

NOSHA NEWS

Newsletter of the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association Spring 2007

**New Orleans Secular
Humanist Association**
330 Julia St., Apt. 233
New Orleans, LA 70130
(a 501c3 corporation)
<http://nosha.secularhumanism.net>

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NATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Council for Secular Humanism
American Humanist Association
Atheist Alliance International
American Atheists, Inc.

MEETINGS

One Saturday a month, 2:00 pm
New Orleans Public Library
219 Loyola Avenue

N.O. COX CABLE TV
CH 76 "Humanist Perspective"
Sat. midnight; Sun. noon
CH 78 "Atheist Viewpoint"
Tues. 10:30 am; 10:30 pm

A DAY OF FAREWELLS AND GOOD WISHES

The May 12 NOSHA meeting was a day of farewells to three people, each of who has been special to us in three very different ways. All three are retiring and leaving the area, so we wanted to honor each of them for their unique contributions to the principles of secular humanism in general and to NOSHA in particular.

Sally Mooney is a founding member of the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association since the fall of 1999. Joe Cook, although a member of NOSHA for several years, is foremost known throughout the state as the Executive Director of the Louisiana ACLU, and Dr. Robert Cashner, Dean of the Graduate School at the University of New Orleans has been instrumental in establishing an annual Darwin Day celebration at his institution.

Our own **Sally Mooney** is retiring from the English Department at Delgado Community College in New Orleans after more than 20 years and will relocate to the mountains above Flagstaff, Arizona. A founding member of NOSHA, Sally has served as a board member and officer, most recently as secretary, almost from the beginning. She has always been a "go-to" person when NOSHA needed an organizer for various social activities whether they



involved potlucks or selecting a movie for the potluck-movie nights we used to have. We will be hard-pressed to find a replacement with Sally's organizational skills to replace her. Sally is irreplaceable in many ways, and we will miss her.

Pictured at left, NOSHA president Harry Greenberger presents Sally with a letter of appreciation from the board recognizing her years of dedication to the principles of secular humanism and her service to our organization. We will miss you, Sally, but wish you well and

hope you'll keep in touch. And, keep the light on. Some of us plan to visit you in the Arizona mountains.

When **Joe Cook** came to Louisiana in 1994 to take the reins of the ACLU, the agency consisted of the executive director and an office administrator, operating on a shoestring budget. Today, there are four full-time employees, including a staff attorney and a public education associate, as well as a contract lobbyist. In addition, statewide membership under Joe's leadership has doubled from 1,000 to 2,000.

Joe has addressed NOSHA more than once, and has appeared on our cable TV program, "Humanist Perspective," on a couple of occasions. The work Joe does with the ACLU on behalf of church/state separation issues is of particular interest to NOSHA, and in January 2003 Joe Cook was awarded our first Humanist Award.

JOE COOK *continued . . .*

Said Joe Cook in the press release announcing his retirement: “Of the some 100 cases litigated over the past 13 years, all have been notable and most have been won, with a few standouts. Courageous parents and students came forward shortly after my arrival in 1994 to complain about the Tangipahoa Parish School Board’s promotion of religion with a Biblical creationism disclaimer, and they haven’t let up since then. A cross-section of other cases come to mind: the refusal of ‘Fat Boys Retreat’ to seat blacks; the drug testing or “clean urine loyalty oath” for public officials pushed by Governor Foster; a ‘dog cage’ holding cell used by the Abbeville police department; intellectual freedom at risk for school librarians in Ouachita and St. Tammany parishes; and Orleans Parish Prison inmates abandoned and abused after Katrina and the flood.”



Not only will Joe’s leadership be a hard act to follow at the Louisiana ACLU, but we will surely miss him at NOSHA as well. Joe said that “after being on the front lines and on call seven days a week, the time has come to hang up the ACLU spurs.” He is moving to Norfolk, Virginia to devote more time to the pleasures of

family, friends, regular exercise and to try his hand at organic gardening. Farewell, Joe, and happy retirement.

