



THE SECULAR HUMANIST PRESS

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AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH: IT'S WORSE THAN WE THOUGHT

by Jim Rybock

So where has Al Gore been since the debacle of the 2000 elections? He says the adjustment from being in the White House working for public awareness of the global climate crisis to watching George Bush and his administration gut the limited global-warming policies already on the books "certainly wasn't an easy time." He began teaching courses at two colleges in Tennessee and even entered the business world, partnering with others to start two new companies. One was Current TV, a revolutionary news and information cable and satellite network for young people in their twenties. He also decided to start presenting his slide show on global warming again.

Gore had first organized the slide show when he began writing *Earth in the Balance* around 1990. Over the years he expanded and improved it. For the past six years, he has been traveling around the world, "sharing the information I have compiled with anyone who would listen" Gore says. After a presentation in Los Angeles in 2005, several professional people in the audience suggested that he consider making a film on global warming. The movie *An Inconvenient Truth* was released in 2006, concurrent with his book of the same title. All profits from the movie and the book are being donated to a non-profit bipartisan effort to move American public opinion to support bold action to confront global warming.

The movie had a limited opening. When it arrived in Seattle, we were interested in seeing it, but the prospect of watching a movie of a slide show -- presented by someone who has a reputation for droning on in a lecturing sort of way -- caused some hesitation. But the reviews were very good and the reported per-theater attendance levels were unusually high. So we decided to check it out, figuring we could make the first matinee showing at the Guild 45th, thereby avoiding any crowds and saving a few bucks.

OK, we saved a few bucks going to the 11 am Sunday showing but we were damn fortunate to get two seats together. The place was packed with an audience that seemed especially intelligent and involved -- albeit a bit on the gray side.

And, yes, the movie is basically Al Gore's slide show, but with some features you might not be expecting. First, the technology and production values were very high, so it didn't seem like a boring lecture at all. There was continual reference to data displayed on easy-to-understand graphs and figures with

photos and film documenting specific locations and situations. The subject matter was always clear and interesting. No, it was more than interesting. It was fascinating.

Second, Al was a very smooth and comfortable presenter. It probably helps that he has delivered this information so many hundreds of times previously, but it was more than that. He was very comfortable with the topic and the technical issues, the fact that CO₂ -- the most common greenhouse gas -- has been produced in vast quantities by human activities. As the human population has increased at an exponential rate (Gore's presentation on this topic alone is stunning), our burning of fossil-fuels in cars and power plants in particular and our use of landfills, livestock farming, and wastewater treatment has accelerated the generation and emissions of CO₂, methane, and nitrous oxide into the atmosphere. This thickening gas layer still lets the sun's ultraviolet light pass through to reach the Earth's surface, where it is converted into infrared radiation (heat). Normally, much of this heat would radiate out into the universe, but the atmospheric gases act as a barrier and hold the heat in (much like greenhouse glass lets the ultraviolet light in but prevents the infrared heat from leaving). And the demonstrated correlation between CO₂ concentrations and air temperature is striking, suggesting that CO₂ increases have been largely responsible for the highest temperature years on record in the past decade and will continue to warm the Earth.

Many of the people I've talked who have seen the movie intend to see it a second or third time or more. So much information was presented that it is not easy to retain it all.

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SECULAR HUMANISM is a rational, non-theistic, naturalistic philosophy which supports intellectual freedom, free inquiry, self-responsibility, and scientific progress for the benefit of humankind. When applied to everyday decision-making, Secular Humanism provides a foundation for ethical conduct and human compassion without the need of salvation or supernatural guidance.

That's where the book comes in. It follows the movie presentation closely but, in addition, it has more technical information backed up by references and more information on his father Senator Albert Gore, Sr., his upbringing, and his own family with Tipper. Some have accused him of bringing in these personal stories and anecdotes as an attempt to make him seem "more human" in preparation for his run at the 2008 Presidency. But he's not interested in that. In fact, he believes -- and I agree -- that he can probably be much more effective in doing something about global warming *outside* of government. This is certainly the case when considering how effective Gore's message has already been in other countries.

The movie and book present many relevant and moving personal stories about Al Gore. One particularly personal and disturbing story is that of his sister Nancy, 10 years older than him and his idol and protector. She started smoking cigarettes at age 13 and could never stop -- she died a painful death from lung cancer in 1984. Gore points out the irony that the product that killed his sister was grown on the family farm for many years. But the really salient point is that objective scientists were telling the world in the 60s that smoking kills people by causing lung cancer, yet they were ridiculed by pundits and challenged by industry-paid schills. The same thing has been happening for some time with global warming. First it was denied that global warming was even happening. Once the evidence became clear and that denial was no longer possible, they questioned that humans were a cause and claimed that the changes were no different than what one would expect from natural climate variations. Then when it became clear that humans and their waste products *are* the culprit, a few remnants on the far fringes of science are suggesting that the changes will be beneficial. As the recent Hollywood release *Thank You for Smoking* suggests, we now laugh at those who claim no connection between smoking and lung cancer -- Gore's presentation will help us reach that point of understanding on the global warming crisis.

Gore places particular emphasis on a University of California at San Diego study. As reported in *Science* magazine, researchers examined 928 articles on global warming and found that none doubted the prevailing consensus concerning the human contribution to this warming. Yet in the mainstream media, about half of the articles presented scientific doubt as prevalent. Likewise, Gore notes that the tobacco industry, 40 years ago, reacted to the historic Surgeon General's report linking cigarette smoking to lung cancer by organizing a similar disinformation campaign. One of the memos, prepared by the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Company in the 1960s, is interesting in the context of the ongoing global warming disinformation campaign:

"Doubt is our product, since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy."



No, the personal stories are in fact very relevant to Gore's thesis. They also explain how he became who he is. He had learned to love the outdoors as a child and then became particularly aware of environmental issues about the same time many of us in his generation did -- it was the 1960s and Rachel Carson had informed the world about how pesticides were destroying certain birds' reproductive abilities and creating a *Silent Spring*. Then masses of people got involved and congress took action and, in a matter of just a few years, Richard Nixon felt so much political pressure that he had no choice but to sign legislation creating the Environmental Protection Agency to protect our water, land, and air resources. Gore was most fortunate to have had a professor at Harvard -- Roger Revelle -- who was the first person to recognize the importance of measuring CO2 in the Earth's atmosphere. The book includes background on Professor Revelle and his extensive research that could not

be covered in depth in the movie.

Gore only touches on America's dependence on oil, but he does point out the lousy mileage standards that American automobile manufacturers must meet -- we're near the bottom of industrialized countries and even trail China significantly. And alternative energy generation from renewable sources is reviewed. But he doesn't talk about the pending disasters attributable to Peak Oil -- the point when world oil production peaks and begins to decline at the same time as world demand is increasing due to American growth and industrialization in China and India. Prices for oil and gas will skyrocket and nations will compete more and more aggressively for the limited supplies. In fact, it seems clear to me that we are in Iraq primarily, if not exclusively, because of Middle Eastern oil. These "resource wars" will only get worse. Global recession and depression are also in the cards. There could be massive human die-offs caused by the Peak Oil pressures on farming and food distribution. Will this result in a reduction of oil and gas combustion, or will we make matters worse by burning

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The *Secular Humanist Press* is edited and produced by Barbara Dority and Jim Rybock.

more coal? Some point to the Tar Sands of Canada as a solution to Peak Oil. But it takes almost as much energy to mine, process, refine and upgrade the oil extracted from tar sand as the energy contained in the light oil produced. The processing releases five to 10 times more greenhouse gases than a barrel of conventional oil.

I exited the theater with two strong feelings. First, I gained a tremendous amount of respect for Al Gore. There is no question that his concerns about our climate situation are extremely heartfelt. He is concerned because he understands the severity of the problem and the extent of the denial. He is committed to delivering this message because he feels an obligation to serve the people of this country and the world. For Al Gore, this is definitely the right thing to do. I have always respected and liked him, but after my exposure to *An Inconvenient Truth*, I consider him to be an American hero -- a real one, not one of the shallow hypocritical models worshipped by Bush and others like him who fail to grasp the importance to this nation and the world of an objective, open search for the truth. That was a warm, fulfilling feeling.

The other feeling was of the opposite kind. I had come to understand the significance of the global warming issue years ago and had felt the evidence -- even if not overwhelming at the time -- was at least sufficiently significant as to warrant full-scale international investigations and participation in treaties. I hadn't been staying current with the science. So what I learned from the Gore presentation was that the situation is much worse than I had understood. CO2 levels are well higher than anything measured (primarily in ice and snow) in the prior 650,000-year record, and there is no scientific disagreement over the hockey-stick shape of the curve. We are at about 380 ppm CO2 now (at no point in the historical record did CO2 exceed 300 ppm) and we're destined to exceed 600 ppm in 45 years if we do not make dramatic changes *today*.

The more CO2 in the atmosphere, the greater the greenhouse effect. This means more warming and more disruption of long-established local and regional climatic patterns. The melting of the glaciers -- exacerbated just in the past few years in Antarctica and Greenland -- threatens to raise sea levels significantly. Depending on whether we act fast

enough (and whether we have already passed a point of no return), some models predict a sea level rise of 20 feet, which would wipe out cities and make homeless millions of people worldwide. Florida would lose Miami and most of the Everglades. In Calcutta and Bangladesh, 60 million people would be displaced.

Is there anything someone like me or you can do? The movie touches on these things and the book elaborates and provides websites and other resource information. We can make changes at the local level and vote for politicians who understand and will represent these issues at the state and national levels. But the challenge will not be easy. Our species evolved with an instinct to survive and reproduce, which meant keeping wary watch on predators and other forces that could disrupt these near-term measures of success. Envisioning future threats -- especially those that are as amorphous as CO2 -- is not our forte. And changing our entrenched habits -- particularly our dependence on fossil fuels -- will not come easy. Yet without broad understanding and enlightened and progressive leadership in these matters, we may have no choice but to experience the global forces of nature first-hand before we wake up and can collectively make the changes that will be necessary.

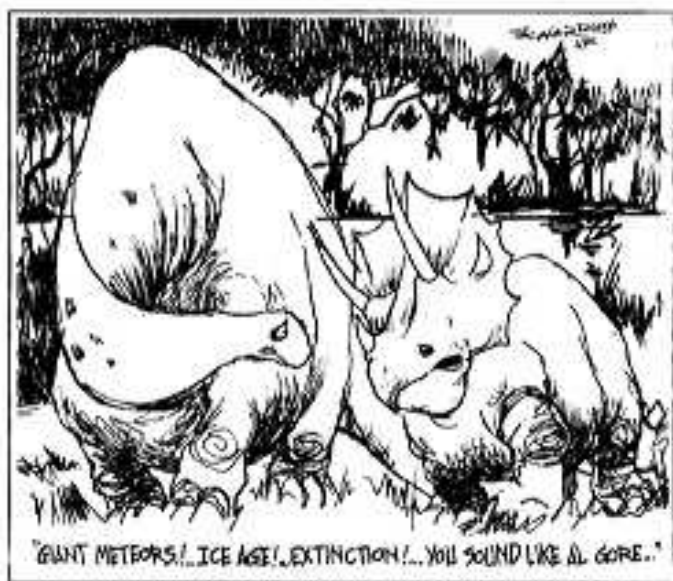
Gore is reasonably optimistic that we can make these changes before it is too late. He draws on the worldwide success in eliminating uncontrolled releases of chlorofluorocarbons -- those gases used in refrigeration that were found to cause destruction of the Earth's ozone layer. Yes, some celebration seems warranted. But that was a relatively simple to understand and simple to control problem. Global warming, on the other hand, is a result of complex human behaviors, as well as population growth and industrial development supported by cheap oil. The major impacts from failing to adapt may not come until I am dead and gone, but I worry about my children's prospects and those of the generations that will follow.

This is a fascinating, must-see movie and a must-read book. I am just one of many who feel this way. Rottentomatoes.com -- one of the leading online compilers of movie reviews -- reports that an unusually high 92% of 120 published reviews were favorable and included such phrases as: "mind-boggling disaster epic," "most important film of the year," "illuminating and distressing ... a grave message indeed." One of the most compelling reviews by Roger Ebert includes this comment: "In 39 years, I have never written these words in a movie review, but here they are: You owe it to yourself to see this film. If you do not, and you have grandchildren, you should explain to them why you decided not to."

[Editor's note: Jim is long-time HOW Treasurer and has a PhD in Ecology.]

"I KNOW THAT THE GREAT TRAGEDIES OF HISTORY OFTEN FASCINATE HUMAN BEINGS WITH APPROACHING HORROR. PARALYZED, THEY CANNOT MAKE UP THEIR MINDS TO DO ANYTHING BUT WAIT. SO THEY WAIT. AND ONE DAY, THE GORGON DEVOURS THEM. BUT I SHOULD LIKE TO CONVINCE YOU THAT THIS SPELL CAN BE BROKEN, THAT THERE IS ONLY AN ILLUSION OF IMPOTENCE, THAT STRENGTH OF HEART, INTELLIGENCE AND COURAGE ARE ENOUGH TO STOP FATE, AND SOMETIMES TO REVERSE IT. ONE HAS MERELY TO WILL THIS, NOT BLINDLY, BUT WITH A FIRM AND REASONED WILL."

ALBERT CAMUS



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

WHAT DOES A FREETHINKER BELIEVE?

FRIDAY, JULY 28, 7:30 – 9:30 PM

A few of you are familiar with the topic of the next HOW quarterly program meeting because I've talked about it to a number of people. For those of you who aren't, let me give you a brief background. While I'm fairly new to most of the freethinker groups, last December at the potluck, I saw (and continue to see in other places and times) people who want to talk about the beliefs of and the differences between the freethinker groups in our area. With that in mind, I will be leading such a discussion at the quarterly program meeting of the Humanists of Washington on Friday, July 28th.

I am not only looking for attendees to participate in the discussion, I am also hoping to find some expertise on the groups belonging to the Northwest Freethought Coalition. Since all of you folks represent these groups for inter-group events and efforts, I thought this would be the best place to start. Ultimately, I'd love to have some representatives of each group there, whether they be official representatives who can speak for the group or just members who can speak about the group.

[Editors' note: This has been a personal description from HOW member Andrew Sattler, who will moderate the discussion.]

THE UPCOMING NOVEMBER ELECTION

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 7:30 – 9:30 PM

The November elections will be looming in October. Come out for a discussion (or venting, or ranting, or raving) on the political situation for progressives. A board member will moderate this meeting. Drag out your campaign pins and wear all of them at once! Let's see who has the largest collection!

SECULAR SEATTLE

Secular Seattle is a social group sponsored by the Humanists of Washington to provide a venue for bringing together Secular Humanists, Atheists, and others unencumbered by religion. Our purpose is to provide an opportunity for people of like mind to meet and have fun together. Secular Seattle events are open to the public. There is no charge; participants pay only for their own restaurant orders.

Secular Seattle's Yahoo Group website is located at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SecularSeattle>. This site is open to the public. It includes a calendar of upcoming HOW events and a convenient way to sign up to receive email reminders of these events. HOW members, SHP subscribers, and non-members alike are welcome at all listed events. Please email the moderator at tiffany_ann_27@yahoo.com if you have any questions or would like to add an event.

