# Freethought Complimentary Copy Join FFRF Now! Today

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Photo: Jeff Yardis

# FFRF Jesus shrine protest sets off firestorm

A letter from the Freedom From Religion Foundation to the U.S. Forest Service protesting an unconstitutional Jesus shrine in the middle of Big Mountain in Montana's Flathead National Forest has ignited a Religious Right firestorm.

On behalf of one of its Montana members, FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt sent a letter in May pointing out that religious symbols may not be posted on federal property. She filed a Freedom of Information Act request to review the leasing agreement with the Knights of Columbus Council #1328. The lease refers to the purpose "to provide a site for a religious shrine."

Documents reveal the government charged no money for the special lease permit for use of 625 square feet of land near Whitefish Mountain Resort's Chair 2.

## Inside This Issue Thomas Jefferson

Student Activist

Catherine Fahringer Student Activist awardee Harrison Hopkins addresses a packed house at the 34th annual national FFRF convention in Hartford, Conn. For more convention photos, see Pages 10–15.

The Forest Service had quietly agreed this summer not to renew the lease to the conservative Roman Catholic men's club. The violation has been going on since the mid-1950s with "leases" renewed every 10 years. The permit was up for renewal this year.

Then, U.S. Rep. Denny Rehberg, R-Mont., got into the act. In October, he wrote Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell: "Removal of this symbol of hope and faith is an insult to the sacrifices they so willingly gave our great country."

Forest Supervisor Chip Weber capitulated and announced Oct. 21 that Flathead National Forest was withdrawing its decision not to renew the permit and would "formally seek public comment." Also getting into the act is the Montana State Historical Preservation Office, which absurdly claims "the site in question is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places." FFRF immediately wrote Tidwell to protest the notion that public opinion can supersede the Constitution. The majority does not rule in matters of personal conscience. Just because a violation is long-lasting does not diminish the violation, FFRF further pointed out — quite the contrary. By that reasoning, the longer an abuse goes on, the less egregious it becomes. FFRF also called it a "sham" that the shrine to Jesus is belatedly being called a World War II memorial. The shrine promotes one religion's deity and excludes all non-Christians, including "the many 'atheists in foxholes' who have served our country with distinction and valor," FFRF wrote Tidwell. Courts have rejected such ruses. Since the Forest Service was seeking "public comment," FFRF also sent Tidwell representative samplings of its vicious hate mail on the issue (see Crank Mail, Page 17), showing how the statue has given believers a sense that they are political insiders, and that nonbelievers are outsiders worthy of deportation or even death.

The concrete statue is one of thousands manufactured by the Knights of Columbus to place on their lawns. "They overstep their rights when they appropriate federal property to broadcast their religious message," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

The record shows the idea for the shrine apparently originated with returning Catholic veterans from Kalispell, Mont., who aimed to recreate the experience of seeing other shrines to Jesus in the Alps.

the ski area, it points out.

The insensitive Rehberg went so far as to create a link, veteransjesus.com, which takes people to his congressional website. In November, he introduced legislation to swap private land from the resort atop Big Mountain for the 625 feet of federal land beneath the shrine.

### **Urgent Action Alert!**

The U.S. Forest Service's official "comment period" for whether to renew the lease for the Jesus shrine lasts through Dec. 8, 2011. Send your objections by email to:

comments-northern-flathead-tally-lake@ fs.fed.us

Please include "Knights of Colum-



Jessica Ahlquist Pages 2–3

Atheist in Foxhole awardee Steve Trunk Pages 8–9





FFRF honors "Annie" composer Charles Strouse Page 24

"The Knights of Columbus is a very wealthy organization with ample land where it may place Jesus statues privately, where they belong," said Dan Barker, FFRF co-president.

The Catholic club demurs and says the statue is too fragile to be moved. "It's hardly a Michelangelo!" Gaylor quipped.

Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, in a Nov. 15 letter of objection to the permit, pooh-poohed the idea that the statue would be damaged. "For a nation that successfully put several men on the moon, this does not appear to be a significant engineering hurdle." FSEEE pointed out the "statue's historic identity would be preserved by locating the statue at a private location within the ski area resort's footprint." In fact, the application's first choice for locating the statue in 1953 was on private land within

bus Special Use Permit Reauthorization Project" in the subject line.

Emailed comments will be confirmed by return email. Only the first email from each sender will receive a confirmation.

Mail or fax comments to: Project Leader Derek Milner Tally Lake Ranger District 650 Wolfpack Way Kalispell, MT 59901 Fax: 406-758-5367

Please take a moment to comment, because Religious Right groups such as Pat Robertson's ACLJ have delightedly latched onto this issue to raise money and muster their forces. We ask every FFRF member to chime in and counter the religious hotheads so reason will prevail! If you are a veteran, please mention that status in your comment.

Sign FFRF's official White House petition to President Obama to remove the Jesus shrine: wh.gov/Th8

## **Thomas Jefferson Youth Activist honoree**

# Teen stands tall for First Amendment

Jessica Ahlquist, 16, who is a plaintiff in an ACLU federal lawsuit to force removal of an 8-foot-tall prayer banner from her Rhode Island high school, spoke at FFRF's 34th national convention Oct. 8, 2011, in Hartford, Conn., where she received the Thomas Jefferson Youth Activist Award of \$1,000. This award is endowed by a West *Coast couple. The painting was donated to* Cranston West by the class of 1963, the first graduating class.



By Jessica Ahlquist

'm a junior in high school at Cranston West, which is in Rhode Island. You don't tend to think that Rhode Island is a very religious place. It usually has more of a secular connotation to it. However, I found out that wasn't exactly true.

All of this started when I was a sophomore, but I first noticed the prayer when I was a freshman after a friend told me there was one on the wall in the auditorium. I was surprised to see it and didn't think that my school would have something like that.

I've been an out-of-the-closet atheist only since this started. Before that, I didn't want to talk about it. I didn't really identify myself as an atheist to other people. It was really just something that I only told my family. I was afraid

## When I identified myself as an atheist, someone gasped.

[of the School Committee of the city of Cranston] after a parent filed a formal complaint with the ACLU. I had been doing research on the prayer, on prayers in schools in general, and during that time over the summer, another parent kind of beat me to it and made a complaint. There were subcommittee meetings because the school didn't want to just remove it right away.

My friend was a student representative on the subcommittee. I spoke at the meeting and identified myself as an



Jessica accepts the \$1,000 Thomas Jefferson Youth Activist Award presented on behalf of FFRF by Webmaster Scott Colson.

atheist. When I did, someone gasped and someone else whispered under



their breath that I was a "little witch." [Jessica is 5 feet tall.] So I didn't feel very welcome there, obviously, from the very beginning.

I attended another meeting, where there were a lot more people wearing signs around their necks that said, "Keep original banner." They were pretty angry. I don't think all of them knew why they were there though. Some of them seemed really confused. They just said, "Someone's trying to destroy God," and then they all jumped in a van or something.

A lot of irrelevant stuff came up at the meetings. People were talking about abortion and how prayers in schools somehow lowered the teen pregnancy rate. This was all coming from people who didn't really know that the prayer mural existed before. I spoke at that meeting also and could feel how much people hated me. They stared and glared at me.

They were angry from the very start, and that was reflected at school. After it was on the news, weird things started happening. I would sneeze in class and people would scream, "God bless you!" in my face.

At the final meeting, the full committee voted to keep the prayer. The ACLU had contacted me, and I told them that I would become the plaintiff in a lawsuit. In April, we filed a lawsuit against the city of Cranston to take the prayer down.

In school the next day. I went into homeroom and people were already talking about it. They were saying that I was "mad, stupid" and things like that, so when we all rose to say the pledge,

that I would lose a lot of my friends if I did come out, and that actually happened. I did lose some friends.

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I went to a subcommittee meeting Proud dad Steve Ahlquist posing with daughter, Jessica, 16.

Freethought Today



which I don't say because "under God" doesn't belong there, people at the appropriate time turned and yelled "under God!" at me. That was probably the first time that I realized the magnitude of what was happening.

People who had never talked to me before were judging me and calling me names, and it was really hurtful, I was really bothered by it. I went home crying that day.

It didn't stop there. My friend and I were removed from school one day because there was a rumor going around that someone wanted to beat us up. A lot of rumors like that were going around for a long time. That was really scary because there had been some violence in my school recently.

### Calling a prayer 'history'

Despite all of this, I've started becoming much more open about my atheism and feeling a lot more confident saying that. In school it bothers me a lot, but I'm able to kind of put it aside and just get through my day. I do have days when I come home from school crying. Sometimes when I get off the bus, if I'm taking the bus that day, people drive past my house screaming things out the window.

Last year during Diversity Week at school, the Chinese-American mayor [Allan Fung, a Republican] of Cranston gave a talk about minorities, and said how even as a minority, he had succeeded and became mayor despite facing discrimination. During the Q&A, a student asked how he felt about the school prayer. He pointed to it (we were in the auditorium) and said, "I would like to see that prayer stay exactly where it is."

Just about every single person stood up and cheered and clapped, applaud-

ing the mayor for basically being a complete hypocrite. I sat there and tried not to cry. It was really unexpected, not that I didn't know what his opinion on whispered that I it was. He had said on TV once that my family was just looking for money. (In case that comes up, we're asking for \$25. The legal advice was to do that, and I don't want any money from this.)

I'm also not lying when I say that the banner is offensive. It's entitled "School Prayer" and addresses "Our Heavenly Father" and ends with "Amen." They've argued that it isn't a prayer. They've argued that it's historical. They've made every claim there is. But one claim that I don't think they can fairly make is that I'm not offended by it. Because I am and other people are, too. Even Christians are. I have a Muslim friend who is.

They're trying to keep the prayer in the school simply to push God on people who don't want it pushed on them, and they've succeeded many times. In my school there are atheists who have told me that they disagree with what I'm doing. I'm always a little bit sad when I hear that, because it seems that they just haven't really thought about it enough.

When I was younger, I didn't necessarily see religion as something that needed to be fought all the time. But the more research I did, the more I learned that religion can be a big problem. That kind of inspired me to start fighting this prayer.

It's been really hard, but I'm going to get through this, and hopefully when I do, the prayer will be removed. The court hearing for this case is Oct. 13, so unfortunately I don't have a conclusion for you yet. I've been writing a lot about it and about the hate I've received and the things that are going on at school. [U.S. District Judge Ronald



# Someone else was 'a little witch.'

Rene Lagueux heard oral arguments Oct. 13 but hadn't ruled as of press time.]

I'm trying to start a secular student group in my school. It was difficult finding a teacher sponsor. People don't want to be associated with me. Teachers often just don't really want to have any connection with me other than they're my teacher. The same goes for students. But we did manage to find a teacher last week, and we're really excited about that.

#### Q&A:

#### [Edited for space]

Q: It doesn't sound like you had any support from the faculty, and that sort of amazes me.

A: The support I've gotten has kind of been quiet, just between me and two faculty members. People are really nervous because it's so controversial. They're worried if they get involved they could possibly lose their jobs.

Q: [Comment] Unfortunately, you're absolutely right about the faculty supporting you and receiving retribution. My daughter started teaching in high school in Virginia and because she started a gay and lesbian support group, within a month she was told she would no longer be teaching advanced placement courses and could no longer serve on various committees

and so on. She ended up going to law school and is now a very successful environmental lawyer.

Q: Do you think the stigma lessened or got worse after the initial shock? Are you now in a position to have even more influence on your school district as time goes on?

A: I'm hoping to. I think it got worse at first. It's getting a little bit better now, but I think it's going to start getting worse once there's a result with the lawsuit. In the long run it could be better for me because I can start my secular club and maybe make atheists feel a little bit more open and welcome.

Q: Thinking of Roger Williams and the founding of Rhode Island, has this come up as a teachable moment in history class?

A: It's kind of funny. In the first couple of weeks of my U.S. history class, the teacher said that when Roger Williams founded this state, he was trying to establish religious freedom. But she said, "Do you know the one group that nobody wanted in their state or in their area?" And she said, "Atheists." Everyone in the class turned and stared at me.

Q: My son, a senior this year, is also an out atheist. I hope this reassures you, that as time went on, many people came up to support him who he never thought would. It's been very good for him.

A: I'm a little surprised by who came forward, too, and who didn't. There are kids I've gone to school with for years, and they're only just now telling me that they're atheists and support what I'm doing. That's a great thing, because you do feel really alone.

Q: Do you have plans for college? What would you major in?

A: I don't know where yet, but I have my heart set on writing.

Q: My husband's an atheist. He's scared to death to say anything at work, and he's the boss. Have your parents felt any pressure at work or in the community?

A: I'm very lucky to have the support of my parents, mostly my dad. I think he's had a couple of awkward moments at work, but other than that it's been pretty good.

Q: I was in high school plays where they prayed before every play, which made me feel bad. But there was one girl who was also an atheist who helped me stand strong. Has there been someone like that for you?

A: Yes, my two best friends, who are in the school. When I first met them, they were religious but they aren't any more.

Q: Throughout New England hisory, not-so-ancient New England history, Catholics were actually in favor of separation because of Yankee prayers in school. Rhode Island is probably the most Catholic state in the country. Have you received any support from **Catholics?** A: Not many, and especially not openly. Some of them have sent me messages on Facebook saying, "Although I'm religious, I still think what you're doing is the right thing." When I went into this, I wanted to not make it a "religion versus atheism" kind of thing, but that's what it's become. I don't know if that's necessarily a bad thing. I think it's shedding some light on something that needs it in Rhode Island.



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### What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

Founded in 1978 as a national organization of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics), the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., works to keep state and church separate and to educate the public about the views of nontheists.

The Foundation's e-mail address is info@ffrf.org. Please include your name and physical mailing address with all e-mail correspondence. Foundation members wishing to receive online news releases, "action alerts" and "Freethought of the Day" should contact info@ffrf.org.



Declare and share your nonbelief in FFRF's online "Out of the Closet" campaign! ffrf.org/out

Jessica Ahlquist, 16, is a junior and plaintiff in an ACLU federal lawsuit to remove religious imagery from Cranston High School West in Rhode Island.

Madison. Wisconsin

# Heads Up A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

## **Come With Me**

Come on, I'll take you where joy rubs off on your skin, where hope dings a tune along your ribs, a country where no one remembers that old gray landscape of sorrow, where play is a full-time job just grab my hand and hold on in the dizzying whirl of our dance, euphoria off on a spin through fiesta todays and tomorrows, where nobody ever looks back, just deep in your eyes, a look that promises nothing but promises, and another big show tomorrow.

> © 2011 Philip Appleman Freethought Today is pleased to publish this new poem.



Philip Appleman is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. His published volumes of poetry include Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible (2011), Darwin's Ark (new 2009 edition) and Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie (2009). His nonfiction work includes the widely used Norton Critical Edition, Darwin, and the Norton Critical Edition of Malthus' Essay on Population. His poetry and fiction have

won many awards, including a fellowship in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association and the Friend of Darwin Award from the National Center for Science Education. His work has appeared in Harper's Magazine, The Nation, The New Republic, The New York Times, The Paris Review, Partisan Review, Poetry, and The Yale Review.

He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both Lifetime Members (four times over) of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. They recorded an excerpt of "Noah," Philip's comic masterpiece, for the Foundation's newest musical CD, "Beware of Dogma," featuring Dan Barker. That CD also includes Phil's poem "Fleas," set to the music of "Trees." New and Selected Poems is available for sale from FFRF for \$23 ppd, The Norton Critical Edition, Darwin, is \$22 ppd., Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie, \$27 ppd., Darwin's Ark, \$23 ppd., and Perfidious Proverbs, \$20 ppd. (ffrf.org/shop/).



# **Overheard**

Why am I an atheist? I ask you: Why is anybody not an atheist? Everyone starts out being an atheist. No one is born with belief in anything. Infants are atheists until



they are indoctrinated. I resent anyone pushing their religion on me. I don't push my atheism on anybody else. Live and let live. Not many people practice that when it comes to religion.

CBS commentator Andy Rooney, who died Nov. 4 at age 92 and was a 2001 recipient of FFRF's Emperor Has No **Clothes Award** 

Boston Globe, 5-30-82

The FBI released its report [Nov. 14] on 2010 Hate Crime Statistics. Of the 6,224 single-bias incidents reported in 2010, 20% were motivated by religious bias, second only to racially motivated hate crimes, which accounted for 47.3% of the incidents.

**U.S.** Department of Justice statistics Religion Clause, 11-15-11

He basically told me that if I don't get right with God, then I'm worthless that if I don't believe in Jesus, why am I in uniform, because this is God's army, and that I should resign my commission in order to stop disgracing the military.

Capt. Ryan Jean, U.S. Army intelligence officer and member of Atheists at Fort Meade, on being berated for his lack of faith by a chaplain in Kuwait

whom considered himself religious. If today's chaplains and lay religious leaders can't bring themselves to respect the beliefs of such men, both of whom performed courageously in battle, the fault lies not in their faith, whatever it may be, but in the narrow, intolerant way they - and the armed forces — have chosen to interpret it. Editorial, "There are plenty of atheists in foxholes, and their beliefs must be respected" The Baltimore Sun, 11-8-11

A lot of students come from small, conservative towns centered around church where there is not a lot of discussion about atheists, and so they are sort of forced to keep their opinion to themselves. This group is a chance to show the rest of the student body we are just like everyone else.

