

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: 904-419-8826
E-mail: CarrieRen@att.net




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The First Coast

FreeThinker



Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

January 2014

Volume 13, Issue 1

Inside this issue: **The John Birch Society Is Alive and Well Part 2**

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Fred W. Hill

In 1974, a disaster drill was held during one of my junior high school classes in San Francisco. My classmates and I all crawled under our desks, pretending this was the best way to survive a nuclear bomb blast we might endure if the ongoing Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union ever boiled over. Since I grew up with the threat of nuclear annihilation, the drill didn't conjure any real dread; it was just routine and seemed a bit silly — as if our flimsy desks would provide much protection in the event we were nuked. Such drills have long since become relics of the Cold War, itself no more than a subject of history rather than a personal experience for modern grade school and even most college students.

Like those drills, the John Birch Society appears to be yet another

silly relic of the era, a joke even at the height of the Cold War and certainly not something that could have survived the collapse of both the Soviet Union and Communist rule in eastern Europe. As of 1991, the Birchers' fear that Commies would overrun the nation was no longer even a remote possibility and casual observers presumed the Society had gone the way of the dodo. But the JBS is not quite dead yet, and might even be getting better (or worse, from a freethought point of view).

As described in a report on the Center for Media and Democracy's SourceWatch wiki site (http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=John_Birch_Society), Birchers see

"the collapse of Communism in Rus-

(Continued on page 3)



"There will always remain a chasm between the faithful — of any religion — and secular humanists. Secular humanists insist on the application of reason, science, and freedom of inquiry and reject the notion that any set of revealed truths can be immune from critical examination."

—Ronald A. Lindsay

January 2014 Meeting

Jack Maurice ("Orlando Jack"), founder, Orlando Humanist Association (formerly Orlando Freethinkers & Humanists) and the Orlando Coalition of Reason

**"The Truth Virus: It's All Plato's Fault
(or, Why All Truths Are Lies)"**

Monday, January 20, 2014, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (doors open at 6:00)

**Buckman Bridge Unitarian Church, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244
(Driveway located 400 feet east of Roosevelt Blvd.)**

Humanist Book Discussion Group - Jacksonville

When: 2:00 - 3:30 p.m., the first Sunday of each month.

Where: Books-A-Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32225

What: Books planned for discussion:

- February 2, 2014 - *The Brothers*, by Stephen Kinzer
- March 2, 2014 - *Extreme Prejudice*, by Susan Lindauer



Link to Book Review: <http://www.amazon.com/The-Brothers-Foster-Dulles-Secret/dp/0805094970>

During the 1950s, when the Cold War was at its peak, two immensely powerful brothers led the United States into a series of foreign adventures whose effects are still shaking the world. John Foster Dulles was secretary of state while his brother, Allen Dulles, was director of the Central Intelligence Agency. In this book, Stephen Kinzer places their extraordinary lives against the background of American culture and history. He uses the framework of biography to ask: Why does the United States behave as it does in the world? (Excerpt from book description on Amazon.com)

Please note that subsequent to the publication of the previous edition of *The Freethinker*, it was decided to switch the books for January and February, hence we will be discussing *The Brothers* in the February bookclub meeting rather than in January as previously scheduled.

For More Info: Contact Herb Gerson at 904-363-6446, or 12herbert30gerson@bellsouth.net.

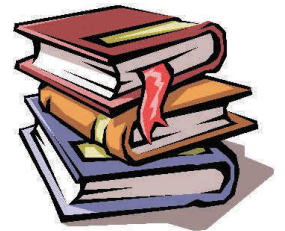
Humanist Book Discussion Group - St. Augustine

When: 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., the second Thursday of each month.

Where: Clubhouse at a private condominium in St. Augustine (Anastasia Island).

