

THE FIRST COAST FREETHINKER

Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

An organization of brights (freethinkers and secular humanists) supporting free inquiry, education, and community in the Northeast Florida area

Our Motto: "To Question is the Answer."



VOLUME 2

JANUARY 2004

NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2004 MEETING

Speaker: David Schwam-Baird, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Political Science, UNF

Topic: "The Middle East -- Right Now!?"
Dr. Schwam-Baird will discuss developments in Iraq and in Israel-Palestine, which seem to be changing by the minute, changing on the surface, at least.

Time: **Monday, January 12, 2004**, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Place: Jacksonville Public Library, Southeast Branch, 10599 Deerwood Park Blvd., Jacksonville, Florida.

JANUARY PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE "The Value of Evolution"

Evolutionism is the cornerstone of biology. That is a fact confirmed by most upper-tiered biologists in the world. The National Academy of Science's handbook for biology teachers titled, Teaching About Evolution and The Nature of Science tells us that, "Teaching biology without evolution would be like teaching Civics classes without mention of the constitution." (7) I believe that not only is evolution necessary to the understanding of biology in an all-encompassing way, the two absolutely cannot be separated or else you are not teaching biology for today's world. According to the handbook, Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science, "Evolutionary research is one of the most active fields of biology today, and discoveries with important practical applications occur on a regular basis."

(4) Its value to our economy cannot be overstated. And, I believe, if anything, scientific creationism/intelligent design, whatever you name it, is creating barriers to economic progress by its attempts to insert itself into the scientific curriculum at all levels of education. What is at stake in this evolution/creationism dilemma is our very way of life and the future of our planet.

Scientific method is a little understood process by which scientists do their work of making and verifying discoveries and developing scientific theory. Even some biologists and other scientists are not really clear on its meaning. Tim Berra explains scientific method in his book, Evolution and the Myth of Creationism. He states, "The vast body of knowledge generally known as 'science' proceeds via the scientific method. Activity that does not function this way is a poor bet to uncover the truth, a poor way for example to design a bridge we would care to trust." (2) Scientific method is precisely what Darwin used when making the discovery of evolution. It consists of observation and careful analysis of a phenomenon, formation and repeated testing of hypotheses to confirm findings. Then, and only then, does it become a "theory." In other words, as William Howells explains in his book, Getting Here: The Story of Human Evolution, (6) theory really means the whole of a developed network of ideas in a given science: the well-established facts, the probabilities, and the possibilities to which these lead... But people are apt to say "theory" when they really mean "hypothesis." (6)

Scientific theory is probably one of the most misunderstood words in the English language. I feel it would be valuable to science to clarify the meaning of scientific theory fre-

quently, as you would do in trying to teach kids to brush their teeth, until the general population understands its true meaning.

With science, you don't see the whole evolutionary picture at once. It is a process of building on theory after theory to accumulate a vast body of knowledge. It has been going on since science was known as philosophy. Admittedly, any given theory may have some inconsistencies in it. But, the beauty of scientific method is that if there are errors or inconsistencies, they will eventually be discovered by this process.

Field Biologists such as Edward O. Wilson and Jared Diamond are the real workhorses of the field of biology. They have years of education to learn about all the different forms of life, both animal and vegetable. Then they go to the sources which are the rain forests, deserts, mountains, rivers, creeks, marshes, and oceans the world over. These biologists gather thousands of species of every conceivable life form, catalogue and label them, make comparisons of their physical features, test DNA samples for comparisons and categorize them in their different phyla. This is not guesswork. It is painstaking, arduous hours of work by educated minds. They have filled museums around the world with displays of thousands of species of every form of life. What a valuable gift to mankind.

So, whose information do we trust to learn about life, its origins and development over the centuries, a field biologist or a creationist? Many of the creationists have little education in related fields of science. They have based their theories on two chapters of an ancient book by unknown authors whose information was "received" in an unorthodox manner. Their "research" pales in comparison to research by even one field biologist like Edward O. Wilson.