Dr. Robert (Bob) Cashner came to Louisiana in 1968 as a temporary part-time lecturer in the biology department at the University of New Orleans. He rose through his career from lecturer to Professor, to Head of his department, to Vice Provost for Research, and Dean of the Graduate School. Bob’s initial involvement with NOSHA was inadvertent. In early 2001, NOSHA needed an auditorium to hold the second New Orleans Darwin Day after prior arrangements fell through. Dave Schultz, a long-time friend of Bob’s asked for Bob’s help, and Bob came through with an auditorium in the Biology Building at UNO. The next year, NOSHA and UNO collaborated in planning Darwin Day, with each inviting speakers. Since then, Bob has recruited faculty at UNO to organize Darwin Day, and has continued to ask NOSHA for input for each event. Bob’s vision for Darwin Day is as an event to celebrate Darwin’s contribution to science and to recognize his broader influence on other scholarly

disciplines. New Orleans Darwin Day has included speakers from eleven universities across a variety of disciplines, including biology, anthropology, philosophy, and English. Bob was NOSHA’s second Humanist Award recipient in recognition of his support of NOSHA’s efforts to make Darwin Day an annual event in New Orleans.

Bob’s promotion of Darwin Day in New Orleans was recently recognized by the National Center for Science



Education who honored him with their “Friend of Darwin Award.” Barbara Forrest, a NCSE board member, nominated Bob and personally gave him the award at our meeting. They are pictured at left.

Bob is now retiring and moving to the Asheville, North Carolina area. His retirement will be a loss for UNO and New Orleans, but he has been assured that the administration of UNO plans to continue to support Darwin Day. Bob has also promised a personal endowment to support Darwin Day at UNO. NOSHA wishes Bob all the best in his new endeavors.

(Thank you to Michael Malec for the photograph of Joe Cook and to Dave Schultz for those of Sally Mooney and Bob Cashner.)

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OTHER NOSHA ACTIVITIES

Between February’s Darwin Day event and May’s farewell to Dr. Robert Cashner, Mr. Joe Cook, and our own Sally Mooney, NOSHA has hosted a movie and held two other regular meetings.

At the March meeting, magician and mind reader Mark Faulkner entertained us with explanations of magic and scams and why some people are so gullible. Then he performed several sleight of hand tricks to the delight of all.

On April 4 and 5, the Zeitgeist Theater, in collaboration with NOSHA, showed the documentary film, “Flock of Dodos: The Evolution-Intelligent Design Circus.” If you didn’t get a chance to see this compelling look at the current science vs. religion controversy by evolutionary biologist-turned filmmaker, Dr. Randy Olson, it will be featured on Showtime in May. Or, for more information you can go to <http://flockofdodos.com>.

The featured speaker at the regular April NOSHA meeting came as a surprise to many. Dr. Robert Stewart,

Associate Professor of Philosophy and Theology at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary spoke to us on “Areas of Agreement, Potential Agreement, and Difference—and How We can Work Together.” As expected, our areas of difference were doctrinal, but we do agree in several areas. Among the areas of agreement are church/state separation, religious liberty, gun control, eradication of racism and poverty, and recognition that HIV “is a virus, not a moral issue.” Dr. Stewart also concurred with humanists that public school curriculum should be based on what is accepted as fact by professionals, not what is controversial. His talk sparked an excellent discussion afterward.

If you have suggestions for future meeting topics or guest speakers, please contact Harry Greenberger at 282-5459 or by e-mail at hpgreenx@yahoo.com.

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MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBERS

With a paid membership of more than 100 and a mailing list of nearly 300, we thought it was time you met the board members of NOSHA. It is our hope that you will realize that we are just ordinary folks like you, that NOSHA gives you a chance to meet and commune with like-minded people to take off some of the edge of the religion-filled world that surrounds us every day. So here we are, starting with the young wife and mother, who in 1999 reached out and established the group that has come to be the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association. We are very grateful to you, Gina.

GINA CEDOTAL -- I brought the members of NOSHA together for that first meeting at Barnes & Noble Bookstore in August 1999. I had met with Sally Mooney and Richard Martin earlier that summer to discuss the possibility of starting a New Orleans Secular Humanist chapter. I wanted to find others who thought like me because I knew I could not have been the only person.



