



## Volume Nine Number 9 - October 2007

Meeting at Westside Unitarian Universalist Building 901 Page Ave Ft Worth 7 PM, 2nd Wednesday of each month - Oct. gathering is on the 10th. Many of us dine at Luby's Cafeteria at 5:30 prior to the meeting (8th Ave South of Elizabeth Blvd) Join us if you'd like!

### **Humanists of Fort Worth Meeting Minutes**

#### **September 12, 2007**

The meeting was called to order by President, Dick Trice at Westside UU Church..

Minutes The minutes of the August 8, 2007 meeting were approved as published in the newsletter.

Treasurer Dolores Ruhs gave the treasurer's report and noted that we have \$2,204.97 in our account.

We observed a moment of silence in memory of Shirley Johnson who died this past Monday. Services will be at First Jefferson, 2 p.m., September 15, 2007.

Our next movie night will be September 29 when we will show Inherit the Wind. Social time starts at 6:45 and the movie at 7:20 p.m.

Our next regular meeting, October 10, will be a showing of the second part of the documentary "A Brief History of Disbelief" by Jonathan Miller.

Reed moved that we donate \$150.00 to Westside. The motion was seconded and carried. Tom Woods noted that this amount would cover the cost of a movie screen for the sanctuary.

John Huffman reported on a DVD he recently purchased titled "War Made Easy" which is about corporate profits from war. We will show this movie at the church on Monday September 17 at 7 p.m.

The Fall picnic is scheduled for September 23 at 12:30 p.m. in Trinity Park. The Humanists will provide drinks for the event.

Minutes will be published in the newsletter.

### **Treasurer's Report Humanists of Ft Worth**

**Beginning balance 8-7-07 . . . . . \$2,157.40**

#### **Credits**

Dues . . . . . \$ 9.00

Donation (J. Fogleman). . . . . 10.00

Donation (Movie Night . . . . . 64.00

**Total Credits . . . . . 83.00**

#### **Debits**

Program Expenses (Dick Trice) . . . . . 35.43

**Total Debits . . . . . 35.43**

**NET . . . . . 47.57**

**Ending Balance (9-12-07). . . . . \$ 2,204.97**

**Attested to and Signed by Dolores M. Ruhs, Treasurer on 9-12-07**

#### **The following was forwarded by Marj Bixler for your consideration:**

The graduate students at my institution have created an online petition to reclassify non-science books from science categories in bookstores and libraries. To quote from the first paragraph of their petition:

"As scientists, we feel strongly that categorizing Intelligent Design ("ID") as science is both inappropriate and misleading. Local bookstores and libraries unintentionally exacerbate this misleading categorization when they shelve ID books and legitimate science texts in the same section . Our goal is to convince the U.S. Library of Congress to re-classify ID books into sections other than the science section."

If this is something about which you feel strongly (or are even lukewarm!), I urge you to support this petition.

Click on: [http://www.sciencea2z.com/z\\_etomite/](http://www.sciencea2z.com/z_etomite/)

Luis A. Ruedas, Associate Professor, Department of Biology Director, Museum of Vertebrate Biology  
Portland State University

## From The Dallas Morning News Friday, September 7, 2007

Either my voice carries incredibly well, or an epidemic of eavesdropping is plaguing America. Chronic, involuntary eavesdropping (CIE). I wonder where the star-studded public service announcements are.

I was sitting at the lunch table rambling away when two of my friends got caught up in an argument with the people sitting across the round table from us. One of the girls was ordering us to stop our conversation, because, she said, discussing religion in a public place is against the law.

Needless to say, this came as a shock to us. When we reminded her about the First Amendment to the Constitution, she confidently told us, "That doesn't apply to the law."

The conversation degraded from there and, after a few exchanges I'm glad an assistant principal didn't overhear, we simply turned around and continued where we left off.

Such is the state of America's youth, many of whom will be voting in the next presidential election. They don't know their own rights, much less the rights of others. The sad thing is I can't really blame them.

We're being raised in the time of "separation of church and state" on steroids. Instead of everyone being able to express opinions without prejudice, no one can. With all the focus on protecting diversity, we've managed to kill it.

