Ft. Lauderdale, or Biscayne Cafeteria, 147 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables. Specific meeting notifications and activities available in **NEWSNOTES**, and on our Web site. FMI: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441. atheist1@bellsouth.net

PALM BEACH: Meetings are held the third Sunday of each month at 2:30pm. Members notified by postcard. For driving directions or more information, call Charles Schisler 561/627-6340 or 561/624-9359.

Twain Scholarship Fund

Thanks to all who responded to our recent fund-raiser for the Scholarship Fund. All but two contributions came in before 9/11.

It was the hope of the Fund Board that each member could contribute \$5 this year, but we understand the reluctance following the terrorist attacks. With most things getting back to normal, we hope those of you whom have not yet contributed will reconsider. Now more than ever we need to encourage young minds to engage in critical thinking.

Ben Ackerly	\$ 10	Joseph Mustion	\$ 25
Joe Ales	25	Nan Owens	100
Jack Basart	25	Donald Papineau	25
Michael Brannon	35	Maria Richardson	25
Peter Castlevecchi	25	Terese Rockefeller	25
Edward Cori	50	Peter Rummel	15
Raymond Erickson	200	Anthony Schliefstein	20
Ricardo Garcia	15	Liz & Greg Simpson	10
Jo Ann Geist	25	David Toback	25
John Gorman	15	Christos Tzanetakos	75
Bruce Gregg	25	Max Weatherly	5
Alex Gribko	10	Harold Weideman	20
Robert Henz	25	James Williamson	50
Andrew Herschel	100	Brent Yaciw	100
William Kilgore	15	Joseph Alesi	3
Alfonso Leon	5	Irving Yablon	100
Abigail Martin	15	TOTAL	\$ 1,243

CHAPTER EVENTS

TAMPA BAY: Pinellas County—First Wednesday of each month at the Pinellas Park Library, 78th Ave N & 52nd Street, 7-9pm, with dinner preceding at 6 p.m. at the King Buffet Chinese Restaurant, Park Blvd & 49th St. (Publix Mall).

Tampa—Third Wednesday of each month, 7-9pm, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa, Community Room, with dinner preceding at 5:30pm, Picadilly Cafeteria, 717 S. Dale Mabry, just north of Henderson, in the front room. FMI: Ed Golly, 813/839-7567, AthALFLE@aol.com.

Response continued from page 3

Are we going to allow this attack to give our government the excuse to suppress our Bill of Rights?

Here in Florida, such concepts are even more pervasive than we're seeing on the federal level. An editorial in the *Tampa Tribune* outlined some of the suggestions submitted by Tom Warner, a Republican candidate vying to take over the post of attorney general when Bob Butterworth's term ends due to term limitations. In the wake of the attacks, Warner outspokenly supports the creation of a statewide database of activity that is considered suspicious but does not rise to the level of a crime. He also suggests giving police the power to monitor, without a court order, the books people check out of libraries, loosening restrictions on wiretaps and searches, and giving the attorney general new exemptions from public records law.

To quote the *Trib*, "Taken individually, Warner's ideas are chilling. Taken together, they're a constitutional horror show." In the religious fervor that has engulfed the nation, it's not just the Muslims or those of Middle Eastern descent who would become the subject of a government dossier absent evidence of criminality. The word "atheist" is still held in vile contempt by many Americans. Would any of us like to see a fundamentalist like US Attorney General John Ashcroft given these powers over any American? As atheists, any of us could easily be caught up in the ensuing witch hunt.

Concludes the *Tribune*, "...a knee-jerk expansion of police powers is an irresponsible reaction that would diminish freedom without any guarantee of enhanced security."

We agree wholeheartedly. Those who give up their freedom for safety end up with neither their freedom nor their safety.



Atheists of Florida



P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33681

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Egad, I was there...

9/11

—Ed Golly, Chairman, Atheists of Florida

NEW YORK—IT WAS ABOUT three hours later that I put it together. The jet which I had heard fly over a little before 9:00 was it. I had even remarked how unusually low and loud it was and noticed subconsciously that it was going the wrong way. A few minutes later came the report from the next room. "A plane just hit the World Trade Center!" "You're out of your mind," was my response. "Where's the TV?"

Since we were over four miles north of ground zero, we never even saw any smoke. Just like everyone else, we watched it all on TV. Having been scheduled to fly home to Tampa from Newark later that day, we were now stranded in the city indefinitely. The streets became ghostly absent of traffic—just a few cabs and a bus now and then...very few private cars. As we crossed a street, a woman walked up to a man and they embraced—no words spoken. The line at the ATM spilled out the door and on to the sidewalk. Were we soon to lose phones, water, power? We couldn't be certain. We viltuated the brownstone we were renting and resigned ourselves to an extended stay.

It was only the previous day that we had ventured down to explore Battery City. After seeing enough we noticed we were just across the street from the World Trade towers. Curiosity led us

into the building, entering from the south side of the South Tower. An elevator lobby reached about three stories high, its vastness outdone only by its starkness. This led into a huge shopping plaza gridded with mall-sized walkways. Typical of New York, anything could be purchased there, from a slice of pizza to a multi-thousand dollar suit. After touring the Wall Street area, we ended up on the other side of the East River in a floating restaurant under the pier of the Brooklyn Bridge. The view, in the words of John Glenn being launched on his first orbital flight, was magnificent. Across the river lay the Financial District under a drizzling, low overcast night sky. Occasionally, the WTC would propheti-

cally disappear from view while nearer buildings remained visible. The skyline without WTC—who could have imagined it would forever appear that way every night hence?