Secular Seattle Second Thursday Dinners: Please join us for discussion of current events from a Humanist perspective,

LIBERAL: One who has, expresses, or follows views or policies that favor civil liberties, democratic reforms, social progress, tolerance, generosity, and the freedom of individuals to act or express themselves in a manner of their own choosing.

American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition

or just to visit with like-minded skeptics. Check out the Secular Seattle calendar at the Yahoo Group above or contact Jerry (see below) for the time and location of the next dinner.

We also have many other events (game nights, dancing, hiking, bicycling, etc.). Check our full calendar of events at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SecularSeattle>. You may also contact Jerry Schiffelbein at 425-402-9036 or email him at jerryschiffelbein@msn.com.

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- The Board of Directors of the Humanists of Washington meets at least quarterly. Members may obtain dates, places, and times by leaving a message on the HOW answering machine at 527-8518. An officer will call you back.
 - If you misplace this journal or want to check the calendar of events, call 527-8518 to hear our 24-hour recording of upcoming events.
 - To find out more about HOW and view the latest version of the *Secular Humanist Press*, go to our website at www.humanistsofWashington.org or email us at humanists@comcast.net.
 - NOTICE: The deadline date for submissions to the Fall 2006 SHP is September 1st.
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JOIN THE DARWIN PARTY

by Graham

[Editors' note: The following is the content of a flyer created by Graham for leaving on the windshields of automobiles displaying the Darwin Fish. We have his permission to print it here and extend his invitation to like-minded readers, especially those who may be feeling a bit isolated in the Olympia area and find it difficult to make it to HOW activities and meetings.]

THE DARWIN PARTY has lunch at 11:30 every Friday at Anthony's Home Port in Olympia. In honor of the foot-fish displayed on your car (or some other praiseworthy quality of mind or character), you are invited. It is no host, no dues, no fees. The world's problems are solved for the day. Jokes may be exchanged. (When an actual joke is not available, a quotation from Congress or the clergy may be substituted.)

Leave a message at 360-866-1286 by Thursday evening of your intention to try to drop in so we can save you a space. Should your work or other commitments make it difficult for you to break bread with like-minded people, do call, drop a card, or email to say hello anyway. Real World Service, Suite 502, 3403 Steamboat Island Road, Olympia, WA 98502 email: therealworld@comcast.net.

UNIVERSITY UNITARIAN HUMANISTS

The UU Humanists meet at the University Unitarian Church (6556 35th Avenue N.E. in Seattle) from 7 - 9PM on the fourth Thursday of each month. The usual meeting format is a 40-minute presentation by a speaker (or speakers) followed by 30-35 minutes of discussion, or to have a topic introduced briefly by a discussion leader, who then moderates an open and free-wheeling discussion for about an hour. Either format may

be followed by further informal discussion over coffee or tea until 9PM for those who wish to stay. To be added to the newsletter list, call Jeanette Merki at (425) 821-4605.

Meetings are held in the Emerson Room (last room on the right, downstairs as you enter from the parking lot). All are welcome.

Is Religion the Basis of Morality? Thursday July 27, 2006

Alfred Harper will discuss the idea that there is a natural basis for morality rather than a religious basis, as is asserted by many. And Katherine Keene will discuss the ethical/moral principles conceived by early philosophers and how they influence current codes of behavior.

Interactions of Science and Religion Thurs. Aug. 24, 2006

Science and religion have been uncomfortable bedfellows for many centuries. Even now, in an era when science has made so many advances, there are problems. Alfred Harper and Bill Taylor, both past presidents of UU Humanists, will introduce this topic and lead a group discussion.

"COHEN'S LAW: WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS THE NAME YOU SUCCEED IN IMPOSING ON THE FACTS – NOT THE FACTS THEMSELVES." ANON.

ETHICAL CULTURE SOCIETY OF PUGET SOUND

The Ethical Culture Society of Puget Sound (ECS) meets to discuss and celebrate ethical and humanist living. ECS meetings are held on the First and Third Sunday each month only (not every Sunday) at the Tallmadge Hamilton House in the University District, located at 5225 15th Avenue, NE, Seattle 98105. Doors open at 10:00 AM and meeting begins at 10:30 AM. Doors close approximately NOON.

The email address for information concerning ECS is: info@EthicalCultureSociety.org.

"UNINTERPRETED TRUTH IS AS USELESS AS BURIED GOLD." LYTTON STRACHEY

SOCIETY FOR SENSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

Do you have a skeptical opinion about paranormal claims or pseudo-science and can't find anyone with whom you can intelligently discuss it? This is your chance! Society for Sensible Explanations presents Skeptics-in-the-Pub, Seattle Style. This is a great way to meet others with a skeptical point of view on various topics. Look for the small table flag on the first Tuesday of each month, starting at 6:30 PM. For meeting locations, contact Tim Kammer at 206-366-3333 or 253-709-3883 or via email at timk@skepticradio.com.

"LIBERTY IS BETTER SERVED BY PRESENTING A CLEAR TARGET TO ONE'S OPPONENTS THAN BY JOINING WITH THEM IN AN INSINCERE AND USELESS BROTHERLINESS." BENEDETTO CROCE

NEW GROUP FORMS: HUMANIST MEDITATION

Are you interested in being more mindful of yourself and your environment? Come practice meditation grounded in human nature. We discuss techniques, sit for half an hour, and listen to a reading. We are meeting Wednesdays from 7:30-8:30 in the theatre on the 4th floor of the Good Shepherd Center in Wallingford located at 4649 Sunnyside Avenue North. Beginners welcome.

For more information, contact Michael Waterston by phone at (206)779-1128 or email him at michaelwaterston@gmail.com.

SECOND ANNUAL NORTHWEST FREETHOUGHT COALITION 4TH OF JULY PICNIC ANOTHER SUCCESS

W was worried that we hadn't started planning for this event early, as we did last year. But things fell together beautifully. The weather was perfect, the park wasn't too crowded, and the FOOD – I don't know what to say. Freethinkers sure do know how to chow down. The quantity and diversity of the food was awesome. I'm truly sorry for anyone who couldn't make it. It looks like this event is going to become an annual tradition. I hope so. Thanks again to Gloria Hariharan for the entire concept, and a lot more.

HUMANISTS IN PRINT: SHARING YOUR PUBLISHED LETTERS

[Editors' note: We solicit copies of the printed letters of HOW members, subscribers, and friends for inclusion in this section. Space preference will be given to letters by members.]

AUTHOR'S NOTE RE: FAITH & VALUES

For many years, many folks in the freethought community (myself included) have been trying to persuade the Seattle Times to publish SOMETHING in their "Faith and Values" section besides mainline religion. They have always been completely adamant in their refusal to do so. (I should like to especially thank Bill Root for his patient persistence in this matter.) Currently, the ST has 5 columnists who rotate writing for the page, which is published on Saturdays. Ideally, we'd like them to add a "secular" person to this lineup.

I was flabbergasted when, about 8 months ago, the assistant editor of the page called me and asked if I would be interested in writing several "sample" columns for the "Faith and Values" page. At first I thought, "No problem." I've been writing for publication for over 20 years in several venues.

I could not have been more mistaken. Here are the "guidelines" I was given:

1. Everything you write must be related to a personal experience
2. No "preaching" (and that means, they said, not wandering off from time to time . . . that means NO "preaching")
3. No negative comments about religion.

What a lesson I learned when I sat down to accomplish this seemingly simple task. I couldn't write the piece I wanted to write at all. I am an advocacy writer, an upfront Atheist, and a Humanist to the core. I often write about religion and its harmful effects. Now I had to come up with some way to sneak in a few advocacy points about Humanism/atheism/freethinking/nontheism in the middle of a very personal experience (AND it had to be one that I was willing to have plastered all over the ST "Faith and Values" section!) This was no easy task for me. In fact, at first I didn't think I could do it. (I don't think they did, either.)

In a week I had one and emailed it in. They emailed back

that they liked it and asked for another(!) Suffice it to say the second one was equally difficult. But they had it in a week. Quite a few months went by and we pretty much decided that their contact with me was for the purpose of being able to say, "We worked on that but have not been able to find anyone who can/will write to our specifications."

We were wrong. In late May, I received a call from the first person in a chain of editors. "I just wanted to tell you that I'm emailing back your piece with a few deletions and changes." Indeed. "Get ready for this one," I thought. But the editing was professional, minor, and did not interfere with the message. Ultimately, the piece was edited by 3 people and handled, I must say, with a great deal of respect and care. It is reproduced on the next page.

I am well aware that not everyone is happy with this piece (Geeze, I'm not "happy" about it myself!). Consequently, I wanted to give some background and explanation. It seems I also outraged a few people by writing about what they call "animal rights." That is a debate we've had in these pages before *ad infinitum*. I personally am uninterested in engaging in it again.

There were 2 follow-up letters to the editor about the piece, one from a spacey woman who totally missed the point, while the other was supportive. As far as we know, this is a first in the history of the *ST* (and would be for the *PI* as well) so about a week later, I inquired of my editors how it went. I was told there was no onslaught of negative reaction, a good amount of positive reaction (that was all of us writing to say "Hooray!"), and the overall editor of the page told me she was "thrilled to have a nontheist on the page. We LIKE diversity on our page!")

Well, we'll see about that. They may continue with this "Guest Columnist" format. But ultimately they say they want to put a "secular" person in their rotation. If we ever get THAT, I've pledged to do cartwheels in my back yard. On camera. (See page 7.)

Seattle P-I, 6/28/06

NATIONAL SECURITY

If anyone has damaged it, it's the Bush administration

So President Bush and Vice President Cheney are bent out of shape because The New York Times reported that the administration has been secretly digging into private bank records of U.S. citizens – a stark violation of the Constitution (without proper warrants). Bush and Cheney are spouting how this (truth) damages our national security. Nobody has damaged our national security more than Bush and Cheney.

Hatred toward America has increased tenfold because of their reckless war (too many innocents tortured and/or gunned down). Bush and Cheney are the real threat to America. If we cannot get along in the world community, the world community will defeat us – it happens to every "empire" that becomes too arrogant and too aggressive. Too many lies, too many wrongful deaths, too much Bush and Cheney.

Jim Corbett
Seattle

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

We solicit copies of your unpublished letters to newspapers and other media on topics of interest to our readers. Space preference will be given to letters written by HOW members.

[Bill Witherup sent the following letter to KIRO 7 on June 27, 2006. In his transmittal to the SHP, Bill wonders, "Do you think they will answer, or perhaps send Homeland Security to my door for calling President Bush 'Howdy Doody?' One can take just so much bullshit!"]

I watch Channel 7 news in the evening because I get better reception at my Greenlake apartment than I get on Channel 4 or Channel 5. That is the only reason I watch your station. I have stopped watching the Lehrer News Hour on Channel 9 because PBS has also drifted to the right -- or the center-right.

I saw a segment on the national news this evening that rose my bilge! President Bush jogging with a Sargent who had served in Iraq. The Sargent (I believe he was from Oregon) had lost both legs in Iraq and was jogging on artificial limbs! This was an obvious photo-op for Howdy Doody, aka President Bush. Bush wore his usual smirk.

I turned off the TV immediately, as I was in a rage. What an obscene segment to show on TV! It only underlines what many of us already know: that the four main news stations: CBS, NBC, ABC and Fox support the President and the war in Iraq. Tonight's photo-op was really very subtle (though not to me). The intent was to milk the public's tearducts: "Gee, what a brave soldier." {ie, the Iraq war is therefore a just and moral war}.

Bob Shaeffer, the Evening News Anchor, should exchange his press pass, if he has one, for that of Propaganda Minister for CBS. To call such a flack and sycophant a reporter is a manipulation of language. Of course I say the same about Jim Lehrer because he has lost his balls, too.

PARDON MY PLANET By Vic Lee



FREETHINER: A Person who rejects authority and dogma, forming opinions about religion on the basis of reason and rational inquiry independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition

Faith & Values

IN THE EYES OF OUR PETS, WE SEE OURSELVES AND THE LARGER PICTURE

From time to time, The Seattle Times will host guest columnists on the Faith & Values page. Today we introduce Barbara Dority, a Humanist.

When we caught our first glimpse of him, he was cowering under a bush in our yard—black, very thin, with huge, yellow eyes. The next night, he paid us a late-night visit by boldly coming in through our cat door for dinner. Hearing a ruckus with our cats, we put him out and went back to bed. The next night, he came in again, terrified and starving. We fed him (how could we not?) then we put him out (we already had five cats).

Needless to say, the determined black feline became the sixth member of our cat family when he came back the next day. We named him Sherlock.

Our animal companions add a unique richness and awareness as they travel with

us through our journey in life. Their little cups of contentment are so easily filled. In return, they provide companionship, affection, grace, beauty, laughter, innocence and a feeling of connectedness. We realize we are far more like our animal friends than we are different. We perceive the world through the same types of physical mechanisms and are equally subject to many of the same moods, joys, ills and suffering.

I've observed that free thinkers are about twice as likely to love cats as are people in general. We freethinkers form our own opinions about religion and philosophy independent of tradition or established belief. Our affinity for cats, I believe, is because they, too, are independent-minded and refuse to be "owned." They are also affectionate, soft and gentle. Only they can bestow on us that ultimate calming and delightful thing we call purring. Still, they do so on their terms.

Through our experiences with our pets, we can come to see a larger picture. We can have empathy for all the world's sentient beings. We can realize they have as much right to live out their natural lives on the Earth as do we.

Humanists like me are naturalistic, rational and scientific, with a deep concern for the environment. We are nontheists who believe in self-responsibility, and that our one and only life is in the here and now. We believe science should be used for the benefit of humankind and our fellow creatures. As we apply these principles to everyday decision-making, our philosophy provides a foundation for ethical conduct and compassion without the need of salvation, belief in the hereafter or supernatural guidance.

There is much we can do to end the suffering of animals. First and foremost, we can have all our companion animals spayed or neutered. We can also choose to adopt a vegetarian diet, acknowledging that most animals bred for human use and consumption experience miserable, pain-filled and unnatural "lives."

Tens of thousands of companion animals are euthanized every year because of overpopulation. They are not responsible for this horrendous situation. We have domesticated them. On our pets' behalf, we can volunteer at the nearest animal shelter, where we will see our own pets in the eyes of unwanted animals and where we will learn how they suffer under the heel of our indifference.

In the eyes of the great sil-verback gorillas and other apes, we can see ourselves. These magnificent creatures belie description, inspiring nothing short of awe. I fail to see why I have more right to exist than they do. Observing them and realizing that they and their habitat are disappearing truly breaks my heart. Without habitat, extinction is a certainty. If there are such things as crimes against the universe, surely this is the greatest of them all.

Sherlock's name soon evolved to Bubba. (With his hysterical and raucous personality, it was unavoidable.) He quickly grew sleek, bright-eyed and endlessly entertaining.

