



The Freethought Society News

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The Freethought Society News is delivered as an ezine newsletter and is complimentary to supporters, donors and like-minded individuals.

A limited number of hard copies are produced for meetings and special events.

The newsletter is published by the Freethought Society (FS) and offers information of interest to the nontheist community.

Attention writers!

Interesting articles about freethought issues are welcomed.

Please submit articles with a bio and photo, a suggested title, and relevant photos/clip art to:

newsletter@FtSociety.org

Submissions will be reviewed and approved for publication by the FS Editorial Board.

Article word count maximum is 5,000.

Articles in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the opinions of the FS Board of Directors.

Donation and financial support information is located on the last page of this newsletter.

FS is an educational nonprofit organization (EIN Number 23-2738574). All donations to FS are tax-deductible.

Freethinkers in Chester County must not give way!

by Margaret Downey

As reported in previous Freethought Society (FS) newsletters, a controlling majority (2 out of 3) of Commissioners in Chester County used all possible power to eliminate the FS *Tree of Knowledge* from being included in the annual Courthouse winter holiday display. Their passage of Resolution 58-10 placed the Chester County Courthouse lawn under the full control of the Commissioners. With that control, the Commissioners would not even consider the placement of FS's *Tree of Knowledge* with the other displays.

FS requested copies of internal documents that related to the selection of winter display items in an attempt to discover whether the Commissioners' office took all measures to save taxpayer money in order to display religious items. They purchased the crèche, the menorah and a Christmas tree because they were offered at a token sale price of \$1 each. The Commissioners' office acquired additional secular elements at market value to round out the display.

After reviewing photos and the "Right to Know" literature, ACLU attorney **Mary Catherine Roper** stated that the Commissioners did not include the *Tree of Knowledge* because it's not a traditional holiday symbol. Inclusion of the FS *Tree of Knowledge* would like have cause controversy, which is the very thing they sought to avoid by bringing the display "in house." The Commissioners would likely argue in a court of law that the maintenance of a "Free Speech Zone" had become too contentious and time-consuming. The passage of Resolution 58-10 put in place a government-only sponsored display.

In Roper's opinion, the court would look at the display as a whole. The religious elements are not isolated, and the display as a whole has enough secular elements that the court would find it constitutional. Given the number of other items in the display, Roper does not think a case could successfully be argued that the conversion from free speech zone to government display was fraudulent. She does not see any grounds for successful litigation if they keep putting up the same display year after year.

FS must monitor all activities taking place on the lawn of the Chester County Courthouse during the winter holiday season. We must watch for violations, such as endorsement of one particular religion over another.

What can FS do to make sure that our voices are not silenced and our citizenship is not degraded? We have some options to consider:

1. Host a second annual "Human *Tree of Knowledge*" event in December 2011. The event will highlight the fact that we are not included in a community event and will give FS an opportunity to protest the Commissioners' exclusionary policies. The goal would be to convince the community and the Commissioners' office that we will not go away, and that the Resolution 58-10 should be rescinded.
2. FS could host a "Human Light" event in Chester County in order to educate the public about the nontheist/Humanist worldview. The event would be advertised as an open-to-the-public family event and would cater to servicing the needs of the nontheist community.

These suggestions are possible only if there is funding and volunteer commitment. Please send a message of support to FS officers and board members and please send an earmarked donation to keep the *Tree of Knowledge* concept growing. ◆

Using the Freethought Society Property in St. Croix

by Patrick J. Devitt

My wife, Linda, and I had a wonderful time on our visit to St. Croix. Our home is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We flew out of Chicago O'Hare on American Airlines at about 7:50 AM and with a change of planes in Miami, Florida arrived in St. Croix at about 4:30 PM. We had decided to rent a car from Judi of Croix because their website was the most interesting and provided the most local information, including a list of what to pack for the island.

We were greeted at the airport by the friendly staff from Judi's, who drove the two of us to the car rental office where we picked up our little white Toyota Yaris. The staff was very helpful, providing directions to Chenay Bay Beach



Resort and recommendations for local restaurants. As we left, the Judi employee said, "Call us if you have any questions, even if they are not related to the rental car."

The drive to Chenay Bay Beach is through the largest city on the island, Christiansted. For some reason, the rules of the road there require that you drive on the left side of the road yet all the cars are standard American left hand drive! My wife navigated and provided me with a constant reminder to stay on the right — er — left side of the roadway.

St. Croix, we learned, was a former Danish colony of sugar plantations. Slaves were brought to the island from Africa and used for the manual labor necessary for the production of sugar. The entire island is dotted with smokestacks and old sugar mills, or the ruins of them. Whim Estate Plantation is one of the old plantations on the island. It is well preserved and worth a visit.

Upon arrival at Chenay Bay we checked in at the open air front desk and picked up the keys to the timeshare unit. The resort is built on the site of a former sugar plantation.

The timeshare owned by the Freethought Society (FS) is number 6. It is, in my opinion, the best unit in the whole complex. It consists of a lovely little shaded front porch with two rocking chairs, a small kitchen area equipped with a refrigerator, stove and



microwave, a living room with a large flat-panel LCD cable television, a bathroom and a nice bedroom, that includes a second flat screen television. Although we did not use it, I believe the couch in the living room folded out into a sleeper. The unit is air conditioned, but because of the ocean breezes and the cooler nights we seldom needed to run it.

Cottage number 6 overlooks the pool beyond to the Caribbean. We most enjoyed sitting on the front porch and watching the evening sunset or simply drinking our morning coffee.

It was late in the afternoon the day we arrived so we decided to go for dinner at one of the restaurants recommended by Judi of Croix. Duggan's Reef, like many restaurants on the island, is open air dining. Linda ordered the Irish whisky lobster and I the Caribbean lobster pasta. Both dishes were delicious!