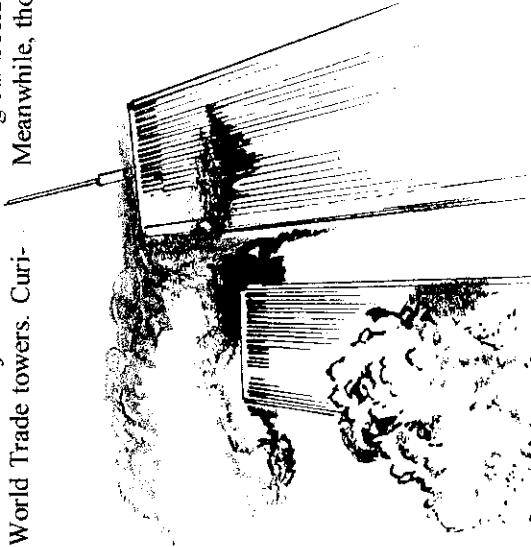
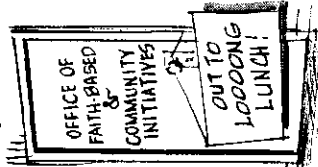
On Wednesday, we ventured down to Penn Station to get our train tickets in hand for a scheduled Thursday evening departure back to Tampa. A stroll through Macy's led to the Empire State Building, inadvertently now having reclaimed the status of New York's tallest. It had been vacated on that day and was surrounded by police; the Houlihan's at street level eerily dark and empty at midday. Only there could we detect a faint hint of smoke. Make no mistake about it...the world had changed.

Haven't we forgotten something?

Isn't it curious that since 9/11 we've heard absolutely nothing about the new White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives? Seems they ended up behind the back shelf. Well, that's no loss.

What became of the essential multi-billion dollar missile defense system? Though the Supreme Court will hear the school voucher case this term, otherwise the issue appears forgotten. And nobody seems to be championing the agenda of sinking our Social Security in the stock market.

Meanwhile, those of us in the community of reason must collectively be utterly stupefied at the outpouring of prayer in this nation. We're fascinated by the irrationality of the superstitious among our society. Logic would mandate that if there were a god, surely it would be on the side of the terrorists. After all, how many millions of prayers were recited over the three buildings assaulted? We witnessed scores of relatives of victims standing outside the ruins telling us they believed in miracles and their loved one was going to be found alive. Yet after the first five were located immediately after the disaster, how many of those prayers were answered? Not one. Not a single survivor was found in any of the three buildings. (Turn page)



"Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful."

—Seneca



www.atheistalliance.org/florida

Chapters:

Miami/Ft. Lauderdale

P. O. Box 640634
Miami, FL 33164-0634
(305) 940-0442 / (954) 929-0441
Fax: (305) 949-3826
atheist1@bellsouth.net

Tampa Bay

PO Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33681
(813) 835-1500 / (813) 839-7567
ATHAFL@aol.com

Palm Beach

374 Golfview Rd, #306
N Palm Beach, FL 33408
(561) 824-9359 / (561) 627-6340
schisler@earthlink.net

Mark Twain Scholarship Fund

P O Box 3893
Ft. Pierce, FL 34948
Phone/Fax: 561-465-6402

Membership dues

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- Couple 50.00 yr
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- Limited Income (over 65) 10.00 yr
- Newsletter (out of state) 10.00 yr

Published eight times a year by Atheists of Florida, Inc., a nonprofit, educational corporation founded to heighten public awareness about atheism and monitor state/church separation issues. Newsletter is provided free to our members. Letters are published on a space-available basis. Send newsletter correspondence to Tampa Bay Chapter, address above. Articles may be edited for clarity or length. Atheists of Florida, Inc. is a Member Society of the Atheist Alliance International.

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How has it been lost on them that all this prayer proved totally useless? All except the prayers recited by the hijackers.

It's doubtful to me that the perpetrators knew for certain the buildings would collapse following impact. A fire that would burn for several days and ruin the buildings was likely their highest expectations. Obviously they prayed for success in their ventures. Their results were probably far more devastating than their greatest anticipation.

I'm told by believers that I just don't understand. It's all the same god. Ra, Allah, Venus, Thor (he must have been an impor-

CHICAGO—As America mourns the victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Gail Pepin can't help but feel left out when everyone else goes to worship.

An atheist, Pepin covered for her co-workers as they attended a prayer vigil. She tuned in when President Bush spoke to the nation about the attacks, but shrunk back

As nation prays, atheists cringe

—Nicole Dignon

each time he mentioned God.

"I'm feeling very excluded from this. There's this big unity, but it's all under God," said Pepin, a nurse from the Chicago suburb of Rosemont. "I feel just as strongly about this as everybody else."

Like Pepin, other Americans who don't believe in a deity are struggling to find their place at a time when "God Bless America" is being sung everywhere. Some worry that the line between state and church is becoming blurred, while others hope to show patriotism doesn't have to equal prayer.

Atheists are dealing with the tragedy by donating blood, money or services to the relief efforts. But many aren't comfortable participating in public gatherings that revolve around prayer, such as the national day of prayer and remembrance Bush declared three days after the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center.

Catharine Lamm, who works at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, has avoided remembrance services held at campus churches but respects those who find strength in their faith.

"What I object to is the feeling of exclusion for me, particularly when the president addresses the nation and doesn't leave any

tant god—they named a day of the week after him), Yahweh, The Great Spirit in the Sky—all gods, thousands of them, are really the same one just worshipped under different names. Following that logic, the god, by whatever name, blessed the terrorists by giving them fantastic success and snubbed all the Americans who prayed for those unmaterialized miracles. When will they ever learn?"

This issue of our newsletter is dedicated entirely to the reaction of the atheist community to the events of 9/11/01. Allah, bless America.

room for people who find their strength in other places," Lamm said.

Some atheists also fear that U.S. politicians who talk about God are fueling those who want to portray the conflict as a war between Christianity and Islam. Osama bin Laden, the chief suspect in the attacks, has called on Muslims to wage a holy war against the United States.

"I cringe every time Bush and everybody else is saying, 'God bless America,'" Pepin said. "They're saying it's not a holy war, but they're invoking God, their deity, all the time. I find that very confusing."

Still, she sometimes keeps her opinions to herself. Groups representing atheists and agnostics say they must walk a fine line between speaking out for the separation of state and church and being pigeonholed as radicals.

Adam Walker, president of the Secular Humanist Society of Chicago, hopes one day politicians will include his group alongside the religious organizations they call on to help the country deal with crisis. Secular humanists believe people can solve their own problems without "supernatural" intervention.

"We're not here to cast aspersions on religious groups," Walker said. "Our purpose is to enhance our responsible role, being citizens with a different and valid point of view. We have much more to offer than to point an accusatory finger and say, 'Don't sing 'God Bless America.'"

Jim Zaluba, who founded the Free Inquiry Network, said there's even some disagreement among atheists and agnostics in his suburban Chicago group over the danger of mixing politics and prayer.

