

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER EVENTS

MIAMI: Sunday, June 18, 2:00 - 4:00 pm. at the Biscayne Cafeteria, 147 Miracle Mile, Coral Gables (across from Barnes&Noble) FMI Patrick Bens, 305/940-0442 or 954/929-0441 e-mail atheist1@bellsouth.net
Singles Happy Hour -- each **Wednesday** from 4-5pm at the Caddy Shack pub & Grill, 315 S. 62nd Ave. Hollywood (located between 441 and Turnpike exit 49) For directions, call Rich, Mary, or Donna at the restaurant 954/985-5655

PALM BEACH: Meetings are held the **third Sunday** of each month at 2:00pm at the Piccadilly Cafeteria on Military Trail near the N.E. corner with Summit Blvd. just behind McDonalds. It's between Forest Hill Blvd. and Southern Blvd. We meet for lunch in the room behind the folding doors where the trays are picked up. Members are notified by postcard. For driving directions or more information, call Charles Schisler 561/627-6340 or 561/624-9359

OUR MONTHLY AD in the *Miami New Times* drew the attention of Mr. Chaim Casper, secretary of the Bal Harbor Chapter of the Rotary Club International. He called because he and his group were eager to learn "what our beliefs are" and said he wished to book our group for a speaking engagement at one of their Thursday breakfast meetings.

Christos wins hearts easily

--Patrick Bens, Chapter Director *Dade&Broward*
 Chapter of the Rotary Club International. He called because he and his group were eager to learn "what our beliefs are" and said he wished to book our group for a speaking engagement at one of their Thursday breakfast meetings.
 Over many weeks, arrangements were made by phone or e-mail and schedules were drawn up and altered. Finally we settled on a date 2/17/2000.

February provided us with a gorgeous cool Gold Coast morning, when my wife Celina and I met Christos Traneakos, founder of Atheists of Florida on the gravel parking lot outside the Bal Harbor Rotary Clubhouse, a sturdy, rustic one story building, encircled by giant luxury condo towers, freshly painted tennis courts and the ocean roar waking a sleepy sun. Christos and we have been friends ever since our daughters were two and three and

TAMPA: Saturday, June 24 (last Saturday of each month), noon--1:30 p.m., meeting room A Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Clearwater. It's not just the Christian missionaries who "minister" (recruit) to the unannointed. We have in our free-thought ranks selfless individuals spreading the good word of rationality.

You want to hear a real died-in-the-wool non-theistic missionary? Come hear The Rev. -Father-Deacon-Padre-Elder-Brother-Friar-Canon. * **Wayne Williams** share his experiences in "trying to tell the Togos the truth." Williams and his wife have returned from Africa to tell the story of their work among the natives.

*Select any or all of the above

Monthly Dinner---**Tuesday, June 27th, Red Lobster** Courtney Campbell Causeway, Tampa. From 6:00 to 7:00, cocktails and complimentary appetizers in the Captain's room, dinner at 7:00. You may select half orders from the menu. FMI on dinners, Ed Golly---813/839-7567 or Jerry Moore---727-526-4223

accompanied us to our first atheist meeting which he directed. It felt good to see him.

While we were treated to a hearty breakfast, members of the Rotary Club small-talked. Subjects ranged from a hunting weekend on an Indian reservation in the Everglades to how to kosher-kill a cow.

When the tables were cleared, Christos took the floor and delivered the best presentation on atheism one can make to an unknowing audience.

Christos has a knack for giving straight talk about the dangers of dependency on creationism and blind faith. I wish he'd publish his speech here for all of us to study. It will be of great benefit to all, present and future presidents and directors and participants in the yearly Miami Bookfair International as well as to the past and aspiring panel members on radio and TV talk shows. So Christos, when you read this, please consider composing some plain, direct guidelines on how best to explain to John Q. Public that a belief-system is something we atheists can live without.

Thanks, Christos, for coming all the way to Dade County, our chapter loves ya!



Atheists of Florida



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 May 2000

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church
 Sponsor of the MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP, Incorporated
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Atheist Alliance convention report

—Marie Hena Castle, President
 SACRAMENTO—DESPISE A COMPETING American Atheists convention in San Francisco, and despite phoned threats suggesting violence from religious zealots that required hiring armed guards, the 6th Annual Atheist Alliance Convention Easter weekend in Sacramento was a great success. Full coverage will be published in the July-September *Secular Nation*.