Then about six years ago, he disappeared. I shall never forget the worry and dread. By the second day, I couldn't work or eat. By the third day, I was a basket case. I could think of nothing worse than having him just disappear and never know what happened. We posted signs. We knocked on doors and asked neighbors to check crawl spaces and outbuildings. We roamed the neighborhood, calling his name.

It was about four days later that he sauntered back, totally normal and nonchalant. "Me?" he said. "Where have I been? I don't know what you're talking about. Feed me."

We forgave him instantly.

Bubba adds so much to our lives and we wouldn't have missed him for the world.



Barbara Dority is president of the Humanists of Washington and executive director of the Washington Coalition Against Censorship. She lives in Ballard with her husband, four cats and one bird.

Seattle P-C 2/23/06

We're free to define our own meaning

GUEST COLUMNIST

DAVID P. BARASH

As part of Starbucks' "The Way I See It" campaign, coffee consumers may get – along with their caffeine – this jolt of wisdom from the evangelical and avowedly "purpose-driven" Rev. Rick Warren: "You are not an accident. Your parents may not have planned you, but God did. He wanted you alive and created you for a purpose."

Not is this a message being transmitted only by Protestant fundamentalists.

As part of the hastily delivered on his installation as pope in 2005, Benedict XVI announced, "We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary."

It's a cheerful conceit, this business of having a purpose, a meaning, a significance in the mind of a caring creator. (Think of the grandmother who, upon hugging her grandchildren, whispers in the ear of each, "You are my favorite.") The gratifying illusion of specialness, of being the apple of God's eye, has long been one of the more carefully feathered arrows in the quill of creationists: If Darwin is right, then your life is a meaningless accident, and so, *ipso facto*, Darwin must be wrong.

Not everyone agrees, however.

At one point in Douglas Adams's hilarious "A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," a whale plaintively

wonders: "Why am I here. What is my purpose in life?" as it plummets toward the fictional planet Magrathea. This doomed albeit appealing creature had just come into being several miles above the planet's surface when a nuclear missile was inexplicably transformed from weapon to whale via an "Infinite Improbability Generator." Evolution, too, is an improbability generator, since natural selection – the engine of evolutionary change – operates by the selective retention of random variations, making it possible to "create" organisms that are extraordinarily complex, although nonetheless a result of purely mechanical processes. All of which leads to this melancholy fact: Human beings have no more purpose in life than the naïve and ill-fated whale, whose blubber was soon to bespatter the Magrathean landscape.

Recall the oft-recounted story of the rabbi, who, upon telling each of two feuding congregations that he – and not the other one – was correct, was remonstrated thusly by his own wife: "They can't both be right." To which the rabbi replied, "You're right, too." Well, much as one might long to proclaim that both evolutionists and religionists are right when it comes to the question of life's meaning, the reality is otherwise. They can't both be right. Either we are created by God (or gods) for some intended purpose, or we arise as the random consequence of one sperm among many encountering a particular egg that just happened to be released at an opportune time.

No matter how much Stephen Jay Gould and others might have

prattled about "non-overlapping magisteria" whereby science tells us "what" and religion tells us "why," the reality is that in the case of our existence, biology tells us "why," too. We come about because of a fully materialist confluence of chance, matter and energy, orchestrated by the laws of chemistry, physics and natural selection. It may be a hard lesson, less ego-enhancing than the deception cherished by each of the grandmother's "favorites," but *Sans Clause* is a pleasant deception, too; ditto for the Tooth Fairy. (It doesn't work, incidentally, to claim that God is working his or her will via those "random" events, because if so, then they aren't random or strictly material but in some sense, purposeful and supernaturally caused.)

Take heart, however: The resulting situation is not so bleak as it might appear. A kind of evolutionary existentialism suggests that despite our genuine meaninglessness and the fact that we are unwitting, unbidden products of that improbability generator called natural selection – or, rather, because of it – we are enabled and even required to define our own meaning, not by seeking to decipher God's intention for us, but by accepting responsibility for ourselves, making up our own minds, and then acting accordingly. As Jean-Paul Sartre put it, we are "condemned to be free."

Put that on my coffee cup.

David P. Barash is a professor of psychology at the University of Washington.

LETTERS to HOW

EDITORIAL POLICY: Alternative rational views or rebuttals from members and friends to articles, letters, or editorial comments presented herein should be no more than two single-spaced 8.5x11 sheets, must be signed, and must include a contact phone number. It is always our intention to edit for conciseness and clarity, not to alter your viewpoint in any way. Letters may also be edited to conform to space requirements. As this is a membership publication, space preference will be given to letters from members.

Is It Possible We Won One?

Say, I think I may have been listened to by the "Zogby poll", because they added "Atheist, Agnostic, Humanist" to their "What is your religious affiliation?" list on their polls! I used to always check the "No affiliation" box, but I emailed them suggesting they add "Humanists" to their list... even though it's not a religion, because that's what I wanted to be listed as. Now, on their latest poll, the category has been added.

So, I'm just bragging! Ha, ha!

Rob Moitoza, Seattle

"MAN ONCE SURRENDERING HIS REASON, LIKE A SHIP WITHOUT A RUDDER, IS THE SPORT OF EVERY WIND. BUT MAY WE HOPE THAT THE DAWN OF REASON AND FREEDOM OF THOUGHT IN THESE UNITED STATES WILL DO AWAY WITH THIS ARTIFICIAL SCAFFOLDING, AND RESTORE TO US THE PRIMITIVE AND GENUINE DOCTRINES OF THIS MOST VENERATED REFORMER OF HUMAN ERRORS."

THOMAS JEFFERSON

MAKE MUSIC NOT WAR

Rob Moitoza, musician, activist, and member of Western Washington Veterans for Peace, Post 92, is proud to announce that his song "You're Not Alone," from his CD "Speak Out!," is now being featured on the DVD "Soldiers Speak Out" by the Empowerment Project. The song is accompanied by a slide show featuring photos taken at peace marches in Seattle, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. The DVD serves as a counter-recruitment and organizing tool for veterans, activists, schools, and organizations, providing a sober view of the war in Iraq and an important counterpoint to the "stay-the-course" rhetoric of the Bush administration. The DVD was spearheaded by Barbara Trent, producer of the award winning documentary, "The Panama Deception."

Rob and his musical associate, Felix Misch, are also delighted to announce that their song "Tag You're It" is being featured on Air America's Thom Hartmann program (Monday through Friday, 9 to noon on Seattle's A.M. 1090). Thom has previously aired "Chicken Hawks" and "George Bush National Park" from Rob's CD "Speak Out!". The song "Tag You're It" was specially written for the radio show based on the words and wisdom of progressive talk show host, Thom Hartmann.

Rob and Felix are currently working on a full length CD which will include the song "Tag You're It," as well as a variety of other songs ranging in style from country-pop to rock to funk. It will also include "Veterans for Peace", a song specifically dedicated to the anti-war organization. The CD will be released under the band name "We the People," and should be out sometime this summer.

Rob Moitoza's "Speak Out!" CD and "World on Fire,

Songs for Peace" (a Moitoza/Ingraham collaboration) are available at www.spacebrothersrecords.com. The DVD "Soldiers Speak Out" is available at www.empowerment-project.org

For further information Rob can be contacted at www.robmoitoza.com.

"WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON IN OUR COUNTRY? HOW CAN THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS NOT SEE WHAT WE'RE BECOMING, AND WHAT WE'VE ALREADY BECOME? ARE WE SO PROUD OF OURSELVES AND SO BLINDLY CONFIDENT OF THE PERMANENCE OF OUR FREEDOMS THAT NO ONE CAN EVEN FATHOM THE SLIGHTEST POSSIBILITY THAT THOSE FREEDOMS COULD EVER BE IN JEOPARDY? LOT ALONE FATHOM WHAT THOSE FREEDOMS ARE EVEN SUPPOSED TO MEAN? WHAT IN GOD'S NAME HAVE GEORGE BUSH AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY DONE TO OUR COUNTRY?" JOHN ARAVOSIS, AMERICABLOG

"PREACHER SHERIFF" HANGS VICTIM FROM PULPIT TO GALLOWS

[Editors' note: The following is a portion of a magazine piece written by Eugene V. Debs and published in the New York Call magazine on October 29, 1922. This piece was selected for SHP by Bill Witherup, Director of the Gene Debs Labor Ensemble. It has been condensed for space by Bill and the editors.]

The other day a Christian clergyman, fittingly named Robb, officiating as a Christian sheriff, murdered an alleged Christian murderer named Weeks by springing a trap that dislocated his neck and left him hanging in mid-air till he was dead, in the Christian penitentiary in the Christian city of Fort Madison, under the Christian law of the Christian State of Iowa, in the Christian United States of America.

The man Weeks who was killed in the name of the Christian law by the Christian clergyman-sheriff Robb, vehemently protested his innocence with his last breath.

And here is what the pious and conscientious barbarian who killed him in the name of the law had to say in answer to his victim's piteous plea:

"In the eyes of God and man, I am doing my duty. I would pull that lever even if I felt in my heart that this man was innocent of the crime for which he was dying."

There is not a doubt that this Christian sheriff who graduated from the pulpit to the gallows, and who has the conscience of a cobra and the heart of a hyena, would have said and done the same monstrous thing if the victim of his Christian piety had been his own brother.

There is presented in this clergyman-sheriff a rare specimen for biological analysis. His heart, if he has one, would no doubt reveal the arrested development of a jackal.

On the eve of the barbarous execution the Christian hangman was interviewed by a staff correspondent of the *Chicago Herald and Examiner* and I quote from his report as follows:

"A few minutes before Robb had fulfilled his duties as minister by shriving the man he executed. Even as he pulled the scaffold lever Weeks protested his own innocence and pronounced Robb a murderer. As the preacher-sheriff walked up to the scaffold, he carried in his mind the hysterical pleadings of a sobbing wife that he resign as sheriff rather than

act as executioner, while in his pockets were dozens of letters and telegrams telling him that if he pulled the lever he would be sending himself to hell.

" 'It is my duty to execute this man,' he told the writers as he walked into the penitentiary. 'All the tears in the world, all the protests in the world, could not shake me from doing what I consider my duty to my God and my fellow men.'

"At 11:55 A.M., Robb called the witnesses and went to the scaffold. He led Weeds out, and the prisoner addressed the newspaper men.

" 'I am innocent,' he said. 'They are making me die for something another man did. The man who kills me is a murderer.'

"He looked directly at Robb, but the latter returned the stare unmoved.

" 'Some day,' said the prisoner, 'he will be punished.'

" 'It is noon, the time has come,' said Robb, and led Weeks up the scaffold runway.

"The parson-sheriff adjusted the noose without a word.

" 'It is too far in front,' said Weeks, and Robb changed the knot.

"The executioner turned to the big iron lever. His jaw was tightened perceptibly. His slouch hat was pulled down over his eyes.

" 'I am innocent,' came in muffled words from Weeks.

"With a tremendous jerk, Robb sent the lever over and the body fell.

"Silently, Robb turned and walked down the scaffold. But when he saw Week's feet touching the ground he went back and held the body up by the rope for fully two minutes while the scaffold was fixed.

"Robb, 33, was chaplain of the 168th Iowa Infantry in France."

After reading this, unless a man has the hyena-heart of Robb, he blushes scarlet with shame for his species and feels like following the example of Jean Meslier, the French priest who, when he was about to die, got down on his knees and begged the Almighty to forgive him for having been a Christian.

The real tragedy of the monstrous affair is the conscientious Christian scruple with which the horrible legal crime was committed.

Robb believed in his heartless soul that he was doing his Christian duty to God and his fellow man.

The bloodthirsty Jehovah of the ancient Jews and the satanic Mosaic law have illuminating illustration and vindication here.

For a deed of refined torture, of downright savagery, of atrocious cruelty and inhumanity, look to the pious barbarian with a theological training and professing God. The robed beasts in the Coliseum of Rome who shrieked with laughter, howled with delight while other beasts were tearing heretics and slaves into bloody shreds, were of that fiendish type, and so were those pious devils of the Inquisition who solemnly folded their priestly robes about them, lifting up their bloodless faces and rolling their cruel eyes heavenward, as they unctuously

chanted their refrain to the mad, unearthly screams of agony of the victims of their inquisitorial ferocity who were having their tongues torn from their throats.

After all, Robb simply incarnates in his role as Christian hangman the Christian state and nation of which he is the bloody executioner.

A nation that believes in capital punishment, in killing a human being to satisfy the law, in committing in cold blood the monstrous crime of murder in the name of justice, is simply a nation of barbarians, and if such a nation calls itself a Christian nation, the shame is all the deeper and blacker by adding hypocrisy to the atrocious crime.

If the American people can contemplate with indifference and composure the shocking spectacle of the Christian hanging of the poor wretch at Fort Madison, protesting his innocence "with muffled voice" -- a spectacle that outrages all decency and disgraces all Christendom -- then with all our vaunted civilization, all our professed culture, all our schools and churches, we are still in the primitive moral state of the beasts of the jungle.

It is worthy of note that Robb the hangman received his training in a theological seminary and in the army.

The army chaplain is one of the interesting by-products of war. He is a shining example of Christian patriotism -- praying for war, shouting for war, thirsting for blood and "ministering" to the soldier boy with his legs shot off, being careful always to keep his own legs out of the shrapnel zone.

The Christian army chaplain prays to his Christian God to bless and prosper the killing business on his side of the line, and to have no mercy on his Christian brothers on the other side, whose Christian army chaplain is praying to the same Christian God. But of course war made by the ruling class, proclaimed by the politicians, must be blessed by the priests.

Every preacher in Christendom howled for the world war and shrieked for blood -- with now and then a rare exception driven from his pulpit in disgrace if not sent to the penitentiary to expiate his crime.

How many of these rampant warriors of the cloth -- how many of these Christian clergymen who betrayed the Prince of Peace they profess to worship -- had their own legs torn off, their own eyes gouged out, their own bowels ripped from their bodies?

Sheriff Robb, the Christian army chaplain who officiated at the Fort Madison murder, true to his degenerate breed, took no chances on the battlefields of France of being deprived of giving his state the benefit and reflecting the glory of his army education and experience.

Why, I wonder, do they not have prizefight chaplains and bullfight chaplains to bless the gruesome game and pray for the defeat of the other side?

[The above is selected from *Writings and Speeches of Eugene V. Debs*, Edited and with an Introduction by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Hermitage Press, 1948.]

"I HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO TURN DOWN A GOOD CAUSE. I'VE COME TO SEE ALL INJUSTICES, NO MATTER HOW SMALL OR SEEMINGLY UNRELATED, AS LINKED." MAGGIE KUHN

Seattle P-I, 5/3/06

Medieval thinking no help to dying

GUEST COLUMNIST

TOM PRESTON

The Oregon Death with Dignity Act has worked nearly perfectly for more than eight years, giving peaceful dying to 24% patients and backup security to thousands more, with no evidence of misuse of the law. Sed to say, unfounded fears and old taboos have kept Washington from doing as well for its residents.

