The Freethought Society News
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Published by: The Freethought Society | http://www.FtSociety.org
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July/August 2013
Volume 5, Number 4

The Freethought Society News ezine is published by The Freethought Society (FS) for the nontheist community.

Free subscriptions are available for supporters, donors and like-minded individuals upon request.

Contact FS at:

newsletter@FtSociety.org

Attention writers!

Articles on topics of interest to freethinkers are welcomed and will be considered for publication.

Submit articles (5,000 word count maximum) for review by the FS editorial board. Please submit articles with a bio and photo, a suggested title, and relevant photos/clip art to:

newsletter@FtSociety.org

FS is an educational nonprofit organization. Donations and financial support are encouraged and appreciated. For donation information, please see the last page of this newsletter.

Articles herein do not necessarily represent official positions of FS.

Tax Number: 23-2738574

2013 Pennsylvania State Conference Update

by Margaret Downey

In March 2012, the Freethought Society (FS) board announced a collaboration with the board of the Pennsylvania Non-Believers (PAN) to co-host the second annual Pennsylvania Atheist/Humanist State Conference, September 13-15, 2013. The conference will take place at the Embassy Suites located at 9000 Bartram Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19153.

The discounted hotel price of $130 includes free parking, Internet access, a complimentary daily breakfast, and tickets to the nightly happy hour. All rooms are suites. There is a limit of 5 people per room with a two-bed feature. A couch-to-bed pull out is located in the living room area of each suite. Please call the following number to make your reservations as rooms will go fast at this low price:

Embassy Suites Reservation Phone Number: (215) 365-4500
(mention group code "113" to get the discounted price)
See photos at the Embassy Suites website:

http://bit.ly/YMSZPc

The opening of a Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center at 7:00 PM, on Friday, September 13, 2013 in the grand ballroom of the hotel will kick off the weekend-long conference. Party guests will be entertained with live musical performances by **Aimee Streeter** and **James DeFrances**. DeFrances will be performing Frank Sinatra songs. **Joe Nickell,** author and skeptical investigator of the paranormal, will autograph his books throughout the evening. **Jamy Ian Swiss**, magician and Senior Fellow of the James Randi Educational Foundation will act as the Master of Ceremonies. There will be games and prizes throughout the evening. A DJ will play anti-superstition themed songs, including Ladder Limbo, for everyone to enjoy.

Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Nurses and Doctors (**Jessica Corra**, **Tarina Dark**, **Margaret Downey**, **Tracy Lockwood**, **Shaun McGonigal**, **Tom Schottmiller, and Jennifer Taylor**) will assist you through an interactive anti-superstition museum. **Magdalena Goss** will attend as the official Miss Fortune Teller. Please see the full-page party advertisement located on page 11 in this newsletter. Please print the flyer and use it to invite your friends, family, and associates. Please post the flyer on community bulletin boards in your town.

The conference continues on Saturday with plenary sessions (speakers and panel discussions) throughout the day, along with lunch and dinner entertainment. Sunday morning will include a plenary session as well. The conference ends at noon on Sunday, but optional post-conference activities are available. Philadelphia tourist attractions can be found at the link below:

http://www.discoverphl.com/?gclid=CL6GmPvaqrcCFYef4Aod9loAmQ

Conference attendees who are not sightseeing are invited to attend a three-hour media training workshop sponsored by the United Coalition of Reason (UnitedCoR).

The workshop will be conducted by **Fred Edwords**, who is the executive director of UnitedCoR. Edwords has been a part of the freethought movement for many years, and even experienced organizers / leaders / activists can learn a thing or two from him. The title of his free workshop is "How to Get Media Attention and Promote Your Group." This is a free workshop that should not be missed.

The conference fee is $113. The price includes a Friday night party ticket, Saturday buffet lunch and dinner, plenary passes, and a post-conference Sunday workshop,. Optional conference pricing (students, volunteers, day passes, etc.) information is available at:

http://www.atheistpa.org/tickets

Confirmed speakers are:

Seth Andrews
(author, blogger, podcaster and video producer)
Jamila Bey
(Washington, D. C. journalist)
Rob Boston
(author and senior policy analyst at Americans United for Separation of Church and State)
State Representative Mark Cohen
(Pennsylvania District 201)
James Croft
(representing the Harvard Humanist Community)
Jerry DeWitt
(former minister and author)
J. T. Eberhard
(blogger, debater and co-founder of SkeptiCon)
A. J. Johnson
(vice-president and co-founder of BeSecular)
Amanda Knief
(author, and executive director of American Atheists)
Lauri Lebo
(writer)
Tracy Lockwood
(former cult member)
Teresa MacBain
(former pastor and executive director of Humanists of Florida)
David Silverman
(president of American Atheists)
David Tamayo
(podcaster and founder of Hispanic American Freethinkers)

Please visit the conference website (see ad below) to view speaker biographies, photos, speech titles, and presentation descriptions.