I was raised as a Catholic in a religious home. The Catholic religion never made sense to me, because evolution, science, and reason have always spoken with a much clearer voice. My parents know I am involved with NOSHA but they are Christian Conservatives and do not agree with my beliefs.

I graduated in 1990 from the University of New Orleans with a B.A. in Anthropology and with a minor in Graphic Design. I am happily married to my supportive husband, Steven, and have two beautiful daughters, ages seven and nine.

HARRY GREENBERGER -- With a Bachelors degree in Business Administration, a Masters in Psychology and a C.P.A. certificate, my work history until retirement was in business with companies in New York, Miami, New Orleans, Dallas and Saigon. In New Orleans, I held offices or participated in numerous organizations, including N.O. Chapter of Louisiana CPA's, Chamber of Commerce, French Quarter Business Assn.,



Alliance for Good Government, French Quarter Task Force and Festival, Business & Professional Toastmasters Club, Greater New Orleans Casino Development Assn., Alliance for Affordable Energy, Louisiana Retailers Association, and Bancroft Park Civic Association.

As a life-long atheist, I attended an organizational meeting for NOSHA and was chosen as its first President, a position I have been unable to shed since. As a spokesman for NOSHA I have addressed the local Unitarian churches, the Godless Americans March on Washington, the City-Wide "Remembrance, Renewal, Rebirth" Katrina anniversary event, Planned Parenthood's Roe v Wade anniversary program, and others. I produce and host the program "The Humanist Perspective in New Orleans," which is broadcast weekly on Cox Cable Access Television.

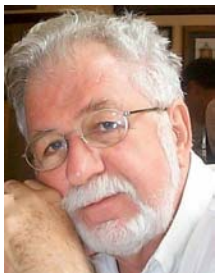
J. MICHAEL MALEC – I grew up as a Catholic kid in a small town in Upstate New York. Although I certainly didn't buy everything, I can't say I really questioned religion until I went to Fordham University, and took a religion course where the professor, a Jesuit, said we shouldn't believe just because it was what we had always been told. He said we should question our beliefs. I did, and I've never looked back.



I moved to New Orleans in 1996, for no particular reason except a certain boredom with my job as a policy analyst for the New York Department of State, a desire to do something different, and a love of New Orleans.

I have worked for the ACLU of LA, was briefly the Executive Director of the Alliance for Affordable Energy, and am currently a contract lobbyist for the ACLU. I studied Political Science and Urban Planning at the State University of New York at Albany.

LANNY GOLDFINCH – I grew up in Paraguay, son of Baptist Missionaries. In college I became a Unitarian and changed from medicine to philosophy. I came to Tulane for graduate school in 1959 and was active in the burgeoning civil rights movement. I was charged with “criminal anarchy” by the State because they thought I was Jewish and from New York!



I was an instructor at Tulane, then after a ten-year career in sales management, I worked through my first “mid-life” crisis, trained and began a practice in psychotherapy from which I am now semi-retired.

Along the way I started the Marengo Commune (uptown) which owned two large houses with 17 bedrooms. I sailed around the world (well, for a while, not what it is cut out to be!).

I remarried in 1980 and have three daughters and one son. I would describe my “religion” as being a Charismatic Hypocrite. I read too much, and sing (two years ago at the Jazz Fest). I believe in stirring things up and challenging people to think and act.

CONNIE GORDON – I grew up in the 1950s and 60s in a small south Texas town in a close-knit family of German Lutherans. I went to church and Sunday School every week because that’s just what was done. Some members of my family still do that today. But not me. By the time I reached my early twenties I had begun to read and learn about other peoples and other cultures and realized that there were a myriad of religious beliefs out there in the world. I wondered how all those people could believe that their religions were absolutely right, if Christianity was right. Or, I thought, perhaps they are all wrong. Look at all the horror that occurs in the world—how could anyone’s god allow that?