On page 3 of this newsletter is a letter sent to the local Sacramento paper regarding the threats made against the convention.

The entire program was excellent. Nearly every presentation gave a plan of action for reaching the public with the atheist message. How to affect school board decision-making, how to reach high school students, how to get Christians to open their minds to facts, how to get information on the history of free-thought to teachers who are being mandated to teach about religion in public schools, how to deal with the creationist threat, how to get the atheist message published in local papers.

A popular feature was the "Open Mic" session. Attendees lined up to say whatever was on their minds: pleas to support physician aid in dying, the Catholic hospital merger threat, the joy of finding atheism, praise for local Toastmasters Clubs, recommendations for books. This event is sure to become standard.

Registration was at 150, plus walk-ins, and an additional 175 people came just to hear atheist Dan Barker and Christian John Morehead debate the "Resurrection".

The Saturday evening debate showed Barker at his best. He presented solid historical, literary and biblical evidence that the resurrection of Jesus is a myth. His opponent, John Morehead, an Evangelical Christian, never responded to Barker's points but kept arguing the assumption that the bible as a history book records actual facts. In his view, if the bible says there were 500 witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, that makes it an historical fact.

Atheists of Florida was presented with the Visible Atheist Award. For reaching out to the public year after year through the annual Miami Book Fair International to counter religious propaganda with the truth about religious history and the human values of atheism. Presented with Gratitude by Atheist Alliance Inc. 6th Annual National Convention / April 22, 2000, Sacramento, California. Atheists of Florida will again appear at the Miami Book Fair this year in November.

Coalition ad project approved

The convention is always the site of the annual board meeting of Atheist Alliance. One of the items of business was to vote on participating in the developing coalition of national organizations. At an exploratory meeting held in Minneapolis last February, the coalition representatives from Atheist Alliance, American Humanist Assn., and Council for Secular Humanism agreed on a project subject to the respective boards' approval. The project is to place media ads with a message about who and what we are and noting the ad is a cooperative effort with the other two national organizations. The purpose is to make the community of reason visible to the general public and create a positive image of atheism.

The Alliance board voted to recommend to our member societies (currently 24 in the US) that they can run ads locally to increase the benefit to them rather than do a national ad. The Alliance will subsidize the ads at the rate of 10% of the cost of one ad, up to \$200.

Paris in 2002

The Alliance has formed a liaison with La Libre Pensée, the FreeThought Federation of France, that nation's oldest and largest atheist organization, with 8,000 members. They are planning an international conference in Paris in 2002 to commemorate the anniversary of Thomas Jefferson's statement saying the First Amendment creates a "wall of separation" between church and state. The Alliance intends to participate fully and will be organizing a tour for that, as we did for the World Atheist Congress in India in 1996.

Meanwhile, La Libre Pensée has another conference going on in July in Avignon, France and asked the Alliance to send greetings, in person if possible. The Alliance board voted to subsidize August Berkshire (who speaks French) in the amount of \$500 to go there in person and give greetings and and check things out for the 2002 tour. Watch *Secular Nation* magazine for details.

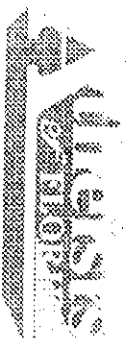
The Atlanta FreeThought Society is considering hosting the 2001 convention. They will discuss it at their upcoming board meeting.

Next Month—A full synopsis of the Atheists of Florida board meeting held May 21st in Tampa.



"It is best to read the weather forecast before we pray for rain."

— Mark Twain



www.atheistalliance.org/florida

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If plants and animals evolved at the same time, why are they different?

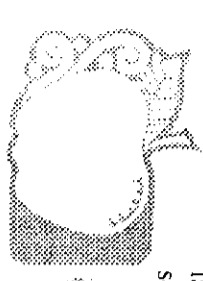
THIS IS A BASIC QUESTION which is often asked by students. The answer is not simple, and will take some understanding of what life is in order to explain. The first thing to understand is that

The Solution is Evolution

No. 2—Cells —Jim Strayer

plants and animals are more alike than they are different.

Of course an apple tree is different from a dog, but the cells that make up an apple tree and the cells that make up a dog are very much alike. By comparing the cells in a plant and the cells in an animal, the similarities are easily seen.