The Saturday afternoon entertainment is drummer, guitarist, composer and podcaster **George Hrab**. He is best known for performing rock, funk and jazz and for exploring atheist, skeptic and science themes in his work. Hrab has released six albums as a solo artist and his CDs will be available for purchase. He is a national star and resident of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The Saturday entertainment includes author and comedian **Dr. Joe Wenke** ("The Cultural Arsonist"). His stage show is based on his book *You've Got to be Kidding*, and his humor will set the stage on fire.

Comedian **Steve Hill** from Southern California will be the opening act for Australian singer and songwriter **Shelley Segal** on Saturday night. Segal released her two albums *An Atheist Album* and *Little March* recently in Australia and she will be bringing CDs to autograph and sell throughout the conference.

FS and PAN are seeking volunteers to help with this exciting and unique event. Volunteers will receive a complimentary Friday night dinner, discounted conference passes, a conference DVD, and the thanks of everyone who attends the conference. A list of pre-conference and conference volunteer jobs are located at the conference website:

www.atheistpa.org

FS and PAN have secured the very best hotel deal possible through The Embassy Suites and we highly recommend that reservations are made as soon as possible to avoid missing the discounted rate cut off of August 12, 2013.

The following information is intended for those who are seeking alternative hotels in the same location as the conference (Note: No special rates have been secured for the hotels listed below):

Extended Stay America
9000 Bartram Ave.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19153
Website: http://bit.ly/169ROTE
Phone: (215) 365-4360
Fax: (215) 365-4398
Email: PLA@extendedstay.com

Fairfield Inn
8800 Bartram Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19153
Website: http://bit.ly/54yq0
Phone: (215) 365-2254

Hampton Inn
8600 Bartram Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19153
Website: http://bit.ly/12YCrsC
Phone: 215-966-1300

Courtyard Marriott
8900 Bartram Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19153
Website: http://bit.ly/9lCtjl
Phone: 888-236-2427

Print the full page conference advertisement located on the next page of this newsletter and help promote the conference. Like us on Facebook and tell your friends, family and business associates about this great event. ◘

PENNSYLVANIA STATE

atheist/humanist 2013 conference

ATHEISTPA.ORG | PHILADELPHIA, PA SEPTEMBER 13, 14, & 15, 2013

CONFERENCE

FRIDAY
Friggatriskaidekaphobia Party
Hosted by The Freethought Society
www.friggatriskaidekaphobia.com

SATURDAY
Speakers, Lunch, Dinner
and Entertainment

SUNDAY
Speakers and Workshops

TICKETS
Conference-$100
Friggatriskaidekaphobia Party-$13

HOTEL
Embassy Suites
215-365-4500
For a discounted rate
mention code "113"

SPEAKERS

Seth Andrews
Jerry DeWitt
Teresa MacBain
Jamila Bey
Rob Boston
Rep. Mark Cohen
James Croft
JT Eberhard
Fred Edwords
Steve Hill
George Hrab
AJ Johnson
Amanda Knief
Lauri Lebo
Tracy Lockwood
Joe Nickell
Shelley Segal
David Silverman
Jamy Ian Swiss
David Tamayo
Joe Wenke
Edwina Rogers

community

“Desolation”

by Jessica Corra

Religion has long filled what many consider an essential place in the hierarchy of human needs, even if one removes loaded theological doctrines from the equation. That is, it provides comfort or consolation to many. Belief in a higher power, and belief in one’s rightness with that power, can soothe, calm, and bring peace to the faithful - when it’s working. And that’s the rub.

Catholicism acknowledges that there are times in a believer’s life when she or he does not feel close to God. This is referred to either as spiritual dryness or desolation, and it is apparently common. What happens then? One feels a separation from God and worship brings no joy; there is no resonance to religion.

As a former believer, I experienced this throughout most of the time of my life when I was immersed in religious faith. As a Protestant, we simply said I didn’t have the “gift of faith,” and that I “had doubts.” I cannot adequately express the mental anguish that these seemingly innocuous phrases represent.