By then I had gone to the big city (Houston) to live and work, and in 1976 met and married my now former husband, a cell physiologist who was himself an atheist, also well-read about the peoples of the world, and my teetering on the fence was about to end. We subsequently moved to Lawrence, Kansas, where I returned to school to major in anthropology, and where I took a comparative religion course, which was the absolute clincher for my atheism. We moved to New Orleans in 1987.

Then in October 1999 there appeared an article in the *Times-Picayune* (with a nice picture of Harry Greenberger) about a fledgling organization of secular humanists in New Orleans. I had never even heard that term before, but the article convinced me that these were

my people. I attended my first meeting that month and the rest, as they say, is history.

In the midst of all this, I raised a wonderful son who is himself a free-thinker. I work for the Louisiana Office of Public Health in the HIV/AIDS Program where I do HIV case investigation and reporting. In December 2006, after several starts and stops and a 35-year span, I received my Bachelor of General Studies degree from the University of New Orleans.

BARBARA FORREST– I am Professor of Philosophy in the Department of History and Political Science at Southeastern Louisiana University (Hammond). I am co-author with Paul R. Gross of *Creationism’s Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design* (Oxford University Press, 2004), which details the political and religious aims of the intelligent design creationist movement. I served as an expert witness for the plaintiffs in the first legal case involving intelligent design, *Kitzmiller et al. V. Dover Area School District*, which originated in Dover, PA, and was resolved with a judgment in favor of the plaintiffs in December 2005. I am a member of the board of directors of the National Center for Science Education and the National Advisory Council of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. I have appeared on *Larry King Live*, ABC’s *Nightline*, and the BBC’s *Horizon* documentary about the Kitzmiller trial, “A War on Science.” My radio interviews include NPR’s *Science Friday* with Ira Flatow and Americans United’s *Culture Shocks* with Barry Lynn. I am the 2006 co-recipient with Brown University cell biologist Kenneth Miller of the American Society for Cell Biology’s Public Service Award.



DENIS DWYER – I didn’t start out as a Secular Humanist. The first 12 years of my life I went to Catholic schools and was brought up in a religious home. The nuns, priests and brothers that I encountered did a good job of teaching me that the Catholic religion doesn’t do what they preach. I started looking for answers to people’s questions as to why I didn’t believe in god and found them in the Council for Secular Humanism magazine, *Free Inquiry*. In 1999 a few of us got together and started NOSHA and now after 55 years I have found that there are lots of other people whose beliefs are similar to mine.



I attended UNO and Nicholls State University where I graduated in 1974 with a degree in Business Administration. I worked for 11 years at Dorignacs food store while in school and then started an outdoor specialty

store named “Adventure Sports,” which I operated for 26 years until December 2004. I am now semi-retired and a partner in some apartment complexes. I also do some electrical construction work to stay busy.

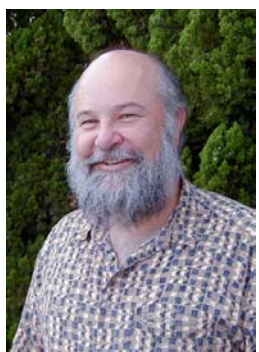
I am an avid sea kayaker and backpacker and enjoy getting away every summer and exploring remote areas of North America.

SALLY MOONEY – I am a co-founder of NOSHA, having attended that first meeting in the fall of 1999. I was raised as an atheist by my biologist father and free-spirited mother. I have been teaching English at Delgado Community College for more than 20 years and will retire this May after which I will move to Flagstaff, Arizona. There I hope to join another humanist group.



I raised my three children as atheists here in New Orleans. One son is a nationally-recognized writer, another is an aspiring jazz guitarist, and my daughter is a college student.

DAVE SCHULTZ – I’m a natural-born curious skeptic. That combination, and a life-long fascination with living things, led me to my career as a biologist. I’m a fish ecologist and evolutionary biologist by training (B.S. University of South Florida, Ph.D. University of Michigan) and an Associate Professor at Nicholls State University, where I teach General Biology, Evolution, and Biology of Fishes.