An adult plant or animal has organs that carry on different functions. Cells have within them very small structures that also carry on different functions. These structures are called organelles. It is at the cellular level where most evolution takes place. Cells need nourishment to carry out functions and they need to get rid of the waste that is produced from this process. It is the organelles in a cell, whether it be a plant cell or animal cell that accomplishes these tasks. Organelles are alive, but cannot live outside of the cell, just like a heart is alive, but cannot live out side of a body. The organelles that are found in plant cells are almost exactly like those found in animal cells.

Jim Strayer is a retired biology teacher. This series will appear on this page in the next six newsletters. He lives with his wife, Bobbe, in Ormond-By-The-Sea.

Atheists of Florida would like to pay special thanks to Ceil Glantz for her most generous \$1,000 contribution to the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund during our fund-raising raffle early this year.

The typical plant or animal cell has a Plasma membrane as the outer most covering. It has a Mitochondria which produces energy. It has a Golgi Body which forms and packages proteins. These proteins are then secreted from the cell. These organelles and others are controlled by the DNA found in the nucleus of cells.

So plant cells and animal cells are very much alike. To answer the original question, we need to examine what makes them different.

Plant cells are much superior to animal cells because of a very important organelle: the chloroplast. This amazing structure enables the cell to carry on photosynthesis. This is a complicated chemical process, but it can be summed up as producing sugar and oxygen from carbon dioxide and water. Plant cells need the sugar as a source of energy and to manufacture secretions. The oxygen is required for this process.

Cells that have chloroplasts can take carbon dioxide from the air and by using the energy of sunlight they can combine it with water to produce the two ingredients that support life.

With rare exceptions, all of the energy that animals get from eating comes from the sun. It has been stored in sugar by plants. Of course this sugar is often converted to starch or fat, but it is still basically sugar. It also means that the basic fuels that humans use, oil, coal, and natural gas, is also basically sugar because these fuels came from decomposing plant materials. Even when animals eat other animals, the energy is still proteins that were made from sugar.

To put it another way, when you had an egg, toast, and orange juice this morning for breakfast in order to get materials for growth and energy, you were getting it from sugar.

Animals are just like plants in that they must combine sugar with oxygen to release the stored light energy. This oxygen is all produced by plants. Almost all of the free oxygen in our atmosphere is produced by plants.

Next month we will have the last part of the answer to this question.

Leave past where it belongs

A letter to the editor recently appeared in the Daytona News-Journal defending capital punishment. The author cited Leviticus 24:17, "If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death." Strayer replied with this and it was printed just four days later.



To the Editors
The News-Journal
Regarding admission an open shut case for capital punishment

I find it appalling that anyone would refer to Leviticus in the Bible in support of capital punishment. Leviticus 24:16 calls for death for anyone who commits blasphemy. In 29:10 it calls for death for any adulterer and adulteress and in 20:15 it calls for death to homosexuals.

"How do we keep Jesus out of jail?"
We should be able to make decisions on matters of capital punishment based on our knowledge and ethics of the year 2000 and not on a vindictive ancient creed that no longer applies.

Ormond-By-The-Sea

The following letter was submitted in response to an article which appeared recently in the Sunday L.A. Times magazine section entitled, "Taking Jesus To Jail"

April 18, 2000
L.A. Times Magazine
Re: Taking Jesus To Jail

A survey was conducted in 1990 by the City University of New York to determine which religious groups are best represented in prison populations. A ratio was calculated to compare the percentage of the US general population represented by each religion, to the percentage of the prison population belonging to each religion. To simplify, the lower the ratio, the more "immoral" the group, the higher the ratio, the more "moral" the group.

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All Christian denominations combined constituted approximately 86.5% of the US population. Christians in prison made up 79.1%. This produced a ratio of 1.1. On the flip side, when Atheists and Agnostics were combined, they amounted to about 8.3%, of the general population. However, there were only 0.2% Atheists and Agnostics in prison. This produced a ratio of 41.5%.

Perhaps the question should be: "How do we keep Jesus out of jail?"
—Charlotte Poe
Sonoma, CA
PosSpeers@aol.com

Caton still fear-mongering

Dear Editor
For once I'm in agreement with at least part of what David Caton has to say. However, our goals are clearly different. Caton hopes to use, or provoke, fear of official recognition of gay relationships in order to continue the religious discrimination that shaped our country's history, and continues today.

Why shouldn't heterosexual domestic partners, children living with parents, or sibling roommates be given equal rights? Marriage is a religious institution, and never should have been the subject of favorable treatment by our government, as it violates the principle of state/church separation. Any adult, legally capable of a contractual relationship, who chooses to form a partnership with another, should receive the same recognition as someone who chooses to have their partnership recognized by a religious institution.