Nick Shadowen, a philosophy major and member of a secular group awaiting Duquesne University's decision to formally recognize it Washington Post, 11-8-11

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10 sticker on the garage door at the State College, Pa., home of Jerry Sandusky, who faces 40 sexual abuse charges for alleged incidents with young boys over 15 years USA Today, 11-12-11

We don't want a Party of God here in Libya, like Lebanon or Afghanistan. We want to build a state on normal, modern organizational terms. The best man for the job would be a man who is a patriot with skills and experience, not someone who counts how many times he prays each day. Omar Salem el-Ghaied, deputy head of the Misrata military council, on who should be defense minister in the new government

The Baltimore Sun, 11-5-11

The hoary aphorism that "there are no atheists in foxholes" is contradicted by, among others, the examples of Baseball Hall of Famer and combat pilot Ted Williams and former NFL player and soldier Pat Tillman, neither of

Wall Street Journal, 11-5-11



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> Slightly irreverent views, news, music & interviews

# FFRF 'cross-eyed' over mayor's bizarre 'fix'

Whiteville, Tenn., certainly isn't "Pleasantville" for non-Christians with James Bellar behind the civic wheel, but the mayor of that Tennessee town finally and very grudgingly agreed that a water tower cross had to go.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation called off plans to sue the town over the First Amendment violation. But the national state/church watchdog with 17,000 members, including over 200 in Tennessee, called Bellar's remedy "bizarre" and is closely monitoring the situation.

Mayor James Bellar sent a letter in late October to FFRF's attorney, advising him that "There is no longer a Latin cross atop the Whiteville water tower." Bellar attached an invoice for nearly \$4,000 from a crane service. He inexplicably paid the firm to lop

off one arm of the Latin cross, leaving what looks a bit like a gallows (or a broken cross!).

The mayor has called FFRF and its potential plaintiff "terrorists."

After receiving a demand letter on behalf of FFRF by Nashville attorney Alvin Harris, Bellar initially announced on Oct. 3 that he would move the cross. Then he changed his mind. On Oct. 17, Bellar told reporter Daniel Wilkerson, WBBJ-TV in Jackson, Tenn., that "Somebody has to stand up to these atheist sons of bitches, and you can quote me on that."

FFRF, on behalf of a local complainant, had written four unanswered letters of complaint since last December to the town of Whiteville protesting the illegal lighted display.

"We're looking a little cross-eyed at

the mayor's strange action and, his vindictive and unprofessional statements, but we are satisfied, for now, that there is no longer a Latin cross on governmental property," noted Dan Barker, FFRF co-president. He warned that if the town restores the Latin cross (an action hinted at in the mayor's letter), it will sue.

"This intemperate mayor has wasted nearly \$4,000 in tax dollars to essentially mutilate a religious symbol, rather than remove it. A careful administrator would not have indulged in such folly. The town could even have made some money had it auctioned the cross to bidders. We would encourage the town council to investigate the mayor's action," added Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.



"Now we are ready for the return of one-armed Jesus" was a local comment on the WREG News website.



# FFRF contests 'In God We Trust' vote

FFRF accused the U.S. House of Representatives of "playing political football with religion" when it voted, 396-9, on Nov. 1, to reaffirm "In God We Trust" as the official motto of the United States, and to support and encourage "the public display of the national motto in all public buildings, public schools, and other government institutions."

The bill was authored by Rep. J. Randy Forbes, co-chair of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, who had previously attacked President Barack Obama for invoking the nation's first motto, "E Pluribus Unum" ("Out of Many, One") in a speech last year in Indonesia. In a statement, FFRF noted: "In fact, both are national mottos. 'E Pluribus Unum,' originally chosen by a distinguished committee of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, appears on the Great Seal of the United States and is still on currency. The religious motto was unfortunately adopted following a religious lobbying campaign during the Red Scare in 1956. As FFRF always points out, 'In God We Trust' isn't even accurate. In order for it to be accurate, it would have to say, 'In God Some of Us Trust,' and wouldn't that be silly?"

The nine brave "naysayers" were: Rep. Gary Ackerman, D-N.Y.; Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo.; Rep. Justin Amash, R-Mich.; Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif.;

# FFRF protests Michigan bullying proposal

The Freedom From Religion Foundation spoke out against a provision in Michigan Senate Bill 0137, passed by the state Senate on Nov. 2, which appears to exempt bullying in the name of religion:

"This section does not prohibit a statement of a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction of a school employee, school volunteer, pupil, or a pupil's parent or guardian."

"FFRF's legal team spends the bulk of its time trying to enforce neutrality over religion in public schools. We are monitoring coaches, principals, teachers, student bible clubs, and even other students who view a captive audience of students as recruiting territory," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, who co-directs FFRF with Dan Barker.

Abuses FFRF has handled recently include science teachers who jeer at evolution, music teachers who make children sing Sunday school praise songs, principals who post the Ten Commandments on school walls, kindergarten teachers who illegally train

eligion Founa provision in their small charges to pray before their milk and cookies, and schools which al-

milk and cookies, and schools which allow unsupervised Christian youth pastors to roam lunchrooms in search of souls to save.

In one recent case FFRF is pursuing, a parent reported that a religious teacher belittled an eighth grader because the parent was divorced. The teacher reportedly said in the classroom that divorce is a "sin" and the student's parents would "go to hell."

The First Amendment requires not that religionists be given a free pass on bullying, but that our public schools be free from religion. Public schools must ensure that students are not harassed, preached at by teachers, or bullied by other students in the name of religion.

Sen. Rick Jones, a Republican who had inserted the religious exemption in the bill, said Nov. 14 that he would drop his amendment and vote for the House version that doesn't have the exemption, Religion News Service reported.

# FFRF objects to 'probation

Rep. Mike Honda, D-Calif.; Rep. Hank Johnson, D-Ga.; Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va.; Rep. Pete Stark, D-Calif.; and Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor debated Rep. Dan Lungren, R-Calif., on national Fox TV over the issue. View the video at: *ffrf.org/ news/ video/*.To read more about this or sign up for FFRF Action Alerts, visit: *ffrf.org/ news/action/* or to receive FFRF in the News: *ffrf.org/news/releases/* 

## What Is a Freethinker?



**free-think-er n.** A person who forms opinions about religion on the basis of reason, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief.

## officers for God'

FFRF sent a letter Nov. 3 to Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange objecting to a proposed sentencing program in Bay Minette, Ala., that would let offenders serve time in church instead of jail. After FFRF objected to Police Chief Mike Rowland's unconstitutional scheme in September, the city sought an official opinion from the Attorney General's Office on the legality of the jail diversion program, called "Operation ROC: Restore Our Community."

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote: "On its face, it should be obvious that giving special treatment to offenders who attend church services is coercive and unconstitutional. The city admits in its own documents that Operation ROC penalizes those who do not participate in the program. The program seeks to push church attendance on offenders and calls for continued government surveillance of offender participation."

Participating Pastor Robert Gates, Police Department chaplain, would be in charge, according to the police chief: "The oversight will be Pastor Gates. Pastor Gates will be the probation officer for God, you might say. He, Pastor Gates, will be the one the offenders will report to. The offenders will not be calling the church to say that they are not coming to church. They will have to call Pastor Gates and let him know, if for some reason they miss."

The proposal is currently on hold.

# FFRF protests Penn State football prayer

The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a strong letter of complaint to the interim president of Penn State University over the "ostentatious pregame Christian prayer" at the Nov. 12 game between Penn State and Nebraska. The game was the first since disgraced former Penn State Assistant Coach Jerry Sandusky, a churchgoer, was charged with sexually abusing eight boys. Fallout after revelations of a coverup has led to dismissal of football coach Joe Paterno, firing of the school president and placement on administrative leave of Assistant Coach Mike McQueary.

Penn State Coach Tom Bradley said publicly "it would be a great idea" that Nebraska Assistant Coach Ron Brown would pray to Jesus at the game. Brown intoned: "Father, you would say grace and forgiveness in the lives of all of those involved." At a press conference, he added: "The bible says to all of us of sin and falsehood of His glory, not one of us could stand before God. He forgives us. He restores us. This community, this university, and every one of us needs restoration."

"The inappropriate prayer spectacle on Saturday involved all coaches and their entire public university teams participating in Christian prayer in the middle of the football field with 100,000 stadium spectators watching and millions of television viewers," wrote Annie Laurie Gaylor on behalf of FFRF. "This government prayer service was deeply offensive to many university students, parents, faculty, boosters and spectators.

"Our membership is distressed to see a [de facto] public university in the midst of a national scandal wrap itself in piety. Clearly, we need eyes wide open, not further demonstrations of blind faith and heads bowed in submission to misused authority," she added.

In addition to the offense against the Constitution, which the letter detailed, FFRF objected to the offensive prayer content: "It should not be necessary to spell out why it is impermissible for a public university serving Christians, non-Christians and nonbelievers alike to characterize a school football game as being played to honor Jesus. Given the timing and context of the game, the long-winded sermon by Brown that his god 'forgives us,' no matter the 'sin,' is deeply disrespectful to the victims in this far-reaching scandal.



"Brown downplayed the egregious nature of the allegations and cover-up by saying 'every one of us needs restoration.' Far from being appropriate or 'unifying,' his message of salvation through Jesus was divisive and insulting. Brown's evangelical message is one which many players, students, faculty, parents and boosters do not subscribe to, nor should they be expected to show obeisance to his or Bradley's personal religious views."

FFRF chided interim President Rodney Erickson for his "resounding support" for the prayer.

The Nittany Lions lost 17-14.

# It Pays to Complain: FFRF Legal Victories

# FFRF protects Michigan state employees

FFRF action convinced the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) to change its oath-taking practice to permit secular affirmations.

DHS offices throughout Michigan were making employees retake their oaths of office. The complainant informed FFRF that when the oath was administered to the employees, the phrase "so help me God" was included. Employees were not given the option to either swear or affirm. On Oct. 25, FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt wrote to DHS Director Maura Corrigan, alerting her to the constitutional violation.

On Nov. 1, FFRF received assurance from Corrigan that the protocol would be altered. Her letter noted, "[T]o better meet the needs of all DHS employees, I have changed my practice to ask staff to affirm or swear. Further, I also now advise staff that they are welcome to omit the words 'so help me God.' That language is now entirely optional." vising him of the violations.

DiNicola replied Oct. 12: "Please be advised that as of Oct. 2, 2011, a presentation which informs or reminds trainees of the separation between church and state has been added to all academy orientation sessions presented to trainees shortly after their arrival."

All religious postings in the gym have been removed, and the practice of putting bibles in dorms will stop, DiNicola said.

# FFRF teaches Madison district a lesson

FFRF saved Madison [Wis.] Metropolitan School District (MMSD) employees from taking part in a nonsecular staff meeting.

An MMSD staff member was shocked to find out that middle-school staff development meetings were scheduled to take place at a Presbyterian church in late October, at a time when students would not be present in school buildings, allowing for ample space and no need to seek refuge in churches. FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt sent a letter of complaint to Superintendent Daniel Nerad on Sept. 22. in the current week's bulletin from your local congregation and everyone at your table will receive \$2 off any of the following brunch menu items!"

FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt sent a letter Oct. 17 to Brew Works: "Offering this discount violates the federal Civil Rights Act in addition to provisions of state civil rights statutes."

On Oct. 24, Brew Works said by email that the Sunday brunch discount had been discontinued.

## FFRF grounds Alabama football prayer

FFRF received a complaint in September from a concerned resident of Lauderdale County, Ala., about Christian prayers over the loudspeaker at Brooks High School in Killen before home football games.

In a Sept. 15 letter, FFRF Staff Attorev Stephanie Schmitt asked Superintendent William Valentine to "take immediate action to ensure that prayers are not scheduled at any school-sponsored events. After a follow-up letter Oct. 17, the district brought a halt to their illegal practice. In an Oct. 31 response, the district enclosed an Oct. 27 memo sent by Valentine to district administrators and employees saying, "Effective immediately, football games are not to be opened with a prayer that is in any way led, directed, organized or encouraged by Lauderdale County Board of Education employees." Valentine added, "Additionally, no student, parent, volunteer, or anyone else may use the public address system of the stadium to lead, direct, organize, or encourage prayer."

# FFRF complaint stops faith-based assembly

The Chesterfield County [S.C.] School District canceled a student assembly featuring a presentation by a faith-based drug rehabilitation center after FFRF sent a letter Oct. 17 on behalf of a local complainant. The assembly was set for Oct. 27 at New Heights Middle School in Jefferson, where FFRF successfully contested further appearances during the school day by Christian rapper B-SHOC and the planting of Christian crosses on the lawn.

The Oct. 27 assembly was to have featured speakers from the Bethel Colony of Mercy rehabilitation facility, self-described on its website as "missionaries to the addicted" offering "a 65-day residential program that teaches victory over sin through Jesus Christ and the Bible." FFRF received information that a permission slip to attend the assembly, with a warning that "there is a possibility of a guest making faithbased statements," was sent home with students. FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt's letter to David Duff, school attorney, noted that the U.S. Constitution's prohibition against schoolsponsored religious exercise cannot be overcome by claiming such activities are "voluntary." While FFRF understands the importance of drug and alcohol education, Schmitt said, "It is extremely disturbing that the school district would select this facility. There are several other government-run organizations, such as police departments, that are secular in nature and are well-qualified to present anti-drug awareness. "Given the overt Christian nature of Bethel Colony of Mercy, we are extremely concerned that their religious focus will bleed into the message pre-Continued on next page

## FFRF stops Tennessee in-service prayer

FFRF stopped prayer and religion at a mandatory employee in-service at a Tennessee correctional facility.

An alarmed employee and FFRF members in Tennessee notified FFRF that the Tennessee Correction Academy in Tullahoma was engaging in religious practices at an employee in-service. FFRF was told there were bibles in employees' rooms and prayer while employees were in formation. It was also FFRF's understanding that there were religious postings in the gym.

FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert sent a letter Sept. 16 to Academy Superintendent Sam DiNicola adAlthough FFRF received a response from the district's legal counsel that "[T]he district intends to move forward with the scheduled staff meetings," a complainant notified FFRF on Oct. 31 that both meetings had been moved to a room in the middle school.

## Even in Bethlehem, this is illegal

FFRF brought an end to a church bulletin discount at Bethlehem Brew Works in Bethlehem, Pa. A resident sent FFRF a copy of a menu for " 'Show Your Spirit' Brunch!" reading "Bring

FFRF's complaint received a lot of local media coverage.

#### Page 7

# FFRF stops weekly Florida school flagpole prayer

<sup>9</sup>hoto: Brent Nicastro



Rev. Ron Baker, a Baptist pastor who has been praying with students at schools for 12 years, is persona non grata after an FFRF letter in October on behalf of a local complain-

ant. FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt alerted Superintendent Ben Wortham to an illegal "Prayer Around the Flagpole" taking place at 8:15 a.m. every Monday at Clay Hill Elementary in Green Cove Springs, Fla.

The Sept. 30 staff newsletter from Principal Larry Davis quoted from a Christian minister who said "Our children need God back in schools. . . . The First Amendment was for Christianity, not other religions."

Davis also stated, erroneously, that "Our prayer around the flagpole gatherings are [sic] permissible because they are community led and take place outside of class time."

"Despite Davis' disclaimer that this is permissible, the unabashed promotion of the event in the school newsletter and the repeated use of the possessive 'our' would lead any reasonable observer to infer that the event is directly sponsored by Clay Hill Elementary and the School District of Clay County," Schmitt wrote. "It is grossly inappropriate for principals, teachers, other public school employees or outside adults to actively participate in or promote student-run religious organizations and activities."

Schmitt noted the historical and factual errors in the newsletter: "That a faculty member of an elementary school — a principal, no less — would attempt to pass such egregiously false information off as fact displays an utter lack of respect for the school environment and the education of the hundreds of children entrusted to his care."

While many in the community rallied around the principal and the flagpole prayer, school district attorney J. Bruce Bickner did not. In an Oct. 27 legal opinion requested by the school, Bickner said teachers and administrators may not pray with or in front of students. "Other adults, (i.e., the minister) may not come onto the campus and prayer with students. There is no right of a minister or anyone else to come onto school grounds to lead anyone in prayer. Schools, especially elementary schools, are a nonpublic/ closed forum." Bickner called the prayer "a clear violation of the Establishment Clause and a clear case of endorsement of religion generally and Christianity particularly." He listed nine ways in which the weekly prayer events violate the law. Baker and the school district reached an agreement Nov. 10 that he won't pray at Clay Hill or at three other elementary schools. "Reverend Baker is free to find locations off of School Board property but in proximity to each of the schools at which to continue his prayer meetings," the agreement said. "The School Board, through their attorney, will contact the Freedom From Religion Foundation to ensure that they are apprised of the resolution of this matter." See FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor debate Baker on national Fox TV, where she called his conduct "predatory," at ffrf.org/news/video/.



## **Temple-Inland replaces Second Timothy**

North Vermillion Community School Corp., Cayuga, Ind., replaced a religious sign (pictured at right) at the high school athletic field entrance, after a letter of complaint by FFRF Staff Attorney on behalf of a local complainant. On Oct. 10, Superintendent Michael Turner wrote that the signage "has been changed, thus placing North Vermillion in compliance with the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings. Attached you will find photos verifying the change."

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules This is the will of God .....

## It Pays to Complain

#### Continued from previous page

sented at the school assembly. Therefore, we ask that the district immediately cancel the presentation to be given by Bethel Colony of Mercy."

Duff responded Oct. 25 to say the "Bethel Colony appearance as a schoolsponsored event during the school day, involving students, has been canceled." Duff added that it's his understanding that the group "is to appear and present information following a PTO meeting in the evening on Nov. 17, 2011."

