

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

TAMPA BAY: Last Saturday of each month through August, Noon—1:30, Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Meeting Room A. Beginning September, **First Wednesday of each month**, Pinellas Park Library, 7—9 pm. **Third Wednesday of each month**, 7—8:30 pm, Platt Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave., Tampa, Community Room in vestibule.
Dinner at 5:30 preceding Wednesday meeting at Piccadilly Restaurant on Dale Mabry just north of Henderson, front room FMI: Ed Golly, 813/839-7567, AthALFLE@aol.com.

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

Heritage *from page 5*

from this prohibition. To say this amendment only prohibits a national religion misunderstands that government powers must be explicitly stated, not inferred as if government has all powers except for those civil rights which are listed. The ninth and tenth amendments further emphasize that We the People retain all other rights.

The National Day of Prayer

Americans are free to celebrate a National Day of Prayer. Such celebrations can be held on public property where public or free speech gatherings are allowed. Public officials can participate if they do so as private individuals and not as part of their functions of office. This preserves the private freedom to celebrate religion as we choose.

What violates Constitutional separation of government from religion are acts by public officials that support or appear to support

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. Meeting notifications and activities available in **NEWSNOTES**, a monthly publication mailed to all active Dade&Broward chapter members. FMI: Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441, atheist1@bellsouth.net.

ORLANDO: Meetings scheduled for the **first Sunday** of each month at the Orange County Public Library, 101 E Central Blvd, 3rd Floor, Downtown Orlando, 1:00pm. FMI: Nan Owens, (813) 662-6612, nanowens@ix.netcom.com.

religious activities. These include:

- ✦ Government chaplains.
- ✦ Prayers at government functions or activities.
- ✦ The 1952 Congressional Act establishing a National Day of Prayer.
- ✦ Congressional Acts making "In God we trust" the national motto and putting it on currency.
- ✦ Religious displays on government property where the area is not treated like a public free speech area open to others.
- ✦ Prayer and other religious proclamations by public officials such as presidents, governors, mayors, etc.
- ✦ Direct or indirect funding of any religious activities by government.

Our Religious Freedom

We have perhaps the greatest freedom of conscience of any nation. Yes, Constitutional separation of religion from government is unpopular with many to the point of denying it exists. Separation of religion from government has, however, allowed religion to flourish in America such that we are now the most religious of any industrialized nation.

We certainly have the freedom to oppose separation of religion from government. We should in good conscience, then, be honest in our opposition to our founders' Constitution. We should not pretend there never was separation of religion from government.

Beginning next month—

Camp Questmaster Edwin Kagin will join Jim Strayer as a regular columnist in our newsletter. Items from Kagin's soon-to-be-published book will give a sample of its content.

In the Tampa area, board-appointed producer Brent Yaciv

10 May 2001



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Volume X No. 1
May, 2001

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

Sponsor of the MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, Incorporated
A Member Society of Atheist Alliance International, the Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies
www.atheistalliance.org/florida

Atheist Alliance Convention: Catalyst for Local Action & Growth

—Marie Alena Castle/
President, Atheist Alliance International
The Easter Weekend Atheist Alliance International (AAI) convention in Atlanta was a great success, judging by the large turnout of nearly 200. The hosts—Atlanta Freethought Society—said they were extremely pleased with the results of their efforts. There will be a full report in the July-September *Secular Nation* magazine.

The speakers were both varied and excellent. For example, the presentation by William Sierichs, Jr.—"The History of Christianity"—was a compendium of the innumerable instances of fables, force and fraud used to create and sustain Christianity. This history alone is enough to destroy the system's credibility. Paul Kurtz, the keynote speaker, emphasized the need for activism. Massimo Pigliucci demonstrated the superiority of a rational approach to ethics as opposed to the incoherent mess religion produces. Marie Castle and Ed Buckner's workshop on "The Etiquette of Religion-Bashing" was both hilarious and instructive for the standing-room-only crowd.

August Berkshire proved to be an ambassador of good will extraordinaire in bringing seven members and leaders of La Libre Pensée to the convention from France. They were welcomed as colleagues and full participants. One, Philippe Besson, sat in on the AAI board meeting. Another, Claude Singer (pronounced Sang-jay) reported on their organization's progress when AAI member societies gave their reports. Their president, Christian Eyschen, spoke to the convention and urged attendance at the AAI-La Libre Pensée international conference in 2002 in Paris.