"I've been arguing with people in the group recently that we really don't have a problem with church-state separation in the United States," Zaluba said. "They have a problem in Afghanistan."

I cannot know—nobody can—if "good will triumph over evil." I can only hope that the human spirit to help each other will last long enough for us to overcome this ordeal and actually become "one nation, indivisible, under the Constitution, with liberty and justice for all."

—Ro Ellis
Huntsville

Misguided heroes

There's been a terrible disaster. Struck by the tragedy of it all (and the realization they might be next), the public clamors for insurance, and agents answer the call. They work long hours, sometimes in offices open around the clock, conduct seminars, make extraordinary efforts to convince people of the need for their product, even visit people in their homes, answering tough questions and offering support, and, of course, sell many more policies and gather more leads for future sales than usual. Some might admire their dedication, and even call them heroes. At least, it seems the *Tribune* would.

Oh, did I mention these particular salespeople are selling *afterlife* insurance, an unproven product which cost them nothing, and one for which they will never know if the client ever receives the promised return? Did I mention that when they answer the tough questions they have no way of knowing if their answers are right, but merely tell the clients what they want to hear? These salespeople call themselves clergy, and were recently lauded in a *Tribune* editorial. They're certainly not heroes in my book.

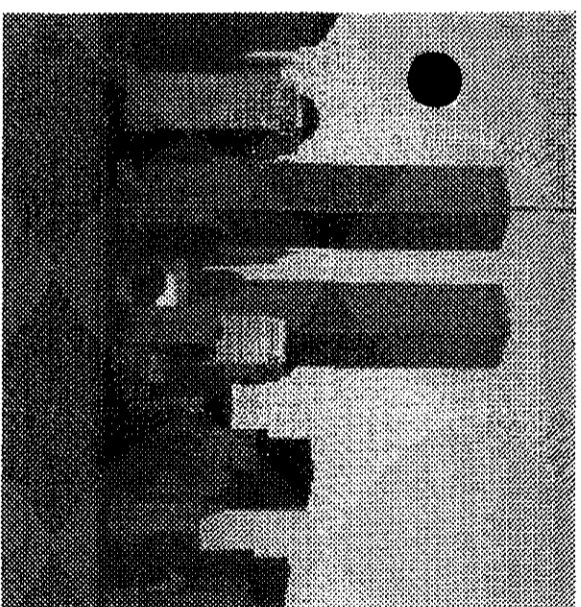
—Brent Yaciv

Wesley Chapel, FL E-mail: ahaflhb@aol.com

Would protest

The real pledge of allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy in August 1892. Bellamy was chairman of a committee of state superintendents of education in the NEA. The pledge was written for the public schools' quadricentennial celebration in 1892.

In 1923 and 1924 the National Flag Conference changed the words "my flag" to "the flag of the United States of America."



Bellamy's protest was ignored.

The Knights of Columbus, formed by Irish-American Catholics in the spirit of affirming that the discovery of America was a Catholic event, in 1954 persuaded Congress to add the words "under God" to the pledge making it both a patriotic oath and a public prayer.

Bellamy's granddaughter said the author would have resented the second change, too. Bellamy had said, "The true reason for allegiance to the flag is the 'republic for which it stands,' " where "republic" is the concise political word for the nation, which must be specified as being indi-

visible. Bellamy was mindful of Lincoln and the Civil War.

"Under God" promotes divisiveness in that many Americans are non-Christian, as were our most important founders. The adulterated and current pledge promotes god-belief when we're supposed to have freedom of religion.

Another step away from indivisibility occurred in 1956 when Congress caused "In God We Trust" to replace our real American motto, "*E pluribus unum*."

The restoration of the more meaningful pledge and motto is necessary to redirect America's course towards the principles of enlightenment upon which our Constitution is based.

—Larry Darby
Montgomery, AL

It's always our fault

Here we go again, a religionist trying to call atheists murderers! I've sent the following to the St. Pete Times (letters@sptimes.com) but I need more letters going to them, the flood of Xian writers trying to blame atrocities on us is rising!

Re: Don't ignore the good religion does, letter from J. R. Carrel, minister, Northeast Christian Church:

Dear Editor:

I'm not aware of the educational background of J. R. Carrel, but it appears the teaching of math skills is highly deficient. Carrel states: "Even a cursory look at the record shows that far more lives have been taken in the name of atheism in the last hundred years than could ever be laid at the feet of religion."

To which I can only respond, "Huh?" Don't the millions killed by lifelong Catholic and Jew-hater Adolf Hitler count? The millions killed as the Muslims killed the Jews (and vice-versa), the Christians killed the Muslims (and vice-versa), and even the Protestant Christians killed the Catholic Christians (and vice-versa)? Since he mentioned Klansman, let's not forget that they get their moral authority from the Christian teachings of Martin Luther, as did all of the churches supporting slavery during our own civil war.

And what "lives have been taken in the name of atheism?" No doubt, there are atheists who have killed from the motivations of greed or politics, for example, just as religionists have done so, but I've never heard of an atheist saying he was killing someone because a lack of belief (or a lack of voices in his head) told him to, or that a group of people deserved to be killed because they were believers. Atheists don't have the famous Flip Wilson excuse, "The Devil made me do it," as we don't believe in him either! I've certainly heard plenty of religionists arguing that others should be killed because they don't believe in the same god, whether it be from worshipping a different deity or none at all.

I think Carrel's flock should send their minister back to school for lessons in basic history and mathematics!

—Brent Yaciv
Wesley Chapel, FL

The ball's in your court

A of F founder pens this letter to the National Academy of Sciences

The Honorable Bruce Alberts
President, National Academy of Sciences
2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20418
October 4, 2001



LETTERS

Dear Mr. President and Members of the Academy:

As you stated in your September 20, 2001, letter to President George W. Bush, the unimaginably devastating attack on our country demands the attention of all Americans and we should add the attention of every concerned inhabitant of our planet!

On September 11th our nation and the world, indeed, received a terrible wake-up call which, if properly answered, could stave Humankind's self-destructing march of folly.

Therefore, history has caught up with you at the helm of the most prestigious body of experts our country and perhaps our species could master.