The district has also responded to an FFRF open records request for the lease agreement and fee schedule for B-SHOC's performance at McBee High School on Oct. 28, a staff development, no-student day. The school leased the gym, canteen and restrooms for \$210 (\$15 an hour), from noon to 2 a.m.

## **Gideon bibles out after FFRF** complains

FFRF received recent assurances from three school districts that they would halt illegal bible distributions.

ber Middle School, where they may have trespassed on school grounds and allegedly blocked the sidewalk. In a Sept. 27 letter of complaint, Elliott asked Poudre School District Superintendent Jerry Wilson to "make sure the Gideons' actions fall within the confines of the law."

In an Oct. 4 response, an attorney for the district responded, "In light of the problems on Sept. 12, 2011, the school district is considering various options to protect students' rights as they travel home from school on public streets and sidewalks if and when the Gideons return to distribute bibles

and other literature. These options include a request for law enforcement personnel to monitor the Gideons' distribution."

Elliott wrote a Sept. 22 letter of complaint to the Norwood School District in Norwood, Mo., protesting bible distribution by Gideons at a table directly outside the school entrance during school hours. On Sept. 28, Superintendent John Eaton replied, "I will write the local Gideons a letter making sure they understand that they cannot be on school property nor can they try to distribute religious literature during school hours."



crats to use Christmas as an excuse to should be a public forum for religion.

'Tis the season, already, for theo- tol. "We don't think the State Capitol

A concerned Georgia parent alert-

ed FFRF in September about bible distribution by Gideons International inside Chatsworth [Ga.] Elementary School. According to the parents, their child came home with a bible and said the teacher had walked students down a hallway to a table to receive a New Testament bible.

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott noted in a Sept. 27 letter to Murray **County Schools Superintendent Vickie** Reed: "The district cannot legally allow its campuses to be utilized by overreaching proselytizers."

In an Oct. 12 response, the district told FFRF, "We have been advised by the Gideons that their organization will no longer be making bibles available at information tables in our schools."

FFRF was alerted by a Fort Collins, Colo., parent about the Gideons handing out bibles after school to students who didn't want them outside of Webwage a war on secularism.

Wisconsin media in early November sought out the Freedom From Religion Foundation for comment when Gov. Scott Walker announced he was renaming the state holiday tree a "Christmas tree."

In the 1980s, Gov. Tony Earl had dubbed the annual rotunda display a holiday tree to show inclusivity following disputes over religious displays in the Capitol.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor, in several interviews, told media that "Governor Walker is wrong. It's not a Christmas tree. It's a Winter Solstice tree. The custom of decorating with evergreens is pagan in origin and long predates Christianity." She added, "Clearly, Governor Walker, by insisting it be called a Christmas tree, intends to send a message of exclusion."

FFRF has applied to put up its annual Winter Solstice sign in the Capi-

but as long as religion will be in the Capitol in December, we nonreligious should be represented there, too," Gaylor said.

The Capitol becomes the venue for countless choirs, a menorah with godly sign, an interfaith week and other religious events in December, including a nativity pageant that takes over the Capitol for a weekend.

One of FFRF's first actions in the 1970s was ending city and public school subsidies of the pageant. Madison songwriter Ken Lonnquist has written a clever song about the tree-naming controversy, "O Isthmus Tree" (the Capitol stands on an isthmus between two lakes in downtown Madison). One verse says:

While Christians claim you as their own Historically it's widely known Your origin was pagan when The Yule tree was plundered.

November 2011

# 2011 Atheist in Foxhole honoree

# A cross by any other name . . .

Steve Trunk, an FFRF Board and Lifetime Member, spoke Oct. 8 at FFRF's 34th national convention in Hartford, Conn., where he received the Atheist in Foxhole Award. He is plaintiff in a lawsuit in which the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in January declared the Mount Soledad cross near San Diego, Calif., unconstitutional. Steve suggested FFRF inaugurate an Atheist in Foxhole honoree, and nominated Philip Paulson to be its first recipient in 2006.



**By Steve Trunk** 

hank you, this really is the most awesome honor! Although I have to admit that it does feel just a little bit weird receiving an award that I thought up. It's kind of like, "Here's your trophy, Mr. Heisman."

I grew up in a religious household. My dad was hard-core, Deep South Southern Baptist, and my mom, Church of England. I went to Catholic school. If I ever want a prescription for medical marijuana, that's all I gotta tell 'em.

I first had doubts about god the same time, I guess, as do most kids when we started to figure out the science we were learning didn't match the technological capability of Santa Claus. And because in my circle of childhood friends all our fathers were in the Air Force, we probably began questioning even earlier than most. We're surrounded by the latest and greatest in jet fighter and space technology and begin to ask ourselves. "If Santa Claus can do this, why can't the United States Air Force?" The only logical conclusion was Santa Claus, unlike the Air Force, probably didn't exist. And if that was true of Santa Claus . . . I began to have really serious doubts about the truth of religious stories one evening in the basement of the Rosedale Baptist Church in Covington, Ky. I discovered that the blood of Christ was delivered cleverly disguised as Hi-C grape juice. So I've been an atheist, skeptic, nonbeliever, freethinker for pretty much most of my life. Shortly after moving to San Diego in 1980, I became more out and more activist when I connected with the San Diego Humanist group while volunteering as clinic defense at the local Planned Parenthood. Then I discovered FFRF when Dan Barker's concert tour series brought him to San Diego. Still don't have the T-shirt.



one of the most picturesque spots in San Diego County. It's about 43 feet tall, made of concrete and painted white. Until 1989, it sat there all by itself. Erected in 1954 and officially named the Mount Soledad Easter cross, it overlooked no services recognizing veterans, no services on Memorial Day and none on Armistice Day, on D-Day or VE Day. But you can bet your last dollar, there was a service every Easter Sunday morning.

San Diego is a really conservative

lowed to sell houses to nonwhites or even to Jewish people. It wasn't until the Scripps Institute of Oceanography settled in the area that those rules began to change, simply because many of the scientists that the Scripps Institute hired were Jewish.

The Klan likely burned crosses atop Mount Soledad. But with many members of city government and police being active members, the burnings would clearly not have been accurately recorded. Details are sketchy. What we know for sure is that Gregory Peck, documented in his autobiography, witnessed cross-burnings as a young boy in the area. Later in life, Peck would draw on that experience while making the film "To Kill a Mockingbird." The cross is not necessarily just a symbol of Christian love and salvation. To some, it's a symbol of hatred and racism.

Although the cross stood alone for most of its history, it has become the centerpiece of a more extensive war memorial. This memorial now features six concentric walls around the base of the cross, with approximately 2,100 plaques honoring individual veterans, platoons and groups of soldiers. Bricks and paving stones also honor veterans, and 23 bollards honor community and veterans organizations. An American flag flies from a large pole.

In 1989, two Vietnam veterans, one of whom was Phil Paulson - the first recipient of the Atheist in Foxhole Award — sued the city seeking to remove the cross from city land. Those two cases were combined. Ultimately the veterans prevailed. The court found that the cross's location violated the No Preference Clause of the California Constitution. The court held that to the extent that the cross could be construed as a war memorial, it was only a memorial in the sense it would be a sectarian war memorial carrying an inherently religious message and creating an appearance of honoring only veterans of a particular religion.

The city of San Diego sold the land to the Mount Soledad Memorial Association, a sale later deemed illegal because the open-bid process wasn't followed. What did follow was a mindnumbing series of appeals, filings, counter filings, special elections, city council meetings, special city council meetings, more special elections, more than a few backroom deals and yet another special election.

The mayor declared in an interview that 'San Diego is a Christian city.'

Immediately after that sale, the memorial association, led by Charles Li-Mandri of the Thomas More Law Center, started building the memorial that now exists under the cross. This is one of the most salient factors in this whole story about the cross being a war memorial. Up until the cross was declared unconstitutional on public land, there was no indication whatsoever that it existed as a war memorial. Everything that exists now as a memorial was added after the judge's decision in 1989.

The Mount Soledad cross sits atop

place. The area where the cross sits, La Jolla, is [a corruption of] Spanish for "the jewel," and the area is one of the most affluent in the country. In fact, as I was driving Annie Laurie up to the cross a few weeks ago, I commented, "You can tell we are in the *good* part of town; the car behind us is a Maserati."

The earliest record of a cross being placed on the mountain was in 1913. Considerably smaller than the current one and made of wood, it was twice knocked down during storms and replaced.

In the 1920s and '30s, the Ku Klux Klan was very active in San Diego. Roughly a block from my house used to be the site of KKK headquarters for San Diego and Imperial counties. La Jolla at the time was a very white place. It was WASP-only, and that was actually written into the covenants, conditions and restrictions. Real estate agents, up until well into the 1960s, were not al-

#### The war memorial

The present cross was dedicated in 1954 "as a reminder of God's promise to man of everlasting life and of those persons who gave their lives for our freedom..." The primary stated objective in erecting it was to construct "a permanent handsome cast concrete cross and to create a park worthy of this magnificent view and worthy to be a setting for the symbol of Christianity."

### The legal standing issue

In the summer of 2006, I got a phone call at work. "Steve? It's Phil Paulson. I'm dying."

He said he needed someone to take over the case. He had cancer and only a few months to live. If no one took the case when he died, the case would die with him.

Sometimes, opportunity knocks; sometimes it breaks down the door like a DEA raid.

Phil's death came at the start of a huge flurry of activity around the cross. The first hurdle to me taking over Phil's case was the issue of my standing. I had to be able to demonstrate to the court that I had standing at least equivalent to Phil's.

Standing is probably the biggest obstacle we face now with any state/ church separation issue. By questioning standing, courts are quite literally denying citizens' access to the judicial system and inhibiting their ability to right a constitutional wrong. Let me put that another way: If courts deny standing on a constitutional state/ church issue, they are at the most fundamental level denying our right to redress the government for grievances. If, in 1989, Phil Paulson had been subjected to the same level of qualification for standing that he would be now, this case would've never seen the light of day.

So I've had to tell the court that I feel left out. When I see the cross, as a veteran who is not represented, I have to say I feel that I can't enjoy the park because the cross is there. I have to be able to demonstrate some kind of harm.

But it's really the Constitution that's harmed. And in that sense, we are all harmed. It is disturbing that the courts are inhibiting citizens' ability to right constitutional wrongs by denying access to those very same courts. If an average citizen can't bring these cases, who will?

This is my statement to the court in an answer to an interrogatory:

The presence of the cross makes me feel as if I'm a secondclass citizen. A clearly Christian symbol sits atop one of the most significant geographical features of San Diego with the full acquiescence and encouragement of the local — and more recently, federal — governments.

That feeling is reinforced by statements by city officials, such as when then-Mayor Maureen O'Connor declared in an interview with TV reporters "San Diego is a Christian city." To put this in context, imagine the outrage if the mayor had said "San Diego is a White city." Implicit in those kinds of comments, and in this case represented by the cross, is an official position of exclusion toward a minority group.

If the Mount Soledad Memorial is to be viewed from the perspective of a tribute to veterans, which of course it wasn't until 1989, the presence of a Christian cross, absent any other religious symbols, sends a clear message that the service of Christian veterans is more significant than that of those with differing beliefs.

## Yeah, I took out a restraining order on W!

the 2005 budget, designating it as a federal war memorial. After that bill was signed into law in December 2004, the San Diego City Council declined to donate the property on the advice of the city attorney, who publicly stated that the move would violate the state and federal constitutions.

The donation question was then submitted to the voters as Proposition A, which was approved by 76% of the vote, but a state court enjoined its implementation.

While the appeal of the state court injunction was pending, a federal district court order directed the city to remove the cross within 90 days or pay a daily fine of \$5,000. The city appealed and sought a stay, pending appeal, which the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals denied. Justice Anthony Kennedy of the U.S. Supreme Court then overruled the 9th Circuit, granting the city's stay application.

In June 2006, Hunter and fellow Republican Reps. Daryl Issa and Brian Bilbray introduced H.R. 5683, which proposed to seize the land beneath the cross by eminent domain. The House approved the bill 349-74 and the Senate by unanimous consent.

The act authorized the land transfer, "In order to preserve a historically significant war memorial designated the Mount Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego, Calif., as a national memorial honoring veterans of the Unitanother country. . ."

Until this point, the ACLU had not been involved. It was being handled entirely by Jim McElroy of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Once this literally became a federal case, a group called the Jewish War Veterans got involved. It's one of the oldest active veterans associations around. It dates to the Civil War and is self-described as a group that "engages in extensive advocacy of religious liberty." I want to put that on my résumé. Once the ACLU brought in their big guns, the court combined my case with the Jewish War Veterans and two other litigants who are Muslim.

Freethought Today

#### Back to federal court

Once the cross, the memorial and the land under it became federal property, there was a flurry of legal activity and motions that sought to relieve the city of any legal burden. The city of San Diego was cleared and the case moved to the federal level.

U.S. District Judge Larry Burns (who coincidentally is presiding over Jarod Loughner's case in the Tucson, Ariz., fatal shootings that injured U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords) issued the ruling that the 9th Circuit overturned. Burns decided that the cross, because there are so many of them around, was a secular symbol and therefore not subject to the Establishment Clause, the Free Exercise Clause or No Preference Clause of the California Constitution. I always said, if I were a Christian, I would be really upset at this ruling because a judge just took the preeminent symbol of my religion and made it just another logo.

On behalf of FFRF, Annie Laurie Gaylor hands Steve Trunk the Atheist in Foxhole medal and plaque.

ed States Armed Forces." The federal government took possession in August 2006. It's now managed by the Navy.

It's interesting that the cross is mainuned by the Navy. Those of you familiar with the Navy will recall the mantra, "If it moves, salute it; if it doesn't, paint it." Yet recently when the cross needed to be painted, the Navy was nowhere to be found. A local contractor stepped up and took on the project. To his credit, he donated his time and materials and put a fresh coat of paint on the cross and, frankly, for a big ugly concrete replica of the execution device, it looks pretty good. Phil and I both filed temporary restraining orders to stop the land transfer, but the motions were denied for - guess what? - lack of standing. But I now have a piece of paper that says, "Steve Trunk v. George W. Bush, Donald Rumsfeld and Does 1-100." It's one of my proudest possessions. Yeah, I took out a restraining order on W! I was kind of disappointed that it wasn't the sort of restraining order you get for an ex-spouse. I wanted to be able to call, "Hello police? Um, yeah, he's invading

So fundamentally, what the 9th Circuit has ruled, is that this particular cross is in fact a sectarian symbol.

It is, by any reasonable definition, the preeminent symbol of Christianity, and is, by orders of magnitude, the dominant feature of that memorial. But the court saw a sectarian symbol even though Reps. Issa and Bilbray and Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., had clearly indicated the purpose of their bill was preservation of the cross on federal land. I believe they ruled that narrowly to reduce the potential for an appeal. The case now goes back to federal district court to find a remedy. The Thomas More Law Center and Mount Soledad Memorial Association have filed a motion for an en banc hearing before the full panel of the 9th Circuit. What's it like having your name on a case like this? Phil Paulson had earned the unenviable title of "most-hated man in San Diego" and was given a new first name. Whenever there was a news report that involved Phil, he was always referred to as "Atheist Philip Paulson." I, fortunately, have the option to let the

ACLU attorneys take the heat.

Have I received death threats? Not directly, but find any article about the cross in any blog and imagine reading the Crank Mail in Freethought Today. And they're all addressed to you. That's what it's like to read the comments section in your daily newspaper. Our very own right-wing radio talk show host Roger Hedgecock has called for the wholesale roundup and execution of atheists.

I'm pretty secretive about my involvement with this case. There's one person where I work — I go to his cube, and he's got maybe a dozen pictures of the Soledad cross hanging up. I'm there working on his computer, all the time wondering, does he know who I am? How would he react if I told him?

On the other hand, when the issue does come up, I'm upfront about it. Actually, I found most people are generally supportive even if they don't particularly agree with my position. I just say something along the lines, "You know how NRA members are about the Second Amendment? I'm that way about the First."

They usually respond with something like, "You do know that the phrase 'separation of church and state' is not in the Constitution, right?" To which I reply, "Neither is 'right to privacy,' but are you going to deny you have one?"

The critics often ask such, no doubt rhetorical, questions like, "What's next? You going to take all the crosses out of Arlington Cemetery?" Well, first of all, you're thinking of the American Cemetery at Normandy, and in the case of a gravesite, while the cemetery itself may be on public land, the actual gravesite pretty much clearly belongs to the dead person.





This is not so much about how the existence of a cross on a mountaintop harms one particular individual or a group. It is about the harm done to the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of California by the unconstitutional and conspiratorial actions of public officials and legislators who enacted a law with the express purpose of maintaining a Christian symbol. In other words, Congress plainly made a law respecting the establishment of religion and in so doing violated my First Amendment rights.

#### Another giveaway

Meanwhile, the city decided to donate the land beneath the cross to the federal government. U.S. Reps. Duncan Hunter and Randy Cunningham facilitated that by slipping a rider into And no, what I, and the rest of the people involved in the lawsuit, want is to move the cross from public land and quit using the sacrifice and memory of veterans to advertise your religion.

[The week after Steve Trunk delivered this speech, the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals denied an en banc hearing.]

Steve Trunk joined the Navy in 1972, served a one tour in Vietnam in 1973, got discharged, became a born-again Californian, and moved to San Diego in 1980. He has a Bachelor of Technical Education from National University and works in the IT department of a major defense contractor. Steve noted in testimony that he "served his country during the Vietnam conflict [but] I am not a Christian and the memorial sends a very clear message to me that the government is honoring Christian war veterans and not non-Christians."