August also brought Robert Buckman, president of Humanist Assn. of Canada—a compelling speaker. All participated in a panel discussion on the value of international cooperation.

The AAI annual board meeting, always held in conjunction with the convention, was especially productive. Because AAI is a grassroots organization run by unpaid volunteers, it is now in a position to provide financial assistance to member societies to

help them grow and develop their own outreach projects.

The board voted to set up a matching funds program using 50% of its net revenue per year. The program will start small to test it out. A basic grant of about \$200 will be available to member societies with minimal eligibility requirements. In following years, a "challenge" grant will be added that is expected to provide larger amounts on a competitive basis. A grant committee has been selected, representative of the 25 U.S. member societies' geographical distribution and varying sizes.

The Atheist Alliance was founded specifically to help form and develop democratic atheist organizations in every state. With the matching funds program, this goal is becoming a reality.

The AAI board also voted to encourage its member societies to form state secular councils patterned after the Minnesota Secular Council, which was successful in



Representing Atheists of Florida at the Alliance board meeting are Board Members Jim Young, left, and Ed Golly.

meeting with Gov. Jesse Ventura. It's at the local level where action really counts. Metroplex Atheists, Dallas-Ft. Worth, volunteered to host the 2002 convention. The 2003 convention will be in Madison, Wisconsin, hosted by Atheists & Agnostics of Wisconsin.

"Man is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a flea, and yet he will be making Gods by the dozens." —Montaigne

www.atheistalliance.org/florida

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Membership dues:

- Life Member \$ 500.00
- Sustaining 60.00 yr
- Couple 50.00 yr
- Individual 40.00 yr
- Student 10.00 yr
- Limited Income 10.00 yr
- Newsletter 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 promote church separation on issues.

*Letter 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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SECRETIONS ARE THE useful chemicals produced by a cell. The cell is living, but secretions are nonliving substances. They are not to be confused with excretions, the waste materials given off by a cell. Excretions will be discussed in a later article.

All secretions are valuable because they

The Solution is Evolution

No. 8—Secretions

—Jim Strayer



aid in the survival of the organism. Some of them are obvious and well known to us, like hair, teeth, and bone. Others are not as obvious, but much more impor-

tant.

About three billion years ago there were no multicellular living things. All bacteria and cells were unicellular. That is, each cell carried on all the functions to maintain life. Then one of the most important events in the history of evolution occurred. Mutations in the DNA caused a secretion that allowed cells to remain together. This was extremely important because it meant that organisms could be multicellular. The ad-

This series will continue in the next newsletter. Jim Strayer is a retired biology teacher. He lives with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea.

vantages for survival were greatly increased. Because of this development some cells in the organism could develop special functions and therefore be more efficient. Some cells could produce a secretion for digestion, some could produce a secretion for movement, some could produce a secretion for protection. The possibilities were enormous. With all of these different cells working for the survival of the organism it helped assure that the cells that carried on reproduction in the organism had a better chance for survival.

The process of cells forming different specialized tissue is known as differentiation and it is what led to the beginning of plants and animals. In our own bodies we can see how important it is for muscle, skin, and nerve tissue to hold together. We can also see some cells do not produce the secretion or else blood would not be a liquid and sperm would not be able to swim.

Many other secretions that are responsible for growth and development in both plants and animals are the hormones. Each hormone is the result of a specific bit of DNA (A gene) producing the proper protein. The beak of a bird, the cartilage of an ear, the venom of a snake, the lens of an eye, milk, honey, and saliva are all secretions.

In plants the secretion that forms cell walls form the veins of a leaf and the wood of a tree. Plant cells produce peanut oil, maple sugar, sap, and poison. Almost everything we think of as living is made of cells and the secretions are made from cells. Next time - Excretions.

Yaciv still seeking memoirs on Musy

Many of you no doubt saw the call for commentary, info, etc. for a celebratory edition on Jacques in the AOF newsletter. However, knowing that Jacques shared more by snail mail, I suspect I might acquire a vaster and more representative trove that way. Thus, please pass on my address below to anyone who might have materials or reminiscences they would like to share with our newsletter audience, including those outside our immediate circle. Also, we are trying to put together a memorial party—the kind of thing Jacques would have enjoyed. We're seeking a location that can handle at

Porn in more than one form
Here are two responses to an article titled "Churches tend to porn addicts" run April 7.
Ah, yes, yet another invented addiction to a perfectly natural human impulse, traded (supposedly) for the even worse addiction to an even more absurd fantasy: religion. Or has it not

LETTERS



occurred to anyone that the same predilection to accept fantasy as reality that attracts people to reality is what makes them so attracted to porn?

