



July 2009

Volume 7, Issue 7

Inside this issue:

“Aren’t You Adrift?”	4
Religious Wars on the First Coast	6
Anti-Semitism Remains a Scar	8
Freethinkers Are Being Heard, More and More	10
Meet Karen Wells	11
NPR Corporate Sponsor Drive	14

July 2009 President’s Message

Earl Coggins

“Descended from the apes! My dear, let us hope that it is not true, but that if it is, let us pray that it will not become generally known.”

A Victorian ma- tron (a bishop’s wife) became famous for this statement which was a reaction to a

quote from *Man’s Place in Nature* (1863) by Thomas Henry Huxley,

where he said that man is “separated by no greater structural barrier from the brutes than they are from one another.” He was of course lending support to the *Origin of Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin.

say we do, we do ourselves great harm. Take the whole notion that the Founding Fathers were nonreli-



gious. Many of my first encounters with free-thinkers involved conversations about the Decla-

ration of Independence and the United States Constitu-

(Continued on page 3)

That people with opposing world views came together in the 18th century to create a secular form of government...is great evidence that people with opposing world views can work together again to complete other meaningful goals in the 21st century.

What we don’t know may not hurt us, but when we don’t know and

“So far as I can remember, there is not one word in the Gospels in praise of intelligence.”

—Bertrand Russell

July 2009 Meeting

Reverend Harry Parrott, Jr., President, Clay County Chapter, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and Ordained Baptist Minister

“A Baptist Minister Reflects on the Freethought Tradition”

Monday, July 20, 2009, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

In the Sanctuary, upper parking lot level • Doors open at 6:00

Unitarian Universalist Church • 7405 Arlington Expressway • Jacksonville, FL

HUMANIST BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

- When:** 2:00 p.m., the first Sunday of each month.
- Where:** Borders Books, 8801 Southside Blvd., 519-6500, books are usually in stock.
- What:** Books/magazines planned for discussion:



- July 5, 2009 - *The Jesuit and the Skull: Teilhard De Chardin, Evolution, and the Search for Peking Man*, by Amir D. Aczel.
- August 2, 2009 - Article of choice from <http://atheism.about.com/>

You may select any article from the Agnosticism/Atheism section of the About.com website. You may either go to the primary website at About.com (click <http://atheism.about.com/> and click on the Agnosticism/Atheism link on the right, under “Explore Our Topics,” or chose something from the “Browse Topic” on the left side; or you may go directly to Atheism.About.com (link above). Some of the topics currently on the site: Atheism 101: Common Questions Answered; Common Myths About Atheism & Atheists; Why Not Believe? Reasons for Atheism; How to Be an Atheist; and Top 10 Conversation Killers for Atheists; Church/State Separation; Bible Analysis, Commentary; Ethics and Morality; Advice for Atheists; Atheist Activity & Politics.

For more information, contact Jewell Kross at JKross@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org. or call 904-996-1553.



The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for FCFS members, other freethinkers, and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive three issues free of charge, after which they must join the FCFS to continue to receive hard copy.

Readers are invited and encouraged to reprint our original materials provided they give credit to this publication. The officials of the FCFS are not responsible for opinions or other statements expressed in this newsletter. The *FreeThinker* is intended to convey ideas that stimulate thought and promote discussion on a variety of subjects.

We welcome submissions. The deadline is the **FOURTH SATURDAY** of each month for the

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following month's issue. Submit contributions to the newsletter by e-mail to Hugo (see above), or by U.S. mail to Hugo Borresen, 8831 Taurus Circle South, Jacksonville, FL 32222.

June 2009 President's Message
(Continued from page 1)

tion, which invariably led to discussions about the Founding Fathers, or as some would put it – the Framers of the Constitution. Just about any atheists I spoke with about the men who signed the Declaration of Independence told me they were a bunch of atheists. When I spoke to theists, I was told the Founders were—you guessed it—theists.

I believe a lot of the conjecture regarding the world views of the Founding Fathers, on both sides, is classic confirmation bias, due primarily to “quote mining,” among other things. Confirmation bias is a simple concept—we confirm what we want to see or believe and deny anything contrary to what we’re trying to prove or demonstrate.

The truth about the Founders’ world views isn’t exactly clear depending (obviously) on whom you ask. I think it’s apparent from the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution that a majority of the Founders wanted a secular government. That’s the only definitive conclusion that can be drawn. While they created a society free from religious entanglement with government, we cannot conclude that they were freethinkers. There is no doubt that some were, but many were not.

