

THE FIRST COAST FREETHINKER

Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

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

Our Motto: "To Question is the Answer."



VOLUME 2

JUNE 2004

NUMBER 6

JUNE MEETING

Speaker: **Ellen Wagner, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, UNF.

Topic: **"What Is the Good Life?"** Dr. Wagner will discuss the ancient Greeks' concept (Aristotle's in particular) of what it took for a human being to lead a good life. Quite different than today's concept!

Time: **Monday, June 14, 2004**, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., in the sanctuary.

Place: **Unitarian Universalist Church**, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, FL

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A New Mentor for Freethinkers

*Susan Jacoby, an award-winning independent scholar, is the author of numerous articles and seven books, the latest of which is **Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism**. She is director of the Center for Inquiry-Metro New York and lives in New York City.*

“We have retired the gods from politics. We have found that man is the only source of political power, and that the governed should govern.” --Robert G. Ingersoll, July 4, 1876

So opens Susan Jacoby's new book, *Freethinkers*. For many of us, I think we have found our freethinking mentor in the person of Susan Jacoby. Although I have not yet finished

Freethinkers, I have heard her interviewed several times, and I am extremely impressed with her ability to express the type of humanism, atheism, and freethinking that appeals to me and others I have talked with. If our message of truth, reason, and rationality is ever to be heard and listened to, it may be Susan Jacoby who teaches us how best to express it.

The newsletter from our friends of the Secular Humanists of the Low Country in Charleston, SC, quoted a study revealing that Americans view "atheists" as the greatest threat to American society, ahead of Muslims with whom we are particularly at odds at the present time. The writer further states, "We may be the last minority against which intolerance and discrimination are not only permitted but modeled by political leaders at every level." Scary thought isn't it?

I was particularly pleased to hear John Kerry say at his recent rally here in Jacksonville, that questioning authority and speaking out is not only appropriate, it is the "patriotic thing to do." Has the need ever been greater?

Forty-four million Americans are without health care insurance even as the health care system seems to be losing its efficiency, and those with health care insurance face yearly premium increases. As drug prices escalate, drug companies are lagging in new drug discoveries and are enlisting aid from academia in research, indicating insufficient numbers of able scientists.

We face a growing deficit, loss of high paying jobs, a failing infrastructure, growing water shortage/pollution problems, an energy crunch with increased gas prices, many and varied other ecological problems, education problems, lack of proper care for thousands of de-

pendent children, vanishing precious food sources due to pollution in rivers, oceans and their estuaries, while at the same time we are depleting our resources fighting what some consider an unjustified war; and I could go on.

In her book, Jacoby quotes Robert Ingersoll: "Secularism teaches us to be good here and now... Secularism teaches us to be just here and now... It has no glorified fog. It depends upon realities, upon demonstrations; and its end and aim is to make this world better every day."

Jacoby states, "These values belong at the center, not in the margins, of the public

square. It is past time to restore secularism, and its noble and essential contributions at every stage of the American experiment, to its proper place in our nation's historical memory and vision of the future."

I suggest we all read her book. To show our support, get in front of your computer or take pen in hand and start writing, or pick up the telephone and call those in office. Let the world know that freethinkers have something valuable to say.

As a very wise gentleman has said, "If not us, who? If not now, when?" --W.W.

CAN YOU CARRY THE TORCH?

Can you carry The Torch? Not the Olympic torch, but rather the Free-thought Torch!



Since its inception in 1999, the First Coast Freethought Society (FCFTS) has become an important voice for freethought in Jacksonville. Our membership had grown to over 70 members in 2003, with 54 persons having renewed thus far in 2004, and our mailing list contains an additional 145 individuals and organizations who support freethought. In addition, we have built healthy bonds with allied organizations like the ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Having served on the Nominating Committee several times over the years, I have noticed a pattern in our organization. Since our inception, the same names come up year after year as candidates for elected office. Sometimes there is a little friendly "arm twisting" to encourage individuals to accept a nomination. In-

variably, those who have accepted the responsibility have fulfilled their obligations to the best of their abilities. All members and friends of the Society owe a "thank you" to those who have kept the society a viable organization over the years.