If the "problem" is an inability to differentiate fantasy from reality, religion is no solution, just a deeper, though more socially accepted, example of the problem. The likelihood of any deity's existence, based on those found in current religions, is far lower than the likelihood "porn addicts" will have a real, long-term relationship with the women in their fantasies. At least we can prove the women exist!

"Whose suffering would make atheists of lesser people...."

—Brent Yaciv
Wesley Chapel

As long as The Tampa Tribune is going to run pseudo-journalism like this one about pornography addiction, why not do a series of reports on, respectively, Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Great Pumpkin? I, for one, am dying to find out if Linus ever got his toys from that big pumpkin.

This thing was front page and no one picked up on how humorous this story would look to a sane person? I guess since some slick L.A. Times writer penned this garbage, the cow patty reporters at the Trib thought it must be good journalism. For heaven's sake—addicted to pornography?

I'm convinced the men in the story have problems. Self-loathing for one. Quite possibly obsessive-compulsive disorders, as well, as they attempt to juggle the very nature of their being with tenets of worship that demand they deny and repress a part of who they are. Perhaps you can do a follow-up story on how these men got started down the path to their deviant behavior. You can run an article on support groups for people that are addicted to religion.

—Joseph Redner, Jr.
Tampa

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The Insanity has to stop!

A response to an editorial in the St. Petersburg Times.

INSANITY is your recent editorial that called our public hospital Bayfront's entanglement with the Roman Catholic BayCare merely an "awkward" agreement that stopped most reproductive care and pain-relief measures at the end of life at Bayfront!

NO. This is not "awkward," this is a violation of the First Amendment's separation of state and church clause!! Lawsuits that have been filed against Bayfront and the "excommunication" of Bayfront from BayCare dramatically show that this was no mere quirk of funding—it was a serious violation of the Constitution that the citizenry will not stand for!!

Funny how the *St. Petersburg Times* blusters about the First Amendment when it affects its own \$ bottom line—freedom of speech—but blithely ignores citizens' own First Amendment rights to be free from being imposed upon by religion.

Can't pick and choose about the Constitution, *Times*. Wise up.

—Edwin Corl
St. Petersburg

Re: "Faulty logic for art that offends," column by Bill Maxwell:

How deliciously ironic! In attempting to expose how irrational thinking degrades public debate on issues involving politics, race, religion, and art, Maxwell falls into the very trap he decries!

I'm referring to his statement concerning his devout grandfather, "whose suffering would make atheists of lesser people...." The implication of the statement is that, by considering the evidence (suffering), and basing their decision (not to believe in a deity that would allow or condone said suffering) on evidence (which is, of course, what logic is supposed to base decisions on), atheists are "lesser people." Obviously, Maxwell's emotional attachment to his grandfather (understandable, of course) overrode his ability to apply logic in this case—and that's exactly what happens to most people whenever the aforementioned subjects are at issue.

While it might offend him to examine it, one could logically make the case that his grandfather was using belief in his deity as a crutch to get through his suffering, or worse, merely cowing to fear of an imaginary being he believed was responsible for his suffering, rather than having the strength to face suffering on his own.

Logic and religion will never be compatible, because the basis in faith of religion is not acceptable to the logician. The most we can hope for is an agreement to disagree. —Brent Yaciv
Wesley Chapel

National day of insanity

The National Day of Prayer dawned on one of the worst draughts of the century. What to do? Mimic the governor—he's been praying every day for who-knows-how-long for rain which never seems to fall. All citizens were summoned to pray for rain. A month later, we continue to experience dangerously dry conditions. What's the message here? Did God have a bad vacation in Florida or is He just too dumb to see how badly we need rain? Sadly, the message is that Bush and all the other super-stitionists are just too irrational to get the message. Guess what, dum-dummies? There have been some 20,000 gods invented throughout history. Not one of them could produce a single drop of rain on request. Or ever will.