This backwardness is largely because Americans don't understand how dying has changed, and their obsolete notions of acceptable ways of dying cause a lot of end-of-life suffering. Dying is not an isolated event but a process beginning with a final illness. In the past, dying was swift, as with pneumonia, but our advanced medical interventions now extend dying for weeks, months or years. We no longer die "naturally" but live longer with chemotherapy, surgery, artificial pacemakers, organ transplants and more.

Modern medicine gives us extra years of good life, but when interventions such as chemotherapy or bypass surgery prolong life they also change how we ultimately die. People - medical workers with their technologies - fashion our new ways of dying, and too often patients linger with suffering before the end. Most Americans die in medical facilities, sustained for the last weeks of life with drugs, feeding tubes and artificial ventilators.

Doctors already directly help patients die, in order to stop pain and suffering, with legal and ethical methods such as morphine drips or continuous drug-induced unconsciousness, or by withdrawing artificial ventilators or other means of life support. The majority of patients so-

We distort the meaning of the sanctity of life by saying we must sanctify all life, however artificial and harmful it has become.

die after a human decision - made by doctor, family member or other - to stop further treatment that would only prolong suffering. The process of dying for most of us is a series of medical decisions culminating when someone decides how we will die.

The issue for most of us will be, "Who decides how and when we die?" We have pre-empted natural dying with our medical interventions, so why shouldn't the patient decide the mode and time of dying, consistent with his or her values, rather than leaving it to the ravages of "doing everything possible" or the whim of the medical resident on call?

Many would say, "It is a violation of God's will, or the sanctity of life, to help someone die sooner than is natural." The sanctity of life principle evolved in the Middle Ages, when St. Thomas Aquinas equated God's will with what is natural. But the unending work of modern medicine is to pervert natural dying and to give us longer than natural lives. When a doctor maintains life with an artificial ventilator, he has created unnatural life, and when he turns off the breathing machine months later, life ends unnaturally.

We distort the meaning of the sanctity of life by saying we must sanctify all life, however artificial and harmful it has become. Is it God's will that we may not end a life after we have artificially extended it to a state

of ungodly suffering?

In the totality of a medically managed process of dying, the last individual human act - deciding how a patient will die - is equally ethical whether isolating the patient until death, stopping life-support therapy such as kidney dialysis or giving a patient the means of voluntarily ending life with lethal pills.

A patient who self-administers lethal pills is not committing suicide. Suicide is of a person who does not have to die, and who has a treatable or manageable disorder. On the other hand, a terminally ill person (the law in Oregon requires terminal illness for aid in dying) has no means of cure or long-term management of his illness, is inevitably dying and does not commit suicide by choosing one means of medical dying over another.

Further, a physician who prescribes lethal pills a dying patient may or may not use is not assisting suicide any more than when he stops life support or sedates a patient to the time of death. Nor is he "killing," a phrase used by opponents to generate fear of assisted dying. To kill is "to deprive of life," and a dying patient who self-administers pills achieves his goal - he is not deprived or killed.

Once we have prolonged life as much as is reasonable without causing undue suffering, we have honored our obligation - and that of the state - to protect and sanctify life. Assisted dying for terminally ill patients is then ethical and merciful, and - as in Oregon - is safe. If ours is a humane and caring society we should make it legal.

Tom Preston, M.D., of Seattle is the author of "Patient Directed Dying"; www.tomprestonmd.com.

"MAN WILL OCCASIONALLY STUMBLE OVER THE TRUTH, BUT MOST OF THE TIME HE'LL THEN GET UP AND WALK AROUND IT."
WINSTON CHURCHILL

RIGHT-TO-DIE UPDATES

by Midge Levy, Co-President

Compassion & Choices of Washington State

Right-to-die supporters are concerned about the Washington State Pharmacy Board's recent attempt to allow pharmacists to refuse to dispense medications that were not in keeping with their personal religious or moral beliefs, such as the "morning after" pills.

Such a decision could have grave implications for those of us eager to legalize the option of assisted death, since it would enable pharmacists to refuse to fill a prescription for lethal medication. We were relieved at the reaction of Governor Christine Gregoire, to the effect that the Board would therefore fail to protect Washington residents and deny them their right to legally prescribed substances.

Permitting a pharmacist to impose his or her moral or ethical beliefs onto their patients is unacceptable. Consideration of a referral system whereby the pharmacist could refer patients to a colleague may be impractical in some areas where pharmacies are scarce or time is of the essence, as in the case of a terminally ill person suffering intolerable pain. Present medical practice supports aggressive treatment of pain even to the point of death, which may necessitate the prescription of narcotics and other controlled substances. This cannot be questioned by pharmacists, even if the practice conflicts with their own beliefs.

The volume of letters published in the *Seattle Times* on 6/15/06 supports our view. Elizabeth Donelan pointed out that "the Board is heading down a slippery slope and I fear what's next: refusing HIV medication because of how HIV may have been contracted? . . . Pharmacists are not entitled to be the public's moralist nannies. They provide health care by distributing medication. If their personal beliefs prevent them from providing health care of any kind, they should seek a new profession."

A further argument by Eden Rogland published on the same date: "One has to wonder if pharmacists' prerogative will apply only to women's contraception, or if, say, a Christian Scientist pharmacist will be able to deny men heart medication or prostate cancer drugs as well. An even application of the proposed law would seem to demand it."

In conclusion, quoting from a letter to Gregoire by Robb Miller, Executive Director of Compassion & Choices, "At a time when end-of-life care is finally getting the attention it deserves, we need to find ways to encourage better pain and symptom management for the terminally ill, not issue rulings that inhibit a patient's right to excellent palliative care. Thank you for your efforts to stop the Pharmacy Board from implementing this rule."

"THE OLD TESTAMENT, AS EVERYONE WHO HAS LOOKED INTO IT IS AWARE, DRIPS WITH BLOOD; THERE IS, INDEED, NO MORE BLOODY CHRONICLE IN ALL THE LITERATURE OF THE WORLD."
H. L. MENCKEN

DEFEND JESUS? WHY ME?

By Rob Moitoza

It seems like every time I turn on the T.V. or open a newspaper these days, there's another crooked CEO or politician proclaiming his profound faith and dedication to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The latest were convicted Enron tycoons Jeffrey Skilling and Kenneth Lay. (Interesting that Lay would die of a heart attack. Didn't know he had one. We trust he is with the Lord now.) Right after the guilty verdict came down against Lay, he said, "We believe that God in fact is in control and indeed he does work all things for good for those who love the Lord."

Pardon me, but where exactly in the Bible did Jesus say we should rob, cheat, lie, and steal millions from other people for our own personal wealth and power? If memory serves me, he said just the opposite. So, how can this guy claim to be a Christian? If you believe that Jesus would forgive this guy for his "sins," wouldn't the guy at least have to "repent" first? That was my understanding. Yet these guys are still maintaining their innocence even after they've been found guilty beyond a shadow of a doubt. Jesus supposedly whooped ass on the "money changers," and so he sure as Hell would not have put up with these crooks. These are certainly not things I learned about Jesus Christ as a child growing up in church.

Then we have the devout Christian, Tom DeLay, a ruthless S.O.B. who would trample over his own mother for a little more wealth and power. That's certainly Christ-like! Now that he's been found guilty of swindling and robbing money from the people, he says he's going to go on a lecture tour of the Christian circuit! It seems convicted felons are in high demand on the Christian circuit these days.

The list of so-called believers in Jesus includes most of the egregious con men involved in the Jack Abramoff scandals. These guys actually preached about the sins of gambling while bilking millions from the Indian gambling casinos. Talk about great deceivers! Among them are Bob Ney, Ralph Reed, James Dobson, Grover Norquist, and the list continues to grow by the day. Grover Norquist's "Americans for Tax Relief" became a conduit for more than a million dollars from the Mississippi Choctaw to Ralph Reed's "Christian" operation, while Norquist, a close White House ally, took a cut. I guess Norquist, who wanted to "get the government to a size where he could drown it in a bathtub" had no problem in first filling his bathtub with millions he had defrauded from the American people. Where did Jesus tell him to do that?

Meanwhile, Dobson, head of "Focus on the Family," appears to be increasingly embroiled in the Abramoff scandal as well. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt for now. But in the meantime, I'd prefer that he focus on his own damned family and leave mine alone. Jesus wouldn't have liked him, either!

Every time I hear about another "born-again" Christian these days I wonder who just got raped, robbed, and pillaged! The truth is, I have forgotten more about the teachings of Jesus than any of these guys will ever know. Maybe that's why I stopped going to church a few years ago and became a Humanist. I had pretty much learned the lessons that Jesus had to teach. They are not complicated. Love your fellow man, don't steal, don't sleep with your friend's wife, don't kill people. Not complicated stuff. In fact, they are all things that any atheist or agnostic would consider basic moral concepts. We don't need a Bible or years of study to know these things. A simple

conscience will suffice. But these "Christians" seem to have none. Instead, they go to church week after week in order to be reminded not to commit the crimes that they commit every day without even giving it a second thought. Then they hide behind their Lord, Jesus. Some of them want to

post the Ten Commandments on MY lawn, while they continue to break every commandment there is and claim to have "Jesus in their heart." Believe me, if he's in there, he's dying to get out!

Many of these "Christians" are die-hard supporters of the current administration in Washington D.C.. They are fervent followers of George Bush, who is supposedly a devout follower of Jesus Christ. I'd like to know where Jesus told us to go around the world killing off people we disagree with. Isn't the number one rule of Christianity "Thou Shalt Not Kill?" It doesn't say "Thou shalt not kill unless it's a Muslim." George evidently missed that one. And where did Jesus say to steal from the poor to give to the richest 2% of the population? I understood Jesus to be a champion of the poor, not the CEO of Exxon. And where did Jesus say torturing other human beings was just fine? Jesus was the torturee. Bush is the torturer! Pontius Pilate would have loved Bush. Anyone who believes that George Bush is a follower of Jesus has never read the teachings of Jesus.

No, my friends. These are no believers in Jesus Christ. These are lying, thieving, murderers who have no morals or ethics whatsoever. Why, then, do so many people believe this crap? Well, they call Satan "the Great Deceiver" and all I can say is "It takes one to know one." There is no greater deceiver

NON SEQUITUR By Wiley Miller



"virgin birth," and yet they can't believe that man evolved from the ape . . . hey, they'd believe anything! Tooth fairy anybody?

But what I really want to know is, why does it take a Humanist to defend Jesus these days? I've got better things to do . . . like living a moral and just life which I, myself, take responsibility for. These crooks and thieves can go ahead and hide behind some religious deity, whose teachings they have no clue about, if that's what they want to do. No skin off my teeth. Sooner or later they will have to pay the cost of their own deception. And, hey, I'm not saying I'm perfect. I make mistakes. But the difference is, I'll take responsibility for my own life and my own actions. I'm not going to go out and commit unconscionable crimes against humanity and then hide behind some religious deity as if I were so damned holy. That is truly unconscionable, and an insult to the very religions in which these people profess to believe.

"THE TRUTH IS THAT CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, LIKE EVERY OTHER THEOLOGY, IS NOT ONLY OPPOSED TO THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT, BUT IS ALSO OPPOSED TO ALL ATTEMPTS AT RATIONAL THINKING." H.L. MENCKEN

PRO-CHOICE UPDATES

The GOP Forced Me to Have an Abortion by Dana L., the Washington Post, 6/8/06 Contributed by Marcy Bloom

The conservative politics of the Bush administration forced me to have an abortion I didn't want. Well, not literally, but let me explain.

I am a 42-year-old happily married mother of two elementary-schoolers. My husband and I both work, and like many couples, we're starved for time together. One Thursday evening this past March, we managed to snag some rare couple time and, in a sudden rush of passion, I failed to insert my diaphragm.

The next morning, after getting my kids off to school, I called my ob/gyn to get a prescription for Plan B, the emergency contraceptive pill that can prevent a pregnancy -- but only if taken within 72 hours of intercourse. As we're both in our forties, my husband and I had considered our family complete, and we weren't planning to have another child, which is why, as a rule, we use contraception. I



wanted to make sure that our momentary lapse didn't result in a pregnancy.

The receptionist, however, informed me that my doctor did not prescribe Plan B. No reason given. Neither did my internist. The midwifery practice I had used could prescribe it, but not over the phone, and there were no more open appointments for the day. The weekend -- and the end of the 72-hour window -- was approaching.

But I needed to meet my kids' school bus and, as I was pretty much out of options -- short of soliciting random Virginia doctors out of the phone book -- I figured I'd take my chances and hope for the best. After all, I'm 42. Isn't it likely my eggs are overripe, anyway? I thought so, especially since my best friend from college has been experiencing agonizing infertility problems at this age.

Weeks later, the two drugstore pregnancy tests I took told a different story. Positive. I couldn't believe it.

I'm still in good health, but unlike the last time I was pregnant, nearly a decade ago, I'm now taking three medications. One of them, for high cholesterol, is in the Food and Drug Administration's Pregnancy Category X -- meaning it's a drug you shouldn't take if you're expecting or even planning to get pregnant. I worried because the odds of having a high-risk pregnancy or a baby born with serious health issues rise significantly after age 40. And I thought of the emotional upheavals that an unplanned pregnancy would cause our family. My husband and I are involved in all aspects of our children's lives, but even so, we feel we don't get enough time to spend with them as it is.

I felt sick. Although I've always been in favor of abortion rights, this was a choice I had hoped never to have to make myself. When I realized the seriousness of my predicament, I became angry. I knew that Plan B, which could have prevented it, was supposed to have been available over the counter by now. But I also remembered hearing that conservative politics have held up its approval.

My anger propelled me to get to the bottom of the story. It turns out that in December 2003, an FDA advisory committee, whose suggestions the agency usually follows, recommended that the drug be made available over the counter, or without a prescription.

Nonetheless, in May 2004, the FDA top brass overruled the advisory panel and gave the thumbs-down to over-the-counter sales of Plan B, requesting more data on how girls younger than 16 could use it safely without a doctor's supervision.

Apparently, one of the concerns is that ready availability of Plan B could lead teenage girls to have premarital sex. Yet this concern -- valid or not -- wound up penalizing an over-the-hill married woman for having sex with her husband. Talk about the law of unintended consequences.

By late August 2005, the slow action over Plan B led the director of the FDA's Office on Women's Health to resign her post. The agency's delay on the drug, she wrote in an e-mail to her colleagues, "runs contrary to my core commitment to improving and advancing women's health." As recently as April 7, Steven Galson, director of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, said that the agency still needed time to work on the issue.

Unfortunately, time was the one thing I didn't have.

Meanwhile, I hadn't even been able to get Plan B with a prescription that Friday, because in Virginia, health-care practitioners apparently are allowed to refuse to prescribe any drug that goes against their beliefs. Although I had heard of pharmacists refusing to fill prescriptions for birth control on religious grounds, I was dumbfounded to find that doctors could do the same thing.

Moreover, they aren't even required to tell the patient why they won't provide the drug. Nor do they have to provide a list of alternative sources. I had asked the ob-gyn's receptionist if politics was the reason the doctor wouldn't prescribe Plan B for me. She refused to answer or offer any reason, no matter how much I pressed her. By the time I got on the phone with my internist's office and found that he would not fill a Plan B prescription either, I figured it was a waste of time to fight with the office staff. To this day, I don't know why my doctors wouldn't prescribe Plan B -- whether it was because of moral opposition to contraception or out of fear of political protesters or just because they preferred not to go there.