For years, Dr. Wilson traveled most of the major rainforests of the earth gathering species of ants. He and Bert Holldobler, a German anthropologist with whom Wilson collaborated for a number of years, co-authored, The Ants, one of only a few science books ever to win the Pulitzer Prize. Dr. Wilson said of his friend Bert Holldobler, "By strength of character, alone, no scientist more deserved recognition." (Naturalist, p. 302) "He simply loved science as a way of

knowing." (p. 303) When you have examined several thousand samples of a species as has Dr. Wilson, I would say you can call yourself an "authority." I do not understand how anyone could read his book, Naturalist, and not believe in the value to today's world of "the theory of evolution."

If you had to have brain surgery to remove a tumor from deep within the substance of your brain, would you want to have someone who based their expertise on a couple of pages from a 2000 year old book and had no practical experience with removing brain tumors? Or, would you rather have a neurosurgeon who has studied the structure of the brain, has dissected an actual cadaver brain to learn the landmarks of various brain structures and has read many books on brain surgery to learn all the pitfalls? Then why are we willing to accept information passed on to us by creationists with so little actual exposure to legitimate research.

Tim Berra tells us about the record of research and publication of creationists in his book Evolution and the Myth of Creationism. (p. 138)

Their scholarly publication record is nonexistent. With all their talk about "scientific creationism," the creationists have produced no documentation in the scientific literature. No empirical, experimental, or theoretical evidence for "scientific creation" has been published in peer-reviewed science journals, the traditional method whereby scientists communicate the results of their research. (p. 138)

When we are searching for factual information that would be actually useful to base conclusions on that would be helpful in solving world problems or finding a cure for disease, shouldn't we be looking for material that is supported by legitimate evidence? When we are looking for information to clarify problems in real science, creationism comes up short in producing understanding. I have to think that creation science's efforts to gain recognition of their theories is doing a grave disservice to scientific advancement.

To try to gain more legitimacy for creationism, they are now espousing a more updated version called Intelligent Design Theory. A pamphlet published by Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier, Inc. informs us of their new ideas.

This is the notion that organisms are too complicated and too improbably well adapted to their various niches to have formed by chancey Darwinian evolution alone. Somewhere, somehow, some sort of designing force - God perhaps - intervened to give natural selection a hand.

The pamphlet further states, "Intelligent design is mainly about picking holes in Darwinism. It does not lead to positive assertions of its own that can be reliably tested by experiment." (1) Actually, to add insult to injury, Dr. E. O. Wilson postulates that "Traditional Religious beliefs have been eroded, not so much by humiliating disproofs of their mythologies as by the growing awareness that beliefs are really enabling mechanisms for survival." (3 On Human Nature)

I sympathize with those who are compelled to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible and hold to the idea of creationism. However, religion and science fulfill different purposes in our lives. Religion is a philosophical and cultural belief system that addresses different aspects of our life. Religion is an attempt to teach people about morality and how to treat others to make the world a better place. There is another sticking point with creationists that Christopher Toumey relates in his book, God's Own Scien-

tists, stating, "Within that cluster of creationist organizations centered on the Institute for Creation Research, it is universally agreed that the idea of evolution bears much responsibility for immorality."

However, science is an outwardly directed endeavor, intended to accomplish goals that will result in building a body of useful knowledge that will solve future problems. These include such crucial needs as increasing food production, dealing with environmental problems, advances in medical discoveries, etc. Trying to inject religious dogma into the field of science is not a productive endeavor. It consumes a lot of taxpayer money to resist the insertion of creationism into our educational system. Let science do science, and religion be religion.

--W.WI

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- National Academy of Science Working Group. Teaching about Evolution and the Nature of Science. Washington DC. National Academy Press. 1998.
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- Wilson, Edward O. On Human Nature. Cambridge. Harvard. 1978.
- The Hand of God. New Scientist 175 2362 3. Reed Elsevier. 2003.

THE VALUE OF PRAYER

Keeping somebody in your prayers may have spiritual value, but it provides no health benefits, say Duke University researchers.

They conducted the largest study to date on the effects of prayer on patients undergoing heart surgery. Before their operations, 750 patients were randomly split into two groups; half

were prayed for by Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Muslims, while the rest received no prayers.

Prayer teams were notified by email to start intercessional prayer as soon as possible after the patient was enrolled in the trial, but neither hospital staff, patients, nor relatives had any idea who was being prayed for. After six months, the patients who received prayer had fared no better than those who didn't.