Meanwhile, Attorney General John Ashcroft demonstrated that he, too, is wallowing in the intellectual gutter. Each workday at 8 a.m. sharp, Ashcroft presides over a Bible study at the main Justice building in Washington, either in his personal office or a conference room. According to aides, any employee is welcome, but none are required to attend.

Yet within the Justice Department, which employs about 135,000 worldwide, some who do not share Ashcroft's Pentecostal Christian beliefs are uncomfortable with the daily prayer sessions—particularly because they are conducted by the nation's chief law enforcement officer, entrusted with enforcing a Constitution that calls for the separation of state and church.

Demonstration of the fact that the practice is coercive, critics within the department conceal their identity. Said one attorney, "The purpose of the Department of Justice is to do the business of the government, not to establish a religion."

In February at a Black History Month celebration, Ashcroft prayed with a minister, who urged Justice

employees to join in. Then the department issued new style guidelines for correspondence carrying Ashcroft's signature. They forbid, among other things, use of the word "pride," which the Bible calls a sin, and the phrase "no higher calling than public service."

Several top aides, including Ashcroft's deputy chief of staff, never attend the meetings. But the federal government's "Guidelines of Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace," issued in 1997, say supervisors and department heads must be careful with religious activities or statements. "Because supervisors have the power to hire, fire or promote, employees may reasonably perceive their supervisors' religious expression as coercive, even if it was not intended as such," the guidelines say. "Therefore, supervisors should be careful to ensure that their statements and actions are such that employees do not perceive any coercion...and should, where necessary, take appropriate steps to dispel such misperceptions."

Something to consider: State/church separation cases are not unheard of. How does an attorney general who violates this clause impartially try such a case? Ashcroft has regularly cited God and Scripture in speeches and policy statements. In 1998, he said at a Christian Coalition event that "a robed elite have taken the wall of separation designed to protect the church and they have made it a wall of religious oppression."

The next year, he told Bob Jones University graduates that America was founded on religious principles, and "we have no king but Jesus." That, you may recall, was the statement that became the subject of some controversy at his confirmation hearings.

A *Washington Post* article on the subject included a comment from Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United, saying, "He's running the department like a church, complete with rituals and forbidden words."

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In our own back yard, gay high school students lobbying for discrimination protection in Florida schools got a jolting civics lesson on April 9 from an elected lawmaker who welcomed them into his office only to declare: "God...is going to destroy you."

Rep. Allen Trovillion, a Republican (no kidding) representing Winter Park, told the Orlando-area students, "You are going to cause the downfall of this country that was built on Christian principles." The confused religious bigot continued to say, "I'm against discrimination, but I'm opposed to this. You're throwing your life away."

Blind to his own bias, Trovillion actually questioned "why the gay population is becoming so vocal."

Student Chris Vasquez, an honors student and editor in chief of Edgewater High School's campus newspaper, thanked Trovillion for his time but left the office in tears. The students were looking for potential sponsors for The Florida Dignity for All Students Act intended to broaden Florida's antidiscrimination laws to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

Said Trovillion, "I will do anything I can to keep it from happening. You have to suffer the consequences of your actions. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and he is going to destroy you and a lot of others."

Chapter Dade&Broward

—Patrick Bens, Director

THE YEAR 2000 has been a year of enormous progress for our chapter. Coming into January with 74 new recipients of our chapter bulletin, *NewsNotes*, we had record attendance at our Fort Lauderdale presentation of *A Cosmic*

Chapter reports 2000

Voyage, a video which circulated to all chapters. In February, A of F founder and spokesman Christos Tzanetakos addressed the Rotary Club breakfast meeting at the Bal Harbor Beach Club. That month we moved our Dade meetings to Miracle Mile. The small restaurant where we held our first Coral Gables meeting burned to the ground less than a week later.

In March, a book review was given at the Broward County Main Library about the troubles in Belfast leading to a debate on "Living with religious wars." *NewsNotes* started the first of its 13 Questions featuring Ed Golly.

The April meeting in beautiful Coral Gables brought so many Hispanic atheists out of the closet, a mini meeting within a meeting had to be held. *NewsNotes* added an extra page in Spanish named "LaNuestra" ("Ours") to its next issue.

At the Library in May we showed the A&E video of Mark Twain and discussed his books. In June, Carlos Coronado joined the *NewsNotes* team to write for *LaNuestra*. *NewsNotes* ran 13Q with Rebecca Porto, M.D.