My parents were not church-goers and I never was religious. An elementary school pal introduced me to atheism—his dad was a freethinker—and the logic of no god stuck. While I was a teenager I was forced by my stepfather to attend a Baptist Church and I tried, really, but I didn’t catch it. Forced church attendance ended when I was allowed to choose my own church to attend, and after trying various options I chose the Unitarian church. For my stepfather, no church was better than the Unitarian church. In my twenties and thirties I read about, or had first-hand experience with a broad spectrum of new-age religion. The gullibility of new-agers led me to seek out the evidence against the paranormal and other modern myths. That’s how I discovered *Skeptical Inquirer*, *Free Inquiry*, and the Council for Secular Humanism. My subscriptions resulted in my invitation to the first organizational meeting of NOSHA in 1999.

Since becoming involved with NOSHA I have been active in the evolution/creation controversy, have helped organize local Darwin Day celebrations, and have participated in several creation/evolution debates. I moderate the Topica discussion group, and manage the NOSHA mailing list database and web site. NOSHA is important to me. Freethinkers of the region need to know they are not alone. Everyone else needs to know that using reason and logic is a virtue, not a flaw.

TIMOTHY RUPPERT – I am a registered professional engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District. I hold a Bachelor’s Degree in Civil Engineering with a minor in Economics from the University of New Orleans.



I am a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and Society of American Military Engineers. I am a past president of the ASCE New Orleans Branch and am currently president of the ASCE Louisiana Section. I was chair of the 2006 Louisiana Civil Engineering Conference and Show, an annual seminar and trade show attended by more than 500 engineering and construction professionals from throughout the state.

Prior to joining the Corps, I was a partner of Murphy, Makofsky Consulting Engineers, a local civil and structural engineering firm. My work there earned the company an Award of Merit from the American Concrete Institute, Louisiana Chapter in 1998.

I served as a photo journalist and intelligence specialist for six years in the Louisiana Army National Guard. I am a graduate of the Defense Information School, and my writing has appeared in *Stars and Stripes* in Europe. I was honorably discharged and was awarded the Army Service Ribbon and Cold War Recognition Certificate.

Raised in a Roman Catholic family, I drifted from the church after marriage. The more I studied the Bible and the Catechism, the more I realized I was in the wrong church. My wife and I joined Community Church Unitarian Universalist here in New Orleans where we were active for several years.

Finally, sometime in about 1994, I acknowledged my atheism. I have been fully “out of the closet” since 1999 when I put a bumper sticker on my car proclaiming, “Blasphemy is a victimless crime.”

In addition to NOSHA, I am a member of American Atheists and Atheist Alliance International. Prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, I was a regular contributor of letters to the *Times-Picayune* on the topic of separation of church and state.

I live with my wife of 20 years and our daughter in New Orleans. I maintain a blog about living and rebuilding in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina at www.timsnamelessblog.blogspot.com.

CHARLOTTE KLASSON – I have been a resident of



New Orleans since September 2004 after moving here from Knoxville, Tennessee. I am a volunteer with the Audubon Aquarium and also serve as a board member and treasurer of the New Orleans Lesbian and Gay Community Center. I am the

current President of the Greater New Orleans Chapter of NOW and was selected for the Equal Marriage ad hoc committee by the national NOW office in 2006. I have been active on the board for the Bancroft Park Civic Association, handling communications for the neighborhood since the flood.

I have worked as editor and designer of my own publication for women, *Knoxville Style*. I also enjoy photography, crossword puzzles and scuba diving.

At press time, biographies were not available for Doug Hinton and Vitas Paukstaitis. Look for them in future newsletters.

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MEMBERS’ PUBLISHED LETTERS

The following letter by Heather Hall (in her capacity as Director of the Louisiana Justice Coalition) appeared in the *Times-Picayune* on March 19, 2007:

Re: “Judge sued over fines,” March 9.

Taxpayers aren’t often the first in line to complain about Louisiana’s broken justice system, but they should be. For decades, the broken system has been siphoning money away from other pressing state needs.

The latest example is Orleans Parish, where taxpayers are footing the bill to jail people who are too poor to pay their fines. In some cases, the cost to taxpayers is exponentially more than the fine itself.