And with people to look up to like David Wallace Croft, the crusader against a moment of silence in public schools, I'm fearful of the day when my generation takes over the country. He and others like him try to trample others' rights in order to remove all traces of religion from schools. That helps breed ignorance about the law. He has every right to be an atheist and to raise his child according to that (lack of) belief. But that doesn't mean he has the right to expect everyone around him to be an atheist as well.

That's especially true in a state and country with such religious roots. We can debate all we want on the beliefs of the founding fathers – in fact, informed debate on all these issues is exactly what we need – but we can't ignore the history of the Christian majority in this country. Or the simple fact that most Americans belong to one religion or another.

The Legislature recently felt the need to pass a bill clarifying students' right to express religious views on any topic on which they are normally allowed to express secular views. It seems like a pointless rewording of the First Amendment, but I'm starting to see that the message is needed. Not just to protect the religious views that hold such an important place in many students' lives, but also to foster the expression of a variety of opinions – both secular and religious – on all issues.

It's the cornerstone of a functional democracy, and I don't want to be the generation that causes our democracy to fail.

So, for the benefit of my peers, here are some things the school system doesn't seem to teach anymore: Religious speech in public is not illegal. People talking about their religion in our vicinity is not an attempt on their part to convert us. It's much easier to mind our own business than it is to invade someone else's conversation and censor the content.

And until someone finds a cure for CIE, maybe sufferers could better spend their time learning the laws of the country we're to inherit.

*Mary Stanfield is a senior from Highland Village at Marcus High School in Flower Mound and a Student Voices volunteer columnist.*

Thanks to Kevin Metcalf for bringing this to my attention.  
Ed

### Subject: Is there a Hell?

The following is an actual question given on a University of Washington chemistry mid term. The answer by one student was so "profound" that the professor shared it with colleagues, via the Internet, which is, of course, why we now have the pleasure of enjoying it as well:

Bonus Question: Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)?

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law (gas cools when it expands and heats when it is compressed) or some variant thereof. One student, however, wrote the following:

First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate at which souls are moving into Hell and the rate at which they are leaving. I think we can safely assume that (continued on page 3)

once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving. As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different religions that exist in the world today.

Most of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell. Since there is more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionately as souls are added. This gives two possibilities:

1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.
2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by Teresa during my Freshman year that, "It will be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you," and take into account the fact that I slept with her last night, then number two must be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over. The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not accepting any more souls and is therefore, extinct.....leaving only Heaven, thereby proving the existence of a divine being which explains why, last night, Teresa kept shouting "Oh my God." The student got an A+ for his essay

Editors note: Hell freezes over annually.

**Hell** is a small village in Stijordal, Norway with a population of about 352. It has become a minor tourist attraction because of its name: people like to take the train there to get photographed in front of the station sign. What was possibly Norway's most popular postcard, at least among English-speaking tourists, showed the station with a heavy frost on the ground—Hell frozen over in fact, though there was no caption to make the point.

Visitors to Hell can also stay at the Hell Hotel.



### A New site for your consideration

Marilyn Westfall is a long-time Humanist and Unitarian Universalist. She currently serves on the board of the American Humanist Association.

Marilyn is a co-founder and a senior editor of The Eloquent Atheist on-line magazine. She has published fiction, poetry, and criticism in several literary magazines. The Humansists of Fort Worth are proud to call her a friend.

go to: <http://www.eloquentatheist.com/?author=3>

**“I am strongly in favor of using poisoned gas against uncivilized tribes. The moral effect should be good and it would spread a lively terror.”**

*~ Winston Churchill commenting on the British use of poison gas against the Iraqis after World War I*

Sadam said and did essentially the same thing, and was hanged, while Churchill is revered. Ed

**“The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is to tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.”**

*Hermann Goering*

**“Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”** *George Santayana*

People from The Ft Worth Humanists, UTA Freethinkers, Ft Worth Freethinkers, Metroplex Atheists, and even members of The UU Church of Arlington attended our Fall picnic on September 23rd.

It was such a joy to have so many people from the area who do not believe in intelligent design, the rapture, or other unsustainable beliefs, all in one place.