In any event, they were also partly responsible for why I was stuck that Friday, and why I was ultimately forced to confront the decision to terminate my third pregnancy.

After making the decision with my husband, I was plunged into an even murkier world -- that of finding an abortion provider. If information on Plan B was hard to come by, and practitioners were evasive on emergency contraception, trying to get information on how to abort a pregnancy in 2006 is an even more Byzantine experience.

On the internet, most of what I found was political in nature or otherwise unhelpful: pictures of what your baby looks like in the womb from week one, and so on.

Calling doctors, I felt like a pariah when I asked whether they provided termination services. Finally, I decided to check the Planned Parenthood Web site to see whether its clinics performed abortions. They did, but I learned that if I had the abortion in Virginia, the procedure would take two days because of a mandatory 24-hour waiting period, which requires that you go in first for a day of counseling and then wait a day to think things over before returning to have the abortion. Because of work and the children, I couldn't afford two days off, so I opted to have the procedure done on a Saturday in downtown D.C. while my husband took the kids to the Smithsonian.

The hidden world of abortion services soon became even more subterranean. I called Planned Parenthood two days in advance to confirm the appointment. The receptionist politely informed me that the organization never confirms appointments, for "security reasons," and that I would have to just show up.

I arrived shortly before 10 a.m. in a bleak downpour, trusting that someone had recorded my appointment. I shuffled to the front door through a phalanx of umbrellaed protesters, who chanted loudly about Jesus and chided me not to go into that house of abortion.

All the while, I was thinking that if religion hadn't been allowed to seep into American politics the way it has, I wouldn't even be there. This all could have been stopped way before this baby was conceived if they had just let me have that



TOM BEERE / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Marcy Bloom left Aradia Women's Health Center on Friday as its executive director after 18 years at the abortion clinic.

PROFILE | Marcy Bloom, women's health advocate

Viewing abortion as "a moral good"

BY CARA SOLOMON
Seattle Times reporter

Marcy Bloom sat in a flowered sundress last week, surrounded by photographs of family and talking about faith.

Down the hall were three exam rooms with white cotton curtains on the windows. Thousands of women have gotten abortions in those rooms. Bloom has held the hands of many of them.

"I see this as the work God sent me to do," said Bloom, 54, executive director of Aradia Women's Health Center on Seattle's First Hill.

Bloom, a longtime champion of abortion rights who has become a national figure in the movement, left Aradia Friday after 18 years, hoping

"I see this as the work God sent me to do."

MARCY BLOOM
Former executive director of Aradia Women's Health Center

to work abroad and spend more time with her family. During her tenure, she has doubled the staff at the abortion clinic and added bilingual counselors. She has debated leaders in the national anti-abortion movement and become a mentor to clinics in other countries.

In her years at the forefront, Bloom has fought not only for access to abortions, but to change the way that some people view abortion as either

tragic or immoral. She has described it instead as a "normal and common" experience in the lives of women — a "moral good" that saves lives and prevents unwanted children.

Colleagues have called her a hero. Critics have called her a baby killer. Dan Kennedy, of the anti-abortion group Human Life of Washington, described her as just plain misguided.

"You can be sincere, and be sincerely wrong," he said.

Bloom's commitment goes back 35 years to the days when her home state of New York was one of the few to allow abortions. She would show up at the airport wearing a red smock, a signal to women that she was their ride to the abortion clinic.

For Teresa Goepfert, former clinic manager of Aradia, working beside her was an inspiration.

"Her dedication is really important for those of us coming up in the next generation," said Goepfert, who left the clinic to become a doctor. "We don't want to lose sight of the harder times."

Please see **BLOOM, B3**

< Bloom

FROM B1

ADVOCATING ABORTION AS "NORMAL"

Upon moving
to Seattle, she felt
like she was home

Bloom grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., with talk of human rights at the dinner table. Even so, she said, her parents seemed to prime the girls only for marriage. She went to college anyway, got a master's degree, and settled into a career in women's health care.

The passion was personal. In high school, before abortions were legal, she accompanied her best friend to Pennsylvania, where the girl met strangers in a parking lot and was taken blindfolded to get the procedure. It cost \$1,000, which the girls raised with the help of their friends.

Finding a voice

When Bloom joined the movement, feminism was still trying to find a voice. She stumbled along with it. She was loud and aggressive, refusing to look for common ground.

Then, Bloom said, she grew up. Now her words are practiced and polished. She leans into conversations, listens hard and stays longer than most, try-



TOM BEERE / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Marcy Bloom is in an examination room at Aradia Women's Health Center. During her 18 years at the abortion clinic, she doubled the staff and added bilingual counselors.

"You can be sincere, and be sincerely wrong."

DAN KENNEDY
Anti-abortion group Human Life of Washington

ing to find consensus.

"Marcy is one of the only people I know who still says sisterhood is powerful and believes it, and acts on it," said Lisa Stone, executive director of the Northwest Women's Law Center, a Seattle nonprofit.

When Bloom moved to Seattle in 1979, she saw the word "feminist" in Aradia's mission statement and had a feeling she had arrived home. It was a

small, grass-roots clinic, "health care for women, by women" providing a range of reproductive health services.

Under her watch, Aradia's budget grew from \$300,000 to \$1.2 million. She reached out to underserved women, including those in the gay, bisexual and transgender communities. Just last year she carried a suitcase of abortion implements with her on a vacation to Mexico to give to a women's clinic there.

In some ways, Bloom comes across as a traditional family woman, said the Rev. Monika Casarano of the state's Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and a campus minister

at the University of Washington.

Bloom is proud of her Jewish faith. One of the reasons she is stepping down from Aradia is to take closer care of her parents. And she constantly talks up her husband of nine years, Domenick Dellino, who works for a bank. And the pink lip-stick. The dainty jewelry. It is striking, Casarano said, to see her standing in a long, lace dress, talking to a crowd of women with dyed hair and pierced noses.

"It cracks me up," she said.

The face of Aradia

Still, many others have come to see Bloom as the face of a

place that has provided about 70,000 abortions over the past 30 years. She was there in the 1980s, when anti-abortion activists targeted Aradia and other clinics with threats of violence and blockades.

As far as Bloom knows, she has never made a hit list. She still drives a different way home every day, just in case.

"She's small, but she's a pretty fiery tiger," her husband said. "I worry about her sometimes."

Even after she leaves Aradia, Bloom will not be silent. The way she sees it, women's health is losing ground. Abortion has been banned in South Dakota. In Washington, there is a proposal before the state Pharmacy Board to allow pharmacists to deny medications, such as emergency contraceptives, on personal moral grounds.

Bloom says she may write a book. Or work with clinics in Latin America.

Hanging in the office she's leaving is a painting that reminds her of who she likes to be.

It shows a skinny cat, standing in front of a mirror. The reflection in the glass is a lion.

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Seattle P-I, 5/17/06

damn pill.

After passing through the metal detector inside the building, I entered the Planned Parenthood waiting room; it was like the waiting room for a budget airline -- crammed full of people, of all races, and getting busier by the moment. I was by far the oldest person there (other than one girl's mom). The wait seemed endless. No one looked happy. We were told that the lone doctor was stuck in Cherry Blossom Parade traffic.

He finally arrived, an hour and a half late. The procedure itself took about five minutes. I finally walked out of the building at 4:30, 6 1/2 hours after I had arrived.

It was a decision I am sorry I had to make. It was awful, painful, sickening. But I feel that this administration gave me practically no choice but to have an unwanted abortion because the way it has politicized religion made it well-nigh impossible for me to get emergency contraception that would have prevented the pregnancy in the first place.

And to think that, all these years after *Roe v. Wade* became the law of the land, this is what our children have to look forward to as they approach their reproductive years.

[Editors' note: Dana L. is a lawyer and writer living in Virginia. Out of concern for her family's privacy, she requested that her last name not be published.]

"THE FACT THAT A BELIEVER IS HAPPIER THAN A SKEPTIC IS NO MORE TO THE POINT THAN THE FACT THAT A DRUNKEN MAN IS HAPPIER THAN A SOBER ONE." GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

DARWIN'S EXAMPLE

by Philip Appleman

Charles Darwin, after many years of hard work and illness, controversy and honor, lay on his deathbed. A biographer tells us: "During the night of April 18th [1882], about a quarter to twelve, he had a severe attack and passed into a faint, from which he was brought back to consciousness with great difficulty. He seemed to recognize the approach of death, and said, 'I am not the least afraid to die.'" His last words.

Living among the relentless Victorian pieties, educated to be a clergyman, surrounded by threats of literal burning hellfire: why didn't Darwin fear death? Part of the answer is that by the time he was a mature man, he simply knew too much about the real world to be frightened by superstitions. The once orthodox Cambridge undergraduate had, he wrote, "gradually come...to see that the Old Testament, from its manifestly false history of the world, with the Tower of Babel, the rainbow as a sign, etc., etc., and from its attributing to God the feelings of a revengeful tyrant, was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindoos or the beliefs of any barbarian."

Another reason Darwin didn't fear death and hellfire is that he could not take seriously religious threats that were openly sadistic. "I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true: for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that [those] who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother, and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine."

Throughout his adult life, Darwin took a deep human satisfaction in his important work, in the comradeship of his friends, and in the love of his family. That was enough, and he was not merely content with it; ill though he often was, he was a happy man.

And he was not afraid to die.

Death, Darwin knew, is simply a natural part of a natural process. Death is always out there, waiting: only its timing is in doubt. Eventually we will have played our small part in the great system of nature, and have passed on, leaving the system intact. We are a part of nature, just as tigers or termites are.

Priests and preachers in most religions refuse to accept this sensible view of things. "Eternal Life," they cry -- thus thwarting all hope of a mature personal philosophy. By promising glory in a glittering but unreal eternity, they sour our satisfactions in a brief but genuine present. They portray a God who supposedly plans all things reasonably and wisely. After all, if we are reasonable, surely God must be supremely reasonable.

Our bodies, we are told, are temples, so we treat them with respect and look forward to our promised threescore and ten years. But God, it turns out, has something else in mind for us, and eventually we find out that God is not only unreasonable; he is also a vandal: after years of our taking good care of our tidy little temples, God suddenly and without explanation breaks down the door, smashes the windows, rips the paintings, and slashes the furniture. All of our lives we have been prudent: about diet, about drinking and smoking, about doing everything in moderation -- and all of a sudden, without any warning at all, God shrieks in our ear: Cancer!

But what if you are not religious when cancer slips up without warning, threatening death? You do not fear death, any more than Darwin did; but you hate it. You hate the loss, and the sorrow of leaving behind bereaved family and friends. So in your mind, and in the minds of those who love you, there is a sharp pain, a conscious rage at being mortal. Ants and alligators must also die, but they do not face that fact with rage or regret; those thoughts and feelings are human.

Religion says: console yourself, there will be another chance, another life. Two things are wrong with this: first, there is not a shred of evidence for it; and second, it is a sop, consciously intended to blunt our rage and regret, thus dehumanizing us. Our anger at death testifies to the value of life; our sorrow for family and friends testifies to our devotion. Every noble quality we possess takes on a more poignant value because of our natural brevity. Our final pain is mortal, and our own; we hate it, but we do not want it cheapened by the seductions of an alleged immortality.

Face to face with death, we realize: the meaning of life is inside our lives, not outside them. We cannot impose on our experience a meaningfulness that we have not ourselves built into it. Our true philosophy of life is whatever we choose to do from moment to moment. If we regularly behave honestly and decently to those around us, then our philosophy is clearly a healthy and adaptive one, accounting for our lives in terms of our whole social environment. The sum-total of our actions at a given time constitutes our philosophy of life.

Darwin on his deathbed could look back at forty-three years of devotion to a loving wife, forty-five years of devotion to a grand idea. At the end, he had one characteristic regret: that he could not somehow have lived two lives, so that one could have been spent in full-time philanthropic work. The mind is tyrannically ambitious; the flesh cannot keep pace with it. Still, Darwin was content: he had made his commitments, and he had kept them. In an often hostile and bewildering world, he had lived honestly and decently: Darwin understood that that is the only "heaven" we will ever know. And it is the only one we need.

"OUR IGNORANCE IS GOD; WHAT WE KNOW IS SCIENCE."
ROBERT INGERSOLL

FROM THE CITY BY THE BAY

Report from the RAM (Regional Atheist Meet)

by Lenny Maughan

On June 24, 2006, an American Atheists-sponsored mini-convention was held in the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Foster City, California, just south of San Francisco. This one-day event exceeded attendance expectations with 142 total seats filled.

After a short delay caused by the overflow crowd, American Atheists President Ellen Johnson spoke of the need for political action on national issues, and how the Godless Americans Political Action Committee (GAMPAC, <http://www.godlessamericans.org>) is endorsing candidates who overtly support the Establishment Clause and all godless Americans. Johnson also revealed some details of the next American Atheists National Convention. Among the confirmed speakers so far is Luigi Cascioli, who earlier this year sued a priest and the Vatican for libel, and the claim that the Holy See was promoting fraud by proclaiming the historicity and divinity of Jesus Christ.

Other morning speakers were Beverly Hills attorney Eddie Tabash, who presented "Ten Reasons Why There Really is no God." Internet Infidels President Clark Adams played several audio and video clips showing an increase in and greater acceptance of atheism and religious satire in popular media.

After a lunch break, several freethought activists shared microphone time to impart their stories and techniques. Then the microphone returned to one person, Dr. David Eller, author of *Natural Atheism*. Dr. Eller, a cultural anthropologist, spoke about language and how our words can influence our perceptions -- and our ability be persuasive and clear in debates. A booksigning for *Natural Atheism* was held after his speech.

The event wrapped up with "Jesus Jam 2006" -- an often humorous panel discussion on "strange new wrinkles and weird old theories on Jesus." Don Havis, David Fitzgerald, and Richard Carrier each presented their own takes on the historicity of Jesus, from each of their own body of extensive research.

Several attendees regrouped in San Francisco for a night of fun, visiting several hotspots until Saturday became Sunday morning. Everybody is anticipating the next big American Atheists event, the American Atheists National Convention, which will be held in Seattle April 6-8, 2007. (<http://www.atheists.org/convention>).

"AND BY THE WAY, NONE OF THE BUSH RELIGIOUS FANATICS WILL ADMIT THIS, BUT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER WAS A FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE. A FUNDAMENTALIST-MOSLEM, FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE. DIFFERENT FAITH, BUT HEY, WE'RE ALL ABOUT DIVERSITY HERE." GEORGE CARLIN

FOMENTING PREJUDICE WITH FALSE CLAIMS

by Sam Dunlap

Same sex marriage continues to cause right-wing frenzy. Republican politicians and extremist preachers propagandize the issue endlessly. They effectively prey on easily swayed, credulous Christians who are fervent in their faith but happily unconcerned about biblical content and even less interested in

Christian theology and church history. Oftentimes, preachers make up things and blat out thoughts that sound good but are not at all truthful.

