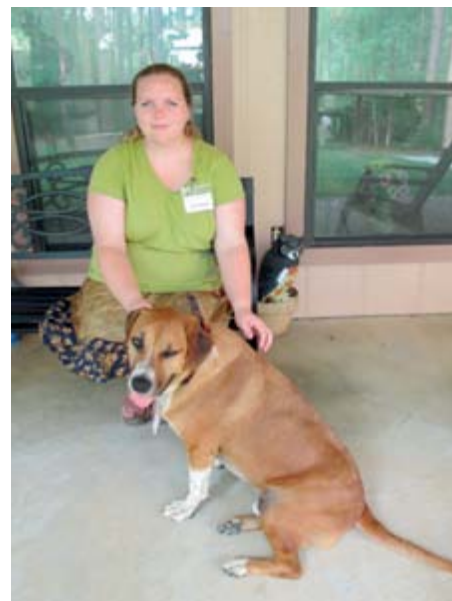




Group photo of attendees beside FFRF's Atheists in Foxhole monument. About 120 FFRF'ers from around the country attended.

Nonreligious veterans gathered at Lake Hypatia, Alabama, on the weekend of July 4, 2011, next to FFRF's monument to Atheists in Foxholes. The monument was erected "in memory of ATHEISTS IN FOXHOLES and the countless freethinkers who have served this country with honor and distinction . . . with hope that in the future humankind can learn to avoid all war." To view a slideshow of photos capturing this years event, visit:

ffrf.org/outreach/lake-hypatia/advance-photos/



Participant Tori Smith, Alabama, whose geodesic dome home survived the recent Alabama tornado.



Speaker Benjamin Burchall, founder of Black Nonbelievers of Atlanta.

Pat Cleveland, an FFRF officer and director of the Alabama Freethought Association, the chapter that puts on the annual Lake Hypatia "Glorious Fourth" in rural Alabama. And veteran Bill Teague, pictured by the impressive Atheists in Foxholes monument he carved for FFRF.

Speaker Mark Zumbach, director of Triangle Freethought Society, an FFRF chapter in North Carolina; Annie Laurie Gaylor, Wisconsin co-director of FFRF, and speaker Steve Benson, Arizona, editorial cartoonist, Arizona Republic, pose in front of FFRF's colorful sales table at the Lake Hypatia July 4th event in Alabama. The annual gala is hosted by the Alabama Freethought Association, an FFRF chapter, and takes place in FFRF's air-conditioned southern Freethought Hall.

Turn page for more photos

Celebrating Reason Lake Hypatia, Alabama July 1—3, 2011



FFRF Co-President Dan Barker, Wisconsin, and "atheist in a foxhole" veteran Jessale Lewis, Georgia.



Speaker William Dusenberry, an activist, with the Tulsa FFRF chapter and his wife, Jackie Dusenberry, Oklahoma.



USS Randy Flynn, named in memory of a longtime Alabama member, cruising on tranquil Lake Hypatia.



Freethought student activist honoree Duncan Henderson with his brother, Brendan (holding some baby frogs).



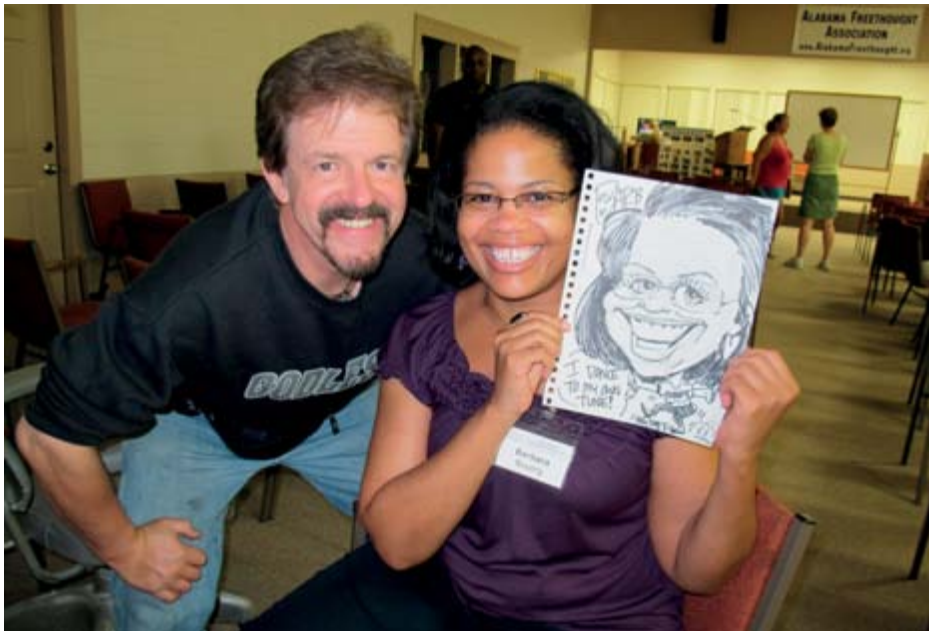
Duncan Henderson took questions after showing the “Nick News” segment introduced by Linda Ellerbee in which he was featured. Duncan received \$1,000 from FFRF as a student activist awardee.



The crowd responded warmly as Duncan Henderson talked about fighting ignorance in Alabama and for his right to start a freethought club.