The next day we did a little grocery shopping and then spent most of the day on the beach or by the pool. The resort offers free use of snorkeling gear and kayaks, of which we took full advantage. The water is clear, but there is not much to see in the water near the resort. I would recommend instead a commercial tour to the reef off nearby Buck Island National Park. Unfortunately, I absentmindedly left my camera in the car and do not have any pictures of that part of our visit.

We used our rental car to tour the island, visiting Point Udall, Whim Plantation, the island's rainforest, Fredriksted and Christiansted (all in or near Christiansted).

Anyone visiting St. Croix must spend some time in Christiansted. The old fort is a wonderful example of its kind and is maintained by the National Park Service. Government House, built by the Danes, is a magnificent example of colonial architecture and is even today the seat of government for the island. Christiansted has a wonderful shopping area, great restaurants and a waterfront boardwalk — a terrific place to watch the pleasure boats come and go. We spent an enjoyable afternoon sitting at one of these restaurants while we watched the fishing charters come in to the dock with their catch.

As I said earlier there are some very good restaurants on the island and we enjoyed sampling the fare at a number of these. Besides Duggan's Reef, we visited Mahi, the

restaurant at Chenay Bay, Savant, The Bombay Club, Bacchus, Angry Nates, Cheeseburger In American Paradise, Rum Runners, Port Christian, Brew Pub, and Polly's at the Pier in Fredriksted.

On the weekend closest to St. Patrick's Day, the island celebrates with a parade, which is a "must see" for visitors. The parade is held in Christiansted and both locals and tourists dress up for the event.



There is an abundance of local food and much to drink. The schools, businesses and organizations sponsor floats and music. The tourists and locals mix and everyone has a great time. We loved it!

The FS cottage is always available the 11th week of the year which falls in the second week of March. The St. Partick's Day celebrations can be enjoyed by any winning bidder.

We enjoyed our stay very much and would definitely like to visit again. The weather was perfect.



The days were mostly sunny and warm and the nights were cool enough to make sleeping with the windows open a pleasure. It did rain several times while we were on the island, but mostly at night and then only for a few minutes. We captured a lovely rainbow in this photo after a brief rain.

I highly recommend that people who want to support FS bid on this St. Croix timeshare opportunity. You will have a wonderful time and also feel good about helping FS. ◆



Let the mail-in/email bidding begin!

The Freethought Society (FS) cottage in St. Croix is available for use the 11th week of every year (second week in March). I have read the description of the property and understand that my bid does not include travel, rental car or food expenses. My bid is for a one week stay in cottage number 6 at the Chenay Bay Beach Resort (Saturday-Saturday). I understand that the opening bid must be at least \$1,000 and that the highest bid will win!

Yes! I would love to stay at the Freethought Society's cottage located in St. Croix. My bid is: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Please return this form to the address below by **October 1, 2011** or bid via email to: **St.Croix@FtSociety.org**

The winner will be announced on **November 1, 2011**.

Freethought Society St. Croix Cottage Bid
P. O. Box 242
Pocopson, PA 19366

Note: For additional information see: www.FtSociety.org



One whack on the head was enough!

by Chuck Collazzi

I probably received as normal a Catholic school education as one could get in the early 1950s in the New York City suburbs. My parents sent me to Catholic schools, starting with kindergarten. In elementary school, I was subjected to severe regimentation, and developed a hysterical fear of nuns and priests “thanks” to their stories and threats of eternal torture. I was an altar boy at age six. Fortunately, I was never molested. I do recall that we were drilled in the Baltimore Catechism, a question-and-answer format. For example:

Question: “Why did God make us?”

Answer: “To serve him in this life and to be happy with him in the next life.”

The question and answer format was chock full of big words I didn’t understand and answers that didn’t make any sense to me. In high school, religion (meaning the Catholic doctrine) was required every semester. I dreaded going to confession. I also dreaded the consequences of *not* going to confession! I spent many sleepless nights fearing that I wasn’t in a “state of grace.” I was fearful that if I died I’d go straight to hell. It was a true case of “between a rock and a hard place.”

It was a prominent display ad in my local newspaper that got my attention like a two-by-four whacking me upside the head.

As a teenager growing up in ultra-liberal Los Angeles I was seldom confronted with religion, so I didn’t think about it very much. In the superficial Hollywood culture, people are obsessed with how they’re perceived by others and only rarely will you find some show-business wannabe testify for “the Lord” in a public setting. There’s an underlying feeling that it’s a sign of weakness or maybe, just as undesirable, political conservatism.

These recollections occupied my mind as I read the following ad placed by a local Christian church in a prominent location in the main section of the newspaper:

“IF YOU DON’T TEACH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE SUFFERING, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST YOU ARE COMMITTING CHILD ABUSE!”

I was outraged. It was then that I realized I believed the exact opposite.



Chuck Collazzi at age seven.

I thought about my two beautiful young daughters when I read the ad. My wife and I reared them without any religion at all. The children were gentle, loving, respectful, well-behaved, intelligent, and all good things children should be. The ad reminded me that my decision to completely ignore the existence of religion in our house was the correct one. They were in elementary school before they heard the word “sin” and the myth of Adam and Eve.

But when I saw the ad, I was also shocked and outraged in a much larger sense: It occurred to me that vulnerable, malleable young minds have been hearing this horrible mythology for centuries! It’s impossible to measure the harm that it has done.

We were living in the San Francisco Bay area for four years when I accepted a position in Jacksonville, Florida. This was true culture shock. My new job required membership and attendance at

local business and community meetings. I soon found that as a new arrival any introductions always included, “Where do you worship?”

Every official meeting began with an invocation that usually referenced Jesus, and Jewish individuals kept as low a profile as possible (even referring to their houses of worship as “church”).

My job ended after a year, and I went into business for myself. I had the luxury of being in a business with an ongoing turnover of clients. This gave me the opportunity to swim against the tide. I never missed an opportunity to express my atheism, and I did so frequently and publicly, with no fear of losing a client as a result (it may seem strange, but I don’t recall it ever happening).