What: Book planned for discussion:

- February 13, 2014 — *God Is Not Great*, by Christopher Hitchens
- March 13, 2014 — *Radical: My Journey Out of Islamist Extremism*, by Maajid Nawaz



Link to Book Review: <http://www.amazon.com/God-Is-Not-Great-Everything/dp/0446697966>

In the tradition of Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian ...*, Christopher Hitchens makes the ultimate case against religion. With a close and erudite reading of the major religious texts, he documents the ways in which religion is a man-made wish, a cause of dangerous sexual repression, and a distortion of our origins in the cosmos. With eloquent clarity, Hitchens frames the argument for a more secular life based on science and reason, in which hell is replaced by the Hubble Telescope's awesome view of the universe, and Moses and the burning bush give way to the beauty and symmetry of the double helix. (Excerpt from book description on Amazon.com)

More Info: Contact Bill Stroop at bill@strooplaw.com for address, directions, and gate code.

NOTE TO ALL!: Books may be found in the library, purchased from local book stores or online. The First Coast Freethought Society will receive a small remuneration from your purchase (at no additional cost to you) if you first go to <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> and then click the link to Amazon.com for your purchase.

(John Birch Society ..., cont'd from pg 1)
 sia and eastern Europe as false and 'planned' by the Russian/eastern European governments..." In *Wrapped in the Flag*, Claire Conner's book about her life as the daughter of early JBS members, she relates how her parent's adoration for Governor Ronald Reagan as the apparent untainted enemy of Communism everywhere transformed into disgust with President Reagan as "the latest traitor to encourage 'Merger Mania,' the plan to merge the United States and the USSR and lead all nations into an all-powerful world government." In the Birchers' eyes, Reagan disgraced himself by supporting the United Nations' Genocide Treaty, raising taxes, and being friendly with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. President George H. W. Bush raised the Birchers' ire even more with his 1990 New World Order speech, promising "a new era – freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace." This, in the Birchers' interpretation, was the signal for the final assault on the United States by global conspirators. (Conner, p. 192-193) The failure any such assault to occur in over 20 years since has hardly convinced Birchers that they may be wrong, only that their loathed enemies are ever more conniving and subtle in their efforts to conquer

the world, with every U.S. President from Hoover to Obama in cahoots in a grand scheme to create a communist, anti-religious global state.

The Birchers, however, have been doing more than just fulminating against anyone who runs afoul of their point of view. Despite fading from media prominence since the early 1960s, bolstered by donations from wealthy supporters, many JBS ideas once regarded as so far out as to be on the extreme fringe of con-



servatism have long since become standard talking points for many Republicans and Libertarians, as noted by investigative journalist Chip Berlet, such as, "the belief that big government leads to collectivism which leads to tyranny; that liberal elites are treacherous; that the U.S. has become a nation of producers versus parasites; that the U.S. is losing its sovereignty to global treaties; that the 'New World Order' is an actual plan by secret elites promoting globalization; and that multiculturalism is a conspiracy of 'cultural Marxism.'" (<http://www.splcenter.org/home/2012/spring/bringing-back-birch>) Then there is the involvement of prominent JBS members,

Timothy LaHaye and Nelson Bunker Hunt, in the founding of the Council for National Policy (CNP), described by New York University media studies professor Mark Crispin Glover as a "highly secretive ... theocratic organization...." The CNP is a "networking tool for leading U.S. conservative political leaders, financiers and religious right activist leaders." (http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Council_for_National_Policy).

The JBS has become far more savvy since their early days, presenting a friendlier image on their website and ads, maintaining a lower profile and acquiring key allies to help finance and push mutual goals that highlight "family and freedom."

The only freedom anyone would have under their dominance, however, would be within the limits of their idiosyncratic interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, which would be subordinate to their preferred state laws and bibles. My old school would cease to exist as a public school but would likely be transformed into a private religious school where students would get down on their knees to pray at the beginning of each class. They would be taught they are "free" to obey appropriate authorities but not to think for themselves or question anything.