Madison, Wisconsin

November 2011



Broadway composer Charles Strouse, 84, holds his Emperor Has No Clothes statuette aloft at the conclusion of FFRF's 34th annual convention in Hartford, Conn., Oct. 7-9, 2011. Strouse composed "Annie," "Bye Bye Birdie" and many other memorable musicals and standards (including the "All in the Family" theme song, "Those Were the Days"). Strouse, like so many Broadway composers and lyricists, is a stalwart atheist.



FFRF Co-President Dan Barker hands Strouse the statuette, made for the Freedom From Religion Foundation by the company that produces the Oscars. Strouse identifies himself as an atheist in his fascinating memoir, "Put on a Happy Face."

# Honoree Charles Strouse puts on 'a happy face'



There was hardly a dry eye in the ballroom after Strouse's gentle and moving rendition of "Tomorrow" (from "Annie"), the finale of his concert. A Broadway revival of "Annie" is scheduled for next spring.





Strouse drew a standing ovation after his remarks and magical concert. Read his acceptance speech on back page. View a slideshow of hundreds of other photographs from the 2011 convention at *ffrf.org/outreach/convention/past-conventions/2011-convention-hartford-connecticut/*.





Honoree Charles Strouse with student honorees Jessica Ahlquist and Harrison Hopkins. His speech and concert ended the freethought weekend on a high note.



One of his admirers chats with the charming composer.

Charles Strouse with FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor. Listen to an interview with him on Freethought Radio (6/20/09) at *ffrf.org/news/radio/shows/2009/#r-06-20-2009/*.



Charles Strouse posed graciously with many fans, including this FFRF'er.

Madison, Wisconsin

Freethought Today



Emeritus professor Jim Coors (right), an FFRF officer, presents an Emperor Has No Clothes statuette to professor Jerry Coyne, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Chicago and author of the book *Why Evolution is True*.



Novelist and philosopher Rebecca Newberger Goldstein (left) accepts her Freethought Heroine plaque from FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.



Graduate student Dylan Galos, recipient of a \$1,000 student activist award, talks about censorship of his FFRF "Out of the Closet" billboard in Columbus, Ohio.



Steve Trunk, successful litigant in the Mount Soledad Easter cross case, was named the 2011 Atheist in Foxhole.



Harrison Hopkins, 18, received a \$1,000 student activist award for protesting graduation prayers at his South Carolina high school.





Jessica Ahlquist, 16, received a \$1,000 student activist award as plaintiff in a Rhode Island lawsuit against a prayer banner at her high school. See her speech on pages 2–3.



Joe Taylor, formerly a Christian rocker, spoke about "Finding My Way by Losing It: A Christian Music Icon's Path to Disbelief."



Holly Huber and partner Mitch Kahle display their freethought threads. Mitch is 2011 Freethinker of the Year for his victory ending prayers by the Hawaii Senate. 34th Annual FFRF Convention Hartford, Connecticut October 7–9, 2011

At right: Steven Pinker, Harvard University evolutionary psychologist and Honorary FFRF Director, spoke Friday night on his new book *The Better Angels Of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined.* Read his speech in December's Freethought Today.



November 2011

# **Convention Moments**





Officer and volunteer Phyllis Rose shows what an atheist looks like!







"Let them eat cake!"



Attendees meet authors Steven Pinker and Rebecca Newberger Goldstein (seated).



Officers Phyllis Rose and Wendy Goldberg. Good cheer abounds at the Non-Prayer Breakfast with a Texas member (right).

The "Moment of Bedlam" — not a prayer — precedes the breakfast.



Convention volunteer and Mount Holyoke College student Taylor Myers, who interned last summer for FFRF, meets awardee Charles Strouse, Broadway composer.



FFRF staffer Melanie Knier (left) with student honoree Dylan Galos.



Webmaster and bibliophile Scott Colson.





Freethought Today

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott.



Publicist Katie Stenz (left) and Bookkeeper/Executive Assistant Katie Daniel.

Staff and Volunteers



Attorney Alan Goldberg and Wendy Goldberg staff the "clean money" table, selling chances for pre-In God We Trust currency. Wendy is a volunteer and new FFRF officer.



FFRF Co-President Dan Barker opens the convention with music.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

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Freethought Today

Madison, Wisconsin

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Ajaypal Singh (left) and Camilo Echeverri Bernal are students who traveled from Florida to attend the convention. Camilo is from Colombia. There were members from about 40 states, two Canadian provinces and a participant from Ireland.



Lifetime Member David A. Reichert, M.D., Arizona, asks a question.

# Snapshots





Student litigant and and honoree Jessica Ahlquist (red dress), surrounded by her family and friends.





View complete slideshow: ffrf.org/outreach/convention/past-conventions/2011-convention-hartford-connecticut/



Staffer Scott Colson (left) mans a sales table.

A table stocked with FFRF "ammunition" to defend the wall of separation.



Juhem Navarro-Rivera is a research fellow at the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn.

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker gives a year-in-review PowerPoint presentation.

# The Irreverent Audience



Kristen Wiley and David Backerborg, Connecticut, with their daughter Lara, 15 months.



Dan Barker announces a "Moment of Bedlam" (*not* prayer), at the convention breakfast. That's soundman Buzz Kemper (headphones) recording the moment.



Lara, the youngest attendee.



"Lifer" and Board Member Dick Hewetson, California, came prepared for the "Moment of Bedlam."







Attendees enjoy cake and camaraderie.



Student activist Jessica Ahlquist answers questions from the audiance.

#### View complete slideshow:

 $f\!f\!r\!f.org/outreac\bar{h}/convention/past-conventions/2011-convention-hartford-connecticut/$ 

Just imagining it can bring a beautiful smile!



Area college students brought their enthusiasm to the convention.

## State/Church Bulletin

## Attorney questions school flier policy

Ellen Davis, attorney for the Graham County [N.C.] School Board and Andrews Board of Aldermen, has advised officials that it's time to review school policy on sending religious materials home with children. "Schoolchildren are a captured audience," Davis told The Andrews Journal in a Nov. 9 story. "Someone is always coming to principals, and it's hard for principals to tell a minister you can't send home a religious flier.

"The policy allows just general community information [to be sent home], such as if there's food drive, but not if it's co-mingled with 'Come to our church service at 7 p.m.,' " Davis said.

## ACLJ health care challenge denied

On Nov. 9, a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled against the American Center for Law and Justice, a legal group founded by Rev. Pat Robertson, in its challenge of the health care law signed by President Barack Obama. The suit alleges the law violates the religious freedom of those who choose not to have insurance because they rely on God to protect them from harm, The Associated Press reported.

"That a direct requirement for most Americans to purchase any product or service seems an intrusive exercise of legislative power surely explains why Congress has not used this authority before — but that seems to us a political judgment rather than a recognition of constitutional limitations," Judge Laurence Silberman, an appointee of President Ronald Reagan, wrote in the court's opinion.

Oral arguments on the 2010 law before the Supreme Court are expected to be heard in March, with a decision in June.

# Court upholds anti-gay funeral picketing

A panel of the 8th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Omaha struck down a Nebraska law meant to keep protesters like Westboro Baptist Church members several hundred feet away from funerals or memorial services. "We're very disappointed. This is a slap in the face," said David Diskin, organizer of Sacramento Freethought Day and an FFRF member. "He supports the National Day of Prayer but not a day that celebrates separation of church and state."

The Sacramento Bee reported that an empty frame sat next to signed proclamations. FFRF Co-President Dan Barker was among the speakers at the event.

# Court allows Tennessee secular display

In order to settle a lawsuit, Johnson County, Tenn., has agreed to display Ralph Stewart's display on state/ church separation in the "public forum" area of the courthouse in Mountain City.

Stewart, a "Gung Ho" FFRF member, sued to have his posters displayed after he wasn't allowed to place them near a Ten Commandments plaque that was ostensibly part of a display on the history of American law. The posters are titled "On the Legal History of the Separation of Church and State" and "The Ten Commandments Are Not the Foundation of American Law." The latter contains the statement, "The primary source of American law is the common and statuary law of England, NOT the Bible and NOT Christianity."

The settlement was announced Nov. 10. It includes a \$75,000 payment to Americans United for Separation of Church and State and \$1 to Stewart.

The Associated Press reported that Stewart said he'd rather just have the county remove the Ten Commandments.

## Utah highway crosses lose again in court

The U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari Oct. 31 in Utah Highway Patrol Association v. American Atheists Inc. and a companion case, thus refusing to hear an appeal of a 10th Circuit appeals court ruling that said Utah violated the Establishment Clause when it let the State Patrol put crosses on public land as memorials to members killed in the line of duty.

Justice Clarence Thomas wrote a 19page dissent to the denial of certiorari.



sworn in as Ireland's ninth president. Higgins has vowed to remove prohibitions against atheists and agnostics running for president.

His swearing-in included a humanist element, alongside the traditional religious ones.

## 31 sentenced for Hindu-Muslim violence

A court in India imprisoned 31 people for life after finding them guilty Nov. 9 in the deaths of 33 Muslims, who were burned alive in a building in 2002 in retaliation for the deaths of 60 Hindu pilgrims in a train fire.

More than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, died in three days of riots after the train fire, which Hindus blamed on Muslims.

## Limo drivers deliver for Schuller's wife

An email request for the Crystal Cathedral congregation in Garden Grove, Calif., to drop off meals for Rev. Robert Schuller's ailing wife Arvella brought "mixed feelings of outrage and sadness," according to a Nov. 3 Orange County Register story.

The email asked for meals to be left for three to four weeks at the church's Tower of Hope for the Schullers' limo drivers to pick them up at designated times.

Member Bob Canfield got the email. "These are millionaires who have limos and chauffeurs. Why in God's name would they want the congregants to deliver meals? It's ludicrous." The message asked for low-sodium items and for fruit, meat, soup and egg dishes such as quiches.

The church has filed for bankruptcy, and documents show the Schullers received almost \$10 million from the church's endowment fund. "They're still being chauffeured around in limos," Canfield said. "We, the congregants, have nothing."

# Faith-based 'family planning' gets contract

The Shelby County [Tenn.] Commission voted 9-4 on Oct. 17 to award the contract for low-income, family planning services to faith-based Christ Community Health Services, a setback for Planned Parenthood, the Memphis Commercial Appeal reported. Planned Parenthood performs abortions but Christ Community doesn't and won't refer women to facilities that do.

Jeff Drzycimski, a Catholic deacon and one of several abortion opponents who spoke before the vote, said, "We want our tax dollars not to fund Planned Parenthood, not to fund the killing of children."

Planned Parenthood spokeswoman Joan Carr called the decision "political pandering. It is unfortunate that politics trumped people's needs."

Mary Phillips, 24, testified that Christ Community's services sometimes come with a "sermon." She said she'd told that "If only my relationships with people and God were right, I would have fewer health problems."

Shelby County will get \$1.3 million in grants for family planning.

The Oct. 20 ruling came in an appeal of a lawsuit filed by Shirley Phelps-Roper, daughter of Rev. Fred Phelps. Members of the Topeka, Kan., church believe U.S. troop deaths are punishment for tolerance of homosexuality. The suit followed Phelps-Roper's arrest in Bellevue during a 2007 protest at the funeral of a National Guardsman.

# Sacramento freethought gets no proclamation

California Gov. Jerry Brown's refusal to sign a proclamation noting the Sacramento Freethought Committee's 10th annual Freethought Day, which took place this year on Oct. 23 at the McGeorge School of Law at the University of the Pacific, didn't sit well with freethinkers. Former governors, including Arnold Schwarzenegger, had signed similar proclamations.

# When Irish skeptics' eyes are smiling

Reuters reported Nov. 4 on Ireland's decision to close its embassy to the Vatican, calling it "stunning" and "a huge blow to the Holy See's prestige."

"This is really bad for the Vatican because Ireland is the first big Catholic country to do this and because of what Catholicism means in Irish history," said a Vatican diplomatic source who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Cardinal Sean Brady, head of the Irish Catholic Church, expressed profound disappointment. The closure will save Ireland more than \$1.7 million a year.

The Vatican has been a sovereign city-state since 1929.

The country took another step away from the church with the inauguration Nov. 11 of Michael D. Higgins, 70, who

## In Memoriam

## Sherrie D. Bryant, 1948–2001

Sherrie Diane Bryant, 63, Spokane, Wash., died Aug. 8, 2011, in Spokane. She was born July 2, 1948, in Addison, Ill.

She was the founder and first president of a Freedom From Religion Foundation chapter now called the Inland Northwest Freethought Society. Sherrie was a woman of many talents and interests and was active in many causes. She was a diesel mechanic in the Army and later owned a bookstore. She taught her daughters to change their own oil and tires and her sons to sew.

As a Toastmasters member, she tried

to stop prayers opening meetings. Her motion failed, 11-1. She served on the Spokane Human Rights Commssion, was a volunteer for domestic violence and rape victims and adopted stray animals. Sherrie loved music and played the fiddle and the banjo with the Mountain Musicians.

Survivors include Bill Bryant, her husband of 28 years; four children; four stepchildren; several grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

"Sherrie was a distinguished citizen with few peers," noted Frank Bender, Spokane-area FFRF member.

# Sharing the Crank Mail

A sampling of less-than-positive feedback from religionists that FFRF has received from around the nation, spelling and grammar uncorrected:

#### You are fucking communist liars

There is no such thing as separation of church/state. This is a communist ideal that is being used to force your evil, disgusting hate upon Christians, you fucks. We will stuff the Christmas tree in WI up your collective communist lesbian cunts, you pieces of shit. Fuck all of you Godless fucks.

#### FUCK YOU !

FUCK YOU ASSHOLES. If you don't like the customs and history of this nation - GET THE FUCK OUT of my Country. There are a lot of CRAZY people out there who are strongly offended by your big fucking mouths! Caution would be Wise! — *Nigger@whitehouse.gov* 

#### My boot up your ass

Maybe you will think even clearer if I put my boot up your backside. — moose airborne

#### jesus statue

One day you will go to far and the majority if Americans will cook your Butt — John Basilone

#### Your Honorary Board

Your Honorary Board are all a bunch of illiterate cum-suckingFuckingASSHOLES!! More people should express their disgust with your organization. We CAN make you go away, forever!!! — Jack Mehoff

#### Jesus Rules

You fucking assholes. Stay the hell out of montana. One of your members ever shows up here, they will never leave. They will be planted with the statue. — *Bobbie Thompson* 

#### Jesus Statue on Big Mtn. Whitefish, MT

This Message is for Annie Laurie Gaylor... Here's a big FUCK YOU from Montana. STAY OUT OF OUR LIVES. PERIOD. — *Nolan Mc*-*Cormick* 

#### Mountain Jesus Statue in Montana !!

Are you people OUT of your "F-in" Mind?? Are you that Stupid?? Jesus is the ONLY Religiion in this Country of the United States of America!! Knocl it OFF Morons!! — *Gary Hendricks* 

#### Jesus statue in Montana

YOU ARE THE MINORITY, SO SHUT THE HELL UP DON'T PRAY LIVE YOUR LIFE AND LEAVE THE REST OF US AND OUR RELI-GIONS ALONE. SURELY THERE IS ANOTH-ER COUNTRY YOU CAN MOVE TO IN WHICH YOU WILL NOT FEEL SO OFFENDED. I'LL HELP YOU PACK! — *Cathy Wright* 

#### You idiots

You are the vile underbelly of the earth. - Christian Person

#### Statue

There are no atheists in foxholes idiot. — John Kirby, Hempstead, NY

#### Helena Mont. JESUS ststue

Our country was founded by Religion and GOD. Who do you think you are to take that away from the BELIEVERS. I see where they want to refurbish the Statue of Liberty what a

#### Wow How does it feel

How does it feel to be a traitor? That's what I consider FFR and ACLU and Other organizations like you that should not be allowed to exist. — John Haglund

#### IN GOD WE TRUST

you think you know whats good for every one,,,,IN GOD WE TRUST stay out of my bussiness im tired of you liberals thinking you know whats good for everyone GET FUCKED LADY - fred dingleberry

#### Whiteville

You are all an embarrassment to the human race. ..You are disgusting people and I hope nothing but Evil happens to each and every one of you — *Michael Pagfors* 

#### SKUM BAGS

you all are a bunch of phucking lo-life Piece of SCHIT Phucking Losers. — SEE you in HELL!!!!