On December 10, 1948, when the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the future appeared promising for justice and peace in the world. Unfortunately, the dream was ephemeral. The following cold war and the relentless political, economic and religious conflicts culminated in the September 11th disaster.

Since then, vast amounts of energy and resources have been allocated on plans to retaliate and punish the perpetrators of this horrendous act. But little attention was given to the causes of hate against our country and the ideology used for carrying out the September 11th attack.

Although, unequivocally, our foreign policies and those of our allies, namely England, have contributed to the climate of hate, in my opinion and that of many others, religion was the main force and instrument for the execution of the September 11th disaster.

Of course, nationalism along with religion have been and still are the two major divisive forces of Humankind.

Therefore, we call on you and the members of the Academy to address and expose those two impostors as the public enemy of Humankind.

Only the Academy, in cooperation with the Academies of all the civilized nations, can unmask the hate-breeding irrationality of religion and national-

John W. MacKay, P.A.
Board Certified Civil Trial Lawyer
Certified Circuit Court Mediator

201 South Westland Avenue
The MacKay Building
Tampa, FL 33606

Tampa (813) 254-8835
Statewide (800) 813-RIDE
Fax (813) 254-6662
mackey@tampabay.fl.com

ism.

As your esteemed member and Nobel Laureate Steven Weinberg said, "With or without religion, you will have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things, but for good people to do evil things that takes religion."

Also, Seneca more than two thousand years ago stated: "Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful." Unless, and until, we eradicate those two impostors, our future, and that of many other species as well, is in peril.

The task is in your hands.

Sincerely,

Christos Tzanetakos

Founder.

The Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, Inc.

Dade&Broward Chapter Director Patrick Bens read Tzanetakos' letter via e-mail and responded-

I do support you in that religion is behind the 9/11 attack. Nationalism is not. These hijackers (and their supporters) came from a half dozen countries. Nationalism may be behind baby Bush's revenge plan. Yet the religious leaders of the Christian Right have their own plans already in place: Bush, in a first grade classroom in Chinatown in the morning, just to say the religious pledge, and the huge red massive crosses, torch cut out of twisted steel crossbeams, the same day in the evening, lit up by search lights and placed in the center of the crater where once stood the TWIN TOWERS.

—Patrick Bens

Doesn't understand religious fervor

I simply don't understand the religious fervor in the United States in the wake of the terrorist attack and the blame placed on the secularists who have "taken God out of our schools and public places..."

Frankly, I'd be ashamed to worship the same god as the Taliban, the terrorists. I'd be ashamed to worship in song and praise—any god I thought just "let" this horrendous event happen to "wake us up." I'd be ashamed not to realize the Bible god is either not all-loving or not all-powerful (the Jews, Christians, Muslims just can't have it both ways). I wouldn't ask such a god to "Bless America." The only excuse for such a god is that he doesn't exist.

What I do believe in and am proud of is the human "spirit" of both "believers" and "non-believers" helping the victims of this tragedy, and I know it exists.

I also know there have been many "atheists in foxholes" who have fought and died for the freedoms we enjoy—or enjoyed—in this country, and I refuse to pledge allegiance to a "... nation under God." The Holy Bible did it for others. We are under a godless, secular Constitution, and I'd like for us to keep it that way and say so!

The Tampa Bay Chapter composed this assessment of the terrorist attacks.

WE HAVE LISTENED to America discuss the terrorist attacks for weeks now. Why did it happen?

Our government tries to convince us that freedom, democracy and capitalism are the target of these attacks. But not one of our enemies abroad would list this. They would always list our oppression of their people and resources as a reason.

Our response

—Tampa Bay Chapter

The US government has been eager to prop up any tyrant who promotes our capitalist agenda no matter how much they subjugate their own people. The idea that our sole purpose in interfering in the political affairs of other nations is to promote democracy is a total fraud. We have opposed democratically elected governments around the world when they did not fit our needs. We have been the biggest perpetrator of state terror the world has ever seen followed second by Israel. Maybe they hate us because we are bullies. It's actually the US which sets terrorists free on them. The American flag is seen as a flag of tyranny around the world.

While our Vice President admonishes us not to conserve resources maintaining we have some sort of God-given right to use all the world's resources at give-away prices, he collected a cool \$35-million in compensation from the oil companies for serving on their boards last year. Naturally, he wants us to use as much oil as possible. No longer does the oil industry need to heavily lobby the government to have its way—with the Bush administration in power, it is the government. The oil companies have our military at their disposal to secure middle eastern oil at prices we set.

The people of the United States comprise perhaps five percent of the world's population yet consume 40 percent of its resources. They exercise hegemony over the world directly through overwhelming military might and indirectly

In a report from the Associated Press, Alfred Braca, 54, of Leonardo, N.J., a bond broker for eSpeed of Cantor Fitzgerald, was so devoted to his faith that colleagues called him "the Reverend." He was working in the World Trade Center when it was bombed in 1993. While running down the stairs after that bombing, his coworkers asked him if he was praying, and he replied, "I got you covered," said his son, David John. Braca served as a deacon and a board member of his church and also was active in the chapel's married couple's ministry. Apparently, Braca's prayers, like thousands of others, went unanswered on September 11. His remains have yet to be found.

through secretive organizations like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Though largely dominated by the US government, these are formally international organizations and therefore beyond Congressional oversight.

A recently declassified report on the 1953 CIA operation to overthrow the government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran illustrates a classic example of this premise. Installing the Shah of Iran in power brought twenty-five years of tyranny and repression to the Iranian people and elicited the Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution. This misguided "covert operation" of the US government helped convince many capable people throughout the Islamic world that the United States was an implacable enemy.

Our government has never been honest about its own role in the 1973 overthrow of the elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile or its backing, through "Operation Condor," of what the State Department has recently called "extra-judicial killings" in Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America.

The pattern has become all too familiar. Osama bin Laden, the leading suspect as mastermind behind 9/11, is no more (or less) "evil" than his fellow creations of our CIA: Manuel Noriega, former commander of the Panama Defense Forces until George Bush père in 1989 invaded his country and kidnapped him, or Iraq's Saddam Hussein, whom we armed and backed so long as he was at war with Khomeini's Iran and whose people we have bombed and starved for a decade in an incompetent effort to get rid of him. These men were once listed as "assets" of our clandestine services organization.