President's Message - January 2014

Earl Coggins

The U.S. Supreme Court has heard oral arguments and is now deliberating in *Town of Greece v Galloway*, with a verdict due early summer 2014. If you want a classic example of a group gaining power and then taking advantage of their situation, this is it. The town board of directors for the city of Greece, NY, had opened their meetings with a moment of silence prior to 1999. A new town supervisor, John Auberger, changed the policy that year. Subsequent meetings started out with a prayer, often a sectarian prayer, overtly Christian in composition.

Complaints about the sectarian prayers were addressed by town board members issuing statements which advised anyone having problems with the sectarian prayers to either opt out of attending the town board meetings, stay out of the room during the prayers, or simply ignore the prayers. Subsequent complaints by the petitioners of the original complaints were met with hostility by the town board of the City of Greece, forcing a lawsuit.

This is worth repeating. Subsequent complaints were met with hostility. The new Town Supervisor John Auberger and the City of Greece board of directors were openly hostile to anyone complaining about the blatantly Christian prayers at the city meetings. It

was their way or the highway. Would the new Town Supervisor, as a common citizen, be okay with overtly Muslim prayers? Jewish prayers? Wiccan, Hindu, or Buddhist prayers? Would an atheist invocation (who would be invoked?) be okay with Town Supervisor John Auberger? After all, non-religious people possess one of the top six world-views, and more importantly, are part of the at-large population — that whole “we the people” thing.

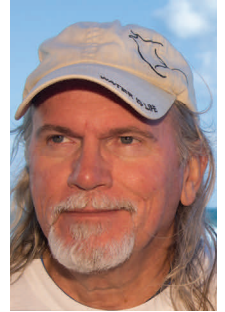
By the way, as much as I don't like the idea of the rotation scheme which supposedly embraces diversity, atheists

“The heart of the matter is whether or not prayer is a reliable, viable practice.”

should request to give invocations until prayer is eventually removed forever from government business. Who would an atheist invoke? No one. You merely announce that your invocation will be a moment of silence that lasts 5 seconds and then wish the government workers a very productive work day.

Whether or not to have prayer in the public square has been a contentious and divisive question for a very long time. The proponents of prayer in the public square almost always point to the fact that prayer has been a part of the affairs of government going back to a call to prayer in

1775 by the Continental Congress asking the colonies to pray for wisdom in forming a new nation. And it didn't stop there.



President John Adams did it in 1798. President Lincoln did the same thing again, proclaiming a day of prayer in 1863. Then in 1952, President Truman went one step further, declaring an annual, “National” Day of Prayer. Being a friend to just about anything that will get votes, President Reagan set a permanent date for the National Day of Prayer signed into law by Truman, making it officially the first Thursday in May.

When challenged, the prayer issue has practically always centered upon the “religious clause” of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which declares “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

In *Marsh v Chambers*, the violation of the religious clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was the position taken by Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers, when he sued in Federal court claiming the Legislature's practice of opening sessions with prayers from a state supported Chaplain was unconstitutional.

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The Supreme Court ruled against Chambers in 1983. Their ruling basically said we've been doing it this way from the beginning and we're not going to change it this late in the game. The official legalese: The prayers before the Legislature are "simply a tolerable acknowledgement of beliefs widely held among the people of this country."

The 1983 ruling in *Marsh v Chambers* shutdown any further debate on the subject, at least until it can be overturned by another Supreme Court ruling. An interesting aspect of the ruling is the assumption that prayers are beliefs widely held — an assumption James Madison would have questioned, given the fact that he was deeply opposed to any majority rule at the expense of the minority. Equally interesting is the change in demographics since 1983. The times they are a changin'.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation challenged the National Day of Prayer in 2008, winning a favorable ruling, but then it was overturned on appeal in 2011 by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Prayer has been, for me, a perplexing thorn-in-the-side when it comes to rational behavior. It is difficult to discuss it without appearing to be insensitive, but I'll try.