They call marriage between one man and one woman a sacred, ancient union blessed by God in Eden. Not so. God wanted Adam and Eve to live in the garden 'happily ever after' in a blissful, platonic relationship. When they defied Him, ate the forbidden fruit and 'knew each other' as do husbands and wives, they became unchaste- unclean- so he drove them from the garden and cursed them for their intimacy.

That marriage, clearly, was not pleasing to God. It seems also clear that God did not bless the marriages of Adam's children, who became unchaste as they sinfully interbred to produce the next generation of humanity. God had condemned their father "for all the days of his life" because of his transgression. Their transgressions undoubtedly received the same curse.

Reading further into the Bible, there is practically nothing to suggest that one-man-one-woman marriages were in accordance with God's will. In Old Testament times, marriages were not limited to one man and one woman. Any man could have multiple wives and as many concubines as he could afford. Consider Solomon, the historical Israeli king of renown, favored by God. The Bible proudly records that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines! And he "knew" them all! There was no such thing as marital fidelity or faithfulness between one man and one woman in those marriages. Polygyny, blessed by God, was the rule for centuries.

Jesus' personal life is always absent from political and religious arguments regarding marriage -- and for good reason. Jesus never married because that experience would have sullied him in the eyes of God, who would have condemned him just as He condemned His first (created) son, Adam. Jesus was born, lived and died a chaste, sacred virgin untainted by marriage.

Of particular note is the status of marriage in the eyes of the mother church of all Christianity, which denies marriage to its priests. Marriage would soil them, making them unfit to fully serve the Lord. How's that for calling marriage a sacred institution? Nuns, of course, are also prohibited from entering into earthly marriage, because relations with men would sully them, too

Archives containing manuscripts, homilies, gospels, and books contain much negativity about marriage. It has guided church theology throughout the centuries. A book in the *New Testament Apocrypha* states unambiguously that marriage is "a foul and polluted way of life." Such dogma has long been fundamental in church attitudes toward marriage.

Going back into the history of Christianity to the Dark and Middle Ages, celibacy -- virginity -- was highly venerated. Celibate Holy Orders were established and have been supreme as compared to the church's rather apathetic view toward people who chose marriage.

Paul was arguably the greatest of the apostles . . . Saint Paul who spread the word of Jesus throughout the known world . . . reluctantly accepted marriage for others but rejected it for himself. He believed that consummation of a man-woman relationship was inherently a sin against God. His writings are clearly expressed in Corinthians for those who wish to read them. Celibacy, chastity, according to Paul, was far superior to marriage. Indeed, he said, "those who marry will have pain and

grief . . ."

One of the towering Christian theologians of ancient times, Saint Augustine, denounced marriage, declaring, that intimate relations between spouses were acts of evil that produced children born into sin! He, in effect, called marriage a step into evil.

Proclamations that marriage has been a sacred rite for millennia and meant only for one man and one woman are pure bunk based on fiction, ignorance, or speciousness. Such arguments are simply pretentious nonsense. They sound good, especially when expressed with emotion, but they are absolutely without merit.

Marriage is an essential institution in civilized societies. It has many legal ramifications and allows for pleasing, social and community ceremonies -- with or without clerical involvement. When a priest "blesses this union" he confers nothing more unique on the couple than on the boats he blessed on Opening Day. His blessing has the same value as the Justice of the Peace saying "Good luck and best wishes."

So right-wing zealots in their stridency against same sex marriage should be called on their manufactured and unsupportable declarations that marriage is a time honored, blessed event only between one man and one woman. They simply do not know what they're talking about, or, if they do know the truth, they are willfully distorting it.

"HERE ARE SOME MORE JINGOISTIC VARIATIONS YOU NEED TO BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR: THE GREATEST NATION ON EARTH; THE GREATEST NATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD; AND THE MOST POWERFUL NATION ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH. THAT LAST ONE IS USUALLY THROWN IN JUST BEFORE WE BOMB A BUNCH OF BROWN PEOPLE. WHICH IS EVERY COUPLE OF YEARS." GEORGE CARLIN

NANO-PHONEME MOBILE PHONES

by Bill Witherup

Nano-Phoneme Mobile Phones are the latest in cellphone technology.

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NPMP transmits before the sender even has a thought, or a phoneme leaves the sender's mouth.

NPMP, in fact, does your thinking for you.

You don't even HAVE to think when you own NPMP!

NPMP has developed an entirely new technology that is even more

powerful than the electro-magnetic field.

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Warning: in a pilot study of female prisoners and female corrections officers, Gerflux was found to destroy some synapses. However we here at NPMP believe if the user restricts his/her phone use to only 8 hours a day that the advantages of NPMP far outweigh the risks.

NPMP is sold only through Albert & Witherup Curmudgeons, Inc

"WHEN I WAS A KID I READ A LOT OF CLASSIC RUSSIAN FICTION, AND FOUND IT STRIKINGLY ILLUMINATED MY OWN CIRCUMSTANCES GROWING UP IN THE RURAL MIDWEST - THE PROVINCIALISM, NARROWNESS, STULTIFICATION. SURE, WE DIDN'T HAVE A BUREAUCRACY ANYTHING LIKE THE RUSSIANS, BUT WE MADE UP WITH IT WITH PURITANISM, THE BUREAUCRACY OF THE SOUL."

FRED WHITEHEAD

WHERE ARE THE ACTIVIST MINISTERS?

by Helen Thomas

Where are the activist priests and ministers who took strong stands during the Vietnam War and hit the streets with their protests?

Three years into the war against Iraq, the silence of the clergy is deafening, despite U.S. abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and a reported American policy of shipping detainees to secret prisons abroad where, presumably, they can be tortured.

There are U.S. chaplains of many faiths serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, ministering to the men and women in uniform and reaching out to local religious leaders in both countries.

But here at home, the clergy seems to be in the same boat as the news media and most members of Congress: They are victims of the post 9-11 syndrome that equates any criticism of U.S. policy with lack of patriotism.

The clergy are not alone. There is a disquieting public acceptance of the status quo. Although the Iraq war has a role in President Bush's declining standing in public opinion polls, rising gas prices may be having a bigger impact on his popularity.

During the Vietnam War, the clergy were vocal leaders of the peace movement and they picked up and marched.

I was reminded of that bygone era -- a time when everyone got involved -- with the passing last month of Rev. William Sloane Coffin, a Presbyterian minister who served as chaplain at Yale University and pastor at Riverside Church in New York.

He was a follower of civil rights leader Martin Luther King and a liberal, to put it mildly.

Coffin went on the dangerous Freedom Rides in the South in the 1960s and 1970s and worked for human rights of African Americans. He became famous for his protests against the Vietnam War and later espoused the causes of gay rights and anti-nuclear proliferation.

He hailed from a wealthy family, attended Ivy League schools, and served in World War II. Before attending a theological seminary, he worked for the CIA.

But he will be most remembered for his moral courage.

The Nation Magazine -- which counted Coffin as a contributor -- quoted Coffin as saying he had the "sense of fulfillment from being in the right fight."

In a comment to *The Nation*, the minister praised peace activists and whistleblowers, saying: "Despair is not an option." He also wrote in the magazine of the two great biblical mandates -- "to pursue justice and to seek peace."

Writer and artist Robert Shetterly, Coffin's good friend, wrote on CommonDreams.org a eulogy of Coffin based on his long association with the minister, dating back to an anti-Vietnam war rally at Yale in 1968.

He recalled that Coffin had written in his latest book "Credo," a 2004 collection of his writings, that "the war against

Iraq is as disastrous as it is unnecessary; perhaps in terms of its wisdom, purpose and motives, the worst war in American history. Our military men and women were not called to defend America but rather to attack Iraq. They were not called to die for America but rather to kill for their country. What more unpatriotic thing could we have asked of our sons and daughters?"

Shetterly's perception of Coffin was that he was not self-righteous and that he had doubts about his own convictions at times. He also wrote that Coffin made mistakes but learned from them.

Shetterly said Coffin "spent his life trying to atone" for having followed military orders in 1945, putting 3,000 white Russians who fought against the Stalin communist regime on a train from Germany to Moscow "and sure execution."

Some of Coffin's quotes are memorable.

After 9-11, he said the U.S. government should have vowed "to see justice done, but by force of law only, not by the law of force."

He also said that "the world is too dangerous for anything but truth and too small for anything but love."

Lest I have selected Coffin's only intellectual qualities, Shetterly also describes his human side and said that he liked "a good drink. A good joke. A good song. A moral act. A worthy laugh."

[*Liberal Opinion*, 5/24/06]

"IT IS GOOD TO HAVE AN END TO JOURNEY TOWARD; BUT IT IS THE JOURNEY THAT MATTERS, IN THE END." URSULA K. LE GUIN,
SOURCE: *LITTLE ZEN COMPANION*, SCHILLER.

"THE OIL WARS"

by John Lee

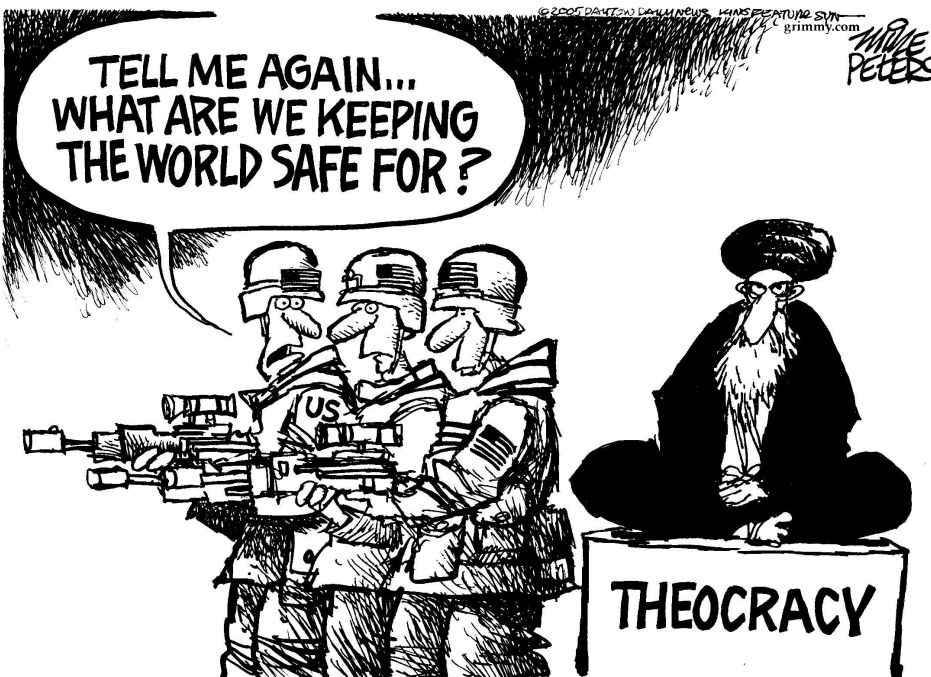
Oh say can you see by the dawn's early light,
Flying from SUV's both day and night,
Those weather worn, tattered American flags,
Once so proudly we hailed, now just wind whipped rags.

They stand for how eager we are to fight,
For the war lover's creed, "Our Right To Be Right".
And although it might take a full scale war,
They will always be ready to even a score.

We have a new anthem that's sung cross the land
"God bless America, please lend us a hand."
For they truly believe (with a great deal of pride)
"There's a god up there somewhere, and he's on our side."

We have done a great job in Afghanistan,
Killed lots of civilians and a few Taliban.
Now we're into Iraq, and with luck (and God willing)
We'll keep our troops there and do some more killing.

Then they'll send your son home in a black body bag,
And award you a folded American flag.
They'll tell you he died for our treasured soil,
But as everyone knows, it's all about oil.



"THE EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT THE PRESENCE OF AMERICAN TROOPS IS CLEARLY THE PIVOTAL FACTOR DRIVING SUICIDE TERRORISM. IF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM WERE THE PIVOTAL FACTOR, WHEN WE SHOULD SEE SOME OF THE LARGEST ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD, LIKE IRAN, WHICH HAS 70 MILLION PEOPLE -- THREE TIMES THE POPULATION OF IRAQ AND THREE TIMES THE POPULATION OF SAUDI ARABIA -- WITH SOME OF THE MOST ACTIVE GROUPS IN SUICIDE TERRORISM AGAINST THE U.S. HOWEVER, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN AN AL-QAEDA SUICIDE TERRORIST FROM IRAN, AND WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THERE ARE ANY SUICIDE TERRORISTS IN IRAQ FROM IRAN." PROFESSOR ROBERT PAGE, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, *DYING TO WIN*. 8UY67

NO ESCAPE FROM REALITY**by G. Richard Bozarth**

One of the ways religionism exerts detrimental moral influence is by causing religionists to believe the imaginary is objectively real, which makes them behave in ways that often have bad results because their behavior is not restrained by reality checks. They also have to repress their awareness of all the ways reality demonstrates that the supernatural exists only in their brains. They do it because religionism has been established in them as something vitally important.

Alas for religionists, all the sermons that have been preached and all the holy books that have been written cannot change this harsh fact of life: natural processes are relentlessly, mercilessly atheistic because they do not show the slightest indication of having been the result of intelligent, supernatural design or of being the result of the action of some supernatural force or entity.

Science is as relentlessly, mercilessly atheistic as the natural processes it studies, which is why it produces beneficial results with reliable consistency. The continuing success science has had in replacing supernatural explanations of phenomena with natural ones is why religionists so often hate science and do their best to weaken or eliminate its cultural influence. Meanwhile religionists must deal with this wretched fact of religious life: all methods of trying to get results from imaginary supernatural forces or supernatural entities in ways that would convincingly prove they have actual existence fail day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Religionists must repress and suppress the obvious if they are to sustain the faith that is so important to them. When they do this, they become more vulnerable to being corrupted by religionism's detrimental moral influence.

Prayer is an excellent example. Prayer doesn't work, yet occasionally it seems to work. Atheists know prayer only seems to work because every sect's and cult's prayers seem to work with equal efficacy. How can the times when prayer seems to work be explained? That's easy. The name of the power by which prayer seems to work is "coincidence."

Here is an example of "prayer" that seems to work. I'm the kind of person who talks to himself and pets and inanimate objects. I know it must seem peculiar, but it's part of my style. Sometimes I do it to amuse myself, sometimes to release stress, and sometimes just because I am who I am. I talk to the rain sometimes. When it's raining and it's getting close to quitting time, I sometimes will command the rain to stop so I don't get wet when I walk to my van. I do this to amuse myself. What is astonishing is how often the rain does stop by quitting time. Yes, the rain usually "ignores" my command, but a surprising number of times it has "obeyed" my command. So, does my command cause some supernatural force or entity to make the rain alter its behavior to please me, or is it merely coincidence that the rain stops after I command it soon enough to seem as if it is responding to my command? It is depressing when Atheists acknowledge how many people on this planet would believe the first choice is the answer!