July and all summer long, Dade&Broward were treated to real atheist radio talk with the warm voice and crystal clear reasoning of James (the Amazing) Randi. *NewsNotes* ran 13Q on Christos Tzanetakos.

August gave Mariana and Fabiola Bens some summer days off to make an atheist Website on Bellsouth.net. *NewsNotes* dedicated its 13Q centerfold to Brent Yaciw. In September, Mr. John Del Rossi was scheduled to review the

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book *A Case against God* as was the A&E video presentation "Questioning Astrology".

In the October mini meeting preceding the scheduled meeting, member Jose Perdomo presented our chapter with his son Leandro's version in Spanish of Bert Russell's *Why I am not a Christian*. *NewsNotes* 13Q were with Dr. Michael Brannon.

November 17, 18, 19 we occupied booth #258 at the Miami Book Fair International. Booth #480, with professor Manuel Paz from Lima, Peru was distributing atheist books in Spanish thanks to the efforts of our chapter. *NewsNotes* had 13Q for Mr. Paz.

December: Our favorite hang-out, Biscayne Cafeteria is the scene of our Winter Solstice 2000.

Tampa Bay Chapter

—Ed Golly, Director

THE CHAPTER continued with meetings the last Saturday of each month except October at the Clearwater East Public Library. Dinners were scheduled nearly every month at various restaurants around the bay area.

Wayne Williams was our most interesting guest speaker of the year. Williams and his wife had journeyed to Togo, Africa and delivered quite an eye-opening talk about his experiences there. Shortly after addressing our group he moved to Prescott, Arizona.

Our advertising continued all year in the classified section of the *Weekly Planet*. We think it is a worthwhile investment since we continue to receive several calls a month on our phone line.

Led by the prolific Yaciw, the chapter had several letters to editors of local newspapers, most of which appeared in our newsletter.

Following our unsuccessful attempt to prevent the construction of a chapel at the Tampa Airport, our legal counsel, John Mackay, discovered that the Aviation Authority was issuing employee parking permits to the shuttle driver who had declared himself airport chaplain and two of his stooges so they could hang out at the airport pretending to be official chaplains. When we requested permits for our members, their permits were pulled.

Circus McGerkin in late October was again attended by Atheists of Florida. The results were several new local contacts. A few weeks later, we joined the Dade&Broward chapter to spend three days at the Miami Book Fair International, always a successful event.

The local FOX network affiliate, Channel 13, called on Ed Golly for an appearance as a panelist on the midday newscast to discuss public funding of religious services. Yaciw got a call into the program, and we think they held their ground successfully.

The Elm Street Flea Market is a weekly event at the University of South Florida. Several years ago, Ed Corl began to appear each week in a covered stand he constructed offering literature and discussion about atheism. Eventually, he moved to Hawaii, but Britt Girard has kept up the stand with occasional assistance from Jim Young.

About a half dozen of our members made the trek to Sacramento for the Atheist Alliance International convention in April where Atheists of Florida received the **Visible Atheist Award** for "reaching out to the public year after year through the Miami Book Fair International to counter religious propaganda with the truth about religious history and the human values of atheism."

During the Baycare attempt to place all hospitals in the Bay area under the Catholic Bishops Directives guidelines for medical care, several members of the chapter attended protests organized by the principal opposition group, the local chapter of National Organization for Women. The story, events and results were covered in issues of this newsletter.

Camp Quest, the freethought summer camp in Cincinnati conceived and operated by Helen and Edwin Kagin, conducted its fourth consecutive year of operation in July, 2000. Jim Strayer and Ed Golly were again on the scene as counselors. Strayer gave lectures on spiders, nature and tree identification, while Golly flew over half the campers above the campground and King's Island in his airplane. He also supplied a generous crop of water pistols—it is, after all, a camp.

Two thousand one promises to be a bigger year for the chapter as our Cable TV program is scheduled to resume production and we will be holding two meetings per month.