Take them all to task

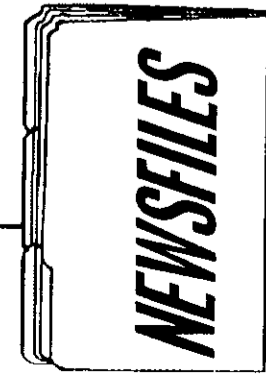
Published recently in the St. Petersburg Times Editor
For the life of me, I cannot understand the ongoing vendetta with the Scientologists. Admittedly, their lifestyle is, to say the least, odd and bizarre, but offhand I can think of a dozen religious organizations and entities that are even more bizarre than Scientology.

One of the largest of these puts on a ceremony that only Hollywood can equal or surpass, where strange men in red dresses swing smoking lamps, place uncooked pieces of bread on worshippers' tongues (oblivious to the fact that this is the flu season and the mouth is a breeding ground for bacteria!) and once a year, daub ashes on their worshippers' foreheads. Yet no one picks on them. This is supposed to be normal! By comparison, Scientologists in their smart summer uniforms and military haircuts look like knights in shining armor, and much, much sner. If we have to live with wacky religions, why differentiate? Why single out Scientology for attack? Why not take them all to task?

Largo

Jax whacks constitution

Americans United for Separation of Church and State condemned a federal appeals court ruling that allows prayer at high school graduation ceremonies as long as students make the decision in its Adler vs Duval County School Board ruling released in March, the U.S. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a 1993 Florida school district policy that permits students to elect a classmate to deliver a two-minute "message" during commencement ceremonies.



We cannot accept this new form of slavery

Since the policy's implementation, prayers and invocations have dominated the student messages. One Duval County school even elected a student "chaplain" to deliver a prayer at graduation.

"Public school events must remain religiously neutral to protect the rights of everyone," said Barry Lynn, executive director of AU. "Students should not be coerced to pray at a public school event even if a majority of students votes to."

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Secular Nation is published quarterly by the Atheist Alliance, an international, democratic, nonprofit, educational organization that connects autonomous atheist member societies. The Atheist Alliance is the only national organization for the community of reason that is coalition-oriented, managed and run solely by its affiliates, and focused on building strong, mutually supportive communities of reason in every state.

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Lynn charged that the Duval County school board set up the policy as part of a deliberate ruse to evade court rulings banning school-sponsored prayer at graduation.

"For years, school prayer advocates have tried to circumvent the law by asking students to do what school officials cannot," Lynn added. "But the fact remains that a graduation ceremony is an official public school event that is supposed to remain neutral and respect the diversity of the community. Turning the podium over to a student doesn't change that."

"If students want to pray at graduation, that's up to them. This isn't about stopping anyone from praying. It's about making sure that everyone feels welcome at public events," Lynn said.

"This ruling allows the state to promote the prayer of the majority at an official public school event, while telling the minority, 'too bad,'" Lynn said. "At its core, that amounts to state-sponsored tyranny of the majority. If that isn't in conflict with the First Amendment, I don't know what is."

•••••

Love and "Pairage"

VERMONT—On Dec. 20, '99, the State Supreme Court ruled that gay and lesbian couples are entitled to the same protections and benefits given to heterosexual married couples. The decision stems from a lawsuit filed by three gay couples who filed for marriage licenses but were denied them by their town clerks. A lower court ruled against the couples. Then the state Supreme Court reversed that decision, but left it up to the state legislature to decide between granting marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples or setting up a broad system of domestic partnerships that would grant rights concerning such benefits as inheritance, joint filing of taxes and hospital visitation.

The Vermont Senate passed a civil union bill that would grant benefits without conferring the title of "marriage" upon such unions. Once differences between the Vermont House and Senate bills are resolved, the compromise bill will go to the governor who says he will sign it into law. Needless to say, the Right has not taken the initial decision or the pending bill lightly. The air waves have been filled with their outrage.

Opponents of the civil union bill organized an event where radio talk-show host and presidential candidate Alan Keyes drew parallels between homosexuality and rape, pedophilia and adultery. He claimed that lesbians and gay men represent "a new effort to encourage us all to become individuals so enslaved by passions that we have redefined human nature. We cannot accept this new form of slavery."

"Another former presidential candidate, Gary Bauer called the decision "an unmitigated disaster" and claimed that it was "worse than terrorism."