#### Ignorance

Your bumper sticker, Sexism - The Original Sin, you may want to remove that one because now your talking about the Bible. And speaking of and about Sexism - only ugly broads complain about it. The one's that complain most need to lose the lard. Yes I am sexist and damn proud of it! — *Jeff Davis* 

#### Barking

Freedom from Religion members eat shit and bark at the moon! — Clark Kent

#### Woe to you

It would be better for you if a millstone was placed around your neck and you were cast into the sea. — *Iwillpray Foryou* 

#### I will pray for you.

I hope you know that even Satin believes in God. — Kate Mott

#### Have you no shame?

You people are twisted, I saw the fox interview with your pig rep, have you no shame? — paul stoll, lansdowne, pa

#### your organization

If you don't like our holidays then go to a country that doesn't support them. 90% of Americans celebrate Christmas & if you don't like it then don't let the door hit you in the rear end on the way out! — Donna Barr, West Virginia

#### Learn to read

Your all fucking morons. Our founding fathers did not want a state sponsered religion. They wanted everyone to worship as they saw fit. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS SEPERA-TION OF CHURCH AND STATE. LEARN TO FUCKING READ ASS WIPES. Keep pushing assholes, we will be tolerant of morons like you for only so long and then the gloves will come off. — *Mike Steel* 

#### Jacksonville

I know you people will burn in hell. Assholes. – Lock and load

#### Global warming

Plant Annie Laurie Gaylor six foot under that will get this stupid pile of shit freedom from reli-



# Sign up here

## **One-holer's out back**

Lori Martins, Iowa, wonders: "A primitive church for primitive thinkers?" The sign is off Highway 11 near Shullsburg, Wis.

favors in the looks department. You communist scum are the ill of this nation. I am offended by your breathing my air. Where do I sue for the offense you bring to this country,? Fuck the whole lot of you, and die a slow and painful death to hell. — *Jesus Christ* 

#### America and religious thought

In our world, the majority rules, so you lose. You are offensive on so many levels, please go away because no one cares about you and your views! Go back under the rock you were hiding under! — *Linda Bonidy, Pittsburgh* 

#### Wisconsin Capitol Christmas tree

Atheists are the filthy tripe remnants of a fecal sewage drain. — *The10thAmendment* 

## OUR ABYSMAL POLITICAL COWARD-

As a serving US Marine over 50 years ago, I find it impossible not to speak out against your totalitarian - even Orwellian - contempt for our country's legacy of Freedom of Speech and Belief. The fact that you hire sleazebag attorneys to THREATEN good people who do NOT share YOUR beliefs simply adds momentum to my horror at your behavior. You - along with the Fraud in the White House are acting in the most contemptible, and arguably treasonous ways. I rather look forward to meeting one of your thugs one day. — *Tom Childs* 

#### y\'all are so screwed up

y'all need to get over y'all self. i live in the lauderdale county area and all you people and your group memebers need to quit complaining bout us praying at school. we dont come to y'alls office and say we dont want atheist in our town or come to y'all convention and kick y'all outta the hotel. So we will still pray at sporting games at school y'all will never take it away in our hearts. And how bout y'all read the alabama constitution we can pray in schools it says. — *korey b* 

#### Prayer at Football Games

We are getting sick and tired of issues having to arise regarding prayer in classrooms and and school functions. God and Jesus are names which are spoken daily within our household and we are f\*\*\*ing tired of you son-of-a-bitches trying to change that by stomping your little feet and throwing a tantrum. If you don't like God or Jesus' name or you don't believe in the Trinity, that's YOUR choice. Don't shove YOUR choice down our throats. If you don't like it, leave the function or get the fuck out of our business, you petty-ass pieces of shit. — *Carl Ostert* 

#### [Voice mail to Dan Barker]

"Yes, Dan. I'm calling on behalf of an institution. It's called Freedom of Religion. So you and your organization, if they have to take the cross down in the small town in Wisconsin, I hope they shove it right up your asshole and send you straight to hell. Because our dear Lord, the only God, Jesus Christ our Savior, will not permit evil motherfuckers like you to take it down. But I say, I hope they shove the cross right up your ass up out your mouth and then put it right back on the stand so that the world will see there's many more Catholics than there are atheist motherfuckers such as yourself. You're fucking with the wrong people.

#### SC school rally

What's the difference between YOU GUYS and AI Qyadah? You don't have anybody trained as pilots. — Robert Emanuel, Boca Raton, FL

#### Whiteville, Tenn.

Being a person of color, I have no problem with the Confederate flag because it's that person's right to honor and believe in what they personally choose. Another Dictator named Adolph Hitler did the same thing that you are doing and look what happened to him, he shot himself in the head. You are committing suicide yourself and that's why I'm not trying to stop you, but giving you all the rope you need to hang yourself. Unless you turn to Jesus as Saul did on the Damascus Road, you'll do what Hitler did. When you stop denying yourself and accept the truth (Jesus Christ), your place in history with Hitler is waiting for you. — A Christian

#### You fucking pieces of shit

So the fuck what? ! Why the hell should you, you god damn low life mother fucking have nothing better to do with your miserable worthless lives pieces of shit, want to fuck with America?! You and those like you are the scum bag devil's spawn that want to bring America down and we will not stand for it. Show your face or your signs in my town and you'll get a bullet! I would gladly go to prison for the rest of my life to put your organization in the sewer where it should be. You would only get away

joke spend all that money. BECAUSE WITH-OUT GOD IN OUR LIVES WE ARE NOTHING! - Lesa Grayson

#### ASSHOLES

Send sonmeone to my house so I can kick his fucking ass out of this country - you dumbcocksucking muthafuckingassholes! — *Barry Soetoro*  gion or religion for eternity and shut her up. Stop waste good air and causing global warming you stink turd FREEDOM OF SPEACH — *Robert Johnson, Chicago* 

Atheists are the lowest form of subhuman life

Just saw your ugly ass face on line. No wonder you hate Christ so much, he did you no

with this in America. You'd all be dead or in prison anywhere else! You're time is coming. Just keep it up! Red dots...red dots are comin...

– Bugs Bunny, Wabbitville TN

#### GO TO North Korea

You don't like it- don't participate. Leave the rest of the god-fearing world alone- better yet get out of our god fearing country. — *Jesus Christ, God Bless Street* 

#### You all are evil

You and your group is evil. I served in th US Army to protect our freedoms and your group is set to destroy what makes are country great, God! You only attack the one true God the Lord Jesus Christ. One day you will realize what evil you have committed. Jesus Christ is the way the truth and the light. He died for your sins. The wisdom the Bible posses is unmatched. We need freedom from your false religion!





## Which is it?

James Louis, Texas, wonders about the mixed messages on different days at this Houston church:

"The love of the lord is the same love that created worldwide destruction just to get our attention? I thought only the Mafia used violence to get people's attention."

# Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

#### Arrested / Charged

Louis "Skip" ReVille, 32, Mount Pleasant, SC: 3 counts of criminal sexual conduct with a minor and 5 counts of lewd acts on a minor. Reville was principal at Coastal Christian Preparatory School, tennis coach at Bishop England High School, counselor at Citadel summer camp and a youth leader at Eastbridge Presbyterian Church. He's accused of fondling, masturbating and performing oral sex on at least 10 occasions, arrest affidavits said.

At Velocity Sports Performance, ReVille hosted "lock-in" sleepovers that mixed basketball, bible study and other activities. ReVille served as a state-sanctioned foster parent who hosted 4 children in his home between 2004-06.

"Thank God, nothing happened to my son," said the stepfather of a teen who played tennis for ReVille. "But Skip got very close, unusually close, to the boys and, looking back, we gave him plenty of opportunities for, well, whatever." *Source: Charleston Post and Courier, 11-7-11* 

**Rabbi Mordechai Elon**, Migdal, **ISR**: Indecent assault and indecent assault by force. Elon, a Modern Orthodox leader, is accused of exploiting his position as an educator and molesting 2 teens in 2003 and 2005.

Elon told prosecutors his actions were misunderstood, and that they stemmed from the love of a teacher for a student and were in no way sexual. *Source: Haaretz, 11-2-11* 

**Michael Lee**, 36, Orlando, **FL**: Soliciting a minor. Lee, youth pastor at Eastland Baptist Church, was among 49 men and 1 woman caught in a child sex sting called Operation SpiderWeb. His arrest sheet said Lee showed up thinking he was going to have a threesome with a 13-year-old and her guardian.

The sting used a website offering "fun" with children at a private home. Lee has been fired, said Pastor Michael Wards. "He was not working with children. He was working with teenagers," Wards said about Lee's job at the church. *Source: Orlando Sentinel; WFTV News, 11-1-11* 

An **unidentified Catholic priest**, 46, in Salzgitter, **GER**, was indicted on 267 counts of sexual contact with children. Prosecutors said he's accused of repeated sexual assault on at least 3 boys between ages 9 and 15 since 2004.

In 2006, authorities were criticized for taking no action when they learned that the priest had slept with a boy in his bed one night. The Diocese of Hildesheim argued that there were no sexual contact allegations at the time. The priest was ordered to stop seeing the boy after the boy's family complained. *Source: BNO News*, *11-1-11* 

**Rev. Matthias Anderson**, 41, Hemet, **CA**: Suspicion of unlawful sex and lewd acts with a child. Anderson, founder and pastor of New Wine Ministries, is accused of having a 2-year sexual relationship with a teen girl.

The girl and her mother met Anderson while living at a women's shelter that was part of the church, the complaint said. The mother told police in 2010 she suspected her daughter, 14, and Anderson were having sex. The church website said he is married with 6 children. *Source: Riverside Press-Enterprise, 11-1-11* 

**Rev. Allen R. Jeffers**, 63, Tulsa, **OK**: Kidnapping, lewd molestation and rape by instrumentation. Police arrested Jeffers, pastor at Summit Park Full Gospel Church, at the church



ministry experience and to further discern his vocation," said a statement from the Catholic Diocese of Trenton.

Burek allegedly tried to lure 4 females, ages 13 to 19, into his car, promising them alcohol and \$10 for sex. *Source: Asbury Park Press, 10-27-11* 

Larry R. Gorbet Jr., 32, Chester, CA: Communicating with a minor with the intent to commit a sexual act and attempting to meet with a minor with the intent to commit a sexual act. The investigation started when police learned Gorbet had been sending text messages, including one that said he wanted to use her thighs as "earmuffs," to a 13-year-old Susanville girl.

The affidavit said when arrested at the girl's home, Gorbet had a cooler containing condoms, lubricating jelly, digital camera, tripod, marijuana, marijuana brownies and a bible. *Source: Plumas County News, 10-27-11; The Smoking Gun, 10-28-11* 

**Rev. Robin W. George**, 57, Wellsville, **NY**: 2nd-degree custodial interference and 6th-degree conspiracy. George, pastor of Brookside Wesleyan, is accused in a scheme to help a Texas man get custody of his 12-year-old son despite a court order barring contact with the boy. Javan P. Smith, 48, Helotes, TX, allegedly offered \$2 million to anyone who could help him get his son back. *Source: Daily Reporter, 10-*27-11

**Travis Branstetter**, 29, Logan, **OH**: 3 counts each of sexual battery and unlawful sexual conduct with a minor. Branstetter, youth pastor at Church of the Nazarene, is accused of molesting a 13-year-old girl from the church about 10 times over 4 months.

Investigators said he took the girl on multiple trips to teach her how to hunt and would drive her to a wooded area for sex. *Source: NBC4i. com, 10-26-11* 

**Rev. Gregory Oats, Minneapolis**: 4 counts of felony financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult. Oats, a Pentecostal Assemblies of the World pastor, is accused of exploiting Vern Rollins, 78, who has Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes and paranoid schizophrenia.

Investigators said Oats took control of Rollins' finances after moving him to a nursing home. Oats allegedly took \$16,000 of Rollins' money and neglected to pay another \$13,000 in nursing home bills.

"When I came back I came here to visit him, I was told by the nursing staff that there were orders that I couldn't see him," said his daughter, Rachel Rollins. "Then, I knew something was up. Greg and his wife told him they had power of attorney and didn't want me visiting my dad." pants while he was sleeping in Campos' car. Campos admitted putting his finger into the victim's underwear by mistake, police said.

Source: Miami Herald, 10-20-11 Msgr. Thomas Brady, 78, Brooklyn, NY: Endangering the welfare of a child and attempted sexual abuse. Brady, a retired Catholic priest and fire department chaplain, is accused of preying on 2 minor boys on the same day.

Stefanie Gutierrez, diocese spokeswoman, said Brady is undergoing chemotherapy for lung cancer. She denied there was actual physical contact. "His mind just got very foggy." *Source: N.Y. Times, 10-15-11* 

Francisco A. Hernandez, 53, Elgin, TX: Aggravated sexual assault of a child and indecency with a child by sexual contact. Police described Hernandez as a "traveling pastor" and believe there may be other victims. He allegedly held nondenominational services and bible readings in private homes as far back as the early 1990s.

"We have additional victims . . . multiple victims," said Detective Sabrina Nichols. The victims ranged from 5 to 13 years old, she said. *Source: American-Statesman, 10-14-11* 

**Rev. Victor Rosa**, Orlando, **FL**: Mail fraud and felony identify theft. Rosa, who ran a food pantry called Esperanza Y Buen Samaritano Ministries, is charged of cashing \$241,000 of pension checks sent to a New York teacher who died in 2000. The teacher, Maria Sicardo, lived in the building in the Bronx where the food pantry was located.

Bank staff told investigators Rosa often preached about God while waiting in line. Fraudulently notarized documents, purportedly signed by Sicardo, were sent to the pension system. *Source: Reuters, 10-14-11* 

**Rev. Rickey A. Reed**, 55, Smyrna, **TN**: Aggravated burglary. Reed, senior pastor at First Free Methodist Church, is charged with breaking into a congregant's house, allegedly to steal Lortab, a prescription painkiller.

Jean Harris set up a video camera after pills kept disappearing from her bathroom. She said she prayed for "a week and a half" on whether to turn Reed in after he turned up in the video. "But if I didn't, he was going to keep doing this."

"You can see [Reed] pull out some sort of tool, possibly a credit card, and try to use that to open up the door mechanism," said police Sgt. Bobby Gibson. *Source: The Tennessean,* 10-11-11

**Joe Cheater Jr.**, 39, Catoosa, **OK**: 7 counts of lewd molestation and 4 counts of rape. Allegations against Cheater stem from incidents in

Investigators said Wilkerson manipulated closing documents and took possession of the homes, living in one and renting the others. After about 6 months, straw buyers were told they had to start paying off mortgages. Most were unable. About \$3 million of loans went into default.

He's also been charged for writing a \$111,000 bad check to buy a Mercedes-Benz. *Source: The Inquirer, 9-30-11* 

#### Pleaded / Convicted

**Rev. David Radtke**, 52, Gibbon, **MN**: Guilty of 2 counts each of 3rd-degree and 4th-degree criminal sexual conduct. A jury decided that Radtke, pastor at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, engaged in sexual activity on multiple occasions with a 16-year-old Spanish exchange student who lived with his family.

The girl testified he gave her back rubs and groped her sexually. Once she awoke to find his hand inside her underwear. *Source: Mankato Free Press*, 10-28-11

**Fr. Yvon Doiron**, 63, **Montreal**: Pleaded guilty to 4 counts of defrauding 4 Catholic parishes in New Brunswick of \$106,000 between 1997 and 2003.

Doiron and the Diocese of Bathurst were sued in 2007 by Béatrice Lavoie for \$110,000, the amount he allegedly borrowed and didn't pay back. The suit was settled in 2009. *Source: Telegraph-Journal, 10-27-11* 

**Rev. James W. French**, 64, Dakota, **IL**: Pleaded guilty to aggravated criminal sexual abuse of a victim under the age of 18. French, pastor from 1987-2008 of Indian Grove Country Church in Rock City, admitted molesting a girl in late 2010 in Naperville.

Police were contacted by officials of the DuPage County Children's Advocacy Center. When arrested in December, French was an adjunct history professor at Rock Valley College in Rockford. He has a master of divinity degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield. *Source: Naperville Sun, 10-20-11* 

**Joshua K. Drucker**, 33, McDonough, **GA**: A jury found Drucker guilty of 2 counts each of malice murder and felony murder in the 2004 fatal shootings of David A. Robertson, 40, and Lora Nikolova, 25. Drucker, who was a youth minister at Global Outreach Church, where his father was pastor, was also convicted of 2 counts of armed robbery, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and credit card fraud.

Nikolova, a student from Bulgaria, and Robertson were dating. In a taped statement played at trial, Drucker said he killed Robertson for allegedly supplying drugs to his sister, who later overdosed with permanent brain damage. *Source: Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 10-10-11

Msgr. Kevin McAuliffe, 58, Summerlin, NV: Pleaded guilty to 3 counts of mail fraud involving the theft of \$650,000 from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church. McAuliffe, the secondhighest official in the Diocese of Las Vegas, gambled it all away, parishioners were told.

McAuliffe expressed remorse through his attorney, Margaret Stanish. "He has donated his life to serve his church and others," Stanish said. "He, however, has a gambling addiction. *Source: Las Vegas Review-Journal, 10-9-11* 

#### Sentenced

**Rev. Cornelius Breslin**, 60, Wilmington, **DE**: 10 years in prison, with 7 years suspended, after pleading guilty to felony theft for embezzling \$350,000 from St. Patrick and St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception parishes.

and towed his van from the parking lot.

The alleged victim, a 15-year-old girl, told police Jeffers raped her Sept. 6 and dropped her off afterward at a McDonald's. She alleged they didn't know each other.

Jeffers has California convictions for indecent exposure and lewd molestation. His son, Randy Jeffers, told a reporter that he had stuck by his dad's side "through all of this [the previous convictions]. Like he said, it happened about 20 years ago and we all took time to trust him again. He started pastoring and thought God had got him through all of this. Now he has done this and it has totally blown me out of the water." *Source: KTUL News; Tulsa World, 10-30-11* 

**Rev. Sagaree Govender**, 44, Tongaat, **S.AFR**: Murder. Govender, pastor of Faith Deliverance Ministries, is accused with 2 others of the murder of Elaine Pillay, a member of her congregation. Govender was allegedly having an affair with Thavan Pillay, the victim's husband, who is also charged.

Cheryl Perumal is accused with Govender of strangling the victim and leaving her body in the bushes. *Source: Independent Online, 10-30-11* 

Marcin Burek, 27, Perth Amboy, NJ: Luring, prostitution, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct. Burek is a Polish national studying at the Church of St. Catherine Laboure to gain "parish All but \$89 a month from his Social Security and disability checks goes to the nursing home. *Source: Fox News, 10-25-11* 

**Rev. Jonathan L. Offt**, 41, Cedar Rapids, **IA**: Prostitution. Offt, senior pastor at Trinity Lutheran and the father of 3 girls, was caught in a sting with 8 other men.