Religion is only peaceful for the people within it who blindly accept it. Anyone who questions the pat answer or wrestles with the deeper mysteries one is supposed to accept by faith will not find comfort in religion. As a child, the idea of God brought only fear. I was a sinner bound for the fire; I must’ve missed catechism class when they taught the doctrine of assurance, and so I spent my childhood with the Act of Contrition playing in my head like a reel in case I got hit by a car. I wish I were joking.

One could say that was a fault with me, not with religion. Surely I misunderstood the theology: if you believe, you’re safe. But desolation creates an ouroboros; it is self-reflexive in that, if one experiences spiritual dryness, one begins to question if one is a true believer (if Protestant), or simply the entire notion of God, which leads to further spiritual dryness — surely I’d done something to make God pull away from me, or allow me to feel this way. If “he” really exists, isn’t that awful? When I converted to evangelicalism as a college freshman, I said the sinner’s prayer about a dozen times over a period of six months, in case it didn’t stick, or my heart wasn’t really “right” yet. I wish I were joking, again.

I always wanted to be a better Christian, both as a Catholic and later as a Protestant. My faith was earnest, but it was small. It was too small to sustain itself, and the questions won out. My dissatisfaction with the answers won out. I got tired of the rampant hypocrisy I saw around me, and frankly, I got tired of the spiritual dryness because the problem had to always lie with me; it could never have been God. There comes a time when one stops beating the dead horse and admits when something doesn’t work. Religion didn’t work for me. Trying to be a good Christian eventually felt like trying to force a magnet to touch another magnet of the same polarity. Something in me always resisted.

When I finally stepped back from faith and accepted my doubts, I found peace. I realized that the problem could be with God, with religion itself, and suddenly the world opened up to my understanding; it made sense again. The thing about Christian doctrine is that there is no margin of error. If you believe in hell, the possibility of it holds real power over you. Not for nothing do we joke about “fire insurance Christians.” The supposed strength of religion, is the way it gives life meaning. This is equally a fault; everything has too much meaning, everything is fraught.

This translates to the ultimate fear of death and thoughts of failure. It ground me down. Even if one bought the assurance doctrine and didn’t fear hell outright, the lesser failures of the everyday Christian created its own sort of desolation: one was never really good enough, and that idea compounded itself. Plato’s cave allegory is a common reference in Western thought; the world is but shadows of an ideal.

I wonder if God is not merely the Ideal of the human and we’ve extrapolated “him” into existence purely reactionary to an essentialist worldview (that is, the “perfect” monotheistic God of the current Western world, as he has become). So if one’s very faith isn’t in jeopardy, religion fails to console on a desultory level, because nobody’s perfect.

One could say the fault lies with me, that the problem here is not with the theology, but the interpretation. I should have been grateful. I should have viewed my imperfections as places God could grow me, accepting that as only God is perfect. I never would be perfect, but thought that God loved me anyway. Should, should, should. If ever there was a word to make someone feel bad, it’s “should.” Nothing cuts someone to the quick faster than knowing what they should be doing when he or she feels entirely incapable of doing it. Religion doesn’t console, it only offers more and varied ways to put your foot in it, with potentially eternally troubling consequences. What, if anything, about that offers comfort?

Once again, when one removes the stumbling block of a god, the shame, guilt, and fear that accompany imperfection and failure vanish. There is no Ideal to aspire to. There is only myself. I try to be the best me, to continue to grow emotionally, mentally, to ensure my physical well-being. I don’t have to be perfect, especially not measured by someone else’s impossible yardstick.

Simply, when one removes religion, there is less to fear. Religion isn’t, on the surface, about fear. Most followers of Christ would adamantly deny such an idea. They, of course, have all the inverse experiences I did: they could accept assurance. They see their failings as potential. Religion works for them. And yet one could argue that they don’t lose anything if there is no religion. If everyone were atheistic, there would be no hell concept to bother the people who struggled with their faith. It wouldn’t matter if religion worked or didn’t.

There will always be people like me, for whom religion can never fill that gap in the hierarchy of needs. In an atheistic worldview, it’s not that the gap goes away, but rather some of the bigger triggers in that gap (death,

perfection) are minimized to the point of being inconsequential. Atheism, then, is of a lowest common denominator for providing consolation. Religion is not and not be. ◘

Jessica Corra grew up Catholic, then converted to fundamental evangelicalism before leaving the church completely. She now believes in chocolate, love, and words. She is the author of the young adult novel *After You*, which will be released in 2014 from Dial Books for Young Readers (a division of Penguin Books). Corra also contributed to the anthologies *Dear Teen Me* (Zest Books, 2012) and *Straying From the Path* (Drollerie Press, 2009). Corra lives outside Philadelphia.