Every religionist knows prayer doesn't work even though they all insist vigorously that it does. When they cite examples, such as healing after medical treatment, it is obvious to any rational person that it was the medical treatment that achieved the healing and not the prayer. Yet, to sustain the religious illusions that are so important to them, they must believe the

treatment would not have been effective without a supernatural miracle performed in response to the prayer. However, how many religionists rely on faith healing by prayer alone, which is one way to test the power of prayer for solving health problems? Well, there actually are several sects and cults in the U.S. that do precisely that, and every year members die from health problems that medical treatment could have cured. When they recover from an illness or injury after prayer therapy, it is only coincidence at work again because the body does not need science to help it defeat lots of illnesses and injuries. This is why an Atheist silly enough to refuse medical treatment can recover from the same illnesses and injuries without praying for healing.

In the developing countries, billions of people have only prayer or magic rituals to help them when they have health problems. Because prayer doesn't work, they are killed by the millions every year by diseases and injuries that medical science has eliminated as serious threats in the First World. Whenever JP2 was seriously hurt or sick, he rushed to a hospital like any Atheist would. He never rejected science to rely on prayer or some other kind of faith healing, which was saying with walk what he never would have said with talk about prayer. When TV evangelist Jerry Falwell got sick with viral pneumonia in March of 2005, he didn't seek out any of the numerous faith-healing Christian evangelists. He hustled his chubby butt to a hospital to have his faith-based life saved by science -- just like any Atheist would!

In the Bible this promise about prayer is made in words spoken by one-third of Christianity's imaginary three-part deity: "I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them." [Matthew 18:19-20] This promise is reinforced by the bragging another third did when it boasted to Abraham, "Is anything too wonderful for Yahweh?" [Genesis 18:14] Every Christian knows the promise is a lie because there is an endless list of things too wonderful for Christianity's imaginary three-part deity to perform in response to a prayer. If they refuse to know it consciously, they know it subconsciously. They prove they know it because there could not be any better test to demonstrate how true their True Faith is, yet they never use it to convert nonbelievers.

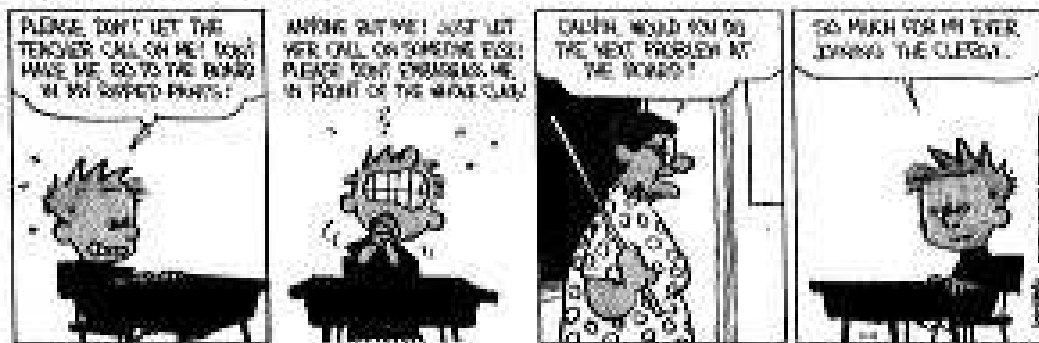
If anything at all will be granted and nothing is too wonderful to perform in response to prayer, here's an experiment to prove it. Build two houses in the middle of Death Valley, California. In each one put a freezer. When August arrives, put three Atheists in one house and three Christians in the other. The Atheists' house has electricity and water. The Christians' house has no electricity and no water. Both groups cannot leave their houses until they have used their freezers to produce ice. The Atheists have to use electricity and water to get their freezer to produce ice. The Christians have to gather in the name of Jesus Christ and agree to ask JC's father in heaven to make their freezer produce ice. Any bets on which group gets out first?

Prayer doesn't work. Yet religionists must continuously delude themselves that it does work and thus is a vitally important act that must have its importance recognized by government, because government is our most important cultural institution. The recognition is crucial because reality unendingly demonstrates that natural processes are not

influenced by prayer. Cultural recognition of the importance of prayer at all levels is necessary to religionists, who need constant reassurance that their belief in the existence of supernatural realms, entities, and forces is not false. They also need recognition to help them establish their brand of religionism in children and then to sustain that establishment for their entire lifespans.

One message sent by a government that preserves, protects, and defends a wall of separation between government and religionism is this: since prayer obviously does not work, engaging in and promoting prayer are not government's duties. After all, if prayer worked, it would be a foolish government that refused to include it among the means it uses to achieve its ends. The failure of prayer only increases religionists' need for government to behave as though prayer works. When government engages in or promotes prayer, it helps them sustain their delusions about the efficacy of prayer in particular and their True Faith in general. It helps them in the establishment of religionism in general and their True Faith in particular. That's why it is religionists who want to demolish the wall of separation. Atheists must never forget this brutal fact of religious life: theofascism is another effect of religionism's detrimental moral influence.

CALVIN AND HOBBS



WE ARE LIVING IN TWO AMERICAS NOW

May 4, 2006 Buzzflash.com

There is the Madison Avenue/Hollywood propaganda production of a presidency transmitted to Americans through transcribers (aka reporters) working for the corporate media that is in the tank with the White House.

Then there is the famous "reality-based" world of the people who are supposed to be running America: us.

In the reality-based world, the latest poll shows that only 30% of Americans approve of Bush's Iraqmire debacle. But the mainstream media still covers Iraq as if it could turn positive any minute, just as the White House and Don "Dementia" Rumsfeld dictate to them.

That's quite a gap between the fantasy world of the Busheviks and the "reality-based" world of the citizens who elect the American government.

The mainstream media is supposed to serve the interests of the national and local communities of America. But they don't. They represent the White House perspective, because the White House is the hand that feeds the financial interests of the corporate conglomerates. It's a business relationship.

The mainstream media giants use the same "K" Street

lobbyists that Exxon/Mobil do. These so-called providers of news know that their bottom line is threatened with every truthful story about the Busheviks, because as the White House has shown many a time, they take no prisoners, just revenge.

Meanwhile, the Busheviks are marching us toward a partisan, politically-driven war with Iran, in which nuclear weapons may be used, using the same game plan as they did for Iraq. And the media plays deaf, dumb, and mute for a second time.

Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld continue to act as if polls and public opinion don't matter. Bush has hit a record rock bottom in approval ratings, and he's off smirking and bike riding. It's as if the Busheviks feel the referees have been paid off (as in Bushevik judges sitting on the federal bench ready to rule in their favor on most issues) and the game is fixed. It doesn't matter what we think; they've got the power and they are not giving it up.

Of course, they can only keep their power by cranking up the fear, a rally around the Commander-in-Chief war cry, stealing elections, and continuing to control Congress and the courts. And they've shown that they can accomplish this without any strong show of opposition from the Democrats on the Hill. So they have a right to be confident.

They are still in office, still making disastrous decisions, aren't they?

They look and act like people who plan to do just what they've been doing -- with the confidence that no one is going to try or is able to stop them.

Their threats against Iran are just warmed over rhetoric from the pre-Iraq War stage. These are predictable Machiavellis. They mean what they say; and

they'll do whatever they have to do to stay in power.

As BuzzFlash has said before, from their perspective they ARE winning the Iraq War. They control the oil and they are building mega-permanent military bases in Iraq, as well as an embassy worthy of the British empire.

But the oil industry in Iraq has nearly been brought to a standstill, and if Bush attacks Iran (U.S. special forces and proxy militias are already allegedly operating inside Iran), our soldiers in Iraq (as the Iraqi blogger Riverbend predicts) will be sitting ducks as the Iran Shiite loyalists in Iraq seek revenge upon our soldiers.

Even in Iraq, you see, the Busheviks have constructed two countries: the one of the Neo-Con, oil profiteering fantasy, and the one of destructive bloody reality.

The mainstream media is now not a news operation; it's primarily a propaganda arm of the White House, whose goal is to support and sell "Brand Bush."

You see, reality doesn't enter into it, just ensuring profits for the big media. That's their only reality.

Meanwhile, reality-based Americans are helpless pawns in a game of madness unchecked.

"THE EASIEST WAY TO GAIN CONTROL OF A POPULATION IS TO CARRY OUT ACTS OF TERROR. [THE PUBLIC] WILL CLAMOR FOR SUCH LAWS IF THEIR PERSONAL SECURITY IS THREATENED". - JOSEF STALIN

DICTIONARY OF REPUBLICANISMS

Katrina vanden Heuvel (thenation.com)

abstinence-only sex education *n.* Ignorance-only sex education [Wayne Martorelli, Lawrenceville, NJ].

alternative energy sources *n.* New locations to drill for gas and oil [Peter Scholz, Fort Collins, Colo.].

bankruptcy *n.* A punishable crime when committed by poor people but not corporations [Beth Thielen, Studio City, Calif.].

"burning bush" *n.* A biblical allusion to the response of the President of the United States when asked a question by a journalist who has not been paid to inquire [Bill Moyers, New York, NY].

Cheney, Dick *n.* The greater of two evils [Jacob McCullar, Austin, Tex.].

China *n.* See Wal-Mart [Rebecca Solnit, San Francisco, Calif.].

class warfare *n.* Any attempt to raise the minimum wage [Don Zweir, Grayslake, Ill.].

climate change *n.* The blessed day when the blue states are swallowed by the oceans [Ann Klopp, Princeton, NJ].

compassionate conservatism *n.* Poignant concern for the very wealthy [Lawrence Sandek, Twin Peaks, Calif.].

creationism *n.* Pseudoscience that claims George W. Bush's resemblance to a chimpanzee is totally coincidental [Brian Sweeney, Providence, RI].

DeLay, Tom *n.* 1. Past tense of De Lie [Rick Rodstrom, Los Angeles, Calif.]. 2. Patronage saint [Andrew Magni, Nonatum, Mass.].

democracy *n.* A product so extensively exported that the domestic supply is depleted [Michael Schwartz, unknown].

dittohead *n.* An Oxy(contin)moron [Zydeco Boudreaux, Gretna, La.].

energy independence *n.* The caribou witness relocation program [Justin Rezzonico, Keene, Ohio].

extraordinary rendition *n.* Outsourcing torture [Milton Feldon, Laguna Woods, Calif.].

faith *n.* The stubborn belief that God approves of Republican moral values despite the preponderance of textual evidence to the contrary [Matthew Polly, Topeka, Kans.].

Fox News fict. Faux news [Justin Rezzonico, Keene, Ohio].

free markets *n.* Halliburton no-bid contracts at taxpayer expense [Sean O'Brian, Chicago, Ill.].

girly men *n.* Males who do not grope women inappropriately [Nick Gill, Newton, Mass.].

God *n.* Senior presidential adviser [Martin Richard, Belgrade, Mont.].

growth *n.* 1. The justification for tax cuts for the rich. 2. What happens to the national debt when Republicans cut taxes on the rich [Matthew Polly, Topeka, Kans.].

habeas corpus *n.* *Archaic.* (*Lat.*) Legal term no longer in

use (See Patriot Act) [Josh Wanstreet, Nutter Fort, WV].

healthy forest *n.* No tree left behind [Dan McWilliams, Santa Barbara, Calif.].

homelandism *n.* A neologism for love of the Homeland Security State, as in "My Homeland, 'tis of thee, sweet security state of liberty..." [Tom Engelhardt, New York, NY].

honesty *n.* Lies told in simple declarative sentences--e.g., "Freedom is on the march" [Katrina vanden Heuvel, NY, NY].

House of Representatives *n.* Exclusive club; entry fee \$1 million to \$5 million (See Senate) [Adam Hochschild, San Francisco, Calif.].

laziness *n.* When the poor are not working [Justin Rezzonico, Keene, Ohio].

leisure time *n.* When the wealthy are not working [Justin Rezzonico, Keene, Ohio].

liberal(s) *n.* Followers of the Antichrist [Ann Wegher, Montello, Wisc.].

Miller, Zell *n.* The man who shot and killed Alexander Hamilton after a particularly tough interview on Hardball [Drew Dillion, Arlington, Va.].

neoconservatives *n.* Nerds with Napoleonic complexes [Matthew Polly, Topeka, Kans.].

9/11 *n.* Tragedy used to justify any administrative policy, especially if unrelated (See Deficit, Iraq War) [Dan Mason, Durham, NH].

No Child Left Behind riff. 1. *v.* There are always jobs in the military [Ann Klopp, Princeton, NJ]. 2. *n.* The rapture [Samantha Hess, Cottonwood, Ariz.].

ownership society *n.* A civilization where 1 percent of the population controls 90 percent of the wealth [Michael Albert, Piscataway, NJ].

Patriot Act *n.* 1. The pre-emptive strike on American freedoms to prevent the terrorists from destroying them first. 2. The elimination of one of the reasons why they hate us [Michael Thomas, Socorro, NM].

pro-life adj. Valuing human life up until birth [Kevin Weaver, San Francisco, Calif.].

Senate *n.* Exclusive club; entry fee \$10 million to \$30 million [Adam Hochschild, San Francisco, Calif.].

simplify *v.* To cut the taxes of Republican donors [Katrina vanden Heuvel, New York, NY].

staying the course interj. Slang. Saying and doing the same stupid thing over and over, regardless of the result [Suzanne Smith, Ann Arbor, Mich.].

stuff happens interj. Slang. Donald Rumsfeld as master historian [Sheila and Chalmers Johnson, San Diego, Calif.].

voter fraud *n.* A significant minority turnout [Sue Bazy, Philadelphia, Pa.].

Wal-Mart *n.* The nation-state, future tense [Rebecca Solnit, San Francisco, Calif.].

water *n.* Arsenic storage device [Joy Losee, Gainesville, Ga.].

woman *n.* 1. Person who can be trusted to bear a child but can't be trusted to decide whether or not she wishes to have the child. 2. Person who must have all decisions regarding her reproduction functions made by men with whom she wouldn't want to have sex in the first place [Denise Clay, Phil., Pa.].

"TO MY WAY OF THINKING, THERE IS EVERY BIT AS MUCH EVIDENCE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF UFOs AS THERE IS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. PROBABLY FAR MORE. AT LEAST IN THE CASE OF UFOs THERE HAVE BEEN COUNTLESS TAPED AND FILMED -- AND, BY THE WAY, UNEXPLAINED -- SIGHTINGS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, ALONG WITH DOCUMENTED RADAR EVIDENCE SEEN BY EXPERIENCED MILITARY AND CIVILIAN RADAR OPERATORS."

GEORGE CARLIN, *WHEN WILL JESUS BRING THE PORK CHOPS?*

THE TRUE COST OF CONSIDERING ATHEISTS AS "OTHER"

by Adrian Liston

The University of Minnesota recently completed a study of the acceptance of minority groups into the American culture. In a political climate of distrust towards immigrants, gays and Muslims. The result was unexpected -- the least trusted minority group was atheists. 48% of people surveyed wouldn't want their child to marry an atheist and 40% think that atheists do not agree at all with their vision of America, a far greater level of distrust than for any other minority. In 1999, Americans were polled for their willingness to vote for a presidential candidate -- a generally well-qualified person nominated by your party who happened to be an atheist. Only 49% said would vote for such a candidate. And this distrust is far more persistent than the distrust against other groups -- in surveys from 1958 to 1999, the voting disadvantage of a Catholics, Jewish, African American, or homosexual Presidential candidate dramatically dropped, leaving the atheist candidate at the greatest disadvantage.