Some of the charter members who were very active in the early years of the Society have been drawn away from active participation by other responsibilities in their lives. The shifting of time and talent from one set of activities to another comes as no surprise: It is a normal part of the life cycle of individuals and organizations. Unfortunately, we have not been very successful in mentoring new members to fill the spaces left by long-time members who have become less active.

As I look toward 2005, I wonder who will lead the First Coast Freethought Society through the rest of the decade. I believe leadership must come from a combination of current leaders and new leaders—new leaders yet-to-be identified. New individuals need to get involved and gradually replace current leaders.

The official Nominating Committee will not take form until September. In the meantime, I urge each of you to consider getting more involved by taking a leadership role in the Society in 2005. Between now and September, there is plenty of time to talk to current officers about ways you can help. Please consider giving time and talent to the First Coast Freethought Society.

--Mark Renwick

DID JESUS EXIST?

Some Conclusions of the “Jesus Seminar”

Blair Scott states that Jesus probably existed even though there is little actual evidence for this.

Jesus may be a fabrication based on pre-Christian mythology. Scott draws an analogy with William Wallace of the Braveheart legend. How do we determine truth about Jesus?

The four Gospels (“good news”) were not signed or dated. Their authors and dates are guesses made by the Catholic Church. Then Scott lists nine events with reasonable dates from 27 to 100 A.D.: the death of Jesus, oral stories about him, letters of Paul, Gospels of Thomas, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, and the capture of Jerusalem.

He gives a quotation from Mark--the shortest and simplest, therefore considered to be the first written--and shows how Matthew and Luke expanded it, while John is quite different still. Interestingly, he describes how many sayings attributed to Jesus are considered probably to be pagan ideas. For example, Turn the other cheek, Give the shirt off your back, and Go the second mile.

Scott lists fourteen things that Jesus did. Among them: Was baptized by John the Baptist, was an itinerant teacher in Galilee, proclaimed the kingdom of God, etc. Scott claims that if we leave off the embellishments, Jesus was actually teaching Judaism. However, Christians are not told this today. When the Jesus Seminar made public its findings, fundamentalists yelled in protest because their beliefs were undermined.

In addition, translating from the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic (probably Jesus’ language) is very difficult. The exact definition of words can be elusive, and social context presents yet another barrier. Jesus spoke of himself as *barnasha* which is translated as “son of man” when it refers to a human being. *Bardalaha* is translated as “son of God” but it can also mean god-like.

If Jesus were proven to have existed, it would have no effect on atheists. Believers have created a myth from a man but that does not affect Scott. “Christianity has turned a man into a

myth. Proving the man existed does not prove the myth. Are we witnessing the death of a religion?”

People would answer, No. Christianity fills many needs so will be here for many centuries. The Gospel of Thomas is merely a collection of quotations gathered years after Jesus died based on what people remembered. They were collected only then because believers had expected Jesus to return at any moment.

Mark--whoever he was--took sayings to create the earliest and shortest gospel beginning with the baptism of Jesus as an adult by John the Baptist. “Matthew” and “Luke” took that text and expanded it to include the birth and resurrection.

The Jesus Seminar consists of a loosely-organized group of liberal Bible scholars who look critically at the text, trying to understand what actually happened, and why. After discussions, they vote on controversies using balls in one of four colors to indicate if they think the sayings a) belong to Jesus; b) may be his; c) may not be his; or d) are not his. Only a fifth are considered truly his, but many more are considered probably his, so most are accepted. These biblical scholars are questioning the infallible Word of God, which upsets believers.

Members of the Seminar travel around the county to deliver lectures, with several having been presented in Florida in the past few years. This research is a contrast to the typical Sunday School classes which consist mostly of rote memory of what exists in print.