Supporters, Financial Help and Volunteers Needed

Did you know that the annual budget for the Freethought Society (FS) is $10,000? Yes, it does take all that money for us to serve the nontheist community.

The average cost to host a speaker is $200 (speakers receive an honorarium, meals and sometimes they are reimbursed for travel expenses). Literature, posters newsletters and other printed items cost approximately $100 a month. Websites are a major monthly expense as well as paper, ink, copies, envelopes, postage and other operational supplies.

FS has a storage unit to house party, picnic, parade and other large items that are needed from time to time (*Tree of Knowledge*, street fair items, etc.). The cost of the storage unit is $150 a month.

FS does not pay salaries to any officer or employee, but independent contractors are hired at times to assist with paperwork and other secretarial type duties. Instead of donating, please volunteer to help.

Please donate today to help FS continue its great work to the community. There is much to do and it can't be done without financial assistance from you — the supporter base of FS. See the last page of this newsletter for donation details. Thank you.

Secular Celebrations

Secular Ceremonies for the 21st Century

Secular Celebrants are available to design and provide secular ceremonies to honor, celebrate and recognize life's passages, such as unions, marriages, births, coming of age, death, divorce, and much more.

Discounts are available to supporters of the Freethought Society.

Mike Aus

P.O. Box 690961
Houston, Texas 77269
Phone:
(832) 493-2174
Email:
ausmike@rocketmail.com

Margaret Downey

P.O. Box 242
Pocopson, Pennsylvania 19366
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(610) 357-9432
Email:
Margaret@FtSociety.org

Secular-Celebrations.com

Memories of Alton Lemon and His Own Words

by Margaret Downey

My dear sweet friend Alton Lemon died on May 4, 2013.

I started a file folder marked "Alton Lemon" in 1995 when I had the pleasure of visiting Alton at his home that year. He invited me over after I telephoned him to say that the Freethought Society (FS) wanted to plan a special event to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the *Lemon vs. Kurtzman* United States Supreme Court decision.

I will never forget the day I arrived to meet and interview Alton. He opened the door and greeted me with warmth, friendliness and a quiet humbleness. Alton was not prepared for the type of celebration I had in mind. As I described how I intended to submit his name for a City Council Citation and a City of Philadelphia Proclamation, he smiled and asked, "Oh, that's nice, but do you think they would actually approve such a thing?"

"Of course they will," I said somewhat optimistically as I gazed at the portrait of **Martin Luther King** Alton had placed in a prominent location in his living room.

I confidently continued with, "I'm here to get all the facts and to make sure that it does happen. *Lemon vs. Kurtzman* is one of the most important separation of religion and government cases — ever!"

"OK," Alton said, "Let's get going. Here is my box of papers and it might be fun to talk about the case again. Oh, I saw you noticed the Martin Luther King portrait. I played baseball with him at Morehouse College."

Wow! I knew right then and there that this interview would be fascinating. We talked for hours that day and many more times over the telephone as I prepared for the big celebration. I still have my original notes! Alton and I became great friends during that one year preparation period. He supplied me with important names to contact and I recruited help from several national groups.

The Council for Secular Humanism and African Americans for Humanism joined with FS to host a Friday, June 28, 1996 banquet and a workshop and luncheon the following day. The two-day event took place at the Renaissance Hotel in Philadelphia.

A few days before the June banquet, Alton, his wife Augusta, several FS board members, friends and I visited City Hall to pick up a City of Philadelphia "Alton Lemon Day" proclamation. We also enjoyed a lovely lunch that day and Alton was beaming with pride as he read the wording of the beautiful proclamation aloud:

The United States of America was first among nations to adopt a secular constitution separating church from state. The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment prohibits government from preferring or supporting one particular religion over other religions, or religion over non-religion.

In 1971, the U. S. Supreme Court established the three-pronged Lemon Test to assist in deciding Establishment Clause disputes. Alton Lemon volunteered to be the plaintiff in the Lemon vs. Kurtzman *case that established the three-pronged Lemon Test as the Standard for deciding church-state separation cases.*

Recognition of Alton Lemon's citizenship and civic involvement are long overdue. Alton Lemon is a resident of Philadelphia, an active member of the American Civil Liberties Union, past president and vice-president of the Philadelphia Ethical Society, and is an honorary member of the Freethought Society and African Americans for Humanism.