Many of these dictators were trained in the School of the Americas, founded in Panama in 1946 and moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1984 after Panamanian President Jorge Illueca called it "the biggest base for destabilization in Latin America" and evicted it.

The school has trained more than 60,000 military and police officers from Latin American and Caribbean countries. Among SOA's most illustrious graduates are the dictators Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama; Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador; Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru; Leopoldo Galtieri, former head of Argentina's junta; and Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia.

While religion is not the direct cause of the hostilities, it certainly is the fuel that fans the flames. As long as our species is plagued by this mental disease, we can expect endless conflict as opposing theologies view each other as the "infidels" who need to be destroyed.

Muslims pray significantly more than Americans. Our churches fill up only when we want to reinforce the idea that a god sanctions our agendas. If a god had the power to prevent the attacks, why didn't he? Since he couldn't, why pray for anything from an impotent god?

It's neither the flag nor a god that makes America great. It's our Constitution, the Bill of Rights, our democratic process, opportunities afforded, and our ability to speak out against our government in dissent. Ironically, some tell those of us who disagree with the "company line" that we should leave, citing the sacrifice of those who fought for our rights. Yet if we don't use those rights, what was the purpose of defending them in the first place?

Turn to back page

IN MY LIFETIME, I have witnessed well over a dozen religious wars, fought in every part of the globe. I have witnessed the brutal death of millions of innocent victims at the hands of numerous religious fanatics. No other evil, no other pestilence, no other disaster has come even close to matching religion's thirst for innocent blood.

Atheists respond

As I watched in horror as the World Trade Center fell killing thousands...

As I heard the Rev. Jerry Falwell's demented explanation...
As I watched Islamic extremists cry out for more blood...
As I read the rankings of Osama bin Laden...

Over and over again these atrocities remind me of the words of Deuteronomy 13:6-10 and compel to my lips the observation of Ben Johnson, 1603. "What excellent fools religion makes of men."

—James F. Young
Lithia, FL

Religious liberty fades after attacks:

People seem to think public prayer was against the law before Sept. 11. The law is clear cut regarding school- and government-endorsed religion. People can pray all they want. People can gather and hold prayer vigils if they want.

There is a difference between freedom of religion and established religion.

You have the right to be Christian, Jew, Muslim, atheist, Buddhist or anything else. You can be a Christian because the government is not establishing Islam. You can be a Buddhist because the government is not establishing Christianity.

Since the tragedy, we've seen a decline in religious freedom. Mandatory school prayer gatherings, pious political pulpits and other establishments of religion destroy religious freedoms.

For those desiring a Christian nation, there is one question you must ask before pursuing it: What denomination will rule America? Baptist? Methodist? Catholic? Adventist? Mormon?

—Blair Scott

President
Mobile Area Freethought Association
Mobile, AL

There are atheists in foxholes, after all

As we have heard "there are no atheists in foxholes" being repeated all too frequently in recent weeks, when Tom Brokaw repeated it on the evening news we felt the need for a response. It follows.

Dear Mr. Brokaw:

It was disheartening to hear you perpetuate the old canard, "There are no atheists in foxholes," as you did on your evening newscast Monday, October 8, 2001. Not only is it patently untrue, but it also divisively implies one cannot be patriotic without god.

Of course, many who find their morals and patriot-

ism in natural values based in human experience have willingly fought and died in defense of democracy, human rights, and basic freedoms. People have also fought sophisticated, tactical battles and wars since well before the dawning of the monotheism our culture knows today making the statement an utter impossibility.

You step onto a slippery slope in using such a misunderstood and undefined word as atheist to characterize and exclude honorable women and men, many of whom were part of "the greatest generation." In addition to maligning atheists, depending on your definition of theism (mono-, poly-, pan-) and its object god(s), billions of Buddhists, Hindus, Shintos and others who do not embrace the dominant theology of the West might also feel excluded.

I am sure you meant no disrespect toward the more than thirty-million Americans of the community of reason but, in this time of coming together for our nation, please be more careful of your characterization of our values, patriotism and willingness to stand for what we believe.

Sincerely,
Tony Hileman

I am finding it tedious and troublesome the way a significant portion of our politicians use quotations from the bible to advance their various agendas. Whether the issue is stem cell research, faith-based charities, gay and lesbian rights, etc., some legislator will reference a bible passage (often not very pertinent to the subject matter at hand) to make a point why an issue should be accepted or rejected. In my opinion the bible is a historical account of Judeo/Christian beliefs ONLY and should not be used as a basis for enacting laws. If references are required, they should be made to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and not to some specific holy book. For instance, see what the Taliban is doing in the name of the Koran!

—Glen A. P...
Indian Rocks Beach, FL

ALERT!

Wanted: (US soldiers) Dead or Alive!!!

The enormous success the terrorists enjoyed on 9/11 and the enormous embarrassment the US suffered, has given Osama bin Laden and his gang the guts to make a counter offer to George W. Bush's Wild West bounty of x millions of dollars (and growing) on the head of 22 Afghan outlaws.

In an article of the Pakistani Newspaper AUSAF, a Taliban journalist publishes that Al Qaeda is willing to offer thousands of US dollars for the uniforms of US soldiers and tens of thousands of dollars for the body of US soldiers, dead or alive. Preference is given to "unspoiled uniforms" and ready-to-fire weapons. No mention is made of the condition of the soldiers, but it is speculated that live soldiers make better bait for blackmail.

With the ground campaign about to begin, I am surprised that this information is not seen on American

News. I got it from <http://www.gva.be/> the local newspaper from my native Antwerp.

My personal fear is that the aim is not necessarily to capture US combat men nor their weapons but mainly to have a supply of US uniforms to be used by infiltrators. Much like they had or almost have done with the uniforms of flight attendants on those hijacking binges of 9/11. Therefore is it not at all a surprise to me that bin Laden is after US uniforms that can be obtained (stolen) in any base in the region, in European bases or in American.

