

Survey finds National Academy of Science is godless to the core

The National Academy of Science (USA) produced a guide-book for public school teachers, *Teaching about Evolution and the Nature of Science* in 2004. The book attempts to assure readers that neither the NAS nor evolution are anti-Christian.

But a survey published in the leading science journal *Nature* conclusively showed that the National Academy of Science is non-religious to the core.

A survey of 517 NAS members in biological and physical

sciences resulted in just over half responding. Seventy-two and two-tenths percent were overtly atheistic, 20.8% agnostic, and only 7.0% believed in a personal god. Belief in a god and immortality was lowest among biologists. It is likely that those who didn't respond were unbelievers as well, so the study probably underestimates the level of lack of god-belief in the NAS. The unbelief is far higher than the percentage among scientists in general, or in the whole population.

CLASSIFIEDS—Our newest feature!

We need your input and help! Send your ad information to the editor—Michael Harvey—at mharvey7@tampabay.rr.com; or Ed Golly at AthAFL@aol.com.

Godless in America: conversations with an atheist by George A. Ricker is now available at most book retailers and online book sellers. For more information about the book and its author, go to www.godlessinamerica.com.

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meetup

St. Pete-Atheists // Free-Thought Group

IN REASON WE TRUST

GARY THOMPSON, Organizer
Monthly Meetup Day: Third Tuesday @ 7:00 PM
Contact: gary8@tampabay.rr.com
<http://atheists-meetup.com/209>

Yes, that's right, get together with other atheists / freethinkers at the St. Pete Atheist / Free-thought every third Tuesday of each month for good food, good drink, engaging dialog, and lotto tickets!

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YOUR ad could have gone here! Remember that we need you help to make this new feature a useful addition to our newsletter. Let your fellow atheists and free-thinkers know about your special talents and let's support each other!

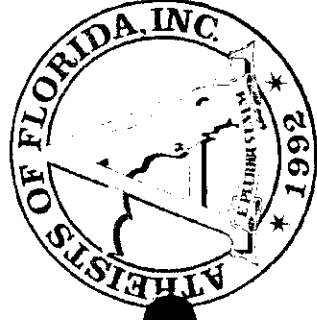
Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS

TAMPA BAY: Pinellas Park Public Library—Second Sunday of each odd-numbered month (Jan., Mar., etc.), 1:30—4:30, 78th Ave North & 52nd Street.
Tampa—Second Sunday of each even-numbered month, 1:30-4:30, Jan Platt Regional Library, 3910 S. Manhattan Ave.
Social dinners follow all meetings at nearby cafeterias.
FMI: Ed Golly, 813/835-1500, AthAFL@aol.com.

Atheists of Florida

Dedicated to the absolute separation of State and church

A Founding Member Society of the Atheist Alliance International
(The Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist Societies)



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So just what is an atheist?

TAMPA—THIS IS A LEGITIMATE QUESTION SOMETIMES POSED by newcomers to the Tampa Bay Chapter meetings. Many have seen the *Atheist Forum* Public Access TV show and are drawn to the meetings hoping to learn more about why atheists draw their philosophical conclusions only to be disappointed to find themselves attending a “business meeting.”

Although we always have numerous pamphlets, tracts and CDs about atheism and religious criticism available, we are reluctant to engage in discussion about atheism because the members in attendance would find it redundant and uninformative since all are already atheists.

A couple of years ago one of the regular hosts of the *Atheist Forum* was recognized in a restaurant by a Hillsborough County social sciences high school teacher. He was inviting various clergy to address his classes, and asked if we could provide an atheist for one of the classes. Joe Reinhardt and Michael Harvey answered the call. Their presentation was so enlightening that some students actually returned to successive classes to hear them a second time. Understandably, most students had neither heard any form of objective examination of religion in their entire lives nor ever had their beliefs challenged.

We decided to make the same presentation to the general public at our April 2007 chapter meeting. Scheduled for Sunday, April 8 at the Jan Platt Public Library in Tampa, we will promote this public meeting on the *Atheist Forum*, on our Web site, and in the local press. Believers welcome.

Board Meeting

Our annual Board of Directors meeting will be held in Tampa this month (see below). One of the major issues we will be resolving is how to utilize the funds derived from the Norma Cossey estate. As of this publication, we have received approximately half the distribution and expect the balance any time now.

We also recognize that we have spread ourselves too thin over the past few years. But with more members now beginning to assume positions of responsibility, we hope to develop a

more efficient organization.

Michael Harvey has stepped up to the position of newsletter editor. We are now displaying all newsletters on our Web site as they are published, and are coordinating our database to begin mailing printed copies of all issues to any members who are unable to receive their issues on-line. The most important focus is to bring the publishing schedule up to a regular basis, preferably monthly. Any member who is available to make a serious commitment to assisting with production of our publication should contact Harvey at MHarvey7@tampabay.rr.com.

Timely collection of membership dues is another issue that has given us difficulty recently. This has not posed a serious financial hardship for us since most of our activities cost us little or nothing to engage in. Since we dropped our bulk mail permit and began publishing the newsletter electronically, we have reduced the printing and mailing costs significantly. Production of the *Atheist Forum* requires only the time of the crew and talent, as does production of the *Old Time Atheist Hour*, our Web cast. We always recover the cost of our outreach stand at events such as the St. Petersburg Times Festival of Reading with brisk sales of merchandise.

Still, we realize we need to keep our membership base up to date. We have come to realize that given the amount of time required to manage the database, compensation is in order for the time our members contribute to undertake the task. We developed the idea of providing a financial incentive for whom-ever will keep our database up to date, including membership renewals and attracting those who contact us for information into new memberships.