Marion police Sgt. Lance Miller said it didn't take long for the men to respond to an online ad after it went up. "They came very quickly. It was fast, at least initially. We were walking some of them out, and there were others coming in." *Source: Eastern Iowa News, 10-25-11* 

**Fr. Peter Jones**, 58, South Grafton, **NSW**: Drink-driving. Jones, a priest at St. Patrick's Catholic Church, had a blood alcohol reading of 0.341 [the limit is 0.5 in New South Wales], and was reported by a motorist for crossing lanes in a Toyota Camry about 1 p.m.

Jones, who had triple-bypass heart surgery earlier this year, was put on medical leave after his arrest by the Diocese of Lismore. *Source: Sunday Telegraph, 10-23-11* 

**Rev. Jose Campos**, 60, **Miami**: Sexual battery on a minor under 12. Campos, pastor of Ministerio Nueva Vida En Cristo Jesus Church, was arrested after a boy, 11, told his teacher that Campos put his hands inside the boy's 2005-08 with 5 young girls. Cheater has connections as a youth pastor to a church in Tulsa and at least 3 churches in Catoosa, authorities said. and one in Tulsa, Stansill said.

"I think there's a special place in hell for these people," said Rogers County Sheriff Scott Walton. "Certainly, predator would be the best thing I would say about an individual like this that would victimize a 9-year-old child, a 14-year-old child." *Source: News On 6, 10-10-11; Tulsa World, 10-13-11* 

**Rev. Christopher R. Olague**, 39, Westminster, **CA**: Suspicion of committing a lewd act on a child under 14 years of age and dissuading a witness. Olague, pastor of Refuge Southland Church in Buena Park, is accused of molesting a girl on her way to play with one of his 5 children. Police said he stopped at a park and allegedly molested the girl in his car, gave her \$40 and told her not to tell her parents, a request she didn't follow. *Source: L.A. Times, 10-7-11* 

**Rev. Michael Wilkerson**, 45, Pottstown, **PA**: Scheming to defraud. Wilkerson, pastor of New Life Millennium Life Restoration Fellowship, his wife and 2 others are accused by the FBI of engaging in a \$6 million mortgage fraud.

Wilkerson allegedly had church members and their families act as "straw purchasers." He allegedly paid them \$15,000 and added \$5,000 more if they got others to pose as homebuyers. Judge Fred Silverman described the sentence as trivial "compared to the judgment the defendant will face in another court at another time."

Investigators said Breslin gave much of the money to a man who told authorities he had a sexual relationship with the priest, an allegation Breslin denied. *Source: AP, 11-4-11* 

**Rev. Arcadio "Larry" Pineda**, 67, Oakley, **CA**: 210 days in jail, 5 years' probation and restitution to be determined. Pineda, former lead pastor at Live Oak Community Church, pleaded guilty to felony grand theft for fraudulently taking out a \$110,000 mortgage on the church in 2008.

Prosecutor Ken McCormick said Pineda used the money to support a lavish lifestyle, including a \$7,000 trip to Israel, in addition to his collecting more than \$40,000 in salary. "He took all that money and lived like the pope of Oakley. He's just a greedy, dishonest person — milking the church, getting a salary and being very secretive about it all. The church is still on the hook to repay that Ioan." *Source: Contra Costa Times*, 11-3-11

**Russell Lewis**, 30, Coral Springs, **FL**: 29 years in prison after pleading no contest to 3 counts of sexual battery by a custodial authority and lewd and lascivious molestation on a victim younger than 15. Lewis, a youth pastor at Church by the Glades, met the victim when

## 'I think there's a special place in hell for these people.'

 Sheriff Scott Walton, on youth pastor Joe
Cheater Jr., Catoosa, OK

she was 12 years old and "groomed" her until she was 14 in 2009, when sexual encounters started.

"I would ask for a second chance at society, at life," Lewis told the judge. "I don't think I'm a bad person. I made a huge mistake."

The girl was in court, where a family friend read her statement calling Lewis jealous and belittling. She will always struggle to forget her first kiss, she said. "I said stop, and he didn't stop. I know he heard me. I do not feel safe at church, a place where security and comfort should go hand in hand." *Source: Orlando Sentinel, 10-28-11* 

**Tommy Joe Pitts**, 60, Fairview, **OK**: 20 years in prison and 15 years' probation after pleading guilty to 4 counts of lewd molestation, 2 counts of forcible oral sodomy, rape by instrumentation and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (an automobile). Most of the counts were related to molesting 3 girls, ages 8 to 12. Pitts was pastor of Midway Assembly of God.

After being confronted by his wife, he tried to kill himself by driving into a tractor-trailer but survived. *Source: Enid News & Eagle, 10-25-11* 

**Rev. Philip Ferrara**, 49, Little Meadows, **PA**: 6 to 24 months in prison after pleading no contest to indecent assault of a 14-year old boy. Ferrara, a cloistered Melkite priest, molested the boy at Our Lady of Solitude Monastery, where he was on retreat with his family.

An affidavit said Ferrara had the boy massage Ferrara's penis with his feet on the pretense that his sperm duct was blocked and causing intense back pain.

Ferrara has been removed from public ministry and sent to a supervised facility in Kansas. *Source: Scranton Times-Tribune*, 10-21-11

**Demetrius D. Allen**, 28, Granada Hills, **CA**: 4 years and 4 months in prison and lifetime sex offender registration after pleading no contest to 3 counts of lewd act on a child. Allen was youth pastor at First Baptist Church in Venice. He admitted a year-long sexual affair with a 15-yearold girl from his church. Nine other counts were dismissed as a result of his plea. *Source: Torrance Daily Breeze, 10-18-11* 

**Rev. Kevin Pushia**, 35, **Baltimore**: Life in prison plus 45 years for murder and insurance fraud. Pushia, pastor at Greater Faith Tabernacle Church of Deliverance, was found guilty of orchestrating the murder of a blind, developmentally disabled man so he could collect \$1.4 million in life insurance.

Lemuel Wallace was taken from his group home in 2009 and shot dead in a park bathroom. Two brothers were tried for the murder but were acquitted. Pushia, who also worked as a caseworker for a nonprofit, posed as Wallace's brother and listed himself as beneficiary on several policies. *Source: Reuters, 10-17-11* 

**Rev. Gerald Williams**, 50, Omaha, **NE**: 36 months in prison, 3 years' supervised release and \$1.3 million in restitution after pleading guilty to conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud. Williams, pastor of Crossroads Christian Center, and his wife, Judith Williams, 50, who was sentenced to a year and a day in prison plus the same supervised release and restitution, used false information to buy 10 homes in 2005-06. All went into foreclosure, leaving lenders holding the bag. *Source: World-Herald, 10-12-11* 

City Star, 11-1-11

Chabad of California, Rabbi Levi Pitzchak Cunin and Rabbi Boruch Shlomo Cunin are defendants in a suit filed by Maxine Coe, who alleges the father-and-son rabbis are complicit in financial abuse of an elder, fraud and negligent misrepresentation.

A day after Coe's husband died in 2009, "[D]efendants Levi and Boruch Cunin offered to bury her husband at the Chabad burial plot in Running Springs, Calif., and to support plaintiff financially for the rest of her life. In doing so, the individual defendants coerced plaintiff into signing documents by misrepresenting to plaintiff the nature of the documents, which included the total transfer of ownership of plaintiff's multimillion-dollar family home in Malibu to defendant Chabad."

The suit alleges Coe wasn't allowed to stay in her home and that her needs and expenses weren't taken care of as promised. *Source: Courthouse News Service, 10-28-11* 

An amended civil suit alleging sex abuse by priests in the **Diocese of Helena**, MT, named **Revs. James Barry**, **Wilson F. Smart** and **George Ferguson** as alleged abusers. The complaint added 44 new plaintiffs to bring the total to 117.

"These cases needed to be turned over to police and local prosecutors to be investigated, and instead they were quietly buried," said plaintiffs' attorney Tim Kosnoff of Seattle. *Source: PR Newswire, 10-28-11* 

A 19-year-old woman sued the **St. Louis Archdiocese**, alleging defrocked priest **Joseph Ross** molested her at St. Cronan's Catholic Church and elsewhere from 1997-2001. She alleges church officials knew Ross had pleaded guilty to molesting a minor but returned him to a parish setting with children anyway. The suit also names Ross and **Archbishop Robert Carlson**.

Ross allegedly told her that she "was doing what God intended for her," that he "liked boys more than girls," and she was "helping him to overcome that issue." *Source: Post-Dispatch, 10-25-11* 

John Doe No. 86, a Miami man born in 1964, alleges in a lawsuit he was molested by **Rev. Lawrence Redmond** in about 1974. The Catholic **Diocese of Orlando** is also accused of covering up Redmond's actions. Before retirement, he was one of then-Bishop Norbert Dorsey's top deputies, known as vicars generals.

In the 1990s, at least 6 men alleged Redmond molested them. *Source: Orlando Sentinel, 10-21-11* 

A West Virginia woman is suing **Open Door Baptist Church**, Mesquite, **TX**, and the estate of a former pastor she claims raped her. **Matthew Jarrell** hanged himself with a bed sheet in jail last May after being charged in Charleston, WV.

E.B. alleges the church was negligent in hiring Jarrell and covered up a previous sexual assault charge. *Source: West Virginia Record, 10-17-11* 

**Rev. John M. Capparelli**, 62, Belleville, NJ, is being sued, along with the Archdiocese of Newark, the Boy Scouts and retired Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the former archbishop of Newark, by Andrew Dundorf, 48, a chemical engineer who alleges Capparelli molested him in the 1970s and '80s.

Capparelli was suspended from the ministry in 1992 and started a fetish website that sold videos of buff young men engaged in erotic wrestling. He now teaches 9th-grade math in Newark.

"John Capparelli is a predator. He should not be allowed to work with children," Dundorf said. "You don't have to be penetrated to be molested. Make no mistake. Sexual abuse is not just physical. It involves abuse of power and trust that invades the core of your being." *Source: Star-Ledger, 10-16-11*  on 2 counts of felony criminal sexual conduct. He was sentenced to 15 years and can't serve as a pastor. *Source: Winona Daily News, 10-8-11* 

#### Legal Developments

The **Diocese of Joliet**, **IL**, reversed a 2007 ruling, calling Dan Shanahan's allegations against **Rev. James Burnett** "substantiated and credible." Shanahan alleged Burnett abused him sexually in the late 1970s and early 1980s when he was an altar boy at St. Mary Catholic Church in Mokena. He said he thanked God when he heard the news from the diocese a year ago.

After a lawyer representing Bishop J. Peter Sartain read the letter to Shanahan over the phone last fall that his claims were substantiated, Shanahan waited for the diocese to announce it publicly. That didn't happen, so Shanahan announced it himself.

"The more I think about it," Shanahan said, "how could I be surprised after what they did to me?" He said he was molested in the confessional, starting when he was 8.

Church spokesman Doug Delaney said the letter wasn't made public out of respect for Shanahan's privacy. Shanahan said he wanted vindication, not privacy.

The letter said that "a new allegation came forward regarding Father Burnett." Delaney said Burnett, who denies being an abuser, will never be allowed back in the ministry.

Shanahan's brother, Tim Shanahan, filed a suit at the same time as his brother's against another priest from St. Mary, **Rev. William Virtue**. That case was also dismissed. But the brothers' attorney, Marc Pearlman, said the diocese also found Tim Shanahan's accusations credible. *Source: Chicago Sun-Times, 11-4-11* 

**Fr. Lowe B. Dongor**, 35, is believed to have fled to his native **Philippines** after being charged with possessing child pornography and stealing small amounts of cash from St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Fitchburg, **MA**.

Diocese of Worcester Bishop Robert Mc-Manus wrote Catholic leaders in the Philippines warning Dongor may be there.

Authorities said images of preteen girls were found on Dongor's computer when he took it in for service. *Source: Fox News, 11-1-11* 

Prosecutors won't pursue a petition to declare **Michael Baker**, a former **Archdiocese of Los Angeles** Catholic priest, a sexual predator. The designation would have allowed Baker, 63, to be locked up indefinitely in a mental hospital.

He pleaded guilty in 2007 to 12 felony counts of oral copulation with a person under the age of 18 for abusing 2 boys at parishes in Pico Rivera and Los Angeles.

Baker didn't plead guilty to any "sexually violent" offenses, so he can't qualify as a sexually violent predator under state law, said a district attorney's statement read in court.

It's unclear when Baker was released, but on Nov. 2 he was arrested in Costa Mesa on an unspecified parole violation. He was originally charged with 34 counts of molestation involving 6 victims.

Those charges were dismissed after the U.S. Supreme Court voided a state law allowing prosecution for acts that occurred before 1988.

"Mr. Baker repeatedly lied to his superiors, therapists and friends and manipulated treatment protocols in order to continue to prey upon young people," said Tod Tamberg of the archdiocese. *Source: San Francisco Chronicle, 10-*6/11-2-11

#### Allegations

Two Italians who allege they were sexually abused by priests finished a 340-mile protest walk to the Vatican to demand an independent inquiry.

The journey from Savona to St. Peter's Square took 19 days. Francesco Zanardi and Alberto Sala were unsuccessful in getting an audience with the pope. They handed over a letter demanding that Italian bishops draft guidelines requiring pedophiles to be defrocked "without exception." Zanardi said the pope has never met with Italian victims of abuse yet has met with victims on trips to the U.S., Malta, Britain, Australia and Germany. *Source: AP, 10-10-11* 



Hana Grace-Rose Williams came from Ethiopa in 2008 to live at the home of her adoptive parents, Carri and Larry Williams of Sedro-Woolley, Wash., who were charged Sept. 29 with homicide by abuse. On the 9-1-1 call on the May day Hana died naked of hypothermia and chronic starvation, Carri told the dispatcher she didn't know how old she was: "She's somewhere between the ages of 14 and 16." She insisted Hana killed herself: "She's very passive-aggressive."

Hana was 13. Authorities said she'd endured systematic emotional and physical abuse and lost 30 pounds. She was regularly beaten with a long plastic tube, which is one of the discipline techniques in Tennessee Pastor Michael Pearl's book *To Train Up a Child*. Investigators were told the Williamses had the book, which also advises being hosed with cold water for toilet training lapses and discipline that includes being forced to stay outside in cold weather and missing meals.

The couple have 6 biological children and another adopted Ethiopian child, a 10-yearold boy. They are charged with 1st-degree assault of a child for allegedly beating him. Their older biological children sometimes helped administer punishment, authorities were told. Other discipline for Hana was being locked in a closet while the family played Christian music and read the bible outside the door.

This is at least the third fatality in which authorities have said that families used methods recommended in To Train Up a Child. No criminal charges have ever been lodged against Michael Pearl and his wife and co-author, Debi. In June in Paradise, Calif., Elizabeth and Kevin Schatz were sentenced to long prison terms in the beating death of their adopted Liberian daughter, Lydia, 7. The Pearls' teachings also came up in the trial of Lynn Paddock of Johnson County, N.C., convicted in 2006 of the 1stdegree murder of Sean Paddock, her adopted 4-year-old, who suffocated inside a tightly wrapped blanket. His siblings testified they and Sean were beaten daily with a plumbing tube and subjected to other abuse, including being made to eat their own vomit. Lynn Paddock's husband Johnny, with whom she had adopted 6 American children, divorced her while she was awaiting trial and wasn't charged.

"We liked Michael Pearl's [system] because it was quick [and] it didn't demean the child and bring their self-esteem down," Lynn testified. Jurors learned the Paddocks got \$2,200 a month in state subsidies after adopting the children. *Source: Paradise Post, 6-10-11; Seattle Times, 9-29-11; KVAL, 10-13-11; WRAL, 6-9-08* 

Our Lady of the Fields in Millersville, **MD**, in the wake of a financial audit, the Archdiocese of Baltimore said. Nickol had served as pastor there since 2003. The audit followed an anonymous tip. *Source: Catholic Review, 10-30-11* 

Msgr. J. Peter Crynes of St. Therese's Catholic Church in Shavertown, PA, will be relegated permanently to a life of prayer and penance, the Vatican has ruled.

Crynes was removed from active ministry in 2006 after being accused of sexual misconduct by 2 women. Crynes "admitted to the Diocese of Scranton that he had engaged in unchaste behavior in the past with high school girls," said a letter to parishioners in 2006. *Source: citizens-voice.com, 10-27-11* **Rev. Daniel Bell**, 49, resigned as pastor of Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Schuylkill Haven, **PA**, after allegations surfaced about inappropriate conduct with a female parishioner. A letter from Bishop Samuel Zeiser said there were no allegations of "physical molestation or intercourse."

#### Civil Lawsuits Filed

Retired **Bishop Joseph Hart** of the Catholic **Diocese of Cheyenne**, WY, is a defendant in a Missouri man's suit alleging Hart sexually molested him as a priest in Kansas City in 1975-76. Co-defendants are **Thomas J. O'Brien**, who was also a Kansas City priest at that time, and the **Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph** as co-defendants.

The suit is the sixth sexual abuse lawsuit filed against Hart. The previous suits were settled in 2008 as part of a \$10 million agreement that involved 47 plaintiffs who sued 12 clergy members, including Hart. *Source: Cheyenne Tribune-Eagle, 11-3-11* 

Msgr. Thomas J. O'Brien, a retired priest in the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese; Rev. Mark Honhart, who left the diocese in 2001; and Thomas Reardon, who left the priesthood in 1989 are being sued by Joe Eldred, 40, of Springfield, MO, for alleged sexual abuse in the early 1980s when he was between the ages of 9 and 12.