When the Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison in public, my voice was the loudest. I made sure everyone could hear that I left out “under God.”

If I sneezed and somebody “god-blessed” me, I responded with “May ALL the gods bless you!”

If I heard any religion reference anywhere, I followed up (as sincerely and innocently as possible) with a question.

My atheist brothers and sisters who are nervous about expressing their atheism to their friends, family, and acquaintances should note that although I was in the heart of the Bible Belt, I never felt threatened in any way. I believe I was considered a novelty. With my Italian surname and Mediterranean-peasant looks, it was assumed that I was a Catholic.

Most people who bothered to engage me in a conversation about religion were often curious about my atheism, and I was curious about their philosophy.

Few people knew what it was that they believed, and no one could describe the difference between a Baptist and a Methodist. I remember a common bumper sticker I saw often:

God Said It: I Believe It: That Does It.

An individual whom I had never met placed a small ad in the local paper suggesting establishing an organization that became the “First Coast Freethought Society.” I was the first to respond, and am gratified to say that the group still exists and is thriving.

At some point Jehovah’s Witnesses began making weekly visits at my house. Every Thursday the doorbell would ring, and unlike most people who would run them off, I would welcome them in and serve them coffee and doughnuts. Unfortunately, my simple questions were too uncomfortable for them, and after interacting with their whole roster of door-knockers over several months, they dropped my house from their itinerary.

My wife and I are now living in Mormon country (Las Vegas, Nevada) and I often see Mormon missionaries peddling their message on the streets all around the city. We’ve probably got the mother lode of sinners here, so I figure it’s a good market for them. But despite my willingness to interact with them, they never seem to get around to me. I’m disappointed. Do you think the Witnesses tipped them off? ◆



Pictured above is **Chuck Collazzi**. He was born in New York City, lived and worked in Los Angeles as a freelance studio/theater musician, and is currently retired and lives in Las Vegas with his wife. He was educated mostly in Catholic schools and has a degree in music from a Catholic college. Collazzi is the proud father of two daughters.

God in Mommy’s Heart

by David Silverman

“A little bit of God is in everybody’s heart. And when a child does something he shouldn’t do, God inside their mother’s heart tells them.”

I’d asked my mother how she had known I’d done something wrong, and that was her answer. I was about 6 years old.

That answer changed my life. You see, I had done other bad things, and gotten away with it clean. It was a defining moment, because it was the first time the concept of falsehood had been combined with a concept of God.

So I tested God in Mom’s heart. I actually went out of my way to do the wrong thing, not because I wanted to BE bad, but because I wanted to really put this telepathic god thing to the test. I stole gum from the store. I played with firecrackers when mom wasn’t home, being careful to clean up the mess. I even did things to get my big sister into trouble (sorry Jodi). It all worked — I never got caught.

Had my mother lied to me about God, or was she just wrong? I didn’t know at that age, but I knew on some level she couldn’t be trusted. I loved her, but I realized at that point that A) Mom was fallible, and B) God posed no real threat. Morally speaking, I was on my own.

Yet I still wanted to do good (I even felt guilty about stealing the gum). After much reflection I realized that morality wasn’t a result of religion. Morality exists on its own, and religion just takes the credit.

My realization about religion and god really impacted my life on one fateful day in high school – the day I tried cocaine.

As I raised my head from the mirror with a straw in my hand, I remembered that a young basketball player named **Len Bias** had just died from using cocaine for the first time. I realized I could be like him. Dead. Now. I’d done something that carried a risk of death, in exchange for a buzz, and as an atheist I knew I had “nowhere to go.” My existence might have ended for the sake of getting high. I’d never felt so stupid in my life.

My atheism has led to the realization that every action has to be weighed against the risks. Since that moment in high school, I’ve never tried any drugs that could kill me, or taken any risks at all that weren’t “worth it.”

It’s not God in Mom’s heart (or anywhere) that keeps me from acting immorally or irrationally. Rather, it’s reality, and weighing that reality against every action’s REAL possible reactions, that keeps me thinking. In this sense atheism has helped to keep me alive and out of trouble. Indeed, I am sure I’d have taken more risks in my youth if I’d believed in God, since I’d have had less fear of death.

Some actions, like speaking my mind and standing for that which I believe, are worth the risk — that’s my judgment call, for which I take full responsibility. But I’m leaving cocaine, bungee jumping, and even aggressive driving to those who think they are immortal. ◆

Going for the Gold

(an excerpt from *Eyes Wide Open*)

by George Erickson

It's a gray September morning. Outside, a chilling rain slants through the long-needled spruce trees that shelter my home. Snug inside, with a mug of coffee close at hand, I lean back, prop my feet on my desk and survey my surroundings.

The wall to my left displays maps of Canada, Alaska and Australia. Along either side of the maps run rows of photographs: An immense herd of caribou fording the Thelon River, fourteen sturdy musk oxen circled around their calves — horned heads down and ready, and a seaplane whose pilot overshot a landing, standing his Cub on its nose and float tips at the edge of an arctic lake.

Gracing the wall to my right are an eclectic assortment of books — books that include the nutty humor of **Dave Barry**, **Jacob Bronowski's** *The Ascent of Man*, and **Victor Hugo's** *Les Miserables*, plus books by **Carl Sagan**, **Jack London**, **Edward Abbey**, **Aldo Leopold** and **John McPhee**. At the end the lowest shelf sits a gleaming clump of crystals — a cluster of iron pyrites from Arkansas that is also called "Fool's Gold."

Arkansas, besides being stocked with an endless variety of homespun churches (lacking only my favorite, **Flip Wilson's** "Church of Where It's At Now, Brother") is also a rock-hound's dream, and one year, just a few miles from Hot Springs Village, I chanced upon a shop called "The Rockery" that easily topped them all.

I have always been a sucker for pretty bits of glass, crystals and beads. Like the Australian bowerbird that decorates his gracefully-arched bower with bits of glass and plastic to attract a mate, colors also call to me. Had the Dutch come to me for Manhattan, they'd have gotten a better deal.