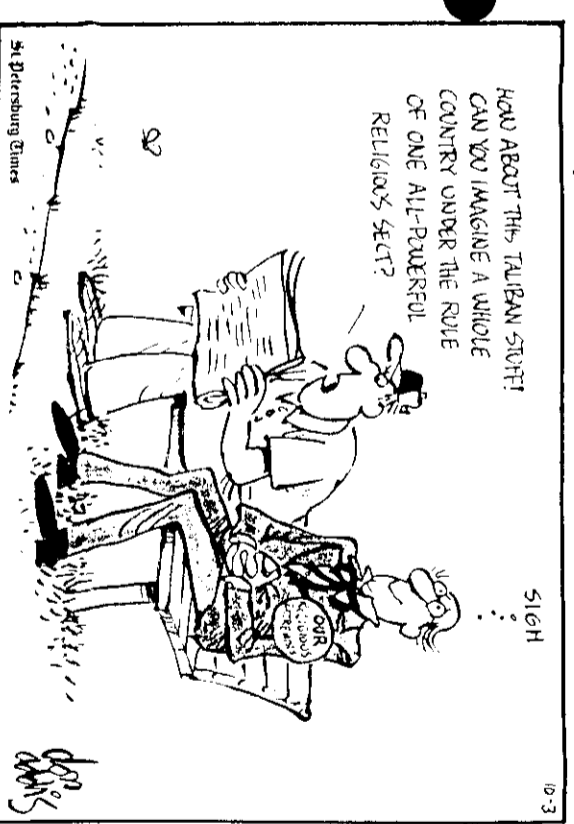
So now that the word is out, it may be a good thing to watch the laundry, if you are a military wife and reading this.

This is my way of doing my bit. I just translated this from this Flemish news article for y'all. My way of saying: I told you so!
Please forward this ALERT to everyone you know.
—Patrick Bens
Chapter Director, Dade&Broward Long Live America.

Will the 21st Century differ from earlier ones?

It is astounding what changes have occurred in the last month. The horrors of September 11, prompted many of these changes. Every American was emotionally affected. Deep within us all is the primary need for a safe environment. The terrorism caused feelings of fear, sadness, and helplessness in nearly everyone. Americans shed more tears than at any other time in our 225 year history. The terrorism was followed by stories of heroes and individual acts of courage. Then, a groundswell of flags and "God Bless America" arose. It gave many a feeling of unity and security in the midst of an official religious pluralism that included "persons of all faiths."

On the Sept. 13 broadcast of the 700 Club, Jerry Falwell and Pat



Robertson blamed "the ACLU," abortionists, pagans, feminists, gays, lesbians, (People for) "the American Way," and "NOW" (National Organization for Women) for creating a secular nation that caused God to allow this tragedy. In a NY Times interview later the same day, Falwell reiterated his position saying, "I sincerely believe that the collective efforts of many secularists during the past generation, resulting in the expulsion [of God] from our schools and from the public square, has left us vulnerable."

The next day on the Christian Broadcast Network (CBN) website, Robertson stated that pornography, rampant secularism, the occult, abortion, the absence of prayer in schools and insults on God "at the highest level of our government" had sent the Almighty over the edge. These statements were seen as harshly inappropriate and were criticized by

many, including President Bush.

The apology Falwell offered four days later, claiming he'd "misspoken" while "in shock and mourning" and Robertson's claim that he did not fully understand Falwell's comments is certainly not supported by the tone and content of broadcast commentary or the follow-up interview, or Robertson's CBN website post. And, of course, their comments were only the first salvo.

On a morning talk show, Billy Graham's daughter said the terrorism occurred because "... for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman that He is, I believe that He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand that He leave us alone?"

In *USA Today* Kathleen Parker wrote an article titled "God, country gain fragile new toehold" that began, "One can't help notice the silence of atheists these days." It pointed to the coming religious revivalism as God and country merge, as flag-waving and "god blessing America" slowly dissolve the essential separation of state and church.

Persons experiencing tragedy, suffering, and fear have long sought out the succor of religion. For many, religion gives them the stability to undertake humanitarian actions. For others, prayer is an inexpensive solution that gives the illusion of actually doing something helpful. Pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell, President Bush's home minister and spiritual advisor, blamed Christians for the conflict. He said, "Had we as a body of Christ been focused and faithful and praying for bin Laden, I don't know what would have happened. But I sure know he could have been shaken by the power of God. Don't forget this is power over practicality. With men and women some things are impossible. But with God all things are possible. It is not ours to reason, it is ours to be obedient. Had bin Laden been in our prayers for the last five years, who knows what would have happened, but we've not prayed for him. Just because a person is Muslim, crazy, or a terrorist does not mean he or she cannot be arrested by the power of God."

Christian fundamentalists are hard pressed to accuse Osama bin Laden of atheism. The letters and instruction manual of the terrorists are filled with religious rhetoric. The terrorists were obedient beyond reason. Abouhalima, one of the militants convicted in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, sounded a lot like Robertson, Falwell and other members of the religious right when he explained to an interviewer that the "holy war" is not against God-fearing Americans, but against secularism in the United States, Egypt, and around the world. Although he is a fundamentalist Moslem, Abouhalima said that if America adopted a "Christian government" it would "at least have morals."

All this makes one really wonder who the real enemy is! Is it terrorists motivated by religious fervor, or God—be He angry or negligent?
—Reasonings, Atheists and Agnostics of Wisconsin

FRAGMENTOS DE LA AUTOBIOGRAFIA ESCRITA POR EL CIENTIFICO NATURALISTA INGLES CHARLES DARWIN (1809-1882) RELATIVOS A SUS IDEAS SOBRE LA RELIGIÓN

Versión al español de LEANDRO PERDOMO

Nada es más notable en la última mitad de mi vida que la diseminación del escepticismo y el racionalismo. Antes de yo quedar prometido en matrimonio mi padre me aconsejó ocultar cuidadosamente mis dudas pues me dijo que había conocido cuánta desdicha se podía causar con ellas al cónyuge. Las cosas iban bien hasta que la esposa o el marido perdían la salud y entonces algunas mujeres sufrían desventuradamente dudando acerca de la salvación de sus esposos y, de este modo, les hacían sufrir a ellos igualmente. Mi padre agregó que en su larga vida había conocido bien a una multitud de personas y se había ganado la confianza de muchas de ellas que poseían un extraordinario poder, pero que sólo había encontrado tres mujeres que fueran escépticas. Cuando le pregunté quiénes eran, me confesó con respecto a una de ellas, su cuñada Kitty Wedgwood, que de la misma no tuvo sólida evidencia sino sólo una vaga impresión apoyada en su criterio de que una mujer que, como ella, veía tan claro las cosas, no podía ser creyente. A propósito, mi padre acostumbraba hacer mofa al citar el "incontestable" argumento por medio del cual una anciana de apellido Barlow' sospechando su poca lealtad al dogma, esperaba convertirlo diciéndole: "Doctor, yo sé que el azúcar es dulce en mi boca, y yo sé que mi redentor vive". Actualmente, y a pesar de mi escaso conocimiento al respecto, puedo nombrar varias señoras casadas quienes creen apenas muy poco más que sus escépticos maridos.