The secularist nature and mandated separation of state and church in the U.S. Constitution was based principally on

Virginia’s 1786 Act of Establishing Religious Freedom. It was drafted and submitted to the Virginia Legislature by Thomas Jefferson in 1779. It’s called the “1786 Act” because it was DEBATED FOR 7 YEARS BEFORE FINALLY BEING VOTED INTO LAW! Seven years of debate is not indicative of a majority view.

The tipping point for ratification of Virginia’s Religious Freedom Act, a bill that unequivocally separated state and church



from each other, resulted from the cooperation between the secularists (or enlightenment rationalists, as Susan Jacoby refers to them in her book *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*) and the dissident Protestants. Jefferson and his secularists could not get the bill passed without help. That help came from Quakers, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists.

The integration of state and religion had been the model for government up until the 1786 Virginia Act. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison used the “government non-interference” angle to convince enough voters

that without legislation, the prerevolutionary Episcopal domination could rule the day for many days to come. It worked, and the idea of a secular government took hold and became the foundation for the U.S. Constitution.

That people with opposing world views came together in the 18th century to create a secular form of government in this country is great evidence that people with opposing world views can work together again to complete other meaningful goals in the 21st century. The only way to accomplish this is to first admit that our country has a diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural background (*E Pluribus Unum*—you might want to bring that up and see how many people remember it) which necessitates secularism, a concept beneficial to everyone, not just secularists. (Hint: use the government non-interference angle to make your point.)

So the next time you’re in a conversation or debate about the Founding Fathers, you might get better results if you stick to what they did to form our country’s government, not what they believed about religion. The atheists were a minority—you’re not going to get far repeating that fact. Getting beyond atheism and into the root causes for the establishment of a secular government is crucial if a cohesive 21st century coalition is ever to imitate that of the Founding Fathers.



“Aren’t You Adrift?”

Sigrun Buckley

In response to my last article on praying, I was asked by a “recovering Catholic” whether I didn’t feel adrift without my faith. A very personal question to ask, but I’ll attempt to answer it truthfully. Many a humanist, atheist, and secularist will have been bombarded with similar questions and may still be cringing like me.

As a child, growing up in the Catholic Church and family, my world was in order. You were born into a religious faith (not a matter of choice in those days) and inherited its culture.

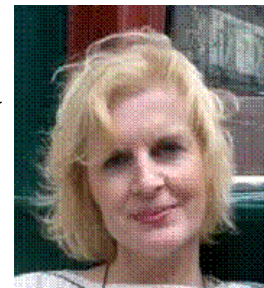
You went to Mass on Sunday, dressed up in your finery. The hymns and Latin songs made me feel holy. (Incense made me sick though.) After the blissful experience of my first holy communion, I truly felt I belonged and I was safe. Easter meant new clothes and the resurrection of Christ the Savior, of course. Whitsun (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whitsun>) promised more clothes, short socks, and another week off from school. I never grasped the miracle of the disciples speaking in foreign tongues, since I hadn’t learned any foreign language myself. Then, pre-

dictably, the four weeks of advent were upon us, an exciting time with little gifts along the way each day. Christmas memories consisted of family reunions including mass, but primarily of gifts, food, and playing in the snow.

Then the Second Vatican Council arrived and with it dangerous transparency. Mass was

holes; anchored steadfastness was replaced by drifting.

A lot of soul-searching and the fear of death—I never believed in hell—led me to pursue the “truth.” I studied various world religions but was none the wiser. My degree in



Catholic Theology let me find answers I would have preferred not to find. (See previous articles on historicity and the claim to holiness of the Bible.)