After drooling over crystals of amethyst, tourmaline, calcite and quartz, I purchased a brassy clump of pyrite with a hundred shining faces, and when it winks at me from high on its shelf, and whispers thoughts of gold, I think of **Martin Frobisher**, and a lesson that should never grow old.

In 1576, Sir Martin returned to England from the north end of Hudson Bay. Having failed to find the Northwest Passage, he'd filled his hold with glittering stones that his men believed held gold. Chemists declared them worthless, but **Michael Lok**, one of the expedition's sponsors, kept searching for an alchemist who would claim to find traces of gold. When Lok asked that alchemist how he managed to find gold where others had failed, he replied that the secret lay in knowing "how to flatter nature."

Aided by the alchemist's claim, Frobisher easily found backers for a second voyage, which also failed to find the Passage, but returned triumphant with 200 tons of mica and pyrite-flecked rocks — the gold of fools. Those who claimed that the ore held gold outvoted the

chemists who resolutely disagreed, and the following spring, fifteen ships and forty-one miners sailed again for the Arctic, there to explore Baffin Island and to mine 1,300 tons of identically worthless ore.

Evidence finally conquered belief, but only after lives had been lost and investors ruined. And as a result of the expeditions, one of Frobisher's Captains penned a maxim we still find useful today: "All is not gold that glistereeth."

In today's world we test almost everything. Consumer magazines evaluate products, chemists analyze for content, accountants count, and stores take inventory. We skeptically examine gas mileage claims and candidates for office, saying, "Show me the proof." Today, just saying that something is true no longer suffices — except for religion.

Though the real world is subject to truth in advertising laws, product liability and money-back guarantees, religion still peddles pyrites, promising rewards tomorrow for your money, your credulity and your obedience today. "Gold," it cries, "Heaven, miracles and bliss can be yours, just for the asking!"

Some of us are like the realists of Frobisher's day. When we try to reason with those who see gold, most of them turn away. The truly devoted scorn us and pity our lack of faith, while refusing to test their own against evidence they choose to ignore.

Some — the Christian Scientists and other faith "healers" — bet the lives of their children on the mythical gold. Many contribute heavily, and sometimes ruinously, to support the voyage and their visionary clergy-captains, who promise a better world. Like Frobisher's men, some die along the way. A few change their minds, but most sail on for the rest of their lives, cruising a Self-centered Sea.

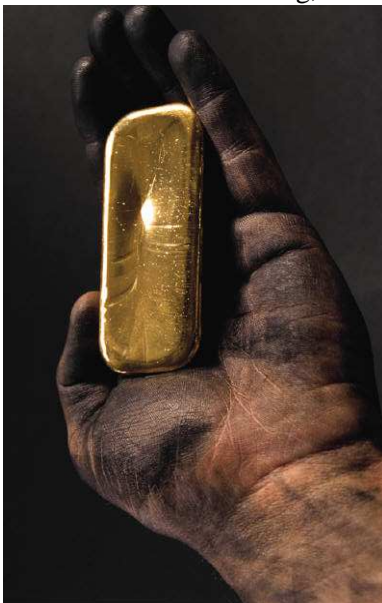
I once sailed as an officer on just such a ship — the S.S. Presbyterian. Like most spiritual ships, the vessel rarely sailed on serious waters — the crew being too busy singing hymns and burnishing brass to tend to the pressing needs that they'd see whenever they went ashore.

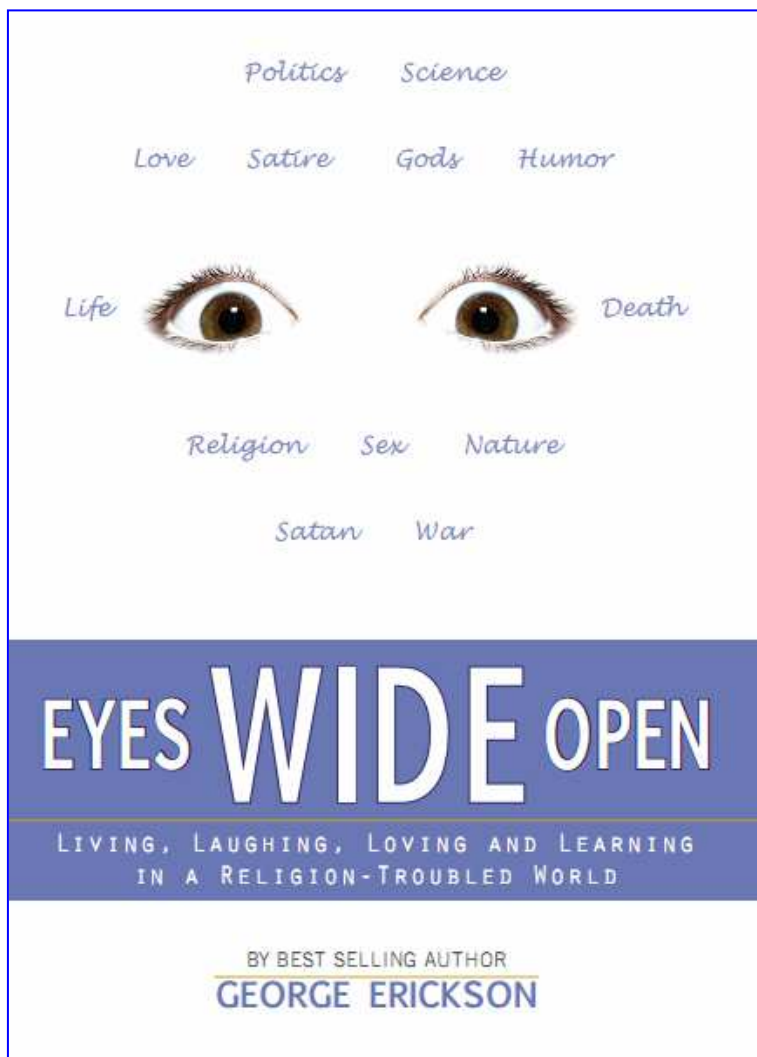
One year, when our wealthier officers began to pressure the crew to pledge even more to embellish our splendid vessel (while ignoring needs ashore) I decided to escape, and late one evening, when we passed abeam the Rational Islands, I slipped across the gunwale and quietly swam to shore.