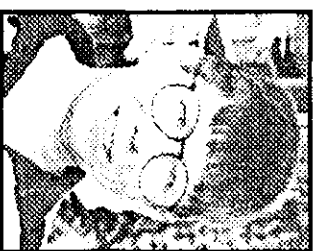
"I've begun worshipping the sun for a number of reasons. First of all, unlike some other gods I could mention, I can see the sun. It's there for me every day. And the things it brings me are quite apparent all the time: heat, light, food, a lovely day. There is no mystery, no one asks for money. I don't have to dress up, and there's no boring pagentry. And, interestingly enough, I have found that the prayers I offer to the sun and the prayers I formerly offered to "God" are all answered at about the same 50 percent rate.

—George Carlin

WITH MORE AND MORE Floridians communicating by e-mail, an e-mail recruiting campaign becomes an essential part of reaching the public. A successful e-mail recruiting campaign can be as simple as a short message to a list of prospective members or late renewers; or it can be as intricate as a

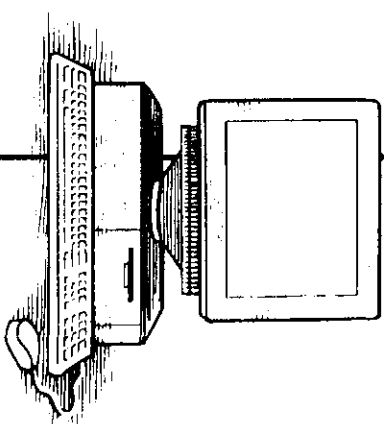
E-Mailing: from cold call to hot link

—Patrick Bens



A new burst service that sends a message every time a new event or alert or book is added to our website.

The reason e-mailing is so important a recruiting tool is because it's simple. Despite the fanfare being made over a Web site's graphics-based attractiveness, efficient communication by text still rules the waves.



E-mailing in Florida has grown steadily in popularity as seniors have matured into being Web users. Like their snail mail, they check their e-mail every day. They don't necessarily use the Web every day. Unlike the Web, the e-mail medium is generally easier and faster. E-mail is also more personal. It can be fine-tuned to an individual's desires.

With regards to soliciting bequests, e-mailing can be more direct, more discreet and more casual than an impersonal formal letter; clicking more relaxed and kinder than a cold call. Plus, when it comes to politics, under the leadership of the brother of a faith-based president, Florida conditions of state/church matters can change quicker than the summer weather.

Patrick Bens is a native of Belgium and director of the Dade&Broward chapter. A real estate investor and businessman, he lives in North Dade with his wife, Celina and two daughters. He edits NEWSNOTES, the monthly chapter bulletin.

can't boom in the Sunshine State.

I discovered that there are three ways we can take advantage of e-mailing as recruitment tool:

1. Invite Web-site visitors to sign up for a concise electronic version of our paper newsletter. Delivered periodically via e-mail, it can feature breaking news on the latest damage done to the Wall of Separation.
2. Invite visitors to sign up for e-mail "new bursts" that alert subscribers to upcoming attempts to damage the Jeffersonian Wall.
3. Invite visitors to fill out an interactive form detailing the specific comments or suggestions they are intending to make and the information they are trying to distribute.

F O C E-mailing lists

Luckily, there are a number of excellent online service providers that will help create and maintain e-mail newsletters and e-mailing lists. FREE OF CHARGE: topica.com, groups.yahoo.com, coolist.com. These services may rightfully run small banner advertisement over the e-newsletter. I see several of these on a daily basis and they are generally well presented ads for bookstores, publishing houses or other college level publicity. Such free hosting is perfect for our group. If we sincerely seek to expand, we must experiment with the creation and maintenance of an e-mailing list or lists on the Internet. This is an offer that can't be refused.

Probably the most important point to remember is that an e-mailed newsletter, in its crudest form, is really nothing more than one e-mail delivered to many people. The beauty of the free service providers is that they take on the responsibility of managing distribution of your mailing list, providing a mechanism for people to sign up for your mailing list, and a mechanism for them to unsubscribe. Doing this yourself is too tedious to consider.

C.O.D. E-mailing lists

Talklist.com, Listbot.com, L.soft.com, Lyris.com can set up lists without the hovering commercial banners, but it'll cost ya! The reason: they handle a number of high-profile clients.

Personalizing the recruitment campaign

There are endless arrays of personal touches that can make the electronic newsletter a more effective recruitment power tool. The most significant is the "holink". It leads the visitor back to our Web site, which can offer so much more than a brief text. The Web site already exhibits all our phone numbers and addresses and events, but it could be made more entertaining with a picture gallery of book covers, a message board, a chat room or 360 degree panoramic photographs taken at meetings and conventions.