The study contradicts earlier findings from the same team, which suggested that prayer might reduce the risk of death, heart failure, or heart attack. That study involved only 150 patients, and more extensive follow-up research, completed this year, found no evidence of benefits.

Some theologians contend that such trials are destined to fail, says BBCnews.com, because they "put God to the test" something the Bible forbids. (*THE WEEK - Health News* 10/31/03, page 22) --W.W.

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HUMANIST FOUNDATIONS OF PROGRESS

Presentation at Monthly Meeting

Jennifer Hancock, Executive Director, Humanists of Florida Association, gave a dynamic presentation at the December 8, 2003, FCFTS monthly meeting. She coupled humanism from a historical perspective with the goals and philosophy of the HFA. Beth Perry tells us what she had to say.

Jennifer introduced herself and stated what she wanted to accomplish is to encourage us as a group to become more active and involved in outreach by educating and encouraging others to join us in our struggle to create a better world. She also asked us as individuals to join the Humanists of Florida, and said that they grew from a membership of about six individuals to 805 in just 3 years.

She spoke about Compassion and Progress and their relationship to Humanism; about the history of Humanism and how it is related to social progress, and how this movement is a progressive movement. The basis of Humanism is reason, which is a right, and compassion for Humanity.

The history of Humanism has been a history of progress. Western Humanism arose in the 15th century during the Renaissance. At that time classical scholars were funded by the church, but as they became educated and saw how the proletariat was kept ignorant and uneducated so they would believe what the priests taught, the educated scholars became Humanists with compassion for the proletariat.

This rocked along until the 16th century when things really began to change. The Humanists wanted everyone to have parity and intellectual freedom, the most dangerous idea of all. Humanists were and are not now anti-religious. In fact, most mainstream believers are also humanistic. They have compassion for their fellow man. It is the church and especially the Fundamentalists who take the Bible literally

2004 DUES ARE DUE!

For the purposes of keeping our records up do date, will RENEWING members, as well as NEW members, kindly *FILL OUT THE MEMBERSHIP FORM* elsewhere in this newsletter. Many thanks!

The Board

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ELECTION OF 2004 OFFICERS

The annual election was held at the FCFTS monthly meeting on December 8, After thanking the outgoing board members for their help and support in 2003, President Wilhelmina turned the meeting over to Nominating Committee Chair, Mark Renwick, who presented the following slate:

- President - Wilhelmina Walton
- Vice President - Alice Ricker
- Secretary - Carrie Renwick
- Treasurer - Ray Pitts
- Parliamentarian - Fred Hill

There were no nominations from the floor, and the slate was unanimously accepted as presented. Alice Ricker, Fred Hill, and Carrie Renwick join the board this year; the rest continue their incumbency from 2003. Carrie has agreed to continue as email secretary. Additionally, Mark Renwick has been appointed as Board Member-at-Large. --H.B.

that have the problem. Humanism is the bane of conservative religion such as the Fundamentalist Christians and some Evangelical Christian churches.

To the church, these ideas were very dangerous as the term Humanism expressed the spirit of intellectual freedom by which man asserted his independence from the authority of the church. And to this day, it still does. Thus began a revolution of sorts, and now the western world and western traditions are culturally humanist. Humanism is the rational and empirical tradition of Greece, Rome, and Europe. It is the western approach to science, political theory, ethics, and laws. *Our entire culture is based on the humanist principle that humans are endowed with reason, the skill necessary to reshape our world according to our needs, and compassion which is a belief in the inherent dignity of human beings.*

Therefore, the Humanist movement led to democracy, human rights, and even the protection of the environment, ideals that now the entire world is striving for. All because someone back in the 16th century decided people could and did think for themselves.

And now what can we as individuals do? We can speak up and challenge authority that is attempting to backtrack on our way of life. We can show our compassion which is a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering. We like to think it is logic and reason that compels us, but it isn't. It is much easier to sit back, keep our mouths shut and let the other guy do it. However, keeping our mouths shut has never ended an injustice, therefore, we are compelled to speak up and act on behalf of not only ourselves, but others who are suffering. This is truly what humanism is all about.