Forty years later, as I sit in my study, my eyes wander over an assortment of maps and books and photos as I recall the adventures and knowledge those years have brought. I share those experiences with groups of all ages through science and nature programs that span the globe from the Arctic to Australia and by funding college scholarships with the money that once helped maintain the large and expensive ship.

Others persist. Misled by an ancient, erroneous map, they search for the mythical port, while from high on my shelf, my crystalline "ore" still sparkles and whispers its lie: "Gold, GOLD!" it calls to me.

"Frobisher," I reply. ◆





*George Erickson has written a real gem: A serious book in which he doesn't take himself too seriously. It's a humorous book with an important progressive message. No one who reads *Eyes Wide Open* will be able to maintain that Humanists have no sense of humor. Had Moses emerged from Mt. Sinai with St. George's 13 Commandments, what a wonderful past couple of millennia we would have had.*

Herb Silverman

Columnist, the Washington Post

George Erickson's captivating prose cleverly weaves together stories filled with humanistic values, love, education and humor as he eloquently puts life's lessons to paper.

Margaret Downey

President and Founder of the Freethought Society

Eyes Wide Open is a cornucopia of vignettes, parables and poetry — a feast for the rational, inquiring mind.

Bette Chambers

Past President, American Humanist Association

Eyes Wide Open is like a box of fine chocolates: When you dip into it, you're never sure what you will find — but you'll enjoy it. This tome deserves a large audience.

Rob Boston

Author and Assistant Director of Communications

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

George Erickson is a retired dentist, a bush pilot, a past president of the Humanists of Minnesota and a former vice-president the American Humanist Association (AHA). He wrote the Minnesota Humanist newsletter for many years, and he currently writes the newsletter of the Lake Superior Freethinkers. His first book, *True North: Exploring the Great Wilderness by Bush Plane*, rode the Canadian Booksellers' Coast to Coast best-seller list for three months, and it is now in its third printing in both the U.S. and Canada.

Erickson's second book, *Time Traveling with Science and the Saints*, is a fast-reading overview of the long hostility of Christianity to science. His third, *Back to the Barrens: On the Wing with da Vinci & Friends*, is a pro-science, anti-missionary sequel to *True North*.

Erickson's fourth and latest book, *Eyes Wide Open: Living, Laughing, Loving and Learning in a Religion-troubled World*, which was recently published by the AHA, is a semi-autobiographical anthology of new and previously published nonfiction and fiction. He is a frequent lecturer on many subjects that range from serious issues like global warming to a lighthearted presentation about death and dying titled "Laughing at Death," which features thoughts of the famous (from **Epicurus** to **George Carlin** and **Woody Allen**) and from Erickson himself as the GRIN reaper.

In 2000, he initiated and led a successful campaign to build a \$1,000,000 indoor tennis facility for his hometown of Virginia, Minnesota. Erickson also helps coach the Virginia boys and girls tennis teams and funds several scholarships at the Mesabi Range Community College and other charities. All of his book and CD profits are donated to educational charities.

Eyes Wide Open can be ordered directly from Erickson. Orders place at the following website will be autographed by the author: www.tundracub.com



Shared Treasures

Shared treasures can be anything from poetry to short stories. Newsletter editors request that submissions be pre-screened to ensure that reprinting will not violate any copyright laws. A maximum of two pages will be available to this “Shared Treasures” newsletter feature. Send submissions to:

editor@FtSociety.org

Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce was an American editorialist, journalist, short story writer, fabulist and satirist. He is best known in the world of freethought for his satirical lexicon, *The Devil's Dictionary*. The following words (one sample A-Q) and their “Bitter Bierce” meanings are excerpted from *The Devil's Dictionary*. They are treasures that should be shared.

ARCHBISHOP, n. An ecclesiastical dignitary one point holier than a bishop.

BACCHUS, n. A convenient deity invented by the ancients as an excuse for getting drunk.

CYNIC, n. A blackguard whose faulty vision sees things as they are, not as they ought to be. Hence the custom among the Scythians of plucking out a cynic's eyes to improve his vision.

DESTINY, n. A tyrant's authority for crime and fool's excuse for failure.

EVANGELIST, n. A bearer of good tidings, particularly (in a religious sense) such as to assure us of our own salvation and the damnation of our neighbors.

FUNERAL, n. A pageant whereby we attest our respect for the dead by enriching the undertaker, and strengthen our grief by an expenditure that deepens our groans and doubles our tears.

GHOST, n. The outward and visible sign of an inward fear.

HOMEOPATHY, n. A school of medicine midway between Allopathy and Christian Science. To the last both the others are distinctly inferior, for Christian Science will cure imaginary diseases, and they can not.

IRRELIGION, n. The principal one of the great faiths of the world.

JEALOUS, adj. Unduly concerned about the preservation of that which can be lost only if not worth keeping.

KORAN, n. A book which the Mohammedans foolishly believe to have been written by divine inspiration, but which Christians know to be a wicked imposture, contradictory to the Holy Scriptures.

LONGEVITY, n. Uncommon extension of the fear of death.

MAGIC, n. An art of converting superstition into coin. There are other arts serving the same high purpose, but the discreet lexicographer does not name them.

NONSENSE, n. The objections that are urged against this excellent dictionary.

OMEN, n. A sign that something will happen if nothing happens.

POLYGAMY, n. A house of atonement, or expiatory chapel, fitted with several stools of repentance, as distinguished from monogamy, which has but one.