I, Edward G. Rendell, Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, do hereby proclaim Friday, June 28, 1996 as

ALTON LEMON DAY

in Philadelphia and urge all citizens to join this celebration by honoring his citizenship with special tributes, workshops and thoughtful recognition.

All citizens are encouraged to learn more about the Lemon vs. Kurtzman *U.S. Supreme Court decision, the Establishment Clause of the U. S. Constitution, and the value of church-state separation.*

At the banquet, Alton was further honored when Council Member **Happy Fernandez** delivered, in person, a City of Philadelphia City Council Citation honoring Alton for his lifelong commitment to serve the community. Above and beyond the wording of the City Proclamation, the Citation stated that:

Alton Lemon, through his professional career as well as his many community and service associations, has been deeply committed to strengthening our communities...in all that he does, Alton brings a high standard of excellence, honesty and integrity...therefore, we recognize the important contribution Alton Lemon has made and continues to make to society through his devotion to a plethora of causes, and applaud his high ideals and many good works.

As I prepared this article by looking through Alton's file, I found his hand written acceptance speech and

realized I was holding a small treasure — Alton's words that had never been printed and have probably been forgotten by now. Below is what Alton said in 1996:

Thank you very much. I accept this award on behalf of everyone who was involved in prosecuting this complaint as well as all who are sympathetic to our position.

For the benefit of those of you who may not be familiar with the details of the case, there were three individual plaintiffs and six organizations involved in the case.

In addition to myself, ***Priscilla Reardon*** *and* ***Betty Worrell*** *participated. The Pennsylvania organizations that were involved were the State Education Association, the NAACP, the Council of Churches, the Jewish Community Relations Conference, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the American Civil Liberties Union. Spencer Cox of the ACLU was the primary coordinator and Henry W. Sawyer was Chief Counsel.*

I thank my wife, Augusta, for her long and continuing support. I thank ***Margaret Downey****, the African Americans for Humanism organization, the Council for Secular Humanism and the Freethought Society for arranging this celebration. Finally, I want to thank my friends for coming, especially* ***Robert Taylor*** *who, with his guest, traveled from Detroit for this event.*

My interest in church-state activities did not develop suddenly. I was involved before I realized it. The public schools that I attended in Atlanta, Georgia opened each day with a Protestant Christian devotion. Those who were not Protestant Christians were left out. I spent my last two years of high school at a school that was a strange mixture of church and state. The Episcopal Church played the leadership role. The church, however, did not have enough funds and the state did not provide enough for quality education. I must say that my experience at the school was quite meaningful. The private college that I attended in Atlanta also had a strong religious influence.

After college, I read extensively about church-state separation issues while reflecting on my past. Above and beyond the Constitutional issues, I was very concerned about the extent to which public funds could be siphoned off the public school budget for nonpublic schools and the negative affect this would have on quality education for Blacks, other nonwhite minorities and poor students in general. I am not suggesting that under the present circumstances public schools are doing the best possible job. They are not. Because of my interest, I was prepared to participate in challenging Pennsylvania public education laws.

Courage is required because the consequences can be far reaching on personal and professional levels. May I also add that many activists are frequently short on courage. I shall cite two examples in which I had more courage than brains.

I worked for the Department of Defense while the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA) was in existence. While this committee was holding hearings in California, college students protested. An announcement was circulated at work which encouraged us to view an HCUA film. They said to view the film so that we could see how, and I quote:"the communists were duping college students." Because I had attended ACLU meetings, I was familiar with the film and I knew that the announcement was wrong. I told the executive engineer that the announcement was incorrect and that I was a member of an organization that was not on any subversive list and that getting rid of HCUA was very high on the list of priorities.

The executive engineer arranged for me to meet the director of our office. While I was talking with the director, a senior engineer came into the director's office. The director asked him if he had ever heard of the ACLU. When he said he had not, I said to myself, "I guess I am in trouble, and on my own then."

The result was that the announcement was toned down and recirculated. The disclosure of my affiliation with the ACLU could have led to the loss of my secret security clearance pass, which was necessary for me to perform my job.

The second example of having more courage than brains is related to the decision that brought us together tonight. Some Catholics were very instrumental in getting the Pennsylvania Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968 passed. My immediate supervisor and some of my coworkers were Catholic.