Divinity School had left me between Scylla and Charybdis. I gave up teaching religion before my job let me become schizophrenic

(teaching one thing, while thinking, “What hogwash”). If I had been a fully tenured New Testament scholar, I would still be teaching the inconsistencies in the Bible under the historical critical method.¹ You can work as a “scholar” even if you don’t maintain your level of belief in Christ, unless you undiplomatically make openly heretical statements which may lead to excommunication. Some of my former Ethics and Church History professors—tenured of course—were transferred to the sociology/philosophy department

Life for a nonbeliever is functionalized and focused on your own achievements, your own strength, and purpose. Nonbelieving requires more energy than going through the motions with some kind of faith of whatever flavor. We humanists, secularists, agnostics, and atheists must have strength in the eye of the inevitable, injustice, and cruelty all around us. We have faith in humankind and progress.

no longer said in Latin. What I hadn’t understood until then became questionable when recited in my native tongue. With the onset of puberty, my brain took over and left me with questioning doubts about the holy ceremony; and then about life in general. The liberalism that ensued in the ’60s made my father stop going to church and pretending to believe. My mother, a Protestant-Lutheran, upon getting married to a Catholic had had to promise to raise me in “the right faith.” No more of that either. The safety net was riddled with

(Continued from page 4)
 having opened their mouths too wide. Without this privilege, I restricted myself to teaching languages. I found steadfastness and a new sense of belonging on a different level by marrying a self-proclaimed atheist.

For a while we remained in the Catholic Church, a given in Catholic Ireland where we had moved. In spite of their Celtic (i.e., pagan) heritage, nonbelievers were still frowned upon in the '90s. Having two children, quitting wasn't an option since nondenominational schools did not exist there and then.

Around Confirmation time, however, our children decided they had enough. Our strategy was working out. Sending them to an Irish Catholic school had exactly produced what we had intended: skeptics and independent secularist minds.

With our abandoning of the church, another incision was made. Cultural landmarks I grew up with, dividers in time marking the progress of the years, the parameters of life as such—faded away. And farm life contributed to the fact that each day was the same. Farming is 24/7: animals need to be fed and watered even on Sundays or at Easter. Our Christmas celebrations too, though reduced to gift exchanges under the tree, became subject to the priority of necessary chores on the farm.

Religion gives you a feeling of safety—safety in habits and numbers. You know the ropes. Religion puts a cushy blanket

around inevitable life events. Religion over the centuries appealed, and still does, to the needs of humans. It appeases their psyche. Hence the phrase, "Religion is the opium of the people." (Karl Marx).

Religions, however, were invented millennia ago, by and for people of a different world view, a world without science and historic knowledge. The plethora of authors who contributed to the Bible had no interest in what



truly happened, often pursuing their own political agenda. If you strip away the Bible's authenticity and its claims of being God's word, all that remains is the soothing "There, there..." of an allegedly well-meaning Father; or the wrath of the Old Testament guy in the sky threatening you with hell and damnation.

Life for a nonbeliever is functionalized and focused on your own achievements, your own strength, and purpose. Nonbelieving requires more energy than going through the motions with some kind of faith of whatever flavor. We humanists, secularists, agnostics, and atheists must have strength in the face of the inevitable, injustice, and cru-

elty all around us. We have faith in humankind and progress. Like people of faith, we are endowed with values and ethical behavior, something that is scientifically proven to be evolutionarily ingrained into humans preceding Biblical indoctrination.²

To have a belief-system that in the end all will be well, that there is a purpose, that you have a place and meaning in this Universe, is precious. Children can still find it in fairy tales.

By finding like-mindedness in the FCFS here in this sea of hardcore believers in strange types of faiths (Evangelicals, Baptists, and Latter-day Saints etc.), my sense of being "adrift" has been diminished. We are all children of the Universe, tiny specs in the dust, mere mortals—just as Believers are. The tide is turning, and we are on our way to reach critical mass as our FCFS president calls it. Sometimes I wish I could go back to the faith of my childhood, but religion doesn't answer my questions any more; and without a shred of evidence of God and Resurrection, I'm content with "being afloat."

Footnotes:

1. See article on Barth Ehrman in the June 2009 *First Coast Freethinker*, by Curtis Wolf, on page 4.
2. See these two books by U.S. psychologists: Marc Hauser, *Moral Minds* and Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*.



Religious Wars on the First Coast

Fred W. Hill

Religious conflict reached Florida during the summer of 1565. Several hundred Huguenots had arrived the year before to escape religious persecution, establish a colony, and find some of the wealth that seemed ubiquitous in the New World. Ultimately they failed in these endeavors, and few traces of their efforts remain. Relatively few people in the modern city surrounding their brief settlement are even aware that they were ever here. Yet, their fate is another example of the necessity of the religious freedoms guaranteed by our constitution.

