From Your Editor...

Howdy! Well some amazing news in the religious realm has been steadily flowing, and we’re going to be talking about it more and more now.

This year’s Hajj in Saudi Arabia has so far resulted in the deaths of 363 people. As the days pass, some of the over 200 injured will also die, no doubt.

It’s a terrible shame that any humans die due to natural disasters, accidental transmission of disease, or anything else that the average human can’t usually prevent.

But for hundreds of people to die at a religious ritual that was totally optional, by being stepped on to death...well I, as an Atheist am going to point this out to as many religious people as I can.

There I just had to say that. It’s ok folks, most Muslims I have talked to about this don’t mind that many of their own die at the Hajj on what seems like a regular basis. In fact some of them said they’d like to die there too, since it means an instant elevator ride to Muslim Heaven. So I guess sometimes it takes Atheists to remind religious people of what’s really valuable in life. That’s THIS life, the only one they’ll get.

It’s a beautiful, and much more rational day, now that I’m an Atheist!

As usual, we’re always looking for submissions. joezamecki@hotmail.com

Thanks and enjoy! :o)

In This Issue...

----Darwin Day! Feb. 12
----Interview with an Atheist Air Force Pilot
----Wacky Theist News
----and much more!
The Atheist Community of Austin is a local non-profit educational 501(c)3 organization founded in 1996, and is affiliated with American Atheists Inc., the American Humanist Association, and the Council for Secular Humanism, and is a member group of the Atheist Alliance International.

The ACA is a democratically run organization. Board Meetings are held every second Sunday of the month, and all members are welcome to attend, but only board members may vote. Board elections are held every year in May.

Regular membership in the ACA costs just $24. per year, and the membership year begins in March. You can join anytime though. We also offer student, family, senior and life memberships.

The ACA hosts a monthly lecture at the Austin History Center at the corner of 9th St. and Guadalupe St. This is a community service, and a means of disseminating information and ideas of interest to Atheists and the greater Austin community. Lecture topics usually focus on core areas of Atheist interest such as science, skepticism, the impact of religion, philosophy, church-state separation and community activism. Lectures are scheduled on the 3rd Sunday of every month starting at 12:30 pm in the “Reception Room.” Admission is always free.

The February 19th ACA Lecture Series will host UT Professor Dr. Alan Cline, who will talk on "The Disregard of Science and the Responsibility of Citizens". The lecture will be his Visions of Computer Science <http://oea.cs.utexas.edu/articles/index2005/visions-retro.html> lecture for a non-academic audience. Alan Cline is the David Bruton, Jr. Centennial Professor in Computer Sciences #2. He recently has been accepted into the Academy of Distinguished Teachers at UT.

atheist-community.org  (512)371-2911
Editorial...

ACA Social Events Rock!

Well the January lecture went great! In the cave! I gave that lecture at Inner Space Cavern, where I’m a tour guide. On Jan. 15, we gathered there and took my tour, and everything went very well.

We were concerned that we wouldn’t get the required 20 people out to that, so we could get the discounted ticket price. But we did better than that, with around 22 people. Below is a photo taken there by Shelley Roberts. As you can see, we all had a great time, and for not much money.

I’d like to thank Don Baker and Shelley Roberts for taking photos, and getting me some so fast, and for helping me publicize this event. Also I thank Chuck Clark for bringing official ACA t-shirts.

In this issue we also feature a photo from a press conference some of our members held on the steps of the Texas State Capital building, downtown.

This month, we’ll have another blood drive, and hopefully I’ll be able to do more to organize some effort on that then just giving blood. It’s a good idea, it helps out, and it’s relatively painless.

Also Darwin Day will be on Feb. 12. It would be nice to talk about Darwin, the personal human man, at a meeting in February. I have great respect for him and what he bravely did in the face of a predictable but still disturbing amount of resistance.

February is also Black History Month, so I encourage you to check out: www.blackatheists.org

Thank you very much for reading and we hope you enjoy this, and the other perks of our organization. We’d really like to make ours the best local Atheist group ever. JZ :o)

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Thank you very much for reading and we hope you enjoy this, and the other perks of our organization. We’d really like to make ours the best local Atheist group ever. JZ :o)
Thursday Feb 2 7:30 p.m.  Happy Hour at Antonio’s Tex Mex, I-35 Southbound side, just South of 183, and just North of St. Johns.

Sunday Feb 5 11:30 a.m.  Romeo’s Italian Restaurant, A weekly social gathering at Romeo’s which is on Barton Springs just west of South Lamar.

4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience TV show, Channel 10, on Time Warner Cable in Austin. Host: Matt Dillahunty Co-host: Russell Glasser

Monday Feb 6 7:00 p.m.  Godless Gamers

Tuesday Feb 7 7:00 - 10:30 p.m.  Unholy Rollers Skate Event, Meet other atheists and atheist-friendly people at Playland Skate Center, 8822 McCann Rd. near 183 & Burnet Rd.

Thursday Feb 9 7:30 p.m.  Happy Hour at Antonio’s Tex Mex

Saturday Feb 11 ACA Blood Drive  The Blood and Tissue Center of Central Texas 4300 North