## Humanists Challenge Alcoholics Anonymous Monopoly

For Immediate Release - Contact Fred Edwords at  
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www.americanhumanist.org

(Washington D.C., September 12, 2007) Today the American Humanist Association notified its members, local chapters, and allies nationwide that there is now a well-established legal precedent that Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous are "pervasively religious" recovery programs. Moreover, government officials shouldn't specifically promote religious programs to the public, may not coerce incarcerated individuals into them, and may not sentence people to attend their meetings without offering a secular alternative. This action by the American Humanist Association comes in the wake of the September 7 decision by the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco that the government can't force parolees to attend such programs as a condition of staying out of prison.

"Our members and allies will now be more vigilant than ever in seeing to it that government agencies remain scrupulously neutral in their advocacy of substance-abuse treatment programs," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "Though public officials may prescribe self-help group attendance in general, they shouldn't advocate for or discourage any particular program, especially if that program is religious."

Joseph Gerstein, M.D., past president of the SMART Recovery Self-Help Network, added: "The most up-to-date scientific literature on substance abuse treatment has made it clear that matching a client to the most appropriate resources for that individual produces the best outcome. This means that one size doesn't fit all. It is refreshing to see the courts recognize that constitutional requirements coincide with established ethical and clinical imperatives."

SMART Recovery is a worldwide, science-based, secular substance abuse recovery program that, from its inception, has been endorsed by the American Humanist Association and offered through many of its local chapters.

There are other such programs, including LifeRing and Women for Sobriety, all of which contribute to greater public choice among mutual-help recovery group options. "While some people may benefit from a religious program," added Dr. Gerstein, "that doesn't justify giving Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous a treatment monopoly. Millions of people would benefit most from a secular, science-based program. And SMART Recovery was developed to help break that monopoly by offering a secular or religiously-neutral alternative that would work for humanists, for atheists, and for religious people who aren't comfortable with a blatantly faith-based approach."

The case law on efforts to require parolee attendance at religion-based treatment meetings has grown clearer over the years. Since 1996 courts have increasingly recognized that such a requirement violates the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This precedent is now so well established that nine state and federal courts have ruled that a parolee has the right to be assigned to a secular program. Moreover, the latest decision by the Ninth Circuit makes it clear that a parole officer can be personally sued for damages if he or she acts otherwise.

"Though Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous are well-established programs that have benefited many, their demand that participants acknowledge a 'higher power' is religious," added American Humanist Association President Mel Lipman. "Federal courts for the Second, Seventh, and Ninth circuits, as well as numerous lower courts, have found that mandating the program constitutes a violation of the First Amendment. We intend to make sure that these established court precedents are remembered and followed."

The latest case involved Ricky Inouye, who was paroled in November 2000. His parole officer, Mark Nanomori, ordered him to participate in a program that included Narcotics Anonymous meetings, despite the fact that Inouye, a Buddhist, had objected to treatments with any religious content. When Inouye refused to participate in the Narcotics Anonymous meetings he was sent back to prison in November 2001 for violating his parole. Inouye died while his suit was pending, and his son has continued the litigation on his behalf.

The American Humanist Association [www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org) is the oldest and largest humanist organization in the nation. The AHA is dedicated to ensuring a voice for nontheistic Americans and advancing a positive outlook, based on reason and experience, that embraces all of humanity.

(Continued on page 5)

Our own Dr. Russell Eleven is a licensed therapist who is involved in the SMART program here in the Tarrant County area. He has received a grant from the American Humanists to promote this program locally.

He is scheduled to begin counseling in January 2008

Contact: [doctorelleven@gmail.org](mailto:doctorelleven@gmail.org) or [www.rke.cc](http://www.rke.cc)

Russell holds the following certifications:

- Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)
- Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC)
- Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE)
- Certified Sex Therapist (CST)
- Certified Grief Recovery Specialist

He's a member of the following organizations:

- American Counseling Association
- Association for Addiction Professionals
- Coalition of Marriage, Family, and Couples Education
- National Council on Family Relations
- American Board of Sexology
- Association for Death Education and Counseling and Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement.

He performs non-theistic marriages and memorial services, and is the minister of the Westside Unitarian Universalist Church.

Oh, I almost forgot, he's also a founding and active member of the Ft Worth Humanists. What'a guy. Are we a lucky bunch or what?



## Some “urban myths” about humanism, secularism and atheism

*Anyone who has ever spoken to school students or listened to BBC Radio 4’s “Thought for the Day” or joined in a discussion about religion will have heard versions of the “urban myths” below. (They must teach them in Sunday school.) Most of them are offensive to the non-religious, and some of them are so plainly foolish it’s hard to think of a suitable response, but here below are some suggestions.*

Christian / Biblical values are the foundations of universal human rights, freedom, the open society, environmentalism, respect for life and peace [and motherhood and apple pie too].”