Some members whose names may be familiar to you have included founder, Robert W. Funk, Elaine Spagels, Robert M. Price, John Dominic Crossan, and Bishop John Shelby Spong.

Scott’s web site is particularly remarkable because it originates in Mobile, Alabama! It is an oasis of enlightenment in the desert of fundamentalist Protestantism which misused religion to defend slavery and racial segregation. He is well informed about current research and understands Christian history far better than do most church-goers.

(The web site is secularsouth.org.)

--H.B.

HOW DO WE APPEAR?

Taken from *The Economist*

Terry Loucks found the Special Issue on America in the November 8, 2003, edition of The Economist very enlightening. Once in a while it is informative to see how we appear to our friends in Europe.

In the big picture, 80% of us are “very proud” to be Americans while Europeans range from Britain at 50% to Germany at 18%. Sixty percent of us say that religion plays a very important role in our lives while Europeans range from 33% in Britain to 12% in France. When asked to choose between “providing freedom to pursue goals” or “guaranteeing no one is in need,” we are at nearly 60% for “providing freedom” while the Euros range from 40% in Germany to 25% in Italy.

As reflected in the Bush vs. Gore election (remember the red and blue states?), America is seen as divided into two tribes or cultures. One is religious, puritanical, family-centered, and somewhat conformist. The other is tolerant, hedonistic, secular, predominantly single, and celebrates multiculturalism. Most of the secularists live on the Pacific coast and in the north-eastern and upper mid-western states, while the traditionalists live along the spine of the Rockies and in the South.

The distribution of American opinion forms a bell shape with the traditionalists and the secularists on the two tails. In the middle is a bulge of moderate opinion, largely suburban families that are indifferent to, or even repelled by, this contest. Such people make up a hefty share of the roughly 40% of Americans who describe themselves as politically moderate.

Americans are becoming more religious, but church membership has only slightly increased from the lows of the late eighties. In 1965, half of the respondents to a Gallup poll said the most important purpose of their church was to teach people to live better lives. More recently, that share has grown to almost 75% of respondents. Religion for many is playing a more therapeutic role than one of salvation.

Europeans are baffled to learn, however, that three times as many Americans believe in the virgin birth as in evolution and that over 80% of Americans say they believe in God (almost the inverse statistics that those prevailing in Europe). Currently, 39% of Americans describe themselves as born again Christians (the percent among Protestants has increased from 40% to 50% since the late eighties.) Furthermore, 58% of Americans think that unless you believe in God, you cannot be a moral person.

These shifts in opinion have given a boost to one particular group of churches: evangelical Protestants, which includes the Baptist, Confessional, and Pentecostal churches. They have grown from 24% of the adult population in 1987 to the largest today at 30%. The percentage of Catholics has stayed stable, largely thanks to Latino immigrants, but established Protestant churches, such as the Presbyterians, have declined sharply. --T.L.

HUMANIST BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP



The FCFTS humanist book discussion group meets at 2:00 p.m. on the 3rd Sunday of each month at Borders Books, 8801 Southside Blvd., phone 519-6500. Books for each meeting will be held behind the register under the name of Kross. The schedule is as follows:

- June 20, 2004 - *The Third Chimpanzee*, by Jared Diamond
- July 18, 2004 - *Freethinkers*, by Susan Jacoby (Yes, this is the book whose author was interviewed on public radio.)

For further information, leave a message at 996-1553, or write jewellkross@yahoo.com. Hope you can join us! --Jewell Kross

SOUTHERN STATESMAN

Charles E. Bennett And the Southern Manifesto

Charles E. Bennett's statue was installed in Hemming Plaza, in Jacksonville, in April. He was honored as an outstanding Representative in Congress for over four decades and is now buried in Arlington National Cemetery. He sponsored legislation making "In God We Trust" the U.S. motto and requiring it to be included on all coins and currency. He created Timucuan Ecological and Historical Preserve. Mayor John Peyton thinks of him when he has to make a difficult decision. The statue has these words chiseled on the marble: friend, scholar, statesman, preservationist, citizen, war hero.