What exactly is happening when someone prays, other

than a monologue to the observer, a dialogue to the person praying, and delusion to a psychiatrist? Many people are troubled when others talk aloud to themselves. How can anyone know for sure who's praying and who's psychotic? How do you or I tell the difference between someone who is praying and someone who is having a conversation with an imaginary person— someone else nowhere in sight? How can anyone know they are not



"When you're done praying, call up the IT techs—they'll get your pc fixed a lot faster."

one and the same? After all, most people carry on conversations in their heads throughout the day — it's called thinking. How can anyone know a prayer is nothing more than thinking aloud? A symptom of schizophrenia or indeed spoken thoughts? After all, when a situation gets dire, people frequently call out for help, with no one in a range to hear them. They're obviously not crazy, or do we go a little crazy when things move far away from our comfort zones? Is

prayer a manifestation of the uncomfortable person? Many, if not most people, suffer from depression at some point in their lives. Is prayer a symptom of depression? Who's to say?

What is the purpose of prayer? What does it accomplish? How does anyone know it works? Can its efficacy be tested? If you pray, to whom are you praying? Who's listening? Where does the prayer go? Is it similar to a telephone call, where there is a specified receiver? Or does the prayer go out into the ether and it can then be picked up by anyone monitoring its frequency? Does prayer have a frequency? If prayer is directed at a god, then which god? Is there more than one god? How many gods are there in the universe, if any? How does someone praying know how to direct his or her prayer to a specific god, if we all agree that more than one god exists?

One thing is certain, there are a lot of gods in a lot of religions. If a prayer is directed at a specific god, does the person praying have to know the exact location of the recipient god? Or, does the recipient god have a way to detect incoming prayers from his or her constituents, while simultaneously filtering out the prayers directed to other gods? Do other gods have the same ability? If other gods hear your

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prayer, does it matter? How does a person praying know their target god is listening? Many people think their god is the only god that actually exists. If that is truly the case and only one god exists out of the thousands purported to exist, then a lot of people are praying needlessly.

If a prayer is a message to a god, then are there multiple ways to send the message? Can a prayer be conducted, performed, or delivered no matter where the person is located or how the person is praying? In other words, does a person have to pray aloud? Can a prayer be whispered? Written on a piece of paper? Can a prayer be a thought inside the mind of the person praying? Can a person pray while driving a car? Riding a bike? Taking a walk? Sitting alone and unobservable? Pray silently from any location?

Does prayer have a healing effect when the prayer is a plea to heal or help a person or situation? What can we know about the power of prayer based on our own personal prayer experiences? If I pray for something and it comes true, how do I know the prayer helped or healed a person or situation and not something else? In other words, if a person is in the hospital getting treated for a catastrophic injury or illness and I pray to my god to help that person, how do I know which one — prayer or the hospital staff — had an effect on the outcome of the situation?

Cause and effect are difficult to ascertain. What seems to be the cause of an effect can be contrary to what appears to be self-evident — or what we want to be the truth.

How do we know god can detect the human voice? How far away can a god be to a prayer and still hear it? Does any of this matter? After all, many people believe their god is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. In simpler words, all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere.

Many gods are omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, which means a prayer to a god is unnecessary on several levels. If the god is omniscient, then the god knows what is communicated in the prayer before the prayer is expressed, before the prayer is conceived in the mind of the person praying, even before the person is born. The prayer is therefore unnecessary. If the god is merely omnipresent it shouldn't matter where a person prays because their god is everywhere and can hear everything, therefore petitioning to have prayer in schools or before governmental proceedings and meetings (city council meetings) is unnecessary, because the god can hear you praying while driving or walking to school or work, on your bike, in the bathroom, at the grocery store, wherever you might be.

Everyone assumes their god answers their prayers, with unfavorable results relegated to the “god works in mysterious ways” trash bin. How do we know prayers get

answered, or better stated, how do we know they work? Do prayers bake bread? Could the time needed to pray be spent doing something more constructive? Have any studies been conducted to assess the efficacy of prayer? Turns out, studies have been conducted to measure the efficacy of prayer, but they are fraught with controversy and criticism. Did you expect anything less?