Huguenots, members of the Protestant Reformed Church of France who followed the teachings of John Calvin, consisted of over a million French citizens by 1560, but they were a minority in a nation of 16 million Catholics. Protestants abhorred Catholics for adhering to what they regarded as a hopelessly corrupt and superstitious faith, while Catholics reviled Protestants as damnable heretics. Neither were inclined to support freedom of speech or religious belief. Yet, in 1562, the pragmatic Catholic French Regent, Catherine de Medici, mother of 12 year old King

Charles IX, was receptive to Huguenot Admiral Gaspard de Coligny's idea of creating a Huguenot colony in North America, both as a means to get rid of as many Protestants as possible and to challenge Spanish domination of the Americas. After all, even monarchs who shared the same religion routinely battled over territory and booty.

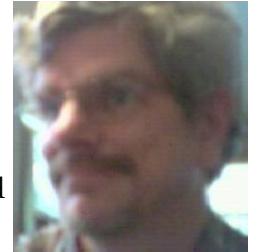


Timucuan greet the Huguenots, Theodor de Bry

And so the Huguenots crossed the Atlantic, reaching North America in May, 1562, at the mouth of a large river they named Riviere du Mai but would eventually be renamed the St. Johns River. There they erected a stone column to mark the event and claim Florida, then a much larger region than the modern state, for France. Then they sailed north, founding a colony, named Charlesfort for their young king, on the future site of a Marine Corps boot camp, Parris Island, South Carolina. Unable to support themselves and short on supplies, with relief

delayed by more religious turmoil in France, the settlers abandoned Charlesfort after less than a year. The French tried again in 1564, returning to the site of the monument they'd left behind and building a new fort, La Carolina, a.k.a. Fort Caroline, on a bluff overlooking the St. Johns River.

La Carolina became home to 300 settlers, mostly Huguenots but also a few Catholics and even agnostics according to the National Parks Service website (http://www.nps.gov/timu/historyculture/foca_explorers.htm), including men, women and children from many walks of French society, with a few important exceptions. As related by Tony Horwitz in *A Voyage Long and Strange* (page 268), "Few knew how to farm or to catch the region's fish and game." During their first few months, they got by through bartering with the Timucuan who were friendly enough to begin with and had even apparently regarded the French monument as a sort of sacred icon, decorating it with garlands and greeting "the French by kissing the column and raising their arms as if in prayer." (Ibid., 268.) They attempted to teach their new neighbors how to live off the land. The French,



however, were more interested in the bits of gold and other precious metals the Timucuan displayed and hinted could be found in greater quantities farther inland but were, in reality, obtained from wrecked Spanish galleons along the Florida coast. When they ran out of items to barter, the settlers resorted to theft and ransoming kidnapped native royalty in order to sustain themselves, naturally arousing the ire of the Timucuan.

The Spanish, led by Pedro Menendez, arrived in 1565 on a mission from King Philip II to “to hang and burn the Lutherans” infringing on territory previously claimed by the Spanish crown (Kenneth C. Davis, “The French Connection,” *New York Times*, November 26, 2008). The French fought off the first attack, prompting the Spanish to retreat down the coast to build their own settlement, St. Augustine, as a base from which to destroy the Protestants. Determined to take advantage of his initial success, Jean Ribault, leader of the French colony, set out with most of his ships and soldiers, bent on eliminating the Spanish before they became too entrenched. Instead, his fleet was forced far out to sea by a hurricane. Menendez responded by leading 500 soldiers through the hot, swampy terrain to take undefended Fort Caroline by sur-

prise, slaying 142 men and sparing, with some reservation, about 50 women and children. Ribault’s ships were wrecked and he and about 300 French soldiers staggered ashore south of St. Augustine. Menendez found them and save for those few who declared their adherence to the “true” Christian faith, Catholicism, all were put to death along an estuary thereafter named Matanzas, Spanish for slaughter.

The French avenged themselves a few years later, slaughtering hundreds of Spaniards caught napping at their fort on

The leading architects of the U.S. Constitution were aware that government-enforced religious dogma not only did not improve anyone’s morals but also inflicted much misery on people whose only crime was to believe in something different.

the St. Johns. Spain, however, mostly kept possession of Florida until 1821, when it was ceded to the United States, spurred in part by General Andrew Jackson’s raids into their tenuously held colony. The next year, a small community called Cowford, a few miles inland from the site of the ill-fated Fort Caroline, changed its name to Jacksonville to honor the future President. By then, disease and war had led to the extinction of the Timucuan who had dominated the region long before any of the Europeans or their descendants had arrived.