Another important link the visitor should be able to click on is of course the standard window to reply with a message or personal info. A third, the electronic application form. A fourth, an electronic order form for books, mugs, tees, and so on. In Florida, e-mailing is elbowing its way into the traditional "cold call circus," without the appearance or background noise of a boiler room. It is time for us to jump on the bandwagon. In increasing numbers, Baby Boomers are embracing the ritual of getting their morning news from their computer screen. Let's wake 'em up with an invitation to join us!

Our true heritage —Howard Thompson

The National Day of Prayer every April is a good day to recall our nation's religious heritage. What better day for remembering our government's founding? Let us begin with the Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence

In 1776 we declared our freedom from England. We proclaimed something radical in Christendom—that "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their

just powers from the consent of the governed." We asserted the right of Men to create their own governments with limited powers. We rejected Kings crowned by Bishops to rule with God's unlimited authority. The Declaration mentions "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God", but only asked for the support of the "Supreme Judge of the world" while proclaiming independence solely "by Authority of the good People of these United States."

We thus became the first nation to establish government on the authority of the people. We also became the first nation to reference a deistic god of natural religion. That's why the god-talk of the Declaration lacks Christian references.

The Constitution

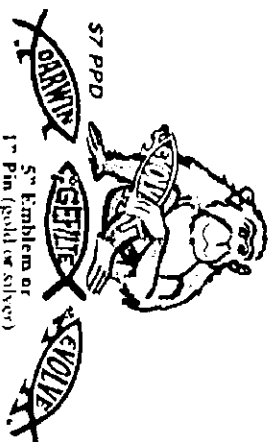
The 1787 Constitution continues the Declaration's themes. The preamble begins with "We the People of the United States" and ends with "do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." We the People, not God, "ordain" our government. The Constitution continues with no mention of Jesus or deity, excepting the date reference. Religion is only mentioned as a prohibition against religious tests for office.

"unnecessary" them

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Alexander Hamilton stated this in "The Federalist": "For why declare that things shall not be done which there is no power to do? Why, for instance, should it be said that the liberty of the press shall not be restrained, when no power is given by which restrictions may be imposed?"

There was a struggle between those who wanted religion in government and those who supported separation of religion from government. Religionists wanted Jesus and God put into the Constitution and the prohibition against religious tests for office struck out. Despite opposition, the Constitution was ratified as written.

This is the basis for America's religious freedom—a Constitution which gives to government zero powers to do anything religious.

Traditions of Government Prayer

Government officials have supported and conducted religious activities. They have done so despite their oath to uphold the Constitution as the "Supreme Law of the Land".

The issue is whether or not government officials must obey the Constitution they swore to uphold. Everyone understands that traditions of violating the Constitution do not change the Constitution. Thus, officials must obey the Constitution in their duties and not support or conduct religious activities.

Our Founders' Intent

But, did our founders really intend state/church separation? While the Constitution is the most important evidence that they did, there are other examples.

On February 21, 1811, President James Madison, arguably the primary architect of the Constitution, vetoed a bill to establish a church in Washington. "Because the bill exceeds the rightful authority to which governments are limited by the essential distinction between civil and religious functions," Madison clearly states that government powers are limited to civil functions.

In his "Essays on Monopolies", Madison states the lack of Constitutional authority for government chaplains and prayers. "Is the appointment of Chaplains to the two Houses of Congress consistent with the Constitution, and with the pure principle of religious freedom? In strictness the answer on both points must be in the negative. The Constitution of the United States forbids everything like an establishment of a national religion. The law appointing Chaplains establishes a religious worship for the national representatives, to be performed by Ministers of religion, elected by a majority of them, and these are to be paid out of the national taxes. Does this not involve the principle of a national establishment?"

There is also President Thomas Jefferson's rejection of the Danbury Baptists' request for a national day of fasting and prayer because it violated the "wall of separation" between "church and state". While some say there is no "wall of separation" in the Constitution, a Constitution which fails to mention deity or religion, and which gives government no powers to do religious things, in fact separates religion from government as effectively as can be imagined.

The First Amendment

The First Amendment begins with "Congress shall make no law." You can't get new governmental powers (see *Heritage, back page*)