Practically all prayer studies (there aren't many) have been criticized on both sides — scientific and religious — for lacking appropriate controls. These are legitimate and serious concerns. How do you control an experiment so you know it has been affected only by the influences you introduced when those influences (prayer) are not quantifiable? Prayer doesn't work like medicine. You can't inject someone with 5cc of prayer today and 10cc tomorrow, then measure the difference of the effect. Similarly, you can't have 5 people pray today and 10 people pray tomorrow, then measure the difference of the effect as if you know for certain tomorrow's prayers are twice as strong as the previous day's prayers.

Even though the aggregate results do not show prayer to have any discernable effect on the outcome of anything, many if not most prayer studies have failed to address whether a specific outcome (positive effect) is due to a recipient's “knowledge” that prayer is being directed at them, or the prayer itself. One study, per-

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haps the only one to date, included this as a factor. That study is the *Study of the Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer*, known simply as STEP. It was funded by the John Templeton Foundation, conducted by researchers at nine medical institutions, and involved 1800 patients from six U.S. hospitals undergoing coronary artery bypass graft surgery. Results of the study were published in 2006. Patients were randomized to three groups of approximately 600. Groups 1 and 2 were told they might receive prayer. Group 1 received prayer while group 2 did not. Group 3 was told they would definitely receive intercessory prayer. The prayer started the night before surgery and lasted 14 days. The researchers were looking for any complication within 30 days. Secondary endpoints (serious adverse events and/or

mortality) were also documented.

The results were probably not what the Templeton Foundation had hoped for. Group 1 (prayed for) had complications in 52% of its patients, while group 2 (no prayer) had 51% complications. Don't forget, neither group 1 nor 2 was certain about receiving prayer. Group 3, who knew for certain they would be receiving prayer, had 59% complications. Secondary outcomes were basically the same for all three groups. Although this is only one study, the results clearly show no benefit from prayer, but we need more studies.

If the Freethought movement is going to ramp up its efforts to stop prayer at government funded events, and I think it should, we have to move away from the rotation scheme. Prayer is a waste of time; regardless of who is doing it. Fighting government sponsored prayer with the

First Amendment may not be getting to the heart of the matter and isn't working very well either. The heart of the matter is whether or not prayer is a reliable, viable practice with a return on the time invested to do it.

The important thing to realize is that a sustained movement to override the Marsh v Chambers ruling and stop government sponsored prayer is possible. Please write to as many government representatives as possible, especially your city council members and remind them of what Robert G. Ingersol said: "The hands that help are better far than lips that pray."

The following is a link to Jacksonville City Council members for readers who want to write them on this or any other local issue: www.coj.net/city-council/city-council-members.aspx



Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners for Doubters: Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. If a dinner is scheduled, sign-up sheets will be found at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details, **see the website**, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, or **ask a greeter** at the back table, at a meeting.

Second Harvest Second Saturday: On the **2nd Saturday of every month**, 10:00 a.m. to noon, join FCFS members and JAM (Jacksonville Atheist Meetup) group members, to volunteer at the Second Harvest North Florida food bank warehouse, 1502 Jessie Street, to help distribute food to the less fortunate in North FL. See <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> or call Fred Hill, 904-358-3610.

Secular Sunday Morning in the Park: Freethinkers, let's get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation the **4th Sunday of every month** (unless inclement weather prevails) at 10 a.m. until ? under the pavilion at Losco Park, 10851 Hood Rd., S., Jacksonville 32257, between Shad and Losco Roads. For directions, call Beth Perry at 904-733-5489 or Google the address. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack and **a chair or two**. Note, if it's too hot under the pavilion, we take our chairs to some trees with a nice breeze. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

Caring Tree: If a telephone call, flowers, or a sympathy card to a member is in order, please contact **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188, or e-mail her at info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org.

National Security Agency (NSA) Surveillance Activity

Joque Soskis

There has been a lot of moaning and hand-wringing of late concerning the fact (and it evidently *is* a fact) that the NSA is "spying on" all (or most) of us, all (or most) of the time.