QUORUM, n. A sufficient number of members of a deliberative body to have their own way and their own way of having it. In the United States Senate a quorum consists of the chairman of the Committee on Finance and a messenger from the White House; in the House of Representatives, of the Speaker and the devil. ◆



I Thought I Saw an Atheist

by Cuttlefish Poet

I thought I saw an atheist, once, walking down the street.
I checked for horns, I checked for tail, I checked for cloven feet;
Began to tremble frightfully — my heart was in my throat —
Then sighed in happy recognition, for 'twas but a goat.

I thought I saw an atheist, down near a swollen stream
With scaly skin, and blood so cold, I couldn't breathe to scream!
I looked into his bulging eyes, and prayed "God, grant my wish"
Then laughed in my embarrassment — it only was a fish.



I thought I saw an atheist, with fur and pointed claws,
And wicked teeth for chewing up Judeo-Christian laws,
I ran, and tripped, and fell to earth, then hid behind a log —
It caught me, though, and licked my face — of course, it was a dog.

I thought I saw an atheist, though cleverly disguised
Not giant and reptilian, but human, normal sized,
It looked to be engaging in productive, useful labor;
But no, this was no atheist — this person was my neighbor!



I thought I saw an atheist; in fact, I saw a few!
My neighbor, and the grocer, and the cop, and maybe you!
I even found some in the church, right there beneath the steeple;
It turns out, to my great surprise... that atheists are people.

Dark Garden

by Brian Andreas

I once had a garden
filled with flowers
that grew only on dark
thoughts
but they needed constant attention
& one day I decided
I had better things to do.

Bittersweet

by Brian Andreas

She said she usually
cried at least once
each day not because
she was sad, but
because the world was
so beautiful & life
was so short.

The two poems printed above (*Dark Garden* and *Bittersweet*) are from the book:

Mostly True (ISBN 0-9642660-0-8) by **Brian Andreas**

Published by StoryPeople

www.storypeople.com

Freedom From Religion Foundation's Philadelphia Region Billboard Campaign

In the March/April 2011 issue of *The Freethought Society News*, it was announced that the [Freethought Society](#) (FS) and the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#) (FFRF) are in need of funds to kick off an exciting "Come Out of the Closet" billboard campaign. If there are large donations earmarked for this campaign, billboards can be placed in more than one location.

The faces of about six FS supporters will appear on a digital billboard that will be located on a prominent highway in the Philadelphia area. Images and words will rotate. Leasing of the digital billboard is costly. FFRF states that they want to have local members to both participate and help pay for the costs. FFRF is hopeful that some FS supporters will want to do both!

A team of FS volunteers is needed to locate a good digital billboard in the Philadelphia area that will accept our campaign. Once a board location is found, FS and FFRF will work with the billboard artist directly.

A special photo technique will be used and FS is fortunate to have [Carol Everhart Roper](#) involved in the project. She is a professional photographer and will be able to meet the standards required. Roper has volunteered to photograph billboard participants at no charge. She is prepared to take high-resolution head & shoulders photos using a white background. Roper's volunteer photography work saves participants approximately \$70 each.

A clever, insightful, humorous or profound three-to-eight word statement would appear with the image of an FS supporter. A **Staks Rosch** sample is printed below.

Please think of what your statement would be and make a donation to this wonderful project. Roper will photograph you at no charge and soon your image and words will be featured on a billboard. For your convenience a donation form is printed below.

For additional information and further details, please write to: Editor@FtSociety.org or call (610) 793-2737. ◆

FTSOCIETY.ORG



*"Did you hear the good news?
Hell is imaginary too!"
-Staks Rosch, atheist blogger and stay at home Dad*

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

FFRF.ORG

Yes! I want to donate to the Freethought Society/Freedom From Religion Foundation's "Come Out of the Closet" billboard campaign. Enclosed is my donation of \$_____.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please keep my donation anonymous.

FS's 2011 Anti-Superstition Bash Information

The Freethought Society's (FS) next Anti-Superstition Bash will be held on **Friday, May 13, 2011** from **7:00 PM to 11:00 PM** in the beautiful [Corinthian Yacht Club](#). The Club is located at **300 West 2nd Street, Essington, PA 19029**. FS will host a "Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center" equipped to assist party attendees in getting over all their superstitions and start the process of ending magical thinking. The general admission (includes light fare) is **\$10** with **\$5** discounts available for students and seniors. Cash bar only. No BYOB. There is no charge for children under the age of 13.



Top 13 Reasons to Attend the Bash



13. Can you think of a better way to spend your evening on Friday-the-Thirteenth?
12. Earn a "Clean Bill of Mental Health" certificate from a [Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Nurse](#) or a Friggatriskaidekaphobia Doctor, with complimentary photos.
11. You could be the "lucky" person selected to break a mirror.
10. Earn a souvenir "Trash Your Horoscope" certificate.
9. Participate in a door prize raffle and book give-away.
8. Network with other Freethinkers and skeptics.
7. Dance all night long to the sounds of a DJ spinning anti-superstition-themed music.
6. Participate in games that will make you laugh out loud.
5. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres/light fare.
4. Toast your accomplishment at the cash bar.
3. Be there to party with Tom Flynn and PZ Myers.
2. Purchase discounted anti-superstition books for your library.
1. This party marks the 14th Anniversary of FS's hosting an Anti-Superstition Party! Let's celebrate our "good fortune" together!!

And the number one top reason to attend the 2011 FS Anti-Superstition Bash is (drum roll, please):



Anti-Superstition Bash 2011 RSVP Form

(Email RSVP to: Tickets@FtSociety.org or return this form to the address below by **May 1, 2011**.)

Yes! I will be attending.

Number of tickets: _____ (at \$10 each or student/senior price of \$5 each) Total enclosed: \$ _____
(Please make checks payable to the Freethought Society.)