But probably some of the old timers have forgotten where he put his signature many years ago. They might even ask him, if they could, how he feels about it now. He signed the Southern Manifesto protesting the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling ending racial segregation in public schools in the United States, which appeared in the Congressional Record on March 12, 1956.

Nineteen senators from the 11 formerly confederate states and 77 members of the House from more states objected to the court's use of an unwarranted decision that "is now bearing fruit always produced when men substitute naked power for established law." The Constitution was created by the founding fathers to provide "change by amendment in order to secure the fundamentals of government against the dangers of temporary popular passion or the personal predilections of public officeholders. We regard the decisions of the Supreme Court school cases as a clear abuse of judicial power."

The Southern Manifesto continued, stating that this legislation by courts disparaged the authority of the Congress and the reserved rights of the states and the people. The Constitution and amendments do not mention education. The congress that passed the amendments provided for segregation in the District of Columbia. Judicial rulings approving segregation began in the North and were followed by many states, ten of

them named.

Signers of the Manifesto observed, separate but equal facilities did not deny rights to anyone, and parents could still guide the lives and education of their children. The Supreme Court ruling is an unwarranted exercise of power, contrary to the Constitution, creates chaos and confusion, destroys amicable relations between white and Negro races that have been created through 90 years of patient effort of the good people of both races, and has planted "hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding." It comes without the consent of the governed from outside mediators threatening revolutionary changes and "is certain to destroy the system of public education in some of the States."

This is followed by six short statements and ends with the following solemn words.

"Even though we constitute a minority in the present Congress, we have full faith that a majority of the American people believe in the dual system of government which has enabled us to achieve our greatness and will in time demand that the reserved rights of the States and of the people be made secure against judicial usurpation.

"We pledge ourselves to use all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force in its implementation.

"In this trying period, as we all seek to right this wrong, we appeal to our people not to be provoked by the agitators and troublemakers invading our States and to scrupulously refrain from disorder and lawless acts."

Some of the senators who signed the Manifesto include Harry F. Byrd, Strom Thurmond, and Florida's George A. Smathers. These four did not sign: Lyndon Johnson, Albert Gore, Estes Kefauver, and Florida's Claude Pepper. (Internet contains several articles with more details)

The eleven Southern States have the highest density of Christians in the nation. The largest denomination is Southern Baptist. The nation is still trying to end racial segregation in public schools. Did Bennett ever change his mind?

--H.B.

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JUNE SOCIAL

To: All **Freethinkers**, FCFTS Members, Friends, and Guests.

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

When: **TUESDAY, June 22, 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 e-mail CarrieRen@att.net. **The deadline to RSVP is SUN., June 20, 2004!**

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DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE

The Presidential Prayer Team wants the public to “pray for the President as he seeks wisdom on how to legally codify the definition of marriage. Pray that it will be according to Biblical principles. With many forces insisting on variant definitions of marriage, pray that God’s Word and His standards will be honored by our government.”

Therefore, the law will have the following principles as dictated by the holy, infallible word of God:

1. It will be a union of one man and one or more women.
2. It will not impede a man’s right to take concubines.
3. The father has the right to choose a husband for his daughter.
4. It will be valid only if the wife is a virgin; if she is not, she shall be executed.
5. Marriage of a believer and a non-believer is forbidden.
6. Marriage is for life, so divorce is not permitted.

7. If a married man dies without leaving children, his brother shall marry the widow. If he refuses to do this, or refuses to give her children, he shall pay a fine of one shoe or otherwise be punished as determined by law.
8. In lieu of marriage if no acceptable men are available, the woman and her sisters can make her father drunk and have sex with him. (e-mail) --H.B.

* * * * *

FAITH-BASED SUCCESS NOT SUCCESSFUL

Born-again Charles Colson has developed a program to reform criminals in prison. He spent time in prison, then later developed a program called Prison Fellowship which uses religion, reading the Bible, and holding discussions to convince prisoner to change their ways.