En cuanto a mí, mientras estuve a bordo del "Beagle" fui un discreto ortodoxo en materia religiosa, y recuerdo que varios oficiales del barco solían reírse francamente a carcajadas cuando se citaba la Biblia como autoridad irrefutable en algunos puntos de moralidad, suponiendo yo en-

tonces que fuera lo novedoso del asunto lo que tanta di- versión les causaba. Por ese tiempo, sin embargo, yo había ido comprendiendo gradualmente que el Antiguo Testamento narraba una historia falsa del mundo, con su torre de Babel, el supuesto significado del arco iris, etc., así como que al atribuirle a Dios los sentimientos propios de un tirano vengativo, no era más de confiar que los li- bros sagrados de los hindúes o las creencias de cualquier bárbaro. Una cuestión ocupaba constantemente mi mente y no podía ser sacada de ella: Si Dios fuera a hacer ahora una revelación a los Hinduistas, ¿la conectaría con la creencia en Vishnú o en Siva como el cristianismo estaba conectado con el Antiguo Testamento? Esto me parecía algo increíble por completo.

Nuevas reflexiones me llevaron aún más lejos: para hacer que cualquier hombre sano crea en los milagros sobre los que se apoya el cristianismo se requiere la más clara evidencia; que todo lo que conocemos de las leyes fijas de la naturaleza hace increíble que en ella se pro- duzcan milagros; que los hombres de aquellos tiempos a que se refiere la Biblia eran muy ignorantes, y crédulos a un grado tal que para nosotros hoy es algo casi incom- prensible; que no puede probarse que los evangelios hayan sido escritos simultáneamente con los eventos que refieren; que en ellos se contradicen mucho sus detalles más importantes, lo que para mí está muy lejos de ser admitido como las normales inexactitudes acostumbra- das en testigos presenciales. Razonamientos como éstos, a los que al principio no les concedí el menor valor, fue- ron influyendo sobre mí gradualmente al punto que dejé de creer en el cristianismo como revelación divina.

Otros dos aspectos que tuvieron algún peso sobre mí fue- ron: el hecho de que muchas falsas religiones se encuen- tran diseminadas por grandes regiones de la tierra, lo que sería algo en detrimento de la única verdadera; y que, be- lla como es la moralidad del Nuevo Testamento, no pue- de negarse que su perfección está en dependencia del cri- terio que se le aplique puesto que se nos presenta me- diante metáforas y alegorías a ser interpretadas por cada cual a su manera.

(Sera continuado)

NEWSNOTES

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

Our next meeting is planned for



November 17, 18, 19, 2001

We participate at the MIAMI BOOKFAIR INTERNATIONAL

Wolfson Campus

Downtown MIAMI

From sun-up till sun-

Our round table WINTER SOLSTICE LUNCHEON

Will be held on December 16, 2001 At 2 pm

At BISCAYNE Cafeteria On festive Miracle Mile In beautiful Coral Gables

NOISENOTES EXPOSING THE DANGERS OF RELIGION FORT GYPSUM

By Patrick Bens, Director I just finished reading "THE DARK SIDE OF PATRIOTISM" posted on msn.com. It raves of "the good, bad and, yes, ugly" sides of being American. I'm very skeptical of extremism. Patriotism is a sentiment that died in World War I, except in the United States. World War II made sure that patriotism stayed dead, except in the United States. Patriotism in the United States peeks from the closet every time fear is feared. And now, once again before a war, there is no better time.

This time the United States is frightened by a faceless enemy. In the Middle East and all over Europe, South and Central America this faceless enemy, called Terrorism, has shown up regularly and irregularly for at least a century. Now that faceless enemy has knocked at the front door of the United States, AF- TER it moved in. The United States is frightened and driven with its back against the wall; a wall made of paper and gypsum. Some call to build a fortress around the US made of better material than paper and gypsum. Others want to keep visitors out altogether. Still others want to turn against the visitors already here.

The United States is frustrated. It has been had. It has to look in the mirror to see its wrinkles. Un- furling the flag of Patriotism will only cover what it has to see. For years the politicians have

ABOVE ALL, THIS IS A MUST READ:
http://www.theconion.com/archive/archive_religion.html

John W. Mackay, P.A.

13 QUESTIONS

1. Where did you attend school? UCLA School of Law.
2. What are your hobbies? Running, motorcycling.
3. What is your all time favorite book and why? "We the living" - Good story; interesting look at history.
4. What is your all time favorite movie and why? "Fewis Beuhler's day off".
5. What is your occupation? Trial lawyer.
6. What influenced you to choose that occupation? Principle + income.
7. In your choice of career, were there any obstacles you had to conquer? Of course...
8. If you ever wanted another occupation, what would it be? University professor.
9. When did you become an Atheist? Was born this way.
10. Was there an event or person in your life that influenced your choice of becoming an Atheist? Reality.
11. If you were a teacher, what lesson would you teach religious kids? That no given religion is universally accepted as true; that the concept of "church" does not serve religion.
12. How do you see the future of the Separation of State and Church? Short term, it's breaking down. Historically it waxes + wanes.
13. If you were to be quoted, what would be your quote?

A PERFECT BEING WOULD NOT REQUIRE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

(Mr. John W. Mackay of TAMPA, FL is counsel to ATHEISTS of FLORIDA Inc.)

eMail Interviews with **ATHEISTS** by **NEWSNOTES**

teen reporter **Fabiola Beins.**

(Continued from page 1)

used patriotism to fatten the pockets of both the military and the weapon industry. Many officers retire to take jobs in a weapon industry for which there is less and less need.