Steve Benson and Dan Barker, a godless duo, shake hands after providing the Saturday night entertainment: Tunes 'n' Toons, an artistic collaboration. They are both former missionaries. Musician Dan was a teenage evangelist who gave up the ministry and religion in his 30s. Editorial cartoonist Steve, the grandson of Mormon president Ezra Taft Benson, was (what else?) a Mormon missionary.



Steve Benson, who donated his caricaturing talents to FFRF, with Barbara Scurry, Georgia, and her portrait.



Mark Zumach, dynamic director of the Triangle Freethought Association, a North Carolina FFRF chapter.



“Friendly neighborhood atheists” Aleta Lodendecker, Laurie Webre and Nan Einhart enjoy cameraderie in the piney shade at Lake Hypatia.

Documenting how God's 'acts of God' devastated Alabama

Day of Devastation: Photos and Stories of Alabama's Deadly Tornado Outbreak is the title of a 128-page book published by the Birmingham News, Mobile Press-Register and Huntsville Times. From the preface:

"April 27, 2011, is a day Alabama will never forget. It was the worst natural disaster in our history, a day when more than 50 tornadoes hit Alabama, taking the precious lives of more than 230 Alabamians."

Huntsville FFRF Lifetime Member **Don Worrell** notes that according to many of those interviewed in the book, God was also busy that day *saving* lives, here and there, all over the place, presumably in accord with His Divine Plan (willy-nilly lifesaving it apparently wasn't).

Some excerpts from the book:

Pearline Hinton and her teenage son Kendrell huddled in the bathroom as a killer tornado bore down on their Tuscaloosa apartment complex. Kendrell said he started to say his prayers. "I was just saying, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.' I was just praising the Lord, and that thing was just coming."

Tuscaloosa's Rosedale Baptist Church, which suffered major damage, held an outdoor service the next Sunday. About 100 church members and guests stood up to sing "Victory in Jesus."

Pastor Louis Johnson reminded them that God is good. "As we look at the destruction around us, the first question that people are going to ask is, 'Would a good God let this happen, or does God even exist?' God not only exists, but He loves us. Every single person here today had their homes ravaged and all their possessions destroyed. But God placed His hand over them and protected them."

Mike Dabbs recalled, "I prayed to God to protect us, but if He had to take someone, to take me." All were spared. The house was not.

"Ten thousand horses came over my house, and they were chasing a freight train," she said. "All I could do was scream, 'Jesus, keep us wrapped in your blood.'"

Rev. Jesse Jackson was guest preacher at Pratt City's Bethel Baptist Church the next Sunday. "The flip side of this tragedy is opportunity," he told the congregation. "We derive beauty from the ashes. Our faith will not refrain from the face of tragedy."

Two days after the storm, 75-year-old Anne Muse kept repeating a phrase for strength, "God is able. God is able." Her daughter, Alondan, 50, and grandson, Alvilante, 14, were sent to Birmingham hospitals with broken bones and head injuries after their modular home was ripped apart. "But God never puts more on you than you can bear," Mrs. Muse said. "God is able,



Don Worrell, who was wounded as an Army infantryman during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, at FFRF's Atheists in Foxholes monument at Lake Hypatia, Ala.

but I don't know how much more I can bear."

T.J. Hagler, 79, looked at the remains of his shattered house. "I survived," he said, shaking his head. "God's got plans for me yet."

On May 5, funerals were held for the Hallmark family, of Arab, all killed in the tornado: Phillip, 56; his wife Ann, 54; their son Shane, 37; Shane's wife Jennifer, 31; and 17-month-old Jayden, Phillip and Anne's grandson.

Rev. Jeff Rowan, who officiated, referred frequently to the bible and Job's lifelong suffering. "But I know that my Redeemer lives," Rowan said, ending with a poem: "Do not hold on to the hurt of this world. It will only make you sad. But a life in Heaven will make you glad."

Mark Wigley, a truck driver, had the top floor of his home ripped off. "But the good Lord was looking after us," he said. "We can replace all of this junk."

Mason Josey, 63, whose house was damaged substantially, said, "Any time I feel sorry for myself, I realize I'm really very fortunate. God blessed me. But it's hard."

Reflecting on a verse from Psalms 30, Pastor Lowell Douglas of Gray's Chapel Baptist Church reassured the grieving that trouble does not last always. "Weeping may endure for a night," he read, "but joy comes in the morning."

After Josh Rosencrans walked away from the tornado without a scratch, he pointed to a bible verse which had been taped to his bathroom mirror: "The Lord will guard you from all evil. He will guard your life."



Dan Barker autographs his book, *Godless*, for Barbara Scurry.



Speakers Betty and Jim McCollum, Arkansas. Retired attorney and champion of the First Amendment Jim McCollum talked about how religion crept into the secular Pledge of Allegiance. Jim aired the Peabody Award-winning documentary, "The Lord Was Not on Trial Here Today," about the Supreme Court case his mother brought and won on his behalf when he was young.



Friends Wanda Alexander and Sheila Dotson.



That's Alice Cleveland, Alabama, who leads the annual poetry reading at Lake Hypatia Freethought Advance. Cups of "sweet tea" in foreground.



Claudia Turner, who turned 89 on July 2, was sung a round of "Happy Birthday."



Ruth Henderson, North Carolina, Pat Cleveland, Alabama, and Karon Park, Georgia, in front of Lake Hypatia.