The Family Research Council (FRC) has been one of the most vocal opponents. Robert Knight, FRC's Cultural Studies Director, has encouraged members of the Vermont Legislature to ignore the Supreme Court, citing pro-family attorney Hal Goldman's testimony that the ruling was "illegal and abusive." Meanwhile, FRC's Janet Parshall compared the Vermont Supreme Court Justices to "bad magicians trying to make the dignity of marriage disappear."

Dear Dr. Laura,

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's law. I have learned a great deal from you, and I try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind him that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination. End of debate.



...from the Web

A letter to Dr. Laura

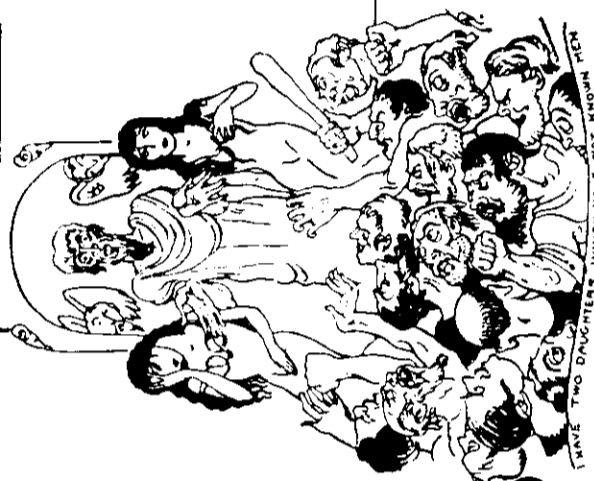
—anonymous

I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some of the specific laws and how to best follow them:

a. When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord (Lev. 1:9). The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odor is not pleasing to them. How should I deal with this?

b. I would like to sell my daughter into slavery as it suggests in Exodus

The following is a letter I sent to the Sacramento Bee concerning the threats at the AAI Convention. The editors did cut the letter, but kept the sense intact. If you are curious, the first paragraph was made less wordy; the third paragraph was deleted; the last two paragraphs were deleted. The edited letter was published May 3, 2000.



21:7. In this day and age, what would be a fair price for her?

c. I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness (Lev. 15:19-24). The problem is, how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.

d. Lev. 25:44 states that I may buy slaves from nations that are around us. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify?

e. I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself?

f. A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an Abomination (Lev. 10:10), it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I disagree. Can you settle this?

g. Lev. 20:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle room here?

I know you have studied these things extensively, so I am confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

havior. The troublemakers did not have the courage to show their faces. Yet, they did cause some consternation to all attendees who were not sure if the threats would become reality.

It is difficult to believe that there are still people in this community who feel so threatened by ideas different from their own that they cannot abide those who differ. These people are definitely not the Americans of the stripe of our great thinkers of the past. Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that "if there is any principle (that is more important) than any other, it is the principle of free thought—not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought we hate." Atheists do not attempt to suppress religions; we agree with Patrick Henry who said, "all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience."

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution forbids the "establishment of religion..." or the abridgment of free speech... Justice Robert H. Jackson said, "The day that this country ceases to be free for irreligion, it will cease to be free for religion."

Unfortunately, we all know that those who cannot fathom thoughts different from their own burn churches and synagogues, disparage those of other races, hate those of different sexual orientation, and brutally suppress any expression of ideas different from theirs. With "Americans" like those, we could soon be back to persecutions, pogroms, and witch burnings.

—Hank Kocof, Co-Chair,
Atheist Alliance International Convention



IN THE Wild West of the gold digging 1860s, Sam Clemens was challenged to a duel by an unforgiving "sure shot". Slick as an owl, young Sam slithered his way out of the raw deal by fleeing to San Francisco. In the City by the Bay he met a new challenge starting from scratch as a journalist. His adventurous

Some of it is true

MARK TWAIN: *An autobiography*.

—Patrick Bens

youth, his cross-crossing the American frontier and his knack for observation and criticism helped him beat that challenge easily. He became known by his pen name, Mark Twain.

For the rest of his lifelong successful literary career he was often challenged into revealing his true opinion about religion and politics. But slick and smart as ever, he slithered loose with clever grace out of the noose of the questioner's traps. Only shortly before his death did he bare the deepest secret of his atheism, which I call his hypocritical oath.