Why is that? Why is it that atheists are seen as immoral, self-centered and criminal? Why is it that while 10-15% of the US describe themselves as "not religious," only 0.4% call themselves atheists? By comparison, of the 46% non-religious in France, over 70% use the term atheist to describe themselves. Somehow, the antipathy towards atheists has become entrenched in American culture, to the point of legal standing (such as the exclusion to public office under the Texas Bill of Rights) and government reinforcement (where John Ashcroft can state "civilized individuals all understand that the source of freedom and human dignity is the Creator"). The net effect is

that atheist is such a dirty word that all of those in the public eye avoid using the term, except as an insult. Where are the secular politicians and even movie stars? As is occurring with the term 'liberal', the term 'atheist' has picked up such a negative connotation that people are avoiding it as a self-description. A religious neighbor will simply attribute the ethical and moral behavior of the atheist next door to religion, and the cycle of misunderstanding continues unbroken.

What is the cost of this misunderstanding to society? Yes, good people are shunned because of their lack of religious belief; no confirmed atheist could possibly become President. But the true cost to society is far greater than the exclusion of a freethinking segment of society. The true cost to society is that atheism becomes silent and alien. "Moral" becomes a byword for religion. Religion claims the sole right to decide morality, and secular morality is ignored or dismissed. By excluding atheism from public life, we create immoral legislation when religious mores, masquerading as morality, override true secular morality, and condom usage is blocked for HIV prevention, the right of abortion is rolled back, and marriage is denied based on sexual orientation.

The true cost of considering atheists as "other" is the denial of secular morality, and the corresponding legal application of religious views.

[Reference: *Atheists As "Other": Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society*. Edgell, Gerteis and Hartmann. *American Sociological Review* (2006) 71 p211. http://www.soc.umn.edu/amp/pubs/atheist_as_other.pdf]

"RELIGION IS FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER MATURED IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF ETHICS. RELIGION TEACHES A CHILD'S VIEW OF ETHICS, THAT 'BEING GOOD' MEANS 'OBEYING YOUR PARENT.' IT GIVES A MORAL BLANK CHECK TO THOSE BOLD ENOUGH, DISHONEST ENOUGH, TO CLAIM TO SPEAK FOR GOD. ATHEISM MEANS LOOKING AT ETHICAL QUESTIONS AS AN ADULT AMONG OTHER ADULTS, CONSIDERING ETHICS AS A MEANS OF MAINTAINING PEACE AND COOPERATION AMONG EQUALS SO THAT ALL MAY PURSUE HAPPINESS WITHIN THE LIMITS THAT ETHICS DEFINES."

JOHN B. HODGES

FOND FAREWELLS

JOHN COLLINS

John Pipkin Collins, of Monroe, Washington, born March 28, 1920 in San Francisco, California, passed away from age related infirmities on May 17, 2006. John lived a rich and textured life, most of it in support of (and a part of) the arts communities wherever he lived. He loved painting, languages, the opera, books, music and Poetry (he himself a poet of some repute). He worked in a Hollywood bookstore and knew many famous people personally. When he moved to Washington in 1948 he managed Hariman's Books and owned and operated Fifth Avenue Records, both in Seattle; during that time he was a part of the arts scene. When he retired (about 17 years ago) he established a mini-manor in his new home in Monroe. He had always wanted to be able to rescue feral cats, which he did frequently, sometimes keeping them himself and sometimes finding other homes for them. John was truly a patron of the arts. His home resembled an art gallery -- it was a delight to be invited to see it.



John was also the quintessential Humanist and was quite active in HOW until his retirement. We didn't get to see him very often after that, but we knew he'd found his niche and his final home, where he was very happy.

He was extremely witty and funny – always the “life of the party.” You just didn't know what was going to come out of his beautiful white beard next. We will miss him.

"WE DO NOT QUIT PLAYING BECAUSE WE GROW OLD, WE GROW OLD BECAUSE WE QUIT PLAYING." PLATO (CONTRIBUTED BY PERCY HILO AND DEDICATED TO JOHN COLLINS, WHO NEVER QUIT PLAYING.)

BUD ULMAN By Barbara Dority

Losing them both in the space of several months was jarring. We met Bud after his retirement from a military career. He was quite a character! In my most vivid memories of him, he would accompany me to speak to a class at the Oak Harbor high school. He insisted that I do the initial presentation, but then he'd jump in on the questions and answers. The kids loved him. He was very blunt about his Atheism and very personable with them. We always had a good time and lunch afterwards.

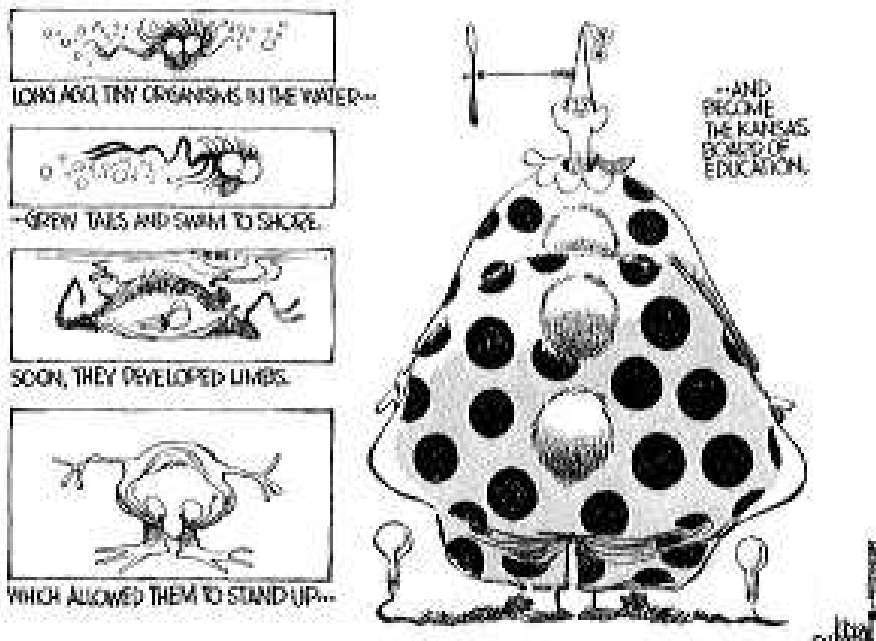
If you are a regular reader, you've seen many of Bud's letters to the editor over the years in this publication. He was completely committed to HOW and made regular contributions to our NW Humanist Center fund.

I will miss him very much.

TRIBUTES TO FUNDAMENTALIST FLATULENCE, EVANGELICAL EFFLUENCE, AND IMPLACABLE IGNORANCE

Fundamentalism (n) derives from two English words: fund (= give cash) + amentalism (= without brains)

Sorry . . . kitties!



Garrison Keillor wants to apologize to Republicans. Here's what he wrote on Salon: "Having been called names, one looks back at one's own angry outbursts over the years, and I recall having once referred to Republicans as 'hairy-backed swamp developers, fundamentalist bullies, freelance racists, hobby cops, sweatshop tycoons, line jumpers, marsupial moms and aluminum-siding salesmen, misanthropic frat boys, ninja dittoheads, shrieking midgets, tax cheats, cheese merchants, cat stranglers, pill pushers, nihilists in golf pants, backed-up Baptists, the grand pooh-bahs of Percodan, mouth breathers, testosterone junkies and brownshirts in pinstripes.'

"I look at those words now, and 'cat stranglers' seems excessive to me. The number of cat stranglers in the ranks of the Republican Party is surely low, and that reference was hurtful to Republicans and to cat owners. I feel sheepish about it." [Source: *Seattle P-I*, 5/19/06]

"A CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSIBILITY AND DUTY IS TO HATE THE JEWS."
POPE PIUS XI

Pat Robertson: Raked Over the Coals While Raking in the Dough By Bill Berkowitz - WorkingForChange

While the Rev. Pat Robertson was recently raked over the coals for suggesting that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's stroke was an act of retribution by God for the transfer of land in the Gaza Strip to the Palestinians, the Reverend's charitable organization, Operation Blessing, was raking in wads of faith-based money from the Bush Administration.

On "The 700 Club" -- Robertson's primary venue -- the Reverend pointed out that the Old Testament "makes it very clear that God has enmity against those who, quote, 'divide my land.' ... I would say woe unto any prime minister of Israel who takes a similar course to appease the EU (European Union), the United Nations or United States of America. God said, 'This land belongs to me, you better leave it alone.' "

Robertson's feelings that Sharon's illness was payback from God -- a sentiment that was seemingly shared by another ayatollah of acrimony, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad -- prompted Israeli officials not only to immediately criticize their longtime comrade but, perhaps more significantly to Robertson's economic portfolio, they cancelled his \$50-million contract to build a new Christian heritage center in the Galilee. The project, which itself hasn't been canceled, is geared toward attracting U.S. Christian tourists to Israel.

"MEN FEAR THOUGHT AS THEY FEAR NOTHING ELSE ON EARTH – MORE THAN DEATH. THOUGHT IS SUBVERSIVE AND REVOLUTIONARY, DESTRUCTIVE AND TERRIBLE; THOUGHT IS MERCILESS TO PRIVILEGE, ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS, AND COMFORTABLE HABITS; THOUGHT IS ANARCHIC AND LAWLESS, INDIFFERENT TO AUTHORITY, CARELESS TO THE WELL-TRIED WISDOM OF THE AGES. THOUGHT LOOKS INTO THE PIT OF HELL AND IS NOT AFRAID . . . THOUGHT IS GREAT AND SWIFT AND FREE, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, AND THE CHIEF GLORY OF MAN." BERTRAND RUSSELL

DOONESBURY by Garry Trudeau



SCIENCE ON TAP

Science on Tap is a place where anyone can come to explore the latest ideas in science and technology in a relaxed atmosphere.

A forum for discussing science issues with local scientists, Science on Tap is based on Cafe Scientifique. We are committed to promoting public engagement with science and to making science accessible.

What to expect: meetings usually last about one to two hours. The speaker gives a short talk about their area of interest, followed by a break to fill up on coffee and a time for small group discussions. Afterwards there will be a question and answer session and general discussion of the topic with the speaker and the audience at large.

Monthly meetings take place at the Ravenna Third Place Bookstore in Seattle at the corner of 20th Ave NE and NE 65th Street. Free parking is available.

HOW LIBRARY

Members interested in obtaining a list of HOW library books may request one by leaving their name and address on the HOW answering machine at 527-8518

SITES FOR FREETHINKERS

If you have access to the Internet and a web browser, we recommend visiting the following Secular/Freethought links. Please pass this information on to anyone interested in HOW or Secular Humanism.

Humanists of Washington & Secular Seattle
www.humanistsofseattle.org

The Secular Web
www.infidels.org

The American Humanist Association
www.americanhumanist.org

Corliss Lamont Site
 (includes complete text of *The Philosophy of Humanism*)
www.corliss-lamont.org

Ethical Culture Society of Puget Sound
www.ethicalculturesociety.org

Seattle Atheists
www.seattleatheists.org

Atheist Alliance
www.atheistalliance.org

Products for Humanists/Atheists
www.evolvefish.com (emblems, pins, shirts, hats)

San Francisco Atheists
www.sfatheists.com

Freethought Products
www.EvolveFISH.com

AAnews
www.americanatheists.org

Banned Books On-Line
www.cs.cmu.edu/Web/People/spok/banned-books.html
 CSICOP (Committee for the

Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal)
www.csicop.org

Positive Atheism
www.positiveatheism.org

Teaching About Religion with a View to Diversity
www.teachingaboutreligion.org

And Just For Fun:
www.jesudressup.com
www.jesusthemonstertruck.com

"WE DO NOT QUIT PLAYING BECAUSE WE GROW OLD, WE GROW OLD BECAUSE WE QUIT PLAYING." PLATO (CONTRIBUTED BY PERCY HILO)

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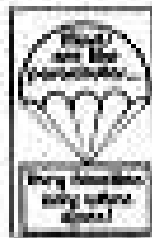
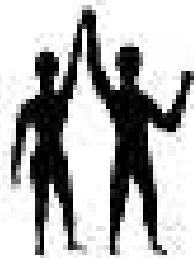


BIZARRO

By Dan Piraro

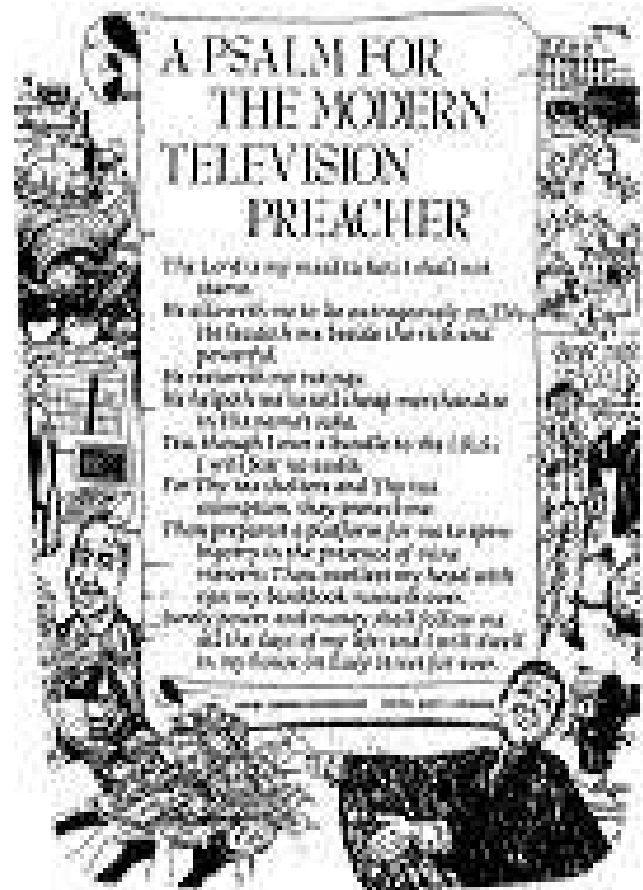


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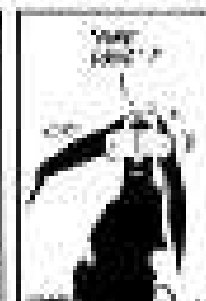
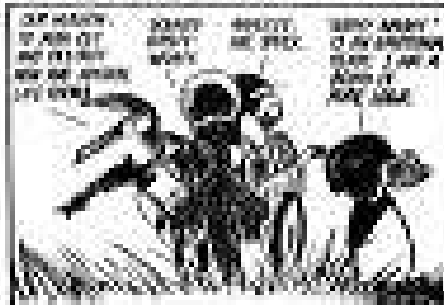
proposed
expansion
the corporation
and the
responsibilities
of
branches for long
the
expansion
of it.

Real Life Times 13 Dec. 1986



BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed



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