The issues that we are about are diverse just as all humans are diverse, and Humanists care about their fellow man. We are compas-

sionate and we want to alleviate suffering. We believe in the dignity of all humans. We have the ability to reason and solve problems by ourselves. This idea was revolutionary ...that we can fix our own problems, not God. These thoughts made social activism possible.

The impediments to progress are authority, (i.e. religious and secular). We challenge both to alleviate suffering, and recently emphasis has been on challenging religious authority. So we need to combine our need to move past religion to create progress even with its hatred of Humanists; and with that we get Modern Humanism and non-theism. We use our logic as a weapon against religion. However, reason alone does not a Humanist make. For instance, *“Views that merely reject theism are not equivalent to Humanism. This lacks commitment to the positive belief in the possibility of human progress and to the values central to it.”* – Humanist Manifesto II. In short, views that merely reject theism lack compassion.

At the present time, conservative religion is winning this battle, and it is working actively to repeal the advances that Humanism has brought to the modern world. We are in a period when all of us need to speak up against injustices. We need allies in our struggle for progress. Cultural Humanists are our allies. Our fight with conservative organized religion is justified, but our emphasis on reason to the exclusion of compassion is hindering us as many people share our compassion for humanity. I am not advocating abandoning reason. *Reason is the tool we use to implement the change that our compassion desires.* What I am advocating is that we use our compassion as the reason for change.

Compassion compels us to work to provide better health care, to end torture, to ensure that our civil rights are protected and to work to make sure that our intellectual freedom is not abridged. You do not have to be an atheist to feel compassion. Compassion is what enables us to have a positive vision for the future. *“Let*

We have the ability to reason and solve problems by ourselves. This idea was revolutionary ... that we can fix our own problems, not God.

us not abandon that vision to despair or cowardice... Let us call for an end to terror and hatred... The commitment to tolerance, understanding, and peaceful negotiations does not necessitate the acquiescence to the status quo nor the damming up of dynamic and revolutionary forces. The true revolution is occurring and can continue in countless non-violent adjustments... Humankind has the potential intelligence, goodwill, and cooperative skill to implement this commitment.” --Humanist Manifesto I

Where do we go from here? Humanism is a statewide movement, so we need to recruit and compete with the Christian Coalition. We need progressive social action and we have a new 5 year plan with grassroots activist training. We need to unify, mobilize, and strengthen. We need to form coalitions with other progressive groups. If they are progressive, then they are humanists if not technically Humanists. This approach will aid the First Coast Freethought Society in bringing in younger members of the community as well as aid you in your goal of promoting humanism to advance a community of reason and compassion. It will aid in our progress to the future. Don't hide your humanism. Speak out. Actively recruit new members and don't forget to be compassionate. Thank you.

--B.P.

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JANUARY SOCIAL

To: Freethinkers, FCFTS members, friends, and guests.

What: **DINNER and SOCIALIZING** at the **STEAK AND ALE** Restaurant, corner of BAYMEADOWS & I-95 South.

When: **TUESDAY, January 27, 2004**, (4th Tue.) Gather at 6:00 p.m. for cocktails in the LOUNGE; 7:00 p.m. for dinner.

RSVP to **Carrie Renwick**, at 268-8826, or email CarrieRen@att.net . **The deadline to RSVP is Sun., Jan. 25, 2004!**

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NAMES OF DAYS AND MONTHS

Fundamentalists pretend not to notice, but the names our days and months are pagan. God gave the days numbers but they are now given names “because, like everything else, Satan made sure that God’s commandments were confused and ignored.”

Here are the origins of days:

- Sunday**—named after the sun god
- Monday**—named after the moon goddess
- Tuesday**—named after the god Tyr, Tiv, Tiu, or Tewes
- Wednesday**—named after Odin, Wotan, or Wodin, Norse god and creator
- Thursday**—named for Thor, Norse god of thunder, weather, and crops
- Friday**—named after the goddess Frigga, Frige, or Freya
- Saturday**—named after the god Saturn

Here are the origins of months:

- January**—named after Janus, patron of beginnings and endings, with two faces, one facing backward, and one facing forward
- February**—named for Februa, a Roman festival of purification
- March**—named for Mars, god of war
- April**—named for Aprilis, a time of fertility
- May**—named for Maia, the Roman goddess of growth and increase
- June**—wife or Jupiter, called queen of heaven and of mighty ones; or, month in which crops grow to ripeness
- July**—named for Roman emperor Julius Caesar
- August**—named for Roman emperor Octavius Augustus Caesar
- September**—named seven, before two months were added to beginning of the year
- October**—named eight
- November**—named nine
- December**--named ten

(www.therefinersfire.org) --H.B.