The program is called InnerChange and is much publicized. It was even evaluated to show that it was successful. Colson was praised by George W. Bush in the White House as an example of the importance of faith in improving society.

The program began with 177 prisoners, but only 75 graduated and found a job when they got out. They were the successes. The 102 who did not graduate due to dropping out, being released, or other reasons, were ignored in the report but should have been counted. The 75 successes actually returned to prison at a slightly higher rate than those who did not participate in the program.

John DiIulio still believes in faith-based programs. He directed Bush’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives for a year. (*Church and State*, September 2003)

Even if the 75 had been successful, they represent only 42% of the total, a low rate. Attempting to change attitudes in prison is not likely to have much good effect when ex-cons return to their previous haunts.

--H.B.

UPDATE ON THE INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE CLASS PROJECT

It has been an interesting year in the fight for the separation of church and state in Duval County. For those who have not heard about this previously, I have been talking to the various individuals in the Duval County school system about the Introduction to Bible courses approved by the Duval County school board last year. In theory, these courses allow the teaching about the Bible in an objective academic manner. What we need to know is whether this theory is actually finding itself into practice.

Towards this end, I have met with the teachers of the courses at Sandalwood and Stanton College Preparatory. I have kept up a consistent flow of letters to the school system expressing my concerns and asking for the opportunity to view the courses in person. I worked with the People for the American Way in initiating a public records request for information about the courses.

Clearly, this year has been a mixed bag. While the public records request has provided us with valuable insight into how the courses are being taught, we were denied the opportunity to sit in on the courses by Stanton. The same request to Sandalwood was never answered. Many of my letters and phone calls were not returned. This has resulted in many unanswered questions that cannot be ignored by the school system.

Despite all this, the People for the American Way sent a letter to John Fryer identifying deficiencies in the teaching of the courses by the school system and requesting that the courses be taught in accordance with the Constitution and the requirements of the state approved course descriptions. We should support the People for the American Way as they speak up for the First Amendment.

I have sent questionnaires to the principals of Stanton and Sandalwood about the courses. With these questionnaires and other information that I have compiled, I plan to re-

lease a report to the press in early August on the Introduction to Bible courses. I am hoping that this will open a public discussion on teaching the Bible in the public schools in a constitutionally friendly way.

How can you help? Send letters supporting our efforts to:

William Gesdorf, Principal
Sandalwood High
2750 John Prom Blvd.
Jacksonville, Fl. 32246

Jim Jaxon, Principal
Stanton College Preparatory School
1149 West 13th St.
Jacksonville, FL 32209

John Fryer, Superintendent
Duval County Public Schools
1701 Prudential Drive
Jacksonville, Florida 32207-8182

In your letters, express your support for the objective academic teaching about the Bible in the public schools. Also, express your support for my questionnaire and the letter sent by the People for the American Way.

If you have any questions, please contact me at wolfcu@comcast.net. --Curtis Wolf

* * * * *



"Well, you can just forget what the dictionary says. From now on, the word 'voluntary' means you have to pray when I tell you to."

SATAN ORDERED OUT!

Mayor Banishes Satan from Inglis, FL In a Proclamation

"Be it ordered from this day forward that Satan, ruler of darkness, giver of evil, destroyer of what is good and just, is not now, or ever again will be, a part of this town of Inglis...In the past, Satan has caused division, animosity, hate, confusion, ungodly acts on our youth, and discord among our friends and loved ones. NO LONGER! We exercise our authority over the devil in Jesus' name. By that authority, and through His Blessed Name, we command all satanic and demonic forces to cease their activities and depart the town of Inglis."

Mayor Carolyn Risher, 62, printed this proclamation on official stationery, stamped it with a gold seal, and signed it. With the help of the town clerk she made copies and stuffed them into four hollowed-out fence posts. On each was painted the words, "REPENT," "REQUEST," and "RESIST." Then with a local pastor, a town commissioner, and the chief of police, she took them to the four entrances of the town of Inglis and in the name of the population (1241 persons) fixed them into the ground.