Across the state in Calcasieu Parish, taxpayers have paid to house defendants for up to four years before trial because of delays caused by extreme caseloads and lack of resources in the public defender system.

Wasting tax dollars is an outrage anywhere in the country, but in post-Katrina Louisiana it’s criminal.

In less than two months, the Legislature will have another chance to reform the justice system so that it operates efficiently and effectively.

Let’s hope they finally get it right.

The following letter by **Harry Freeman** appeared in the *Times-Picayune* on March 21, 2007:

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said that our current policy in Iraq is designed to “buy time” for the Iraqis to stabilize the country. I would suggest that “time” bought with the blood and lives of America’s sons and daughters is way too costly.

Regardless of whether the United States was right or wrong in invading Iraq, the result was that Saddam Hussein was overthrown and the Iraqis were given the opportunity to establish a responsible government. Instead of doing that, they chose to begin killing each other in earnest in a religious civil war, which is only getting worse. Iraq will be “stabilized” when the Iraqis decide the advantages of stabilization outweigh the apparent advantages of killing each other.

As long as we keep our troops there, they will have the luxury of not having to make that decision. We are being played for fools. Sending more U.S. troops is insane.

What we need to be sending immediately is enough planes to bring our troops home out of the hellhole that Iraq has become.

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ALSO OF INTEREST TO HUMANISTS

LOUISVILLE, KY—Members of a gay rights group were recently arrested after staging a sit-in at a Baptist seminary whose president has suggested that prenatal treatments would influence a child’s sexual orientation. He had said that homosexuality would remain a sin even if it were biologically based, and that this hypothetical medical treatment would switch an unborn gay baby’s sexual orientation. Some of the sit-in participants were themselves southern Baptists. Similar demonstrations were conducted at other Baptist institutions as well.

WASHINGTON, DC—The Bush administration’s support of abstinence-only sex education recently received a severe blow. A study showed that such instruction does about as much good as chicken soup for a cold: it doesn’t hurt, but it doesn’t provide a cure either. The behavior of 2,000 teens who participated in two urban and two rural communities were surveyed. Those who received abstinence-only instruction were just as likely to have sex as those in a control group who did not receive such education. The average age of a first sexual encounter was 14.9 years, a majority of those who were sexually active had two or more partners, and only 23 percent said they always used condoms.

ROME, ITALY—A Vatican committee has finally concluded after centuries that unbaptized babies who die may now go to heaven, rather than spend eternity in limbo. Actually, in the 5th century, St. Augustine declared that all unbaptized babies went to hell upon death, a ruling

that was softened by the Middle Ages. Then the idea of limbo was devised. There was no report as to whether the recent edict was made retroactive, though, if it is, that could really crowd heaven’s day-care center.

CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND—In England’s last census, 72 percent of people identified themselves as Christian, mostly Anglicans affiliated with the Church of England. However, the Church of England has said that less than 10 percent of its members are regular churchgoers. Sadly, though, about 40 percent of England’s regular churchgoers are evangelicals, many recent immigrants from Africa.

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA—In 1981, Gary North, a leader of the Christian Reconstructionist movement suggested that the movement could achieve power by stealth saying, “Christians must begin to organize politically within the present party structure, and they must begin to infiltrate the existing institutional order.” Now, Regent University, founded by televangelist Pat Robertson for the purpose of providing “Christian leadership to change the world,” boasts that it has 150 graduates working in the Bush administration. Regent’s most famous graduate is Monica Goodling, a former top aide to Alberto Gonzales who is central to the recent firing of U.S. attorneys. It reminds one of that eerie voice in those old horror movies – “they’re he-e-e-re!”

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A WALK IN THE WOODS

(NOSHA member Harold Dundee submitted the following bit of humor to us. Thanks, Harold.)

An atheist was taking a walk through the woods, admiring all that the “accident of evolution” had created. “What majestic trees! What powerful rivers! What beautiful animals!” he said to himself. As he walked alongside the river, he heard a rustling in the bushes behind him.