The sarcastic wit ("Vit is the sudden marriage of widens which before their union were not perceived to have any relation") for which Mark Twain is world famous in his many maxims (like, "Faith is believing what you know ain't so") takes a backseat in his autobiography when he tells tales of the people who are nearest and dearest to his soft heart: his wife, his daughters, his mother, his brother. And he also spends a kind word on my favorite author, Charles Dickens.

Chapter 35 starts with two pages describing the evening Twain spent at a lecture by Dickens. At that event Twain met the girl he would marry.

Dickens invented the lecture circuit—first in England and then in New England and was the most successful in attendance and revenue. Twain, too loved and perfected the art of lecturing from his own manuscripts and in so doing shows great esteem for the inimitable.

I didn't mind the freedom with which Twain allows himself to sweeten the truth: "Some of it is true," he warns: "Something about my conduct and becoming

Patrick Bens is a native of Belgium and director of the Miami-Dade chapter. An R.E. investor and businessman, he lives in North Dade with his wife, Celina and two daughters. He also edits NEWSNOTES, the monthly bulletin of the Miami-Dade chapter.

graphical guesses his contemporaries wrote." Like Dickens in *David Copperfield*, much of what Mark Twain confides to his *Roaming H or Life on the Mississippi* are autobiographical notes coated thick with fictitious icing. This makes for a great novel!

That raises the question: Why are Dickens and Twain the best novelists of all time? Could it be because they both learned their craft as reporters? Could it be because they worked best under rough conditions, like writing in moving stage coaches, hobbling and bobbling towards demanding deadlines? Could it be because, in extended comparison, their father was a dreamer and their mother authoritarian? Is it because they experienced a substantial interval of poverty during their youth? Or maybe because they became editors while being reporters? Did their quest for productivity, precision and accuracy set them aside as young go-getters in a world of ancient regime go against which their workaholicism rebelled?

Facts galore prove that Mark Twain and Charles Dickens shared a long list of similar qualities: skills and expertise as well as diplomacy, adventure and fame. While young and relatively poor, they were highly respected by their less fortunate peers. This embryonic but meaningful popularity must have planted in their strong will a plan for lasting recognition and in their heart a commitment to improve life around them.

Dickens accomplished that plan early on in his career by inventing the serialization of his novels, which allowed everybody charitable access to literature. Syndication was the beneficent that Mark Twain engineered with detrimental pursuit for his fellow men. He granted reporters the opportunity to spread their stories and editorials nationwide, first in smaller country newspapers and eventually in the big cities.

Comparing Twain and Dickens is not as trivial as comparing JFK and Lincoln. Yet one cannot ignore the curious facts that each was the best young reporter of his time and that each titled his first book "Sketches". These two seemingly insignificant tidbits make you wonder, though, if a young reporter of today or of future generations meets these and other points of comparison between these two literary giants, he may well be on his way to becoming the next Charles Dickens or Mark Twain.

In the latter part of the book, Twain takes us through the many business failures he endured and describes with biting phrases the many scoundrels who, as his partners, took advantage of his naive goodness. His wife's determination to enter Twain on the lecture circuit saved him from bankruptcy. His literary career was never in danger. Regardless of its success however, the critics—people who fail in what the one criticized succeeds in—always diverted attention away from his writing genius and made long critiques about his white clothing and his white hairtop.

As An autobiography, progresses towards its end, ahead of the many pseudo-bio-

On March 8, 2000, Paul E. Patton, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, vetoed this law. In so doing, he said, "House Bill 70... violates both the spirit and meaning of the Kentucky Civil Rights Act by permitting discrimination on the basis of religion, the free exercise and non-establishment of which were among the fundamental principles in the founding of our state and country." We thanked Governor Patton, and praised him as a statesman. He had gotten it

right. We praised our governor, and we relaxed to draw a fresh breath of our once again rescued air of freedom. The entire disgusting matter, and the victory for freedom, was detailed on the Internet at <http://www.edwinakagin.com/documents/bullshitburg/>

had elected, so that it could become law despite the veto. The vote to override was 82-16 in the House. The vote was 26-8 in the Senate. HB 70 (The Camp Quest Law) is now the law in Kentucky. The law goes into effect on July 15, 2000. We will do something about it before then.

AS KENTUCKY WITHDREW May 19 in the *American Statesman* (Austin) reported that the man accused of kidnapping former atheist leader Madalyn O'Hair and two relatives told his ex-wife the O'Hair family was killed, then threatened to kill her because she knew too much. The ex-wife gave testimony to this effect the previous day in an Austin court.