The suit alleges O'Brien and Reardon plied Eldred with drugs and alcohol and molested him in a car and a lake house. Honhart's alleged abuse occurred in 1980-84. *Source: Kansas* 

#### Civil Lawsuits Settled

Two clergy sex abuse victims were awarded judgments totaling \$3 million after **John Dority**, a former Boston-area Franciscan priest, failed to respond to a lawsuit filed against him. They alleged they were molested when they were 10 and 13.

Dority, 70, Coventry, **CT**, served 2 years in prison for child molestation and was released in 2007. Earlier this year he told an AP reporter he did not respond to the suit because he couldn't afford an attorney and admitted molesting the victims. "What I did was completely wrong. I admit that. I'm very sorry for the trouble I caused, the harm I caused."

A related suit against the New York-based Franciscans, formally called the **Order of Friars Minor Province of the Most Holy Name**, is still pending. *Source: Boston Globe, 10-22-11* 

A jury awarded \$1.4 million to a woman for being sexually abused by **Rev. Donald D. Budd**, 67, at McKinley United Methodist Church, Winona, **MN**.

Budd must pay her \$1 million in punitive damages and part of \$410,000 in compensatory damages. The **Minnesota Annual Conference** of the **United Methodist Church**, which oversees McKinley, must pay \$164,000.

The victim sought counseling in 2003 and a relationship started that led to Budd's guilty plea

#### **Removed / Resigned**

**Fr. William Feeser**, 63, was removed from his duties at Immaculate Conception Parish in **Sacramento** after a Southern California woman accused him of sexually assaulting her more than 30 years ago at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish and School in Carmichael. The Sheriff's Department said the statute of limitations for the alleged crime likely has passed. *Source: KCRA News*, *11-1-11* 

**Rev. Gary Schulte**, 66, Warren, **MI**, was restricted from public ministry by the Archdiocese of Detroit due to an allegation of sexual misconduct involving a male under age 18. Schulte, ordained in 1972, moved out of the rectory at St. Sylvester Catholic Church.

Gail Schulte, his sister, doesn't think the allegation is true. "The people that know him, and his friends, they don't believe it, either." *Source: Detroit Free Press, 10-31-11* 

Fr. Eugene Nickol resigned as pastor of

"People are bound to think the worst, and that's what's unfortunate", Bell said. *Source: Republican & Herald, 10-19-11* 

**Rev. Eugene Tully** resigned from St. Theresa de Lisieux Parish in Billerica, **MA**, because he let a volunteer facing sexual abuse allegations chaperone a group of teens. The Archdiocese of Boston said Tully "made a serious error in judgment" and will be reassigned. *Source: AP*, 10-9-11

**Rev. John Warner** of Sts. Philip and James Catholic Church in Canal Fulton, **OH**, was put on administrative leave due to an allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor more than 30 years ago at a parish in Youngstown. Warner has been a priest since 1970. The diocese has reported the allegation to authorities. *Source: Massillon Independent, 10-10-11* 

Email: blackcollar@ffrf.org



# Letterbox

# Stalwart Stone bolsters wall of separation

I was the attorney in 1980 in the Supreme Court case of *Stone v. Graham*, which successfully challenged a Kentucky statute that required the posting of a copy of the Ten Commandments in every classroom in the state.

Twenty-five years later in 2005, I was in the Supreme Court to hear oral arguments in the Supreme Court case of *McCreary County v. ACLU of Kentucky*, frequently referred to as the second Kentucky Ten Commandments case.

Although we won two important Supreme Court cases, it's obvious to me that the fight to preserve the separation of church and state has become both more difficult and more important than ever.

FFRF's outstanding work in challenging the increasing efforts to violate the constitutional wall of separation and to educate the public on these issues is vital.

I'm pleased to enclose my check for a Lifetime Membership along with a heartfelt thank you to everyone there for all you do.

William Cameron Stone Kentucky

## Hypatia 4th inspires Alabama activist

Thank you so much for helping get my story out this past summer [about his fight against censorship of a freethought club at his public school]. FFRF did so much for me, not only with support and publicity but confidence as well. I'm still sometimes unable to wrap my head around what all happened.

I have no idea how to show how much I appreciated being awarded a \$1,000 student activist scholarship at the July 4 Lake Hypatia gathering in Alabama. Jim McCollum was one of the most influential people I have ever had the pleasure to meet! I will remember this experience forever, especially when I spoke.

I was amazed at Lake Hypatia at just how many people in the South are freethinkers. It truly inspired me to do more. The group "AHS Freethinkers" is now official at my high school, with over 50 members. At least 20 people came to the first meeting.

### Duncan Henderson, 9th grader

### Hartford convention was natural high

I'd always wanted to go to one of the FFRF conventions, and had high hopes that this one, only two hours away from where I live, would be a high point. It was everything I'd hoped for and more.

I want to thank Annie Laurie, Dan and all the staff from Madison, who made it all look easy! I'm still on a high from the whole experience — the wonderful speakers (not a dud in the bunch), interesting people, the laughter, the applause (many standing ovations). I was especially impressed with the three student activists and professor Jerry Coyne, but enjoyed everyone else. What a terrific group of intelligent, humorous, upbeat people! And how luxuriously refreshing to bask in the comfort of being surrounded by 400 other freethinkers.

Ironically, the day after I returned home, for the second time in 17 years I've lived here in the Berkshire Mountains, two religion peddlers knocked on my door. I was flying so high from the convention that I was kinder to them than I normally would have been, not that I'd have been mean, but I'd have treated them to a mini-lecture about not laying their trip on others, ending with that quote from Luke, "Go not from door to door."

As it was, I simply told them I was just back from the Freedom from Religion Foundation convention, and had absolutely no interest in anything they had to say. They asked if I wouldn't want to discuss any biblical concerns at all, and I assured them I wouldn't. They thanked me for my honesty and left. We were all smiles.

I know I'll come back to earth at some point, but till then, I'm enjoying this feeling! Thanks so much.

#### Cathy Groves Massachusetts

Congratulations on a terrific convention. What extraordinary speakers! And Steven Pinker, so much in the national news (front page of The New York Times Review of Books when we had him among us).

Alas, Jerry Coyne's brilliant commentary on science and religion not being compatible does not reach far into the heart of our country, not even into the halls of academe. Look at the passionate arguments put forth there on science and faith — ghastly! your organization, black collar crimes and the cranky email, we can no longer hide.

We want everyone to know that we do not believe in a god and that religion is too ridiculous for us to consider even as a social club. We are thinking that for "Christmas" we will ask Santa for our very own "We are Atheists" billboard!

Dinah Lopez, David Darrah and the gang

Colorado

## 'Beware of Dogma' is conversation starter

I'm really enjoying the email Freethought of the Day. I also want to mention your "Beware of Dogma" bumper stickers. People ask me what dogma means. It always opens the door to an interesting discussion of "believing without evidence." Please send me a few more of those stickers.

I also appreciate your objections to Gov. Rick Perry's prayer rally. Keep it up.

#### James M. Alexander Texas

P.S.: Enclosed is a check for \$1,000 for your good work.

## What mom doesn't know won't hurt her

In addition to our membership renewal, please find enclosed a check in the amount of \$25, a donation to the Legal Fund. My mother asked me to send a donation to the Catholic Church for birthday prayers for her niece. As we all know, "nothing fails like prayer."

I would rather see the money go to a good cause, the separation of church and state.

#### Tamara Rousso

Oregon

## 'Great Agnostic' served near Whiteville

The October article on the water tower litigation in Tennessee mentioned that the mayor of Whiteville was quoted in the Jackson [Tenn.] Star. Jackson is near Whiteville.

Union Army Col. Robert Ingersoll, who later became renowned as the "Great Agnostic," was stationed in Jackson, Tenn., during the Civil War and was sent off to nearby Lexington to confront Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, the famed Confederate cavalry commander who was conducting a raid in eastern Tennessee. Ingersoll's badly outnumbered command was shattered and he was briefly a prisoner of war before being paroled. **Dennis Middlebrooks New York**  years later after my Catholic physician refused to prescribe birth control pills for me. He thought I wanted to prevent a pregnancy. When I explained that I needed them to regulate my cycle so I could become pregnant, he prescribed them. I wondered why artificial means to prevent pregnancy were forbidden, but artificial means to encourage pregnancy were fine.

Over time, the cracks spread. Why are women denied meaningful roles in the church? This stuff I'm receiving at communion isn't flesh and blood, really, it isn't. Virginity and conception are oxymorons. If Jesus was a Jew from the Middle East, why is he portrayed with light hair and eyes? It went on and on until I made sense of the world thanks to libraries and graduate schools.

It's all a lie, you see. To an ignorant people living thousands of years ago, it made some level of sense, but only because there was no science, no scientific method to lead the way to true knowledge. Today, it's all a lie, every word.

Because of my strong atheist beliefs and because Robert Barron evangelizes this pack of lies, I object to my PBS station airing his message. If you must (and you already have), it's only fair to air the other side of this story — the message of atheism. It's a strong one that's growing substantially in this country. It's the conviction that if testable evidence doesn't exist to support religion, religion shouldn't exist. It's a powerful demand that separation of church and state was one of our Founders' wisest decisions. It's the wave of the future and the only path to truth.

Now that you've broadcast lies and superstitions, it's time to broadcast the truth. There are numerous sources from outspoken journalists such as Christopher Hitchens to scientists such as Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris to the leaders and ordinary members of the numerous atheist organizations in the United States. Balance your presentations. It's only fair. **Patricia Dunlap** 

Maryland

## Ode to Freethought Today

There's something I feel compelled to say

About your paper, Freethought Today

It puts up an outstanding fight

Against those devils on the religious right.

I enjoy Appleman's poems every time,

Even the ones that do not rhyme.

Alabama

## FFRF convention 'most unusual Yom Kippur'

This past weekend [34th annual FFRF convention, Oct. 7-9] will always remain in my memory as a wonderful and meaningful event. I was enormously impressed with the 400-plus members attending, as well as the staff, speakers, etc. I don't think I've met so many college professors since my days at Brooklyn College.

This was the most unusual Yom Kippur that I, as a member of the Society of Humanistic Judaism, ever experienced.

#### Howard Garrett New York

#### Madeline Tiger New Jersey

## Asking Santa for 'heathen's greetings'

Find enclosed our family contribution to your courageous organization. We look forward to our monthly FFRF publication. Even if we didn't get anything, we are so pleased to be able to contribute to your efforts. Sending this check is the least we can do, knowing that you are working hard to eliminate the need for us to bow our heads and accept their propaganda/traditions/ prayers in public places.

Until now we have just been laying low to not offend anyone. One of our favorite pastimes as a family is to sit around the dinner table and make fun of our crazy religious community and extended family. After learning about Editor's note: For more about Ingersoll's life, read American Infidel: Robert G. Ingersoll, a biography by Orvin Larson reprinted by FFRF (\$20), ffrf.org/shop/.

# Member seeks equal time for atheists

[FFRF member Pat Dunlap shares her letter to PBS objecting to the 10-part "Catholicism" series being aired on about 100 TV stations affiliated with PBS nationwide.]

I'm a former Catholic and a convert at that. At the "knee" of a personable priest, I was indoctrinated at age 19, perhaps too late for it to really stick.

The first crack in the wall came a few

The crimes of the clergy, brought to our attention

And the many great articles too numerous to mention.

But the section I'm most pleased with, to tell the truth

Are the well-written essays by our freethinking youth.

Please apply the enclosed donation to support the College Essay Contest. Harold L. Saferstein, M.D. Lifetime Member, Arizona

## Trunk as monk makes trick-or-treater happy

So, I'm handing out candy to the trick-or-treaters, my house is all decked out for Halloween, and I'm wearing a monk's robe. An older girl (as trick-or-treaters go, maybe 13 or 14) asked, "Are you Catholic?"

"Not any more," I replied. "I gave that up after high school."

"I'm so glad to hear that," she exclaimed. "I can't wait to graduate so I can get rid of this stupid religion!"

That made my night.

Steve Trunk California

# All of Christianity seen as scary cult

[A member's letter to Crawford Broadcasting Co., "the pioneer in Christian broadcasting."]

Yesterday, I was listening to your concern about having a Mormon for a president due to his beliefs. I also think that they are "out there!" What puzzles me, however, is that you guys seem to have *no* problem with a president who might believe in talking snakes or a man living in a whale's belly for three days.

I think the Christian cult is really no less weird than all of the others, and I do my part to "spread the word" about scary cults.

Tom Forss California

# My hat's off to student activists

I was very impressed with the two high school students, Jessica Ahlquist and Harrison Hopkins, on the Oct. 24 Freethought Radio podcast. I found them to be very courageous, intelligent and inspirational.

I was especially impressed with Harrison. Having lived in the Deep South my whole life, I can sympathize with him. It's tough enough to be a minority down here, but especially a nonreligious minority. My hat goes off to him and to Jessica. Please thank them for me, and thanks again for the work you do.

Doug Moore Louisiana

# Tax probe of church was poetic justice

I thought the investigation of a Columbus, Ohio, church's revenue history (after its demand that an FFRF billboard be moved) represented something like poetic justice. Hence the following lines:

We infidels will have our say In a friendly, quiet way. But if you plan to block our access You'd best be current with your Day" slogan should be a bumper sticker and a T-shirt. Keep up the good work. **Ullrich Fischer British Columbia** 

## Remove religious statues on public land

The Jesus statue residing on Big Mountain in Flathead National Forest in Montana is an amusing issue. As a veteran, it's time for "Statue Jesus" to move on to a new location, perhaps on the lawn or parking lot of the local Knights of Columbus. That would be a much more appropriate habitat for him instead of squatting on federal land, the people's land, regardless of their religion or lack thereof, and paying no rent for over 50 years.

This is an issue of great importance to all of us. It's a simple matter of the Constitution. It's disheartening that Rep. Denny Rehberg, R-Mont., is urging Christians to urge the U.S. Forest Service to continue to permit "Statue Jesus" to squat on public land. What part of the First Amendment doesn't he understand?

I'm amused that "Statue Jesus" is a "monument to honor the troops having served with the 10th Mountain Division during World War II, and not a religious icon." Nonsense!

If Montanans wanted a statue on this federal location to honor veterans, why wasn't it proposed by the American Legion or the VFW? **Ralph Scott** 

#### Montana

• •

As a former but longtime Montanan and skier at Whitefish Mountain Resort, I thank you for helping get rid of the Jesus statue on Big Mountain. It's bad enough that our government has god in the Pledge of Allegiance, which in my opinion is religious and flat-out fascist, and on our money.

I'd also like to point out another symbol of this Christian cult, a 90-foottall Mother Mary statue called Our Lady of the Rockies that sits on the Continental Divide outside Butte, Mont., and is not a sight for sore eyes. My guess is it was put there to give residents some false hope that an extra super Jesus injection will heal the environmental disaster that mining has caused to the town.

The area is beautiful. I don't understand why people would ruin such a view with their religion. It's a sickening sight to my atheist eyes, and I think the Berkeley pit (their large environmental disaster) is a much better-looking spectacle than that statue.

Thank you for your service to this

age in the face of violent and irrational opposition, even including personal threats to your staff.

Madison, Wisconsin

Thankfully, the world is becoming more and more secular, even if the U.S. is not showing leadership in that regard. I am energized and encouraged by the work of FFRF and the leadership of outspoken men and women like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins.

As an active member, I will continue to support you financially and in spirit. I know you all have thick skin, but I'm sending some extra positive energy and support your way. Keep up the good fight!

Matt Runde Wisconsin

## Daily freethought makes my day

Reading the Freethought of the Day is such a joy. It's my *lift* for the day! **Connie Kane** 

California

Editor's note: FFRF members may sign up to have the Freethought of the Day which showcases famous freethinkers, their accomplishments, thoughts and freethought credentials in an online calendar — delivered to their inbox. To start your day on a freethinking note, sign up at ffrf.org/signup/day/ or make Freethought of the Day (ffrf.org/news/day/) your homepage.

# In God We Trust a pointless bust

Congress recently demonstrated why it's earned a 9% approval rating by wasting time reaffirming "In God We Trust" as our national motto. If, like me, your initial reaction was, 'In God We Trust is our national motto? Since when?'

Since 1956, it turns out, when Mc-Carthyites promoted a motto that ostensibly differentiates us from the "godless commie" bad guys ("under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance two years earlier). Of course, these days the bad guys are the ultradevout Taliban and al-Qaida, who trust completely in God — oops!

It's a remarkably inapt motto for the U.S. Our most important document, the Constitution, mentions God zero times. In fact, the Constitution mentions religion only in the context of preventing government's involvement in it. Many of the key Founding Fathers (including "Father of the Constitution" James Madison, Declaration of Independence author Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, etc.) were deists who believed the universe's creator is uninvolved in human affairs, so trust in any god is pointless. America's founders embraced the Enlightenment philosophy that government derives its authority from the consent of the people - not gods, monarchs, dictators or priests. America values people for their abilities and ethics, not their parents' social station. Americans tamed the frontier, provided universal public education, innovated in business, science and engineering and absorbed millions of talented, hard-working immigrants into our "melting pot." America changed the world because we empowered our people, not because we appealed to some divine being.