"My main goal was to wake Inglis up. If the proclamation could get people to wake up and realize they needed God, then it would be a success—then Inglis would be saved."

Inglis, FL, is located on U.S. 19 along the Gulf Coast, a couple dozen miles southeast of Cedar Key. Local shrimp fishermen have fallen on hard times due to imports. There is not a lot of commercial activity going on.

The mayor helps her husband by driving a wrecker for his towing business. On the wall of her office is a map of the United States with numerous multicolored pins. Each represents a newspaper, television, or radio station, a total of 217, which sent a representative to the town, one from Sydney, Australia. "We got the world's attention," she said. "It was like wildfire. You couldn't put it out."

"The Daily Show" of Comedy Central sent a correspondent from New York, dressed in a red devil's costume. He stood in front of Lil' Champ's convenience store and slipped passers-by \$20 dollar bills to chase him out of town for the camera. The mayor collected many letters from around the world supporting her, enough to fill five binders. A couple from Canada has claimed they are planning to sell their home and move to Inglis.

When one of the posts with its messages was stolen, all four were replaced. They were then sunk into the ground with reinforced concrete, caps installed, and a Pentecostal pastor anointed them with oil and a blessing.

"This is the most extreme intrusion into religion by a public official that I have ever seen in my 27 years as a director of the ACLU," said Howard Simon, executive director of the ACLU of Florida.

At a town hall meeting, some citizens claimed the ACLU was pushing them around. A critical woman was shouted down. But the people agreed to move the posts to private property. The mayor promised to repay \$13 for stationery, copying, and telephone calls. The proclamation was not official because it had not been formally approved by a commission vote.

But some residents expressed reservations about the proclamation.

"I just think that when [Risher] put it on town letterhead, that she crossed the line," resident Polly Bowser told CNN. "There is an ordinance in our town that says that you do not use town letterhead for personal opinion, and that's exactly what she did."

A local restaurant owner observed, "It reminds me of the Taliban. If you're not Muslim, you're worthless. She just reversed the situation."

Now the conflict between church and state has died down. The local tavern's business increased. The police chief says drug dealing and burglary are down and drug busts are up. "And the Big Man upstairs is the reason."

The local restaurant has been broken into three times in one year. A waitress was fired because she and her boy friend were drinking on the job. Street drugs are still available. The

drug rehab center still tries to help drug addicts, ex-cons, and drunks. A Korean War veteran ran for mayor against Risher a year before and says he was whipped, but the devil was not. Evil is not outside but inside people.

(www.newscoast.com and www.CNN.com)

--H.B.

* * * * *

ONE-PARTY DEMOCRACY

The democracy we grew up with is slowly fading away. Let us look at both houses of Congress, the courts, and voters. The House of Representatives and Senate are controlled by the Republicans who could remain in power for decades. This is helped by the small number of contested seats and Republican courts, including the Supreme Court if Bush wins reelection.

The two major political parties were both divided into conservative and liberal, thus creating four groups. Majorities shifted among these in the past. Major legislation was based on hearings, floor debate about amendments, and meetings of conferees. This has changed starting about twenty years ago and now is rare with Tom DeLay as Majority Leader in the House.

Changes to House bills are often made at night by DeLay, House Speaker Dennis Hastert's chief of staff, and the Rules Committee. Bills are to be voted on after 48 hours, but this has been changed to sometimes be under an hour for "emergency" bills, meaning members will not know what they are voting for. Hearings have been bypassed and amendments eliminated for three quarters or more of the bills. Republicans who object can lose committee assignments, campaign funds, and maybe have another Republican run against them in the next election.