WHY I AM NOT A BRIGHT

FCFTS member Curtis Wolf has given considerable thought to the “Bright concept.” The First Coast Freethinker welcomes and encourages the opinions of its readers. We invite yours!

“I’m a bright. You’re a bright. Wouldn’t you like to be a bright, too?”

Yes, the preceding line is a cheap rip off of the Dr Pepper commercials that were popular many years ago. However, like the commercials, it reflects the desire of human beings to be part of something bigger than themselves. Human beings are social creatures and often find meaning and camaraderie within social groups. Large social movements provide an additional benefit of reducing our feelings of powerlessness when we view the world around us. When I am one, I am weak and powerless. When we are many, we are strong and can change the world. This is the allure of the bright movement.

Is the bright movement worth our time and energy? I say no. I consider it a poorly conceived idea that at best is a waste of time and at worst may hurt the image of freethinkers. While I have no problem bringing freethinkers together to find some common ground within their disparate viewpoints, emphasis on a naturalistic worldview promotes a rigid orthodoxy I thought I left behind when I rejected Christianity many years ago. Later in this essay, I would like to propose a different common ground that I believe to be more conducive to unity while maintaining flexibility in evaluating the evidence for and against supernaturalism and mysticism.

The word bright implies intellectual arrogance. I do not care how many times that its proponents claim that the word bright is to be used as a noun and does not claim superior intelligence for those who hold a naturalistic viewpoint. I can guarantee that these arguments will fall on deaf ears.

Further, it does no good to point out that the word gay does not imply that homosexuals are happier than heterosexuals and therefore we

should view bright in the same way. There is nothing about the homosexual lifestyle that even implies that heterosexuals are sad and homosexuals are happy. Non-belief in God has long been considered to be more popular among intellectuals and scientists than among the less educated population. Considering the anti-intellectualism of many Christian groups, it hardly makes sense to give them new ammunition that we are nothing more than ivory tower intellectuals who disparage Christianity and other religions as the delusions of stupid and ignorant people. I am surprised that this did not occur to the founders of the bright movement.

I also disagree with the emphasis on naturalistic viewpoint orthodoxy. I fear that there are too many within the freethought community who promote a creed that rejects the possibility of any supernatural phenomena with the same rigidity that Christians view belief in God. I believe that a much better approach was laid out by Massimo Pigliucci in *Free Inquiry* (Pigliucci 2003). He argued that while science cannot disprove the existence of supernatural beings or phenomena, science can create a provisional working model of reality that rejects supernaturalism. The key word here is provisional. I have no reason to believe in life after death, but I will never know for sure until I die. If we take the scientific view that our knowledge can change with every new discovery, we have to acknowledge that we may one day find that we were wrong about life after death, ESP and even the existence of God. If that day should come, will we then dissolve the bright movement? If not, we have become as dogmatic as the Christians.

I believe that freethinkers should find common ground in our reliance on reason and science to understand our universe and solve world problems. We should recognize the superiority of scientific inquiry over divine revelation. We should recognize the superiority of solving our own problems through reason over waiting for a savior that may or may not come. This common ground does not require the revocation of my membership in the freethought movement if I should believe in the existence of red polka dotted fairies. It does require me to

base this belief on replicable evidence that is rigorous and objective. There is no point in quoting from a sacred book whose authority I do not recognize or telling me a story about a religious experience that I cannot validate. No matter how wonderful the words in the book are or how real the experience felt, we are in danger of self delusion if we do not rely on evidence that is meticulously gathered and carefully interpreted by knowledgeable experts. I believe that if a supernatural world exists, it will be discovered by science and not by religion. Finally, I believe that combining reason and skepticism with an open mind will lead to a far better social movement than whatever the brights have in mind.