In fact organized religions, including Christianity, have a rather poor record on human rights and freedoms. They often treat heretics, apostates and people of other faiths or none very badly, tend to relegate women to low status, have little regard for freedom of speech, and find support in their holy texts for beating children, exploiting nature, discriminating against gay people (“God hates fags” apparently, and a surprising number of other things too), killing doctors who perform abortions and others who offend them, and in the case of Islam, for using “cruel and unusual punishments” in defiance of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Not only do religions restrict the rights of their own followers, but they seek to restrict the rights of non-believers too. In the USA, the most Christian country in the developed world, atheists are barred from some public offices. Religious groups in Europe have sought to ban books, plays, films and cartoons they did not like. See also the account and the scare-mongering, misinformation, bullying and hypocrisy used by religious groups and leaders opposing Lord Joffe’s Assisted Dying Bill in 2006. Contemporary examples of religious groups in the UK seeking exemptions from human rights and anti-discrimination legislation.

The concept of human rights has a very long history, which does of course include some classical and religious thinkers, but it developed rapidly with the rise of Enlightenment thinking in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Ideas on human rights, and contemporary legislation, national constitutions and international declarations based on human rights owe much more to thinkers such as Locke, Kant, Rousseau, Voltaire, Hume, Wollstonecraft, Mill and Bentham than they do to Christianity.

(continued on page 6)

Christians also have a mixed record on the environment, and one reason often given for the USA's reluctance to act on global warming is the religious belief, widely held in the States, in the imminent end of the world and the "rapture", when Christians of the right sort will be spirited away and given a new, better world.

See also <http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentViewArticle.asp?article=1235> BHA education briefing on human rights

***Atheism is responsible for the 20<sup>th</sup> century atrocities of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Mao Tse Tung et al.***

It's a pity so few people study history properly these days, or they would know that there is a long history of wars and atrocities motivated solely or mainly by religion. Indeed, one reason for the development of liberal and more or less secular democracies in Europe and elsewhere, based on Enlightenment values, was revulsion against religious conflict. Hitler, Stalin et al, on the other hand, were not motivated by religion or lack of religion, but by extreme and authoritarian political ideologies, such as National Socialism, Communism and Maoism. Religious believers were sometimes targeted by them, but so were intellectuals and liberals, indeed anyone who opposed their regimes.

Religious apologists tend to forget the atrocities carried out in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by the likes of Augusto Pinochet in Chile and General Franco in Spain, by all accounts good Catholics, often supported and protected by the Church. It is also well known that the Pope and the Catholic Church in the 1930s and 40s did little to stem the rise of Fascism in Spain, Germany and Italy or to prevent the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Indeed the anti-Semitic aspects of Nazism owed much to primitive Christian beliefs about the Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus. Hitler appears to have had a religious faith, and is on record as supporting faith schools:

"Secular schools can never be tolerated because such a school has no religious instruction and a general moral instruction without a religious foundation is built on air; consequently, all character and training must be derived from faith."

Most of Hitler's German and Austrian supporters in the 1930s and 40s must have been Christians. After World War 2, many leading Nazis and war criminals were sheltered by the Catholic Church in South America .

From the British Humanist [www.humanism.org.uk](http://www.humanism.org.uk)

The apartheid regime in South Africa was supported by many Boer Christians – and many leading opponents of apartheid were atheist Communists.

Ed note: space constraints prohibit posting the entire article— For more cut and paste : [www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentViewArticle.asp?article=2362](http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentViewArticle.asp?article=2362)

I've recently read *Misquoting Jesus*, loaned to me by Don Ruhs. It's an interesting book compiled by Bart D. Ehrman, who is the chair of the Department of Religious studies at the University of North Carolina. He claims the New Testament contains over 30,000 transcribing errors, many intentionally created by scribes who miscopied previous manuscripts.

Professor Ehrman went from hard-wired fundamentalist to, in his own words, an agnostic while compiling this work.

It's probably not wise for a devoutly religious person to study scripture.

For more go to: [www.bartdehrman.com](http://www.bartdehrman.com)

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