After an eight-hour interview that day, and several hours the next, Karr drew investigators a map detailing where he believed the bodies were buried. FBI Special Agent Sam Houston testified.

O'Hair mystery unfolds in court

"He wanted to kill me because of what I knew," she said.

Gary Karr, 52, is accused of kidnapping and extorting more than \$500,000 in gold coins from O'Hair, her son Jon Garth Murray and granddaughter Robin Murray-O'Hair. The family disappeared from their Austin home one morning in August 1995. A conviction could land Karr in prison for life.

Testimony on May 18 built on the prosecutors' theory that the O'Hair family was held hostage at the Warren Inn in San Antonio, killed, dismembered in a North Austin storage unit and buried in 55-gallon drums. Investigators say Waters masterminded the plan, recruiting Karr and Clearwater, Florida resident Danny Fry to help carry it out.

Investigators now believe Waters killed the family members. Fry was found murdered in October 1995.

When Charlene Karr saw her ex-husband that month, he had at least \$15,000 in Armani suits, dress shoes, silk ties and other clothing, she said. He continued to spend lavishly—buying a motorcycle, computer and furniture—with money, he said, he won in a card game.

"There was too much money, too much property to be winning in a card game like that," Charlene Karr said.

In a recorded telephone conversation played in court, Gary Karr told his ex-wife that he believed Waters had killed the O'Hairs. "I highly believe he did it," Gary Karr said. "I didn't see him do it, so I don't know what he did."

Karr never saw the O'Hairs killed or buried, he told his ex-wife in the phone call. But, he told her, Waters did force him to go to a Hill Country ranch where Waters told him the bodies were buried.

"I stayed in the vehicle; he examined the area," Karr said. "He came back, and we left (Waters) was fearful that the rain or flooding may have uncovered something."

Four years later, in March 1999, federal investigators showed up at Gary Karr's Michigan apartment. They asked him about the O'Hairs, and he started talking.

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Future testimony is expected from three San Antonio burglars who stole \$500,000 in gold coins from the alleged kidnappers, as well as evidence about blood found in the storage unit.

Those who know the value of the freedoms we have and who know how easily those freedoms can be lost. It is my unhappy duty to inform you that today, Friday, April 14, 2000, in Frankfort, Kentucky, the people of

HB 70 is now law in Kentucky

—Edwin Kagin

**HB 70
was
designed
to put the
church
above the
law.**

Kentucky lost an important freedom that had been won for them at the high cost of the blood of our forefathers.

It was not taken from us by force. The Kentucky Legislature gave it away.

You may know a little bit about how it happened. A group of Baptists in Northern Kentucky got a member of the legislature to propose a change in the law to the House of Representatives. This bill was called HB 70.

Kentucky has a Civil Rights law, which, like federal law, protects citizens from being discriminated against because of things like their race, their sex, their national origins, or their religious beliefs. If any person, or organization, offers to rent his, hers, or its property to members of the public, and then refuses to rent that property, for no reason other than a dislike for the religious beliefs of the prospective renter or renters, then that person or organization has violated the law. The law doesn't force any person, or any entity, to offer property for rent at all. But if they do, they cannot refuse to rent, i.e., to discriminate, on the basis of religious beliefs.

HB 70 sought to change this "Golden Rule" made law, so that churches would not have to rent to any person or organization that did not share the tenets of their religious beliefs. The stated impetus for this request to be put above the law was that, in 1996, these Baptists had been "forced," by the law they want to avoid, to rent their camp ground to the Free Inquiry Group (FIG), a secular humanist organization that wanted to use the camp ground to conduct "Camp Quest," the nation's first residential summer camp for the children of secular humanists. And they rented the camp to Camp Quest

again in 1997. In the year 2000, they beseeched to change the law that thus compelled them, recalling the anxiety, the horror, and the shame of having to rent property dedicated to a God of Love to the little boys and girls, ages 8 to 13, whom they felt did not share the tenets of their religious beliefs.

In making their self-righteous plea to the legislature to change Kentucky law to give acquiescence to bigotry forbidden by law, and condemned by Jesus, they stated that the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights approved of their request. In a letter by Beverly L. Watts, Executive Director of this commission, published in *The Kentucky Post*, on April 12, 2000, this assurance was proved to be a lie. Ms. Watts said, "Under the current public accommodation law, religious expression is protected, but if House Bill 70 passed, religious organizations would be able to discriminate in the commercial sector. They would be able to discriminate based on religion... Any organization operating as a business must obey existing laws, including civil rights laws... Equal access to the commercial sector for all people is imperative if we are to call ourselves a free country... Any attempt to change the current law is a step backwards."