For example, when the recent Medicare bill was voted on, the majority were in favor of importing lower-cost drugs from Canada and having the federal government negotiate lower costs with American drug companies but these never came up for vote. When conferences are scheduled between the two parties, Democrats

are sometimes excluded unless they support the Republicans. Members had one day to examine the thousand-page bill before voting.

In conferences, Republicans write major legislation, such as the Medicare bill, even if both houses of Congress had previously voted the opposite. Occasionally Republicans are permitted to vote against the leadership to satisfy the voters at home but are too disorganized to rebel or are indifferent. Democrats do not object because they would appear to be whiners, the media are silent, and Senate Democrats are less unified and can only filibuster.

State legislatures have changed districts to make them safe for either party. But the Republicans have more of them. Democrats are very unlikely to regain control of many of the House swing districts which can go either way. House Republicans are not concerned and do not have to compromise policy, so they push extreme legislation regardless of public desires. The Senate does not have districts, and Republicans are strong in the South.

Voting machines are supposed to increase accurate counts, but the three biggest manufacturers are closely related to the Republican Party. Their software can be manipulated to produce any desirable outcome. Identification is required to vote, but voters can be intimidated with threat of prosecution to keep them away. The McCain-Feingold law has lowered donations of soft money but raised the limit on hard money, which the Republicans have in great abundance. Incumbents get disproportionately more money and publicity, discouraging Democrats from running against them.

In the court system, The Supreme Court will probably become more conservative as have the federal appellate circuit courts. This means more limits on sexual privacy, on criminal, voting, reproductive, and disability rights, and on progressive taxation; plus more reduction in rights of gays, women, racial, religious, ethnic minorities, and unions; and less protection of workers, consumers, the environment, privacy, and separation of church and state. (*The American Prospect*, February 2004) Much effort will be needed to change all this. --H.B.

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NEWSLETTER

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

Submit contributions by e-mail to Hugo or Carrie, or mail to Hugo at 8831 Taurus Circle, South, Jacksonville, FL 32222. See monthly deadlines on back cover of every newsletter.

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.

For web site postings, contact Carrie.

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 (See application in newsletter or on web site)

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, to hear speakers and discuss philosophy, science, ethics, and other topics of interest, and to enjoy fellowship with like-minded people.

MEETINGS

We meet the second Monday of every month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, 7405 Arlington Expressway, in Jacksonville, FL 32211 Time: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

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.

BRIEF CALENDAR - 2004

June 14, 2004 - Monthly Meeting
 June 20, 2004 - Book Discussion Group
 June 22, 2004 - **SOCIAL**
 July 12, 2004 - Monthly Meeting
 July 18, 2004 - Book Discussion Group
 July 27, 2004 - **SOCIAL**
 August 9, 2004 - Monthly Meeting
 August 15, 2004 - Book Discussion Group
 August 24, 2004 - **SOCIAL**
 September 13, 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: _____

E-mail 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>

President: **Wilhelmina Walton**

Wilwalt@Juno.com



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

FREETHOUGHT HEROES **Born in June**

MEETING DATES

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

May 10, 2004
June 14, 2004
July 12, 2004
August 9, 2004
September 13, 2004
October 11, 2004
November 8, 2004
December 13, 2004

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96)
Author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* describing
the lives of slaves

Emma Goldman (1869-1940) An-
archist who advocated birth control and
women's rights

Julian Huxley (1897-1975) Biolo-
gist who helped organize UNESCO

Helen Keller (1880-1968) Deaf and
blind woman who overcame her handicaps,
encouraging other disabled persons

Francis Crick (1916-) Biologist
who discovered role of DNA in heredity

Nat Hentoff (1925-) Author who
advocates First Amendment, separation of
church and state

Julia C. Lathrop (1858-1932) First
head of Children's Bureau, who pushed es-
tablishment of juvenile courts and registra-
tion of child births

FREETHINKER DEADLINES

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

May 21, 2004
June 18, 2004
July 16, 2004
August 20, 2004
September 17, 2004
October 15, 2004
November 19, 2004
December 17, 2004