After the decision to abolish the Act was rendered in Lemon vs. Kurtzman*, my supervisor told me that he agreed with the decision! I thanked him, but told him that any organization had a right to exercise legitimate means to exist. I went to court because I disagreed with the law. If my supervisor had not agreed with the decision, my life could have been miserable.*

Although I encourage you to challenge injustices, I realize that the results can sometimes leave a lot of scarred tissue. Nevertheless, there are times when we must meet injustices head on. Finally, and I want to make this point very clear, I am not opposed to religion. You may believe whatever you wish. I am for freedom of and from religion. I do not want individuals, the state or any other institution to impose religion on me.

Again, thank you very much for this honor.

I made sure that Alton received many more awards after that night and thanks to the American Humanist Association, the ACLU, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Alton knew he was loved and appreciated throughout his life.

While Alton was proud to say he knew Martin Luther King, I am proud to say that I knew Alton Lemon. ◻

A Herstory of Religious Rejection

by Elizabeth Evelyn

Fortunately, as children, my only sibling and I were not "churched" on any regular basis. My grandmother took me to a church once in a while. At age three she took me to a nearby church where I was totally enthralled with the "theater" of the service. People paraded in costumes up and down the center of the building. The choir members were also in costumes! Those things were the best part and the most attractive — the music and the costumes.

Many years later, when we asked our parents why we did not go to church, we were told to go if we wanted to. Each of us went separately with our friends. Again it was the theatrics, costumes and music that were appealing to me. Nothing else was at all interesting.

When I married and had children, it seemed to be a good idea to go to church as a family. That was fine until my husband would not go with us. That was the end of that — in many ways.

My second husband was an Episcopalian. We all went to church, though he and I could not be married in his church. Why? Because I was married before and I had had children. (Gasp!)

After some time, my children and I became involved in the church choir and other social activities. The priest and I became good friends as well. He encouraged me and my two eldest children to attend "confirmation" classes, which would prepare us to become confirmed Episcopalians.

He asked if I had been baptized. I didn't know so I immediately asked my mother. She told me that I probably had been baptized although she could not remember.

The priest told me not to try anymore to find out, but if we could not find any records, we just would assume it had been properly done.

Shortly thereafter, I began to question many of the things I was told I needed to agree with in order to "pass" the class. Finally, after many of my questions, the Priest told me to just "buy what you can and we will leave the rest alone."

At that point I knew that I had no business becoming a confirmed Episcopalian. My children were informed that they could choose at another point in their lives to go through the classes and get confirmed, but it would be their choice, not mine.

That was the end of church for me! It was the beginning of my questioning the validity of religion, god, Jesus, the whole theology thing.

I became a seeker of truth through scientific investigation and the reasoning ability of my own mind. Some not-so-wonderful experiences that were very negative for me and my children also played a major role in my knowing that the whole religious program is a complete hoax; lies, and more lies. Man was making God in his own image in order to control the people, I thought. It starts with scaring the crap out of the children!

I found the Freethought Society (FS) Discussion Yahoo group through **Howard Replogle**. Replogle is the founder of the Birds of a Feather Freethought Group sponsored by the Escapees Recreational Vehicle Club.

There are quite a few very assertive Christians in our park, which has 119 leasehold lots, mostly occupied by couples. Although I do not label myself as other than a non-believer in religious teachings, I am sure my Christian friends here in the park refer to me as an atheist. Twice each week there is a Bible study gathering in the community Ranch House. When they first started to meet, there were about a dozen attendees. The Bible study group now only has about 5 regular attendees. Soon they will be required to meet in another smaller building.

I participate in the daily Happy Hour as the musician (I play a keyboard) and I use my computer as a tool to reach others. I've made many cyber-friends through the FS Discussion Group

Alan Gold and I have been cyber-friends from the beginning of my subscription to the FS Discussion Group. We have shared many thoughts, and found that we have a great deal in common regarding the evolution of consciousness.

I have been interested in the subject of consciousness ever since I lived in Lincoln City, Oregon. I met a fellow named Jim who owned a book store that focused on metaphysics and started attending meetings. Jim speaks about what we call "then and now." He never claims to "know." I found the information quite profound. Jim is better known now as "Ishvara," and has become a sort of Guru on this subject.

My interest in Enlifement.org and the FS Discussion Group is all about consciousness raising. It is my desire to be involved in all similar groups, including the subject of science.

In closing, I offer part of what I have learned in my quest for truth. Many of these thoughts originated with Ishvara, whose permission I have to "tweak" in order to include my personal thoughts:

Be All You Are...
Be Yourself...

Everyone Else Is Taken...

Enjoy All You Do...
Do All You Enjoy...