Today, no one knows exactly where Fort Caroline was, although visitors to Fort Caroline National Memorial can find a replica, consisting of little more than an oven, a moat, wooden walls, and a few cannons. St. Augustine, founded in response to Fort Caroline, survived to become the “oldest city” in the U.S., although it is now dwarfed by the major metropolis Jacksonville has become. The leading architects of the U.S. Constitution were aware that government-enforced religious dogma not only did not improve anyone’s morals but also in-

fllicted much misery on people whose only crime was to believe in something different. The opening clauses of the First Amendment, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” made clear their determination to keep church and state separate for the benefit of all citizens of the new nation. France and Spain eventually outgrew religious fanaticism and in those nations as well as the modern successors to their Floridian colonies, Catholics, Protestants and other Christian sects as well as Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and, yes, even agnostics and atheists, can live peacefully together, without fear of being slaughtered for whatever they believe or don’t believe.



Anti-Semitism Remains a Scar

Hugo Borresen & Fred Hill

Stephen Tyrone Johns, a guard at the Holocaust Memorial Museum, and incidentally an African-American, was on duty on June 10, 2009, when he approached and offered to assist an elderly white man who appeared to have a problem. That man, James von Brunn, responded by pulling out a rifle and murdering Johns. Von Brunn's problem was that he had too much hatred and too little reason. A white-supremacist and anti-Semite, his irrationality is all too common, shared by about 15 percent of Americans according to recent surveys, a decline over several decades and a better showing than in Europe, but still a disgrace.

Jewish communities have existed in this country since colonial times, at least since 1654 when 23 Portuguese

Jews settled in what would later become New York City, seeking refuge provided by tolerant Dutch Protestants from oppression by Portuguese Catholics. Jewish immigration increased over the next three centuries, particularly during the late 1800s and early 1900s, as many sought to escape violent pogroms in Orthodox Christian Russia.

Anti-Semitism has varied throughout history. In antiquity, it was based on dislike of Jewish religious beliefs and customs re-

garded as peculiar, rude, and even blasphemous, in the eyes of their polytheistic neighbors. Most Roman emperors granted Jews some religious freedom, for example not requiring them to make ceremonial sacrifices mandated for all other imperial subjects. Still, in the wake of various crises, Jews, as well as early Christians, made convenient scapegoats because they did not make the sacrifices and denied the existence of all gods but their own.

After most of Europe became Christian and the Roman Empire began to fall apart, anti-Semitism gradually took on a racial aspect. Jews were per-

Ignorance and bigotry led James von Brunn to target the Holocaust Memorial Museum and commit murder. His thinking is so distorted that he can insist in the same breath both that the Holocaust did not happen and that Hitler did not murder enough Jews.

ceived as a unique race that could never truly integrate with their non-Jewish neighbors even if they did profess the Christian faith. Moreover, Christian teaching, particularly among the Catholics who dominated most of Europe, held that all Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus Christ.

Protestant leader Martin Luther initially expressed understanding for Jews who would not join what he regarded as the corrupt Catholic Church, but he be-

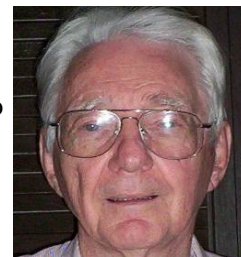
came bitterly hostile when they declined to join his new and improved brand of Christianity. In a 1543 treatise, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, he demanded Jews should be drafted into forced labor or expelled for all time, even if that meant murdering every one of them. A few decades after the Nazis attempted to do just that, the Lutheran and Catholic churches repudiated anti-Semitism, earning at least some credit for belatedly recognizing the extent of the horror their religious bigotry unleashed.