References

Pigliucci, Massimo. 2003. "Methodological Naturalism vs. Philosophical Naturalism." *Free Inquiry* 23(1): 53-55

--C.W.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The issue of how best to handle the "Bright situation" remains unresolved. Please submit your comments via email to Hugo or Carrie, or drop a line to Carrie at 10653 Hearthstone Dr., Jacksonville 32257.

To learn more about the brights concept, visit: <http://www.the-brights.net/>. --C.R.



IF WE RAN THE CHURCH

A local imaginary community Christian church could be improved with a little effort. Assuming its ten thousand members are very satisfied with hearing the same message every Sunday morning and going home feeling they have the right beliefs, we probably would not want to change this and would fail if we tried. But one possibility would be to expand the church's activities. Expansion, here, means more outreach, services, goals, concepts to increase participation in the community. It means utilizing the talents of a few members who want to do more.

The preacher keeps his job unchanged because the audience needs his skills and knowledge. But the choir is pushed to sing more varied selections and musicians play more varied instruments. The Sunday School classes offered for adults could expand from *New Age Cults, I*

Have Been Downsized, Spiritual Warfare, and Identify Theft to new classes which could include *History of Christianity, History of this Denomination, History of the Bible, Current Bible Scholarship, and Other Religions*. These would be noted for their accuracy far beyond classes in other denominations. Some seminaries teach "warts-and-all" classes, so churches should be able to do something similar.

The traditional classes which rely heavily on rote learning and one-word quiz answers could continue for those who favor this.

The church could supplement its weekly notice in the local newspaper to provide a small infomercial each week which provides some details about its good works: meals served to the needy, clothing collected and distributed, picnic to be held, activities of fifth grade Sunday School. It would provide a summary of the budget once a year. It will also explain the activities in this new outreach. The church would

pay a modest sum to the city for fire and police protection.

The biggest change is to reach outside the city to the county, state, and nation. So a small committee is formed from energetic members. The purpose of this Expansion Committee is to contact legislators in Tallahassee and Washington and also the media about important events in which the whole community has an interest.

The purpose is for the church to provide commentary on non-controversial topics which need discussion and changes to improve the community. These include condemnation of domestic violence, improvement of child care for working mothers, health insurance for all children, repair or replacement of defective school buildings, increasing safety in the work place, improving the war on drugs.

The Committee selects a topic each month and writes to appropriate public officials to urge changes. The officials will take notice if told the size of the membership. The monthly activity is described briefly in the paid infomercial so members are aware and hopefully some will want to join by writing their own letters and participate in other church activities. The Committee will also notify other churches in the denomination in Florida of its activities with an invitation for them to do the same.

Some members will be outraged by such changes and leave the church while most will remain. But some may respond to the challenges of making themselves a bigger part of the community. Pastors will hopefully broaden their views and maybe even cease trying to be final authorities on abortion, evolution, birth control, and other religions..

--H.B.

IN MEMORIAM

John Claude Deshaies, age 73, of St Augustine, FL, died peacefully at home, November 19, 2003, after a valiant three year fight with multiple injuries and illnesses.

He was born in Albany, New York. He attended Our Lady of Angels Elementary School; Venetian Institute; and Russell Sage College where he earned a BA in Sociology. Subsequently he earned a MA in Sociology from the University of Chicago.

John's professional career spanned 20 years; first working in Chicago as a Social Research Analyst from 1962 to 1968, followed by a move to Maryland and a variety of positions of progressive responsibility while working for the US Census Bureau from 1968-1982. He devoted his career to developing sociologically-based methodologies for the creation of automated information systems that would allow for further research on the epidemiology of diseases within a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. He headed five major projects that led to ground breaking statistical research analysis. As a result of his efforts, he was awarded the Silver Medal Award for Meritorious Federal Service.

He mentored many research scientists and statisticians along the way. He educated people around the world on his work, through lectures, seminars, authoring and co-authoring of dozens of manuscripts and articles describing the application of innovative health information gathering and computer-generated analysis of local health data. Since his retirement in 1982, he has resided in St. Augustine, Florida.