The Baptists wanted special rights to discriminate against their fellow humans on the basis of religion. That's not what they said, of course, for they may have been familiar with "The Sermon on the Mount" and the parable of the Good Samaritan, that harshly condemned those thus motivated. So they argued rather that HB 70 would merely restore their "freedom" of "religious expression." That phrase, if allowed to be defined by those who want to employ it as a license to commit crimes or to otherwise avoid the law, can mean anything one wants it to mean. It can encompass any witch-hunt, any inquisition, any heresy trial, and justify any outrage that those wanting "freedom of religious expression" want to engage in. That's all the Nazis were doing, after all—just killing Jews as a matter of right, as a legal "expression" of their "religious freedom."

HB 70 was designed to put the church above the law. The church wanted to be free from the restraints of the state that apply, in their view, to everyone but them. As scary as this is, it has happened before. Our Bill of Rights stopped that sort of thing. Until now.

Section 59 of the Constitution of Kentucky prohibits "special legislation," and Section 5 guarantees, as one of our most basic freedoms, that "...the civil rights of no person shall be taken away, or in anywise diminished, on account of his disbelief of any religious tenet, dogma or teaching."

Once again, we learn too late that when we elect religious fanatics to public office, we get religious fanatics in public office.

HB 70 was passed overwhelmingly by the Kentucky House of Representatives. It was then passed overwhelmingly by the Kentucky Senate.

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With his wife, Helen, a retired anesthesiologist, Edwin Kagin founded and runs Camp Quest. Kagin is a retired attorney. They live in Northern Kentucky.
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Twain recalls his remaining memorable incidents in a more mellow mood. He gets down-right sorrowful. The honest relationship he had with his wife and daughters and the artificial contacts he kept with snobby admirers open him up to a self-criticism that is central to his reflections on religion.

Elaborating on "duty for duties' sake" (chapter 75) he explains—four months before his death—that he would *never publish his opinions* uttered to his most intimate relatives. He advises to any public personality to adhere to the hypocritical oath of giving opinions that are not his own "on matters of religion, politics and men," lest he wants to be "hanged."

"I was in the common habit, in private conversation with friends, of revealing every private opinion I possessed relating to religion,

politics, and men, but that I should never dream of printing one of them, because they are individually and collectively at war with almost everybody's public opinion while at the same time they are in happy agreement with almost everybody's private opinion."

An intelligent person, states Twain, should never be daring enough to publicly deny his beliefs and print the denial. This hypocritical oath is how he protected his atheism and is an understanding Mark Twain shares with Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde and many many other celebrities, before, during and after his autobiography was published.

FRED WHITEHEAD, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Family Medicine at KU Medical School is being dismissed from the faculty after 21 years of Service, effective June 30. According to Dr. Deborah Powell, Executive Dean of the School, his "research does not fit the mission of the Medical School."

ence at this center on the Evolution Controversy. I was harassed by two administrators. My subsequent proposal that I work in the field of science education in Kansas has been rejected by the University. There is a clear pattern of favoritism for religious expression while a secular humanist like me is dismissed entirely."

University of Kansas professor files formal EEOC complaint on grounds of religious discrimination

On his complaint now before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of the Federal Government, Whitehead listed his religion as "Freethinker."

His religious belief not being accommodated is "academic freedom."

Whitehead thus continues the American intellectual tradition of Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll.

More than 150 letters of support have arrived at Kansas University, from people in 34 States and 11 other nations. "This," says Whitehead, "is surely the most extensive peer review in the entire history of the University."

Whitehead was a speaker at the Third Annual Atheist Alliance convention held in Orlando in 1997. His presentation was titled *Freethought in America*.

For more information, contact Dr. Whitehead by telephone (weekdays) at (913) 588-1953, e-mail, fwhiteh@kumc.edu or snail mail P.O. Box 5224, Kansas City, KS 66119.



Whitehead

Whitehead's research and teaching has concentrated on the medical humanities, but also includes extensive publication and lecturing on topics of Freethought History. He publishes a scholarly newsletter with that title, which has a world-wide circulation, and in 1992 co-edited a ground-breaking anthology, *Freethought on the American Frontier* (Prometheus Books).

"The Medical Center," says Whitehead, "has many religion-based events, such as an annual Religion and Medicine symposium. Yet last November, when I sponsored a national confer-

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