In the United States, it was expected that things would be much different. After all, this was "the land of the free," where, at least in theory, opportunity was open to all, regardless of ethnic ori-

gin or creed. Jewish poet Emma Lazarus expressed the ideal in her 1883 sonnet, "The New Colossus," engraved on a bronze plaque on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in 1912, with the lines:

*"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to
breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming
shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-
tost to me."*

(Continued on page 9)



The reality, of course, was that while anti-Semitism wasn't as severe as in Europe, cultural and statutory discrimination against nearly everyone who wasn't a white male Protestant persisted in the U.S. until recent decades. In 1826, Maryland became the last state to remove religious bars to voting. Deep into the 20th century, Jews and other minorities were barred from many lines of work solely due to bigotry. Harvard and other elite schools set quotas to ensure Jews remained a very minute percentage of their student bodies. In 1915 in Georgia, Leo Frank, a Jew, was falsely accused of killing a young woman working for him and jailed, then dragged out and lynched by a mob. From 1920 to 1927, automobile manufacturer Henry Ford published many anti-Jewish screeds in his weekly newspaper, including *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fraud created by the Russian government around 1905, claiming Jews sought to control the world; threatened with a lawsuit and a boycott, Ford publicly recanted solely to protect his bottom line as he remained privately unrepentant (see <http://www.Jewishvir-tuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/ford1.html>). During the 1930s, famed aviator Charles Lindbergh and Father Charles Coughlin, a Catholic priest and host of one of the most popular radio programs in the country, publicly proclaimed their hatred of Jews and admiration of Adolf Hitler and his racist ideology. During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, although not

anti-Semitic himself, declined to pressure the military to do more to prevent the slaughter of millions of Jews in the Nazi-occupied Europe lest he alienate masses of prejudiced American Christians who would have opposed the war if they thought its purpose was to "save the Jews."



The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) was formed to combat anti-Semitism around the world and is still busy. American hate groups have doubled in the last decade and exist throughout the nation, even in regions regarded as bastions of tolerance such as California and the northeastern states. There are still plenty within the Old South, although, their current presence in our own First Coast City of Jacksonville is negligible. Sadly, ADL found

that anti-Semitism is high among a third of African-Americans and Hispanics, especially those born outside of the U.S. In a positive trend, the generational indoctrination in prejudice appears to be declining as people 65 or older remain more hostile than younger people.

However, a fourth of American Christians still blame Jews for the execution of their supposed savior, despite the fact that according to their own bibles, it was carried out by Roman authorities who were not inclined to take orders from the people they ruled, and crucifixion was the typical Roman punishment for attempted rebellion against their rule, not a Jewish punishment. Further, assuming Jesus actually existed, his executioners likely did not live past the first century C.E. and to blame anyone living today for such an ancient event is excessively idiotic. Mel Gibson's popular religious propagandist flick, *The Passion of the Christ*, which depicted Jews as vicious sadists who forced the Romans to give in to their demands to kill Jesus, fanned the flames of this idiocy that refuses to die.

Among modern stereotypes about Jews is that they hold too much power in government and finance and are more loyal to Israel than to the U.S. Many anti-Semites are hostile to Israel, believing the U.S. should not support it and that it should not even exist. Of course, there are also many anti-Semitic fundamentalist Christians who are

(Continued on page 10)

Anti-Semitism Remains a Scar
(Continued from page 9)

very pro-Israel, believing that it must exist and expand its power to build a third temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem which, in their fevered imagination, they believe is an essential precursor to the return of Jesus Christ, the rapture of all “true” Christians and eternal damnation of everyone else, including Jews (not to mention us Free-thinkers!). Hundreds of hostile

incidents have occurred in recent years at colleges, where students should be learning to reason and overcome prejudices.

Ignorance and bigotry led James von Brunn to target the Holocaust Memorial Museum and commit murder. His thinking is so distorted that he can insist in the same breath both that the Holocaust did not happen and that Hitler did not murder enough Jews. And Steven Tyrone Johns, referred to as a

“gentle giant” for his large physique and friendly manner, fell as yet another victim to the irrational hatred von Brunn and his ilk perpetrate. Humanity may never fully overcome such hatred, but continued efforts to promote reason over dogmatism, superstition, and judgments made without knowledge of the real facts may at least reduce the damage done, the lives destroyed by prejudice.



Freethinkers Are Being Heard, More and More

Hugo Borresen

The new executive director of the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) is Sean Faircloth. He is a former Majority Whip of the Maine House of Representative. His experience with government will increase recognition of nonbelievers in our society. The SCA has met with officials in the White House to discuss some concerns. These include proselytizing of the military, federal support for faith-based initiatives pushed by the Bush administration, and employment discrimination.

It has increased contacts with the federal government and elsewhere. These contacts include:

1. The SCA has urged the National Institutes of Health to develop secular rather than religious guidelines for research in embryonic stem cell research.
2. The SCA urged the Senate oppose vouchers for religious education in District of Columbia schools.