As a life-long humanist, pacifist, activist, and socially progressive thinker John pursued activities and organizations to be involved in that furthered those value systems. Along the way, he brought his creative thinking to, and led, many efforts within socially conscious organizations. He co-founded the Humanists of Northeast Florida for instance.

Above all he was a kind, caring and tolerant man who gave much more than he ever wanted from or took back from this world.

--Dennis Deshaies

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NEWSLETTER

The First Coast Freethinker is published for members of the First Coast Freethought Society, other freethinkers, and potential freethinkers (brights). We exchange newsletters with other freethought groups and get information from many other sources. Readers are free to reprint our original materials if they give credit to this publication.

NOTE: The officials of this organization do not take responsibility for opinions and other statements expressed by anyone in this newsletter. It is intended to convey ideas to stimulate thinking and for discussion about a wide variety of subjects.

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 (See membership application in newsletter)

PURPOSE

The purpose of the First Coast Freethought Society is to serve the needs of the non-religious population of Northeast Florida; to promote freethought and secular humanism; to provide a place for agnostics, rationalists, atheists, skeptics, and other freethinkers (brights) to hear speakers and discuss philosophy, science, ethics, and other topics of interest, and to enjoy fellowship with like-minded people.

FREETHINKER

A freethinker is a person who forms opinions about religion or any other subject on the basis of reason, independent of tradition, authority, or established belief.

CALENDAR - 2003 - 2004

January 12, 2004 - Dr. David Schwam-Baird
 January 27, 2004 - **STEAK & ALE**
 February 9, 2004 - Ken Hurley
 February 24, 2004 - **SOCIAL**
 March 8, 2004 - Monthly Meeting
 March 23, 2004 - **SOCIAL**
 April 12, 2004 - Monthly Meeting
 April 27, 2004 - **SOCIAL**
 May 10, 2004 - Monthly Meeting
 May 25, 2004 - **SOCIAL**
 June 14, 2004 - Monthly Meeting

FIRST COAST FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY

An organization of freethinkers and secular humanists supporting free inquiry, education, and community in the Northeast Florida area

Post Office Box 550591 • Jacksonville, Florida 32255-0591 • 904-288-6291



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION – 2004

We are an organization of freethinkers and secular humanists supporting free inquiry, education, and community in the Northeast Florida area. We do not believe in the supernatural. The First Coast Freethought Society welcomes you as a member. For further information, visit our web site, address below.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email address (legibly!): _____

Occupation: _____

Areas of interest and/or expertise: _____

How did you hear about us? _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

Regular (\$30.00) _____ Senior (15.00) _____ Student (\$15.00) _____

I am interested in being involved in the FCFTS as a:

General Member: _____ Committee Member: _____ Officer: _____

Financial Supporter: _____ Other: _____

TO MEMBERS: Do you object to your name appearing on the Membership List which would be distributed only to other members? YES _____ NO _____

Other Comments: _____

Make check payable to: **FIRST COAST FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY**

Mail to: Post Office Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591

Visit our web site at: <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

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THE FIRST COAST FREETHINKER
Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society
8831 Taurus Circle South
Jacksonville, Florida 32222

FREETHOUGHT HEROES **January 2004**

MEETING DATES

**Usually the Second
Monday of every
month:**

January 12, 2004
February 9, 2004
March 8, 2004
April 12, 2004
May 10, 2004
June 14, 2004
July 12, 2004
August 9, 2004

Lucretia Mott (1793-1880)

Quaker suffragist helped organize the women's rights movement at Seneca Falls

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) patriot who wrote *Common Sense* and *The Age of Reason*

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) English philosopher, studied knowledge, advanced inductive reasoning

Alice Paul (1885-1977) suffragist who organized demonstrations and wrote the Equal Rights Amendment

Michael Servetus (1511-53) Spanish theologian who opposed the Trinity, was burned as a heretic

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) Humanitarian, clergyman, physician, musician, philosopher

FREETHINKER DEADLINES

**Kindly submit items
to Hugo or Carrie by
Friday:**

January 16, 2004
February 13, 2004
March 19, 2004
April 16, 2004
May 21, 2004
June 18, 2004
July 16, 2004
August 20, 2004