Live Moment By Moment...
Now Is All There Is...

The World Transforms...
As You Transform...

You Are The Universe...
Being You...

The Freethought Society's 2013 Four-Month Activities Calendar

July 1

The Freethought Society and the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia (EHSP) are pleased to announce a co-hosted presentation by **Jay Wexle**r on **Monday, July 1, 2013**.

Wexler's presentation, "Holy Hullabaloos and Beyond: The State of Church/ State Law in the United States (and maybe some other things)" will take place at the **Ethical Society Building** located at **1906 South Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**. The **7:00 PM** speech is free and open to the public, but a $5 donation is requested to offset expenses.

Wexler will talk about the various people and places he visited while researching the book and will discuss the current state of First Amendment law in the United States.

Wexler is an award-wining Professor of Law at Boston University. He is also the author of three books, over two dozen academic articles, and over fifty essays, reviews, and stories in the *Boston Globe*, *Huffington Post*, *National Geographic NewsWatch*, *Salon*, *Slate*, and *Spy*.

July 28

The 7th annual "Unity Picnic" will take place at the Flourtown Pavilion located in the Fort Washington State Park (West Mill Road is a quarter mile west of Bethlehem Pike in Flourtown).

A $10 donation per person is requested to cover the cost of picnic items. Please RSVP so that an accurate estimate for food and beverages can be made. Contact: PhillyReason@gmail.com to RSVP.

Additional picnic food is needed. Please follow the below last name initial guide to participate in the pot luck:

A-G salad or vegetable
H-P fruit or dessert
Q-Z bread, potato or rice dish

This picnic is sponsored by the Philadelphia Coalition of Reason, which includes the following groups:

Atheist Meetup
Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia
The Freethought Society
The Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia
Drexel Freethought
Penn State Atheists Agnostic Association
Rekindle Reason
Temple Atheists and Critical Thinkers
West Chester University Secular Student Alliance

August 11

The Freethought Society and the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia (EHSP) are pleased to announce a co-hosted **Robert G. Ingersoll** birthday party and presentation by **Tom Flynn** on **Sunday**, **August 11, 2013**.

Flynn's presentation, "Freethought's Forgotten History," will take place at the **Ethical Society Building** located at **1906 South Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**. The **11:00 AM** speech is free and open to the public, but a $5 donation is requested to offset expenses. Birthday cake, punch and coffee will be served after the presentation.

It is too often forgotten, but Dundee, New York lies near the center of one of America's great cradles of radical reform. During the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, west-central New York State was a boiling cauldron of activism and controversy in areas like the abolition of slavery, women's rights, and freethought — the principled critique of religious orthodoxy.

America's best-known nineteenth-century freethinker, **Ingersoll,** was born in nearby Dresden. He is the subject of a new book by historian **Susan Jacoby** (*The Great Agnostic: Robert Ingersoll and American Freethought*). Within a two-hour drive to of another are located some 59 historic sites relating to figures like **Frederick Douglass**, **Susan B. Anthony**, **Mark Twain**, **Matilda Joslyn Gage**, **Obadiah Dogberry**, and **Margaret Sanger**.

Don't recognize the name of Obadiah Dogberry? You also might not know what happened at the corner of Fourth and Franklin in Watkins Glen that shaped the future of American obscenity law. Ingersoll Museum director Flynn will fill in all the details as he presents a whirlwind illustrated tour of Ingersoll's birthplace and the Freethought Trail.

Flynn is Executive Director of the Council for Secular Humanism, editor of *Free Inquiry* magazine, and director of the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum. He co-founded the Freethought Trail with **Sally Roesch Wagner**, director of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Museum.

Flynn is editor of the reference work *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (2007) and author of several books including *The Trouble With Christmas* which is always displayed on every *Tree of Knowledge* displayed around the country.

Note: The Freethought Society is considering a group trip to the Finger Lakes area for a weekend in August 2014. A sign-up sheet will be available at the Flynn presentation.

The Philadelphia Coalition of Reason presents

The 7th annual

UNITY PICNIC

Welcome to all

Atheists
Agnostics
Humanists
Freethinkers
Rationalists
Skeptics
etc.