3. The SCA disagreed with a writer on *cbcnews.ca* who claimed “people of faith are better citizens” than others, and SCA President Herb Silverman had four op-eds on *Washington-Post.com*.

4. The *New York Times* had a big e-mail response to a Secular Coalition for America article on separation of church and state.

5. SCA Acting Director Ron Miller met with others from the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination (CARD) in the White House to express concern that President Barack Obama wants to continue funding the faith-based programs of the Bush administration, such as funding of houses of worship, religious discrimination in hiring, and entangling secular and sectarian programs.

6. The SCA heartily endorsed the statement of President Obama in Turkey: “One of great strengths of the United States is...we do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation; we

consider ourselves a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values.”

7. The SCA expressed regret that the Texas Board of Education was partially successful in putting evolution as controversial in the science standards.

8. A cover story in *National Journal* on the Internet featured the Secular Coalition for America and accompanied with an article on “Rise of the Godless.”

Paul Kurtz will become Chairman Emeritus for the Center for Inquiry. He founded it and its two other branches, Council for Secular Humanism and the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (formerly known as the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal).. They will continue their activities with other leaders while Kurtz continues prolific writing and public speaking.

Slowly and steadily, the nonreligious are reaching out more and more.



Meet Karen Wells

Hugo Borresen

Karen Wells has belonged to the FCFS for about 2 years, having learned about us from the Internet. She lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, though she hails from New Jersey, lived in Utah for about 20 years (No! not a Mormon!), and has lived in Florida since 1993.

She has retired from a 43-year career in laboratory medicine (cancer diagnosis), and her last job before retiring was at Memorial Hospital. She is published in a journal of her specialty which is cytopathology.

Her interests are history, especially the Civil War, museums, concerts, and opera, and she reads murder mysteries voraciously.



Karen volunteers at Volunteers in Medicine, in downtown Jacksonville, writing grant applications for the clinic and teaches English as a Second Language at the Women's Center Jacksonville. She has traveled to the British Isles, Italy (twice), China, Mexico, and

Peru, loving those Indian ruins!

She is a cat lover and has no children. She is a pro-choice, pro-environment Republican and frequently writes her congress persons. She has had three letters to the editor published in the *Florida Times Union*.

Her fondest wishes are to 1) give Galileo a computer, 2) take Thomas Jefferson for a ride in an airplane, 3) explain to Henry VIII about the Y chromosome, and 4) have a talk with Abraham Lincoln about everything that has happened since he died.



Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners for Doubters

Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. Sign-up sheets will be at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details on how this works, see **page 7 of the August 2008 *FreeThinker*** (available on website) or ask a greeter at the back table.

Secular Sunday Morning in the Park (or Atheist Sunday Morning)

Freethinkers... let's get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation **every 4th Sunday of the month** (unless inclement weather prevails) at 10 a.m. until ? at the pavilion at Losco Park, 10851 Hood Rd., S., Jacksonville 32257, between Shad and Losco Roads. Need directions? Call Beth Perry at 733-5489 or Google the address to get a map and directions. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack and **a chair**. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

No Atheist Left Behind (or Are You Going My Way?)

If you are seeking a ride to an FCFS event, contact **Hugo Borresen** at HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org or call 904-779-6883.

Caring Tree

If a telephone call to a member is in order, or if a sympathy card, flowers, or some form of support is needed, please contact **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188 or e-mail her at JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org. If you prefer, leave a notation on the sign-in sheet at the back table at one of our monthly meetings.

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 550591
Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
(904) 288-6291
<http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

Statement of Purpose

The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc. is an educational, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization dedicated to supporting nonreligious persons in the Northeast Florida area and promoting a nontheistic approach to everyday life.

Meetings

The FCFS meets the THIRD Monday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, upstairs in the sanctuary, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, Florida 32211, (904) 725-8133. Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

Committees and Chairs

Program Carrie Renwick 268-8826
CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Audit Roger Wenner 288-6291
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Editorial Hugo Borresen 779-6883
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Membership Judy Hankins 724-8188
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FCFS Officers

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Treasurer Mark Renwick 268-8826
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Other FCFS Appointments

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CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

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MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Publicity Carrie Renwick 268-8826
CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Website Mark Renwick 268-8826
MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Welcome Judy Hankins 724-8188
JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org
Long-Range Planning Curtis Wolf 573-3847
CWolf@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

July Social

Where: OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, near the Avenues Mall.
When: **Tuesday July 28, 2009** at 6:00 p.m. Proceed directly to our room.
Drinks at 6:00. Dinner at 7:00. (Order from the menu.)
RSVP: CarrieRen@att.net (or 268-8826) by **Tues. a.m.**, if you plan to go!