As he turned to look, he saw a nine-foot grizzly charging towards him. He ran as fast as he could up the path. He looked over his shoulder and saw that the bear was gaining on him. He tried to run even faster, so scared that tears were coming to his eyes. He looked over his shoulder again, and the bear was even closer. His heart was pumping wildly as he tried to run even faster, but he tripped and fell to the ground.

As he rolled over to pick himself up, the bear was upon him raising his paw to kill him. At that instant, the atheist cried out, “Oh my God!”... and all time stopped. The bear froze, the forest was silent, and the river even stopped flowing. A bright light shone upon the man and a voice came from above saying, “You deny my existence all these years, teach others I don’t exist, even credit the creation of the universe to a ‘cosmic accident,’ and now you expect me to help you in your time of need? Am I to count you now as a believer?”

The atheist, ever so proud, looked up into the light and said, “It would be rather hypocritical to ask to be accepted as a Christian after all these years, but could you perhaps make the bear a Christian?”

“Very well,” said the voice. As the light disappeared, the river again flowed, and the sounds of the forest returned, the bear lowered his raised paw. Then the bear put his paws together, bowed his head, went down on his knees and said, “Lord, I thank you for this food which I am about to receive.”

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GOD’S DUPES

(The following is excerpted from an op-ed piece by Sam Harris. It appeared in the March 16, 2007 Los Angeles Times.)

Pete Stark, a California Democrat, appears to be the first congressman in U.S. history to acknowledge that he doesn’t believe in God. In a country in which 83% of the population thinks that the Bible is the literal or “inspired” word of the creator of the universe, this took political courage.

Of course, one can imagine that Cicero’s handlers in the 1st century BC lost some sleep when he likened the traditional accounts of the Greco-Roman gods to the “dreams of madmen” and to the “insane mythology of Egypt.”

Mythology is where all gods go to die, and it seems that Stark has secured a place in American history simply by admitting that a fresh grave should be dug for the God of Abraham – the jealous, genocidal, priggish and self-contradictory tyrant of the Bible and the Koran. Stark is the first of our leaders to display a level of intellectual honesty befitting a consul of ancient Rome. Bravo.

The truth is, there is not a person on Earth who has a good reason to believe that Jesus rose from the dead or that Muhammad spoke to the angel Gabriel in a cave. And yet billions of people claim to be certain about such things. As a result, Iron Age ideas about everything high and low – sex, cosmology, gender equality, immortal souls, the end of the world, the validity of prophecy, etc. – continue to divide our world and subvert our national discourse. Many of these ideas, by their very nature, hobble science, inflame human conflict and squander scarce resources.

Let us hope that Stark’s candor inspires others in our government to admit their doubts about God. Indeed, it is time we broke this spell en masse.

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“If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our science can reveal it.”
--Albert Einstein

“I am a humanist, which means, in part, that I have tried to behave decently without expectations of rewards or punishments after I am dead.”
--Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

The New Orleans Secular Humanist Association (NOSHA) was formed to provide an opportunity for like-minded people to meet and exchange ideas and to promote awareness of secular humanist viewpoints in the community. We are committed to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems. We reject efforts to explain the world in supernatural terms and to look outside nature for salvation. We strive to make the public aware of the importance of the separation of church and state, to oppose the teaching of creationism and other religious doctrines in the public schools, and to provide a voice of reason when superstition is presented in the media. We believe in enjoying life here and now, and in cultivating moral excellence. We believe in the fullest realization of the best and noblest we are capable of as human beings.

To become a friend of THE NEW ORLEANS SECULAR HUMANIST ASSOCIATION, complete, clip, and mail in the following form:

Check one: New Member Renewing Member Mailing list only Newsletter by mail

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone and/or e-mail: _____

2007 Annual dues are only \$5.00. Make checks payable to "NOSHA" and mail to Connie Gordon, 2509 Giuffrias Ave., Apt. 603, Metairie, LA 70001.

NOTE: For those of you who receive the newsletter by standard mail, the year for which you have last paid membership dues is reflected in the upper right corner of the mailing label.

**NOSHA
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New Orleans, LA 70130**