Please list your guests' names here: _____

I would be interested in volunteering before, during or after the event (details and a list of jobs will be sent to you).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mail or fax this form to the FS Event Coordinator, **Margaret Downey**, or simply tell us you are planning to attend and **pay at the door**:

FS's May 13th Party
P. O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366

FAX: (610) 793-2569
Phone: (610) 793-2737
Cell: (610) 357-9432



2011 Anti-Superstition Bash Hotel Information

Please plan to attend the Freethought Society's (FS) Anti-Superstition Bash scheduled for Friday, **May 13, 2011** and enjoy food, dancing, drinking and camaraderie from **7:00 PM** until **11:00 PM**. To encourage people to not drink and drive, FS is providing the following hotel information (many more Essington area hotels can be found on the [Internet](#)). Volunteer designated drivers are available upon request.

The Ramada Airport Hotel

76 Industrial Highway/Route 291

Essington, PA 19029

Phone: (610) 521-9600

Email: info@ramadaphl.com

Average room price is \$199 (single or double occupancy)



The Ramada offers their guests 24 Hour Complimentary Shuttle Service; Complimentary Wireless High Speed Internet; Exercise Room; Full Service Restaurant and Lounge (with Limited Room Service); Handicapped & Non-Smoking Rooms/Facilities; Heated Seasonal Outdoor Pool; Laundry/Valet Services; Secured Parking Available (free Parking while registered and staying in the hotel); Pay Per View Movies & HBO; Safe Deposit Box; *USA TODAY* Newspaper; Coffeemaker, Iron and Hairdryers in all rooms. A typical Ramada room is pictured below.



No
Pets
Allowed

Wyndham Garden Hotel

45 Industrial Highway (Route 291)

Essington, PA 19029

Phone: (610) 521-2400

Website: www.wyndham.com

Average room prices range from \$89- \$149



The Wyndham Garden Hotel is conveniently located just 3 miles from Philadelphia International Airport and 12 miles

from downtown Philadelphia. The hotel is minutes from Harrah's Casino & Racetrack, Philadelphia Naval Shipyard and a wide variety of attractions and activities sure to make your stay more enjoyable.

Offering 106 newly renovated, spacious accommodations, The Wyndham Hotel also offers their guests complimentary shuttle service to and from the Philadelphia Airport between the hours of 4:00 AM and 1:00 AM, complimentary parking, a professional fully-appointed fitness center, seasonal heated outdoor pool and a business center. Complimentary high-speed Internet service is available in both guest rooms and public areas. Room service is available upon request, but guests can enjoy a lounge and restaurant on the premises. A typical room at the Wyndham is pictured below.



DJ Dance Party featuring Ladder Limbo, Horoscope Trashing, Open-Your-Umbrellas to fast and slow dances, Mirror Breaking Ceremony, Piñata, and other Anti-Superstition games. Cash Bar and free Hors d'Oeuvres.

Door prizes and free educational literature!

Special Guests:

PZ MYERS

TOM FLYNN

Are you **SUPERSTITIOUS** ...or not?

The 2011 Friggatriskaidekaphobia* Treatment Center Soirée

Get rid of your secret superstitions!
Anti-superstition "nurses" and "doctors"
will be on hand to *cure* you.

Hosted by The Freethought Society

Friday May 13th, from 7pm until 11pm

Admission: \$10 - Seniors/Students: \$5

Free admission for children under 13.

Corinthian Yacht Club

300 West 2nd Street,

Essington, PA 19029

Just minutes from the Philadelphia Airport

Visit www.Friggatriskaidekaphobia.com, and www.FtSociety.org

*Frigga-triska-ideka-phobia is an unreasonable fear of Friday-the-Thirteenth.

General Supporter Donations

Linda Mahan	\$75
Glen Loev	\$20
Marshall Martin	\$25
Al Palmer	\$40
Malcolm and Leone Schoenberg	\$40
David Tomayo	\$100

Billboard Campaign Donations

Staks Rosch	\$30
Malcolm and Leone Schoenberg	\$100

2011 Spring Festival Donations

Alan Gold	\$100
Bob Kay	\$100
Glen Loev	\$100

Haiti Solar Box Cooker Donations

Sally Flynn	\$60
Malcolm and Leone Schoenberg	\$60
Glen Loev	\$60
Marshall Martin	\$60
Tom Schottmiller	\$120

Book donations needed for nontheist group in Philippines!

The Freethought Society (FS) has become an organization sensitive to the needs of nontheists around the world. Connections via the Internet have shrunk the world and made it possible to learn about many nontheist organizations. While FS has its own problems with funding, helping other groups in need conveys the generosity and thoughtfulness of the nontheist community.

The Solar Box Cookers for Haiti project continues and now there is an opportunity for FS supporters to donate new and gently worn books to the Philippine Atheists and Agnostics Society (PATAS).

Photos on this page taken by **Levi Chui-Monton** capture a public outdoor street fair event held in the Philippines. PATAS set up a beautiful information booth inviting passersby to stop and chat. While some people were shocked to see atheists and agnostics publicly announcing their philosophical lifstance, others were interested, excited and pleased to know that they were not alone. The group also received media coverage on the day the booth was unveiled.

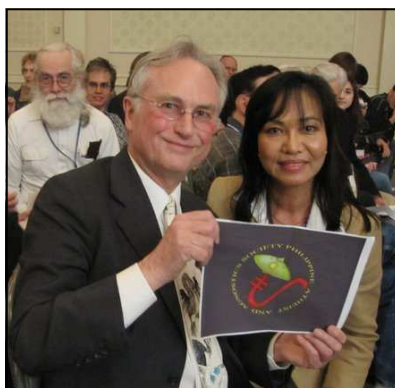
PATAS would like to continue their educational outreach by providing science and philosophy books to rural areas. PATAS may also be donating books to library facilities in the Philippines. The United States coordinator for this book project is **Marissa Langseth**. Langseth is pictured below with **Richard Dawkins**. Dr. Dawkins is holding the PATAS logo. Langseth is willing to accept and process all donations. Your donation will be acknowledged and can be used as a tax-deduction.