Leaving aside the obvious fact that we are all already spied upon by every financial and commercial organization in the U.S. (unless we have no credit cards or debit cards, never travel by commercial carrier, never use the telephone or e-mail, etc.), we should at some point recognize that at least the NSA has a worthwhile purpose in all this spying: to locate and identify those who might be planning attacks. And of course, if one party to a conversation with some nefarious purpose is in the U.S., how would we expect the intelligence agencies to detect that without becoming involved in surveillance of a U.S. phone?

With that introduction, I will give my opinion.

1. I want the government to collect absolutely every single possible microscopic granular shred of information it can: phone calls, emails, bank and ATM transactions, credit card transactions, bridge and turnpike tolls, internet purchases, package shipments, and anything else that can be swept up. And I want them to keep it for the foreseeable future.

2. I want the best minds

we have to develop algorithms to ferret out miscreants, identify them, examine their plans, take appropriate action to interdict and disrupt their actions, and arrest and prosecute them.

3. I want the strictest imaginable controls on access to that information. Once upon a time, the standard for access to classified information had two parts: (1) security clearance, and (2) need to know. (At one point, in what my daughter calls the olden days, I was in an artillery unit in Germany. We had nuclear rounds for our self-propelled 8-inch howitzers. I never did

"I want truly medieval punishment for those who misuse ... data [collected by the NSA]...."

know how many we had, because even though I had the necessary clearance, in my job I had no need to know that.) This standard is evidently no longer in effect, as it is hard to see why Bradley Manning needed to read State Department cables.

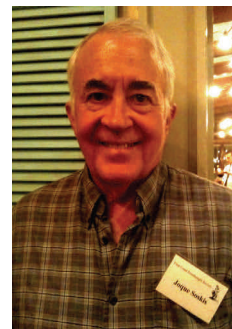
4. I want the intelligence agencies to be able to tie any part of that information to an individual, for further research and investigation, only after satisfying a federal judge that probable cause exists to believe that criminal activity is being planned or carried out. This is precisely what we

do with other kinds of surveillance. If law enforcement officers believe they have developed information that demonstrates

probable cause, they apply to a judge for a warrant.

5. I want truly medieval punishment for those who misuse that data, except through simple inadvertence. Some suggested parameters:

- a. Misuse caused by simple inattention, involving no improper purpose and no actual harm to any person, and consisting entirely of a breach of formal procedures: letter of reprimand and 90 days' probation.
- b. Second such occurrence within 5 years: 30-day suspension without pay and 1 year's probation.
- c. Third such occurrence (ever): summary termination with prejudice, and loss of security clearance.
- d. Deliberate misuse of any kind, with any improper purpose but without actual harm to any person: substantial fine, 90 days' suspension, reduction in grade, 5 years probation.
- e. Second such occurrence (ever): summary termination with prejudice, loss of security



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clearance, and 2 years imprisonment.

f. In cases where any person is harmed by the misuse of information, the otherwise applicable consequences are to be quadrupled. Furthermore, the person so harmed is entitled to compensation, not less than some significant minimum, to be awarded by a jury of their peers (all of whom have security clearances), in a proceeding before the FISA court (in which the person harmed may have the assistance of counsel with a security clearance).

Obviously, this would require that the structure of our intelligence processing apparatus be significantly modified.

For one thing, our mania for "privatizing" everything would have to be abated. We

would have to frankly acknowledge what we all already know, but no one wants to say out loud: the private sector very often *CAN'T* do it



better. Private contractors are answerable to their shareholders, not to the government.

To cite just one example: in Iraq, the contractor KBR built barracks for the Army under one of the many no-bid con-

tracts awarded by the Bush administration. As many as 18 soldiers were electrocuted in the showers of these barracks as a result of improper electrical wiring. In the entire previous history of the U.S. Army, no soldier had *ever* been electrocuted in a building built by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Everyone who has access to national security data should be a full-time career employee of one of our intelligence agencies, with a security clearance granted after a background check conducted by full-time career sworn federal officers, not a private contractor. What more evidence do we need than the fact that both Edward Snowden and Aaron Alexis (the Washington Navy Yard shooter) received their clearances after background investigations by private contractors?