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2009 Membership Application



Name		Date	
Home address	City	State	Zip Code
E-mail address	Home phone	Business phone	
Occupation	Areas of interest and/or expertise		
How did you hear about us? Comments? _____			

Membership level (please select one):

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular (\$30/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Carl Sagan (\$50/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Darwin (\$200/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bertrand Russell (\$75/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Robert Ingersoll (\$500/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior - 65+ (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Paine (\$100/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (\$1,000) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$45/yr.) | | |

Do you object to your name appearing on our membership list, distributed to other members? Yes No

I'm interesting in getting involved in the FCFS as a(n):

- General member Committee member Officer Financial supporter

- Annual dues cover the period of January 1 through December 31.
- The initial dues for new members joining in July through September are half the regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the current calendar year.
- The initial dues for new members joining in October through December are the full, regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the following calendar year.

***You can make a lasting impact on the future of
freethought and secular humanism in this community
...if you provide for the First Coast Freethought Society in your Will.***

Your bequest will ensure that the FCFS continues to be a beacon for freethinkers on the First Coast and to remain a vital Voice of Reason in the Northeast Florida area. Several options are available for establishing a bequest (specific, percentage, residual, or contingent). We will be happy to provide the appropriate wording to you and your attorney, depending upon your wishes.

For further information, contact
Carrie Renwick, P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 or
904-288-6291 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

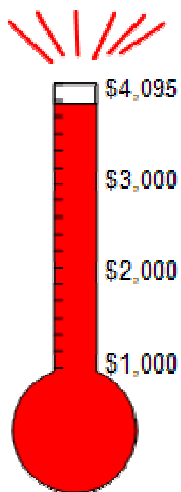
FCFS July 2009 Activities

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5 Book Group	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 Monthly Meeting	21	22	23	24	25 Newsletter Deadline
26 Secular Sunday	27	28 Olive Garden	29	30	31	

Visit our website at <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>.

In the Adobe version, the links are **LIVE!** One click takes you there. If the two-line links do not work, copy and paste into your browser window.

NPR-o-Meter



2009 NPR CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP FUNDRAISING DRIVE IS A SUCCESS!

We have succeeded yet again! Yes, our freethought message broadcast on National Public Radio (NPR) member station WJCT 89.9 FM, covering the Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia area, will continue!!

FYI, here are the figures. The Annual NPR Corporate Sponsorship Fundraising Drive brought in \$3,076. The Support Card donations earmarked specifically for the NPR Fund brought in \$330. Miscellaneous, nonspecified donations brought in \$485. This gives us a total of \$3,891. Subtracting the total from our goal of \$4,095 gives a balance of only \$204! We are confident that last-minute donations and donations from the Support Cards (sent with every newsletter) will enable us to reach our goal.

So, **CONGRATULATIONS!** And **MANY THANKS** to all First Coast Freethought Society members and friends who have made renewal of our six-month NPR contract (for July through December of 2009) possible. You are keeping the Voice of Reason alive on Florida's First Coast!

FIRST COAST FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY, INC.

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.”

Post Office Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
Website: <http://FirstCoastFreethoughtSociety.org>

Telephone: 904-288-6291
E-mail: CarrieRen@att.net



Support the First Coast Freethought Society

Dear E-mail *FreeThinker* Recipient:

To provide support on line, click here: <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/support.htm> to go to the FCFS website and use a credit card or PayPal account.

If you prefer to mail a check, print this page and use the “card” (below) to indicate your choices. To print this page, put your cursor anywhere on this page. Click Print. Then select “Current Page” and click the “OK” button.

Mail your check to the FCFS, P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591. Thank you!



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- I wish to contribute to the **NPR Corporate Sponsorship Fund**; or
 I wish to contribute to the ongoing **General Promotional Fund**
 No preference

Enclosed is my contribution for (please check one):

\$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 Other _____

- I authorize the FCFS to include my name in a forthcoming issue of the *First Coast FreeThinker* recognizing my support.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Your Support Promotes Freethought on the First Coast