For years the White House has been serving up prayer breakfasts to gray-ing faith-providers where they could have honored young scientific and technological geniuses.

For years the CIA has been knitting a list of human rights violations of its own kind in countries where it should have made friends in the places where it counts, among the people, instead of its dictators.

For years the FBI has been tricking and trapping pornography enthusiasts at the rate that one would like to think that maybe they should have been tracking terrorists.

The American Patriot does not like to look these faults in the face. He doesn't question authority. He lights a candle instead and drops to his knees in submission. Patriotic leaders like to keep it that way. That's the paper and gypsum wall.

In order for US citizens to feel safer, there is a dire need to replace the building blocks of its worldwide politics. Theocratic capitalism and the exploitation without education it's made of, is a slap in the face of the world outside Fort Gypsum. When both body and mind are enslaved in poverty and mahourishment, religion and illiteracy, strife is cultured. It only takes a single charismatic opportunist, a Lenin, a Hitler, a Bin Laden or on a smaller scale a David Koresh, a Yaweh Ben Yaweh, to set murder in motion. It takes all of us globally united to prevent this from happening repeatedly throughout our future history.

Comments to this editorial are on www.writtenby.me.com/content/64856

UNINTELLIGENT INTELLIGENCE

Today, the most deadly weapon in the arsenal of the United States Armed Forces is probably not the nuclear bomb nor the tomahawk missile, but the classic pub dart.

With Osama Ben Ladin on the run or in hiding, in short, nowhere in sight, and the Taliban not ready nor willing to hand over the alleged terrorist mastermind of the attack on the WORLD TRADE CENTER, the American Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA, has a nasty nut to crack.

Compared to the World Trade Center's demise, with the Oklahoma bombing it went a lot easier for the FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION. What had motivated timid McVeigh was the FBI's error committed upon the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas when many horrified children were massacred. With the license plate missing on Timothy McVeigh's car, days after the bombing, some say, the FBI was charmed into an easy arrest. No such luck for the CIA.

Their mission accomplished, when McVeigh was put to death as an anti-hero, the nation embraced complacency and placidly cuddled together into a warm cozy nest under the spreaded wings of its safety symbol the mighty Eagle. With McVeigh dead, terrorism was dead. McVeigh is gone all right, but the chemicals he used are still as easy to get as six years ago and it still costs less than a weeks pay to fill the kind of truck McVeigh blew up. As a matter of fact, the WALL STREET JOURNAL of 10.03.01 quips that for a teenager it is easier to buy two tons of Ammonium Nitrate than a six-pack of beer.

Who could have predicted that the perverse success of Tim McVeigh, then the largest act of terrorism on American soil, would oh so soon be dwarfed by the double whammy allegedly orchestrated by Osama Ben Ladin and ruffled the feathers of the American Eagle, now driven to tears. Who could? The CIA could. Could, should and would!

PREMONITION

Some of the Central Bureau's secret agents are, after all, a couple of full time psychics. These sidekicks are paid to foresee military disasters such as the onslaught on Manhattan. Since the early 1950s, these clairvoyants are called upon to forewarn invasions, locate lost aircrafts and predict attacks upon the US Navy.

When its spies in the then Soviet Union learned that Moscow was playing a cloak and dagger cat and mouse game with remote viewing, the CIA hired obscure crystal ball readers to

counter this odd sort of espionage. These psychics later confessed to the likes of HISTORY Channel interviewers, that they had no clue as to what was expected of them and were astonished that government officials took their art of premonition serious. Thus, they had no other choice as to fool the government in making believe they received foreboding messages from incredible sources about information the officials were eager to hear.

One classic tool the CIA psychics used frequently was pendulum dowsing. This primitive technique was used to trace tunnels in the jungles of Vietnam. The findings were then dispatched to the front lines where commanders like Colin Powell were giving orders.

Pendulum dowsing was a favorite of the Nazis. They adopted it as soon as they suspected that it was in use by the British Army officers who discovered their u-boats with unforeseeable ease.

Pendulum dowsing is a big word for a very simple trick. A map is opened on the room floor. The psychic stands over the map holding a pen dangling at the end of a long twine. The point of the pen is held hovering close to the paper map and where the point scratches a mark, it was believed there were Vietcong tunnels.

DARTING IN ON PUBLIC ENEMY #1

With this scientific know how, it will be possible to pinpoint exactly where public enemy number one Ben Ladin is in hiding. Numerous reports from Afghanistan speak of endless caves and mile long tunnels dug deep under the mountains over a period of many centuries. Finding the culprit Osama, is however no problem any more.

There will be no need for a lengthy ground war. As soon as the CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY conveys the secret dossier to the Secretary of State Colin Powell, bilateral diplomatic negotiations with the Taliban can resume. It is my most sincere belief that if the CIA wants to direct the Secretary of State to the exact lair where Ben Laden hibernates, the Agency should, for scientific reasons, apart from the dowsing results, get a second opinion by letting its most able psychological agent throw a dart among the pen scratches. The project must then be presented to the Cabinet in a Rose Garden ceremony, where the president can offer the evidence to the American people during a live interview on television.

Comments to this article are posted on www.writtenby.me.com/content/64686

November

Birthdays

1. Larry Flynt
2. Shere Hite
3. Michael Dukakis
4. R. Mapplethorpe
5. Art Garfunkel
6. Adolph Sax
7. Marie Curie
8. Christie Hefner
9. Carl Sagan
10. William Hogarth
11. Kurt Vonnegut
12. E. C. Stanton
13. St. Augustin
14. Prince Charles
15. Petula Clark
16. Tiberius
17. S. Honda
18. Louis Daguerre
19. Jodie Foster
20. RPK
21. Voltaire
22. George Eliot
23. Erte
24. Spinoza
25. JFK Jr.
26. Robert Goulet
27. Caroline Kennedy
28. Friedrich Engels
29. Donizetti
30. Mark Twain



Non-Prayer Breakfasts

Starting January 17, 2002 and every third Thursday of the following months, our chapter will be holding a non-prayer breakfast at 8 am at Denny's Restaurant, New Testament Boulevard in MIAMI LAKES (just about a block north of the Palmetto Expressway—exit Ludlum Road).

For a free calendar of meetings and breakfasts call: **3 0 5 - 9 4 0 - 0 4 4 2**