An Atheist's Prayer...

Joe Varon

Without any expectation of supernatural intervention, I can still hope that the human mind will continue to evolve so that, one day, people will be sufficiently intelligent and secure to work together, nurturing our fragile planet and all humanity.



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P.O. Box 550591
Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
904-419-8826
<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 Buckman Bridge Unitarian Church, 8447 Manresa Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32244. (Driveway located on Collins Rd., 400 ft. east of Roosevelt Blvd.) Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public.

For other activities besides monthly meetings, please see the website, brochure, or newsletter!

FCFS 2014 Board Members

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| E-mail Secretary | Carrie Renwick | 268-8826 |

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First Coast FreeThinker

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive the e-mail version indefinitely. Nonmembers may receive three hard-copy issues free, 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.

Information for Contributors

We welcome submissions. Articles for consideration should be submitted via e-mail to the e-mail address shown below. Contributors who cannot submit manuscripts electronically may send them to Fred Hill, 1817 Egner St., Jacksonville, FL 32206. The

deadline for time-sensitive submissions is the THIRD SATURDAY of each month for the following month's issue.

We prefer articles no longer than 1,000 words. Longer articles will be evaluated in terms of whether their importance and degree of interest to our readers warrant publication.

Subject matter must tie in with freethought or with the Affirmations of Humanism (found on our website). All accepted manuscripts are subject to editorial modification. Our style guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Manuscript submissions cannot be returned. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for supplying complete references where applicable.

E-mail Address for Submissions

Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

ADVERTISING RATES: Eighth-page (business card size) \$25.00, quarter-page \$50.00, half-page \$75.00, and whole page \$100.

To advertise, contact Fred Hill at 904-3610, or
Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 • (904) 419-8826

2014 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
904-419-8826 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Upcoming Freethought Events of Interest on the First Coast

| | | |
|----------|-------------|---|
| Friday | January 17 | Secular St. Augustine Meetup at Applebee's - 7:00 p.m.* |
| Saturday | January 18 | Deadline to submit articles for January 2014 <i>FreeThinker</i> |
| Monday | January 20 | FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m. |
| Sunday | January 26 | FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville - 10:00 a.m. |
| Tuesday | January 28 | FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville - 6:00 p.m. |
| Sunday | February 2 | Humanist Book Discussion Group - Jacksonville - 2:00 p.m. |
| Thursday | February 13 | Humanist Book Discussion Group - St. Augustine - 7:00 p.m. |
| Monday | February 10 | JAM Meetup at European Street Café in San Marco - 6:30 p.m.* |
| Monday | February 17 | FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m. |

* See <http://www.meetup.com> to sign up

First Coast Freethought Society (FCFS) • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>
Jacksonville Atheist, Agnostic, Secular Meetup Group (JAM) • <http://www.jaxatheists.com/>
Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason (NeFCoR) • <http://NorthEastFloridaCoR.org/>

The FCFS is a proud member of the Humanists of Florida Association and the Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason.

Meet Our January Speaker: Jack Maurice

A Retired US Air Force Officer, former insurance agency owner, public speaker and the founder of the Orlando Freethinkers & Humanists and the Orlando Coalition of Reason. Masters in Philosophy & Religious Studies. "Orlando Jack" holds several certifications in Critical Thinking as a student and instructor.

From his Orlando Humanist Association profile: "Started studying world religions in my 20's. When going to college while in the US Air Force, I wrote a term paper on 'death and dying,' where I interviewed 'seniors' in a nursing facility. To my surprise most of those seniors...were not scared of dying at all. Since then, I have evolved by researching and studying different religious ideologies. Quite frankly, the act of reading the bible in it's entirety should give one a grande pause to 'ASK QUESTIONS'".



Monthly Social

Where: OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, across from the Avenues Mall.
When: **Tuesday January 28, 2014** 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!