July 28th
1-5 PM

Rain or shine

Fort Washington State Park
Flourtown Pavilion

*On W. Mill Road A quarter mile **West** of Bethlehem Pike in Flourtown, PA*

games and activities games and activities

FOR THE KIDS

The Philadelphia Coalition of Reason

- Atheist Meetup
- The Ethical Humanist Society
- The Freethought Society
- The Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia
- Drexel Freethought
- Penn State Atheists Agnostic Association
- Rekindle Reason: Atheists, Agnostics and Freethinkers at UPenn
- Temple Atheists and Critical Thinkers
- West Chester University Secular Student Alliance

$10 minimum donation per adult covers the cost of burgers, hot dogs, vegetarian grill alternatives, buns and beverages.

Please bring a side dish!
if your last name begins with:
A-G bring salad or vegetable
H-P bring fruit or dessert
Q-Z bring bread, potato or rice dish

Please RSVP!

(So we can estimate our food and beverage needs)

Contact PhillyReason@gmail.com

DIRECTIONS

From the North:
From 276 take exit 339 toward PA-309/Fort Washington/ Philadelphia/Ambler
Drive 1.4 miles South on PA-309
Take exit PA-73 toward Flourtown
Turn right at PA-73 W/Church Rd.
Take the 2nd left onto E Mill Rd.
The entrance to the park will be on your right about a quarter mile after you pass Bethlehem Pike

From the South:
Take 76 W to 476 North toward Plymouth Mtg.
Then take exit 20 and turn right on Plymouth Rd.
After about a half mile it will turn into Flourtown Rd. Stay on Flourtown Rd. for another two miles then turn left to stay on Flourtown Rd.
Then turn right on Stenton Rd. and left on W. Mill Road.
The entrance to the park will be on your left.

Featuring a DJ, Dancing, Piñata, Mirror Breaking, Leprechaun Bowling, Ladder Limbo, Games, Prizes, and an Interactive *Museum of Superstitions*. Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center nurses and doctors will provide a *Certificate of Mental Health*.

SPECIAL GUESTS:

Joe Nickell (signing his books)
Magician Jamy Ian Swiss
Magdalena Goss as *Miss Fortune Teller*
Caricatures $13.00
Vocalists Aimee Streeter and James M. DeFrances
And many more special guests!

The 2013 Friggatriskaidekaphobia* Treatment Center & Party

7:00 PM Friday, September 13, 2013

Hosted by The Freethought Society
Admission: $13; Students and Seniors: $10; 13 and under: free

Crudités, Dessert table
Cash bar

Fun events all weekend long!
For more information, visit:
www.ftsociety.org

Embassy Suites: 9000 Bartram Ave., Phila., PA, 19153
Discount: $130/night; free parking, Internet, breakfast, happy hour

**Frigga-triska-ideka-phobia is a fear of Friday the Thirteenth*

The Freethought Society (FS) promotes freedom of thought, expression and choice. FS also advocates separation of religion and government. FS publishes *The Freethought Society News* every other month.The newsletter is delivered as an ezine via email and is complimentary to supporters, donors, like-minded individuals and those who are interested in learning more about freedom of thought.

Monthly events take place in many locations across the United States, with emphasis in the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey. FS activities and services depend on the financial contributions of supporters. Funds may be sent using this form or via the FS website (www.FtSociety.org/donate/). All contributions to FS are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law (Tax ID Number: 23-2738574). Please donate generously.

Yes! I want to:

( ) become a supporter of FS (Please enclose checks payable to the Freethought Society):
$30 Individual Supporter **$35** Family Supporter **$20** Student **$1,000** Supporter for a Lifetime

( ) become a "Freethought Star" by setting up an automatic monthly donation to FS from my bank or through PayPal in the amount of (circle one): **$5 $10 $15 $20 $25 $30 $35 $40 $45** $_____(other per month)

( ) earmark a donation to (insert project, event or committee name): _____

_____

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone: _____Cell: _____

( ) Check here if you prefer your sponsorship to remain anonymous.

FS will email a complimentary newsletter to potential supporters. Please provide contact information for anyone who might be interested in receiving an FS newsletter.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Use this same form to bid on the use of the FS St. Croix Cottage.

FS's cottage in St. Croix is available for use the 11th week of each year. In 2014, the week offered will be March 16-23 (Saturday-Saturday). The yearly maintenance fee for the beachside cottage at Chenay Bay Beach Resort is $900.

The lowest bid FS can accept must meet that cost.

The bid is for a one-week stay in cottage number 6 and does not include travel, rental car or food expenses. If you are interested in placing a bid for the use of this property, please return this form to the address below:

Freethought Society
P.O. Box 242
Pocopson, PA 19366-0242

Email a bid to:

http://bit.ly/XJFfWX

For additional information see:

http://bit.ly/17p4FfK