## Halloween Heathens



## Dark Side, dark beer

"But, of course, Satan would be a subscriber," writes Washington member Mike Carilli. "Other than having a guy in a priest costume try to bless me, it was pretty much a basic Halloween party (I told him it was too late for me, but I could help him convert to the Dark Side). Only one person asked about my 'A' lapel pin. When I explained, she said it 'sounded cool.' I did get a free Guinness for my costume though, which was a big win for me!"



## Fat-free or fact-free?

Harper Gould, New York, writes: "I thought you might get a kick out of this candy I spotted in the Halloween aisle at the supermarket. I guess some people are trying to put the Christ back in Halloween as well. I had a wonderful time at the convention in Hartford!" [The company advises about Jesus Harvest Seeds: "Give these candy corn treats to trick-ortreaters on Halloween for a sweet holiday twist!"]

taxes.

Jeremy M. Harris Ohio

# Atheist tee brings positive comments

I live in Canada, where religious fanaticism is not nearly as big an issue as it appears to be in the U.S. I frequently go to Washington state to shop and often wear my FFRF Friendly Neighborhood Atheist T-shirt. So far, I've had five strangers come up to me to say they like my T-shirt. No one has had a negative comment. I take this as a hopeful sign (not from god) that at least in Washington state, the tide may be turning.

If you've not done it already, I suggest that the "Every day is Judgment

country and the world.

#### Thomas Barnes

#### Oregon

Editor's note: In the mid-1990s, FFRF stopped AmeriCorps funding and volunteers from working on Our Lady of the Rockies. The more things change. . .

## 'Hate mail' funny but frightening

After reading the illiterate, uninformed and small-minded "hate mail" in the last issue of your newspaper, I felt a bit queasy. It's truly appalling to learn the depth of ignorance in some of our fellow Americans. I know you publish those letters for the humor, and they *are* funny, but at the same time they are frightening.

FFRF does incredibly brave and important work, and I admire your cour-

"In God We Trust" might be a great motto for the Taliban or the Vatican,

which base their governance and authority explicitly on scripture. Nearly 20% of Americans are atheists or agnostics. A motto that violates the First Amendment while marginalizing a fifth of the population is downright un-American. America needs to continue to empower its people to fix our current problems and ensure a prosperous and just future, not cry out for celestial help.

Much of America's greatness comes from admitting past mistakes and evolving toward greater justice and humanity. How about returning to our previous motto, "E pluribus unum" (Out of many, one), or "Liberty, Equality and Justice For All"?

A lot of misguided Americans might just get a badly needed history and civics lesson in the process.

#### Rob Kalman California

November 2011



## **Trans-substitution**

I saw this sign, and thought that this is exactly what we non-believers think. Nice of them to say it in writing though! — Joe LaBonte, Texas

# **Overheard**

I had been watching this case since the summer, and I thought the court would find it hard to resist. That was a prediction, not a wish; unlike Justice Thomas, I think the lower court got this one right, and I find the argument for regarding a collection of 12-foothigh crosses along a state's highways as anything other than an official endorsement of Christian belief to be almost laughably weak.

New York Times columnist Linda Greenhouse, on the Supreme Court's refusal (to which Clarence Thomas dissented), to hear an appeal of a ruling that barred cross memorials to Utah state troopers

New York Times, 11-3-11

Under his pants, he is wearing magic underwear. Magic underwear. And he believes that a convicted con man got golden tablets that no one else could see, and sat with an angel

to find out that the original Jews of the bible were living in North America. Crazy, crazy, crazy, crazy.

Atheist Penn Jillette, assessing Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney

opposingviews.com, 11-13-11

Camping has fleeced his followers out of millions of dollars over the years without one law enforcement official ever looking into what he was doing was against the law. When someone doesn't provide a service or the product does not do what it is supposed to, a customer is allowed to receive their money back or it could be considered a fraudulent transaction. But I do not see Harold Camping giving one red nickel back to his donors or even apologizing for misleading them. Marty Angelo, who operates a prison ministry and calls Camping a "Christian Bernie Madoff"

filed a complaint about school-sponsored prayer at Brooks High School football games

Florence Times Daily, 11-6-11

As far as I can tell, there is nothing that pushes you to a lack of faith more than a belief in the natural world. Curiosity in why things are the way they are and how they work is kind of the antithesis of faith in that way.

Shawn Hanrahan, entomology doctoral student and vice president of the Agnostic and Atheist Student Group at Texas A&M

The Battalion, 10-27-11

It's not about prayer, it's not about religion; it's about reasonable requirements.

Hertz spokesman Rich Broome, on the company firing 26 Somalians, who earn about \$9.50 an hour, for not "clocking out" during Muslim prayers, even though that's part of their union contract

Associated Press, 10-21-11

What legal advantage could there possibly be in making the identity of the parent and the Giles County student, whose welfare they are supposed to be concerned with, known to all, with possibly serious harm coming to them from that knowledge? There is none; it is, plain and simple, an attempt at intimidation of a child and an unholy hope that fear will change his or her mind. How would the school board feel if the target was one of their families? Jesus told the hypocrites, "Practice what you preach."

# State/Church Bulletin

Freethought Today

tery and other nonbiblical behavioring.

One employee told the Georgia Voice newspaper that the pledge has some fearing "witch hunts" on campus. "We now will live in fear that someone who doesn't like us personally or someone who has had a bad day will report that we've been drinking or that we are suspected of being gay," said the male employee.

## Fetus dolls more trick than treat

A lot of parents at a Halloween event in Loganville, Ga., attended by 3,000 children, were none too happy at an anti-abortion group for handing out rubber fetus dolls to trick-or-treaters, the Walton Tribune reported Nov. 6.

"A man handed one of the socalled toys to my 3-year-old grandson. He asked what it was. The man that handed it to him told him, 'This is a 12-week-old fetus. This is what you looked like in your mommy's belly,' " said John Ramsey. "There is a time and place for everything. This event for handing out candy to small children was not the time or the place."

Marti Wood said she was "shocked and appalled. . . . Hopefully this is something that will be considered for next year so the children won't worry about someone putting a fetus in with their candy."

# FFRF welcomes 17 'Lifers,' 1 'After-Lifer'

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is delighted to welcome a new "After-Life" Member, Ruth Walker. The slightly tongue-in-cheek membership category of \$5,000 is for those who wish their support to "live on."

They were convicted of second-degree manslaughter. They have two surviving

David Hickman was born two

months prematurely in 2009 and lived

less than nine hours. Experts testified

he had a 99.9% chance of surviving

Judge Robert Herndon called the

attending unlicensed midwife, who was

not charged, "the most dangerous per-

forces anti-gay pledge

Shorter University, a Southern Bap-

tist college in Rome, Ga., is making its

200 employees sign a "personal life-

style pledge," WSBTV Atlanta reported

homosexuality, premarital sex, adul-

Employees sign a promise to reject

children, ages 7 and 4 months.

with medical care.

Oct. 26.

son in Clackamas County."

**Christian college** 

FFRF also gratefully announces its newest Lifetime Members:

Leslie Barke, James Cloyd, Neysa Dickey, Environmental Management Services, Mike Fahle, Paul Fleischauer, Del Futrell. Steven Gabbard, John KelTwork, Jerry Vulstek, Robin Williams and Gaetano Zanelli.

Lifetime Memberships are priced individually at \$1,000 designated for membership or renewal and ensure never another renewal notice!

States represented are Arizona, California, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.

All dues and donations to FFRF are deductible for income-tax purposes to the fullest extent of the law.

Christian Newswire, 10-21-11

Whether or not prayer at school events is illegal is not up for debate. We are not interested in hearing your prayers, sir, or in having our impressionable children subjected to them by those they see as authority figures. Keep them at home and at church where they belong.

Letter to the editor by Jeremy Green, Killen, Ala., on whose behalf FFRF Gene St. Clair, letter to the editor, "Giles board forgets the Golden Rule," on the plaintiffs' request for anonymity in a lawsuit filed by FFRF and the ACLU of Virginia *Roanoke Times*, 10-19-11

Happy people don't write apocalypses. That's why this guy is doing this now. They never show up when things are going well. There's always this lastditch answer to solve problems — let God handle it. The assumption is the world has become so wicked and evil, it will take an act of God to sort it out. **Rebecca Denova, University of Pittsburgh religious studies lecturer, on Rev. Harold Camping's End Times predictions** 

Courier-Post, 10-20-11

ly, Myra Lemson, Bill Lundell, Patricia the fullest extent of the law. Nutt, William Cameron Stone, Elton

# IRA rollovers benefit senior donors; deadline Dec. 31

Individuals  $70\frac{1}{2}$  or older who make a donation paid directly from the individual's traditional or Roth IRA to the Freedom From Religion Foundation, a 501(c)(3) educational charity, receive significant benefits. You may directly reduce from your gross income, for the year in which it was made, the amount of the qualified charitable distribution, up to \$100,000. This is a direct write-off.

The deadline for making a 2011 qualified charitable distribution is Dec. 31, 2011. FFRF recently opened an account with Vanguard, whose fees are less than standard stockbrokers. For more information, phone FFRF Co-Presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor or Dan Barker at 608-256-8900.

Madison. Wisconsin

November 2011











## FFRF 'fool me once' campaign targets Rapture madness

FFRF was not enraptured over Pastor Harold Camping's prediction that (once again) the world would end Oct 21. In its "fool me once" campaign, FFRF erected 40 small educational billboards throughout Oakland, Calif., home base of Camping's Family Radio. FFRF encouraged onlookers to use their judgment not just to reject Camping's irresponsible predicts of "Judgment Day," but all unsubstantiated religious claims.

FFRF's message is instead of worrying about the unknown and unknowable and wasting time, money and energy speculating over the nonexistent: "Make this world better."

A number of Camping's Family Radio followers quit their jobs and even spent their savings to help in his \$100 million campaign, which included placing 2,000 billboards around the U.S. last spring warning of "Judgment Day" May 21. We're still here!

'Clean money' — minus 'In God We Trust' — dispels myths



Drawing the winners at the Oct. 8 "clean money" raffle at the FFRF convention are (left) FFRF staffers Melanie Knier and Katie Stenz, student Taylor Myers, staffer Katie Daniel and students Connie Ward and Alice Obar.

FFRF warmly thanks Taylor, Connie and Alice — all students at Mount Holvoke — for staffing book tables at the conference. Thanks also to volunteers Luther Weeks and Kevin and Paula Gough for additional convention help.

More convention photographs can be found on pages 10-15. A slideshow of hundreds of convention photos is online:

ffrf.org/outreach/convention/past-conventions/

## And the winners are . . .

In order of denomination (not in seating order), winners of the drawing for "clean money" at the 34th annual FFRF convention are: \$1 — Rosalyn Berger, Florida, and Michele Tucker, Maryland (both god-free bills donated by Patricia Karn, Washington); \$2 — Joseph Wilkins, Illinois, and Alice Bennett, Indiana; \$5 — Victoria Usher, Connecticut (donated by the late Irving Kasow, Nevada); \$10 — Todd Peissig, Wisconsin, (donated by Craig Thomson, Pennsylvania); \$20 — Marty Stone, Georgia (donated by Bruce Lowerre, Florida); and two \$100 grand prize winners — Mike Barrows, New York, and Rosalyn Berger, Florida (one bill donated by Robert Newbegin, Wisconsin, and the other by Judy Simons, Arizona).

# Broadway icon Strouse enlivens convention

Charles Strouse, composer of the Broadway musicals "Annie," "Applause," and "Bye Bye Birdie" and many other musicals and songs, spoke and entertained with song at the piano Oct. 8 at FFRF's 34th national convention in Hartford, Conn., where he received an Emperor Has No Clothes Award. The award, a golden statutette, is reserved for public figures who make known their dissent from religion. Strouse, a forthright atheist, notes his views in his memoir, "Put on a Happy Face." He recounted such experiences as serving as chauffeur and accompanist for actress Butterfly McQueen (a Lifetime FFRF member).

**By Charles Strouse** 

A 'm overwhelmed, I truly mean this. My beliefs were something I always kept to myself for no particular reason. And I never knew there was a group of people that were in a formal way not only agreeing with me, but doing something about it. I've never been an activist of any sort, and I'm very proud that you all share my view. I don't know what else to say except what I've done is prepare a couple of songs that I'd like to do for you tonight.

I never thought that atheists made speeches, and I'm certainly surprised to have been asked to. I became an atheist when my sister died at age 40. She had been an orphan and had been adopted by my parents and had fought hard for an identity, married, had four children and five surgical procedures for cancer, but died for all her suffering. When a rabbi said to us, "God in his mysterious wisdom has chosen to take this girl," that kind of clinched it for me, but I was headed that way for a long time.

I had tested God in my childhood prayers; he never took it out on me, on the contrary. Later I had, with the assistance of my wife, four children three of whom are crazy about me and one who isn't, though I like to think he's just angry with himself.

I am a composer. I never got to serve in the armed forces, but was made quite aware then that there are no atheists in foxholes, a very powerful statement to me at the time. Years later, it occurred to me that if everyone was an atheist, there mightn't be any foxholes.

Two weeks ago I broke my wrist in a fall. For the first time, it seemed just vaguely possible that perhaps god (although I knew there was no god) was trying to tell me not to make a speech before the atheist society. On the remote possibility that this was so and there was a god, and that it is curiously Yom Kippur tonight, a religious day of atonement, I thought I should, you know, just in case to make absolutely sure there was no god, come up here and make this speech and see if I would be struck down. So broken wrist and all, I'm going to struggle with this and play a few songs. To be perfectly honest, I didn't know such a society existed, I thought it was just a very private thing that I believed in. I mean, half of the people who were mentioned [in Dan Barker's introduction], people in my profession who were atheists, I had no idea. I met Irving Berlin once, Richard Rodgers once, obviously nonbelief was never spoken about. It's nice to know there is such wonderful company here.

## If everyone was an atheist, there mightn't be any foxholes.

Anyway, I'll just do it in my first show on Broadway, which people account as the beginning of life, like Adam and Eve Broadway — "Bye Bye Birdie."

[Plays and sing "Put on a Happy Face" and "An English Teacher"]

And then there was a song, generally acknowledged to be one of the worst songs ever written in the great American song book, but then became very popular because of a certain young woman.

["Bye Bye Birdie" title song]

I did a show [in 1962] called "All American," starring one of the great musical performers of our day, Ray Bolger. But frankly, we didn't want him for the role. We wanted a European actor because the part was a Russian professor who comes and falls in love with America. It was directed by Josh Logan, Lee Adams and Mel Brooks. Logan wanted Ray to do it and signed him. He decided to do the part in his version of a Russian accent, and I knew we were in trouble when Brooks turned to me one day in rehearsal and asked, "Why is Ray speaking Japanese?" That was a sign of what was going to happen in this show, which indeed did. But there was one song which was a great favorite of Lee's and mine and Mel's.

[Plays "Once Upon a Time"]

You notice the left hand is not doing too much, but you're very kind. I used to have a great problem. I don't know why I'm saying all this to you, you're all atheists. This has nothing to do with opening night. There was an interview scheduled in Bacall's hotel suite with the theater critic from Look magazine, which at the time had the largest circulation in America. We were all very jittery in her suite. Lee and I were treating him as if we were servants: "Would





With his wife Barbara, a choreographer. More photos on page 10.

[Plays and sings Applause" title song]

That was a mistake to sing that because it was in the wrong key and I hurt my hand again. "Golden Boy" was another show, but I'm not going to do it because it's too much on my hand. "Golden Boy" was a big hit and opened three days before "Fiddler on the Roof," so we did not get the Tony for that, but it was a wonderful show.

We were always sold out because Sammy Davis was black and Jewish, and so we were never without people to fill the seats. As a matter of fact, the show had a lot of book problems. Clifford Odets, with whom Lee and I wrote the show, died the first day of rehearsal. The book was then finished by a playwright by the name of William Gibson, and as I say, we were always sold out, but the first act never matched the second act. There was a first act by Bill, a second act by Clifford and it was very painful to watch. But people kept coming to the show because of Sammy; he was the Everyman. I feel so many friends here, even though I never knew you existed. There was another show I wrote, "Mayor," which my wife Barbara, who is here with me tonight, choreographed. ["Mayor" depicted a day in the life of New York City Mayor Ed Koch.] In it was a song that I always liked. Many of you here, I've been told, are from all over the place, but many of you come and visit New York, and there is, you may have noticed, a way that we have of speaking that is different. And so, if for instance you are here for just a visit. . . [Plays and sings "You Can Be a New Yorker Too!"]

Charles Strouse admiring his Emperor after Dan Barker presented it.

anything, these are just things that happened to me in my life. And since you've been kind enough to give me an award and all, I might as well make you share them.

I used to lack confidence. I still do in a way. We all have doubts about ourselves. One of the people who gave me a great deal of confidence was Lauren Bacall, who was the lead in my show "Applause." She had balls, she was really something. "Applause" opened to bad reviews in Baltimore [but went on to win the 1970 Tony Award for Best Musical, with Bacall winning the Tony for Best Actress in a Musical].

We were scared out of our wits on

you like a Coke?" "Sit here, it's a little more comfortable." Betty Comden and Adolph Green [who wrote the play's book] were being very slavish to him.

Bacall came in and cameras materialized, with a lot of flash bulbs popping. Louis Botto was the critic's name. "Well, what did you think of the show?" Bacall asked. "I thought it was very interesting." Botto said. Bacall replied, "Go fuck yourself."

At which point, it was like being on a sinking ship that righted itself. He was being so sweet to us, anyway.

I was going to play a song from "Applause," I'll play it. I forget what key I'm in. Well, I'll do a couple songs from "Annie." They're hard to play but. . . [Plays and sings "I Don't Need Anything But You" and "Tomorrow."]