A of F Secretary Jim Young has assumed this responsibility initially and is updating all membership status. He is directly contacting those whose membership has expired asking them to renew. With the financial means at hand to compensate an Executive Director for Atheists of Florida, the Board will address this issue at the upcoming meeting.

Results of the meeting will be reported in our next newsletter. We anticipate some exciting projects for A of F and look forward to expanding our membership base.

Atheist Alliance

We reported in our previous newsletter that Margaret Downey has become president of AAI. She has announced that the AAI annual convention will now be held during the fall of each year, probably mid-September. We hope this will allow for an even larger turnout at the conventions.



All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

—Thomas Paine (*The Age Of Reason*)

Atheists of Florida Awards Banquet

Our Board of Director's meeting will be held Sunday, January 28, 2007 at the Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore, the same hotel in which we hosted the 2003 Atheist Alliance International convention. The meeting will be followed that evening by the first Atheists of Florida Awards Banquet which will recognize all the members who volunteer time and talent to help o the various projects engaged in by Atheists of Florida.

*I fall asleep in the full and certain hope
that my slumber shall not be broken;
And that though I be all-forgotten,
Yet shall I not be all-forgotten,
But continue that life in the thoughts
and deeds of those I loved....*

—Samuel Butler

Farewell Friend

Christos Tzanetakos

This month, we are very pleased to shine our atheist spot light on Ms. Suzie Siegel, an atheist of extraordinary courage, intelligence, and great humanity. Her story is truly "inspirational".



Atheist Spotlight

I GREW UP IN TEXAS, THE child of a Jewish atheist father and a mother who had more reverence for nature than the Episcopal Church she once attended. For a few years, we went to a Unitarian Universalist fellowship, which supported members in their search for truth and meaning, without imposing dogma.

Many times, I had to fend off attempts to Christianize me. But the worst pressure came at age 43, when I was diagnosed with cancer. This article is my way of explaining why I don't need to convert to find comfort. Instead, my beliefs have helped me accept changes to my life and the threat of death.

My beliefs began before I started school, when my mother explained atoms to me. The idea that we are all made of the same stuff fascinated me. Like other UUs, I imagine an interdependent web of existence that connects everyone and everything. Some might call this a faith in physics.

I don't believe in divinity. I find no evidence to support the existence of a god or gods, and yet, I think it's possible that I could be wrong. This aspect of my belief system could be called "soft atheism." Or, maybe, I should be described as a "mystical atheist," who believes that there is more to this world than we comprehend. I'm intrigued by tarot cards, for example, and the idea that some people seem to have a keen insight into others. Believing that mysteries exist does not deny science or rational thought. Someday science may explain that which I now cannot name.

I enjoy learning about religions, but I read them as philosophy, not scripture. Irritated by sexism, I take special interest in ancient rites when the divine feminine was worshipped. I enjoy neo-pagan rituals and see goddesses as metaphors.

Although I'm not easily categorized, it's safe to say that I'm not a theist or a Christian.

In 2002, I was diagnosed with leiomyosarcoma, a rare cancer of the smooth muscles. It has spread twice. I have had surgeries, radiation and chemotherapy.

I don't view this as a tragedy. To me, illness and death are part of the cycle of life. I don't worry about my soul because I don't believe I have one. I don't think that I'm so fabulous that my consciousness, or whatever distinguishes me, must exist

forever. I do think, however, that my body will be transformed into other forms of energy and matter, such as smoke and ashes.

Similarly, I don't wonder whether I'll go to heaven or hell because I don't believe in either. When I die, I don't think I'm going anywhere. I'm already home.

I understand that bad things happen to good people as well as bad people. I think I got cancer for reasons science has not yet discovered, not as a lesson or punishment. Despite a dismal prognosis, I don't think I've survived because a superior being has plans for me. It's my job to find my own purpose.

Some people say cancer patients cope better if they have a strong faith. But that is not always true. I have friends who wonder how a loving god could allow such suffering. I have seen their faith shaken, when they feel their prayers have gone unanswered. Some worry that they are being punished.

I have friends who have great faith in God and their religion. I enjoy talking to them about spiritual and philosophical ideas. They respect my beliefs, and I hope that I show proper respect to them.

I recognize some cancer patients need to talk about their beliefs, without me interjecting my own. In my mind, I translate "God" into "love" so that I can communicate with them in their own words.

I find it incredible that some people think that, in a crisis, I would be comforted by changing my entire belief system. Others don't care about my comfort; they fear for my soul. One nurse talked to me about Jesus while I got a blood transfusion. A chaplain encouraged me to accept Jesus. Both seemed like kind people.

Some staff say, "God bless you" or "I'll pray for you." I thank them, knowing they mean well. Because people who believe in God and prayer are in the majority, they have the privilege of speaking as if everyone shared their beliefs—and will be comforted by them. They can speak as if faith is fact. They can announce their beliefs on posters, cards, clothing and jewelry. Those who disagree rarely advertise it. We may fear that we will offend others, or that they will dislike us, try to convert us, or even give lesser care.

"Don't upset people who can hurt you," jokes one of my sisters, who works in a hospital.

After my first surgery, when I was in terrible pain, a UU minister came to the hospital and discussed MY beliefs for two hours. What a rare gift! I now attend the UU Church of Tampa, which welcomes the faithful, the faithless and everyone in between.



When I die, I don't think I'm going anywhere. I'm already home!

**John W. MacKay,
P.A.**

*Board Certified
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Certified Circuit Court
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Statewide (800) 813-RIDE

Atheist Forum

Hillsborough County Public Access TV

Live Thursday ...7 PM

Bright House: Ch 20, Verizon: Ch 30,
Comcast: Ch 20

Rerun Tuesday ...7 PM

Bright House: Ch 19, Verizon: Ch 36

Schedule changes every 13 weeks. To be kept informed of new schedules send e-mail address to AthALFLE@aol.com