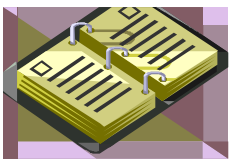
Please send books and/or financial donations to:

Marissa Langseth
73-34 196th Place
Fresh Meadows, NY 11366

Email questions to:

marissa@patas.com





The Freethought Society's (FS) 2011 Three Month Activities Calendar

May 13

Please plan to attend the re-opening of the Freethought Society's Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center on Friday, May 13, 2011. The 2011 Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center will open at 7:00 PM. This year the FS Anti-Superstition Bash will take place at the [Corinthian Yacht Club](#) located at **300 West 2nd Street, Essington, PA 19029**.

Volunteers are needed for a wide variety of jobs. Please see the following checklist and contact the event coordinator listed below to volunteer:

- Make copies of the poster on page 13 of this newsletter and post in public areas, distribute at meetings and mail to friends and family (Anyone can easily do this, now!)
- Load party supplies from storage unit located in West Chester in the early afternoon of Thursday, May 12, 2011
- Unload van at the Corinthian Yacht Club on May 13, 2011 no later than 3:00 PM
- Post direction signs from Highway to Yacht Club
- Set up the Friggatriskaidekaphobia Treatment Center/anti-superstition games, museum, and party layout between 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM
- Meet and greet party attendees dressed as a nurse or doctor and coordinate entries for games and certificates (costumes will be provided)
- Staff welcome table and sell tickets (FS event T-shirt will be provided)
- Break down party/museum displays (11:00 PM)
- Load party items into van (11:00 PM-Midnight)
- Remove direction signs

To volunteer, please contact **Margaret Downey** at (610) 793-2737 or at: volunteers@ftsociety.org. Registered volunteers will be provided dinner at 5:00 PM both Thursday (May 12th) and Friday (May 13th).

Please see the full-page ad in this newsletter for complete party information. Hotel information is also included in a full-page ad in this newsletter.



June 2

FS proudly presents **Robert Kurzban PhD** as the **Thursday, June 2, 2011** speaker at the [Free Library of Philadelphia](#). The meeting will begin promptly at **7:00 PM** in the **Skyline Room**. The address of the library is **1901 Vine Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**.



Kurzban's speech, "Why Everyone (Else) is a Hypocrite: Evolution and the Modular Mind," will explore human inconsistency, including hypocrisy from an evolutionary perspective. Emphasizing how modularity helps to explain various features of human behavior, Kurzban will cover "self deception," "self control," "self esteem" and many other aspects of social behavior. This speech is based on [Kurzban's book](#) of the same title.

July 20

It's "Dinner and a Movie" night on Wednesday, July 20, 2011, at the [Norristown Public Library](#) (1001 Powell Street, Norristown, Pennsylvania).

Please arrive at the library Community Room around **5:30 PM** with your own dinner to chat with friends before the screening of *The Lord is Not on Trial Here Today*.



This 55-minute documentary tells the compelling story of the landmark 1945 First Amendment case that established the separation of religion and government in public schools. *The Lord is Not on Trial Here Today* is written, produced, directed and photographed by Jay Rosenstein. This film has won a Peabody Award. It was named "Best Historical Documentary in the Mid-America Region" and won an Emmy Award for "Best Writing in the Mid-America Region."

Sixty years after the original decision in *McCollum vs. Board of Education*, this film recounts what **Vasti McCollum** later described as "three years of headlines, headaches and hatred." Her struggles led to a decision that still resonates in separation of religion and government today. McCollum was a long-time supporter of FS, and most members of her family continue to receive the FS newsletter via email.

FS will supply bottled water, cups, napkins, plates and a cookie dessert. Please note that new audio equipment was purchased so that the film can be heard well by all. A special door prize will be given at the end of the evening.

Freethought Society Committee Reports

Mentor Connection (MC)

In May 1997, **Margaret Downey** created the Mentor Connection for the Freethought Society (FS) and its supporters. The committee has not been very active in recent years so the website has been updated to provide details to anyone interested..

The Mentor Connection (MC) will concentrate on establishing a support network for the nontheist community. MC will allow concerned nontheists to connect with each other using a list of special interests as a networking tool. Sign up to become part of this networking effort at the FS website. Members of MC will bring new vitality to current social issues facing the nontheist community. Mentors can offer guidance, advice, and support to fellow nontheists. Please see the FS website for details on how to become a mentor or a protégé (www.FtSociety.org).

Helping Hands Committee (HHC)

Volunteers are needed to conduct a sale in Burlington Township, New Jersey. The sale must take place between May 13-June 30, 2011. A collection of household items will need to be organized, tagged and sold. All sale proceeds will go to FS, however, a large donation of canned foods will be transported to the People's Emergency Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Volunteers with a truck are sought for this particular activity. Please send your name and contact information to volunteers@FtSociety.org. Contact HHC coordinator Downey at (610) 793-2737 for further details.



The Freethought Society (FS) is a chapter of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) and a member organization of the Atheist Alliance International (AAI). FS strives to improve society by promoting freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom from religious intrusion in public affairs, and advocates separation of religion and government. FS activities and services depend on the financial contributions of supporters. Please donate generously. Funds may be sent using this form or via the FS website (www.FtSociety.org). All contributions to FS are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Yes, I want to:

- become a supporter of FS (includes email PDF newsletter): **\$30** individual supporter, **\$35** family supporter, **\$20** student. Please enclose checks payable to **The Freethought Society**.
- become an **FS 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** \$____ (other) per month.
- join FFRF: **\$40** individual membership or **\$50** family membership. Please enclose checks payable to the **Freedom From Religion Foundation**.
- earmark a donation to (insert project, event or committee name) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email Address: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

- Check here if you prefer your sponsorship to be anonymous.

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

Name _____

Email Address _____

Clip and mail to: Freethought Society, P.O. Box 242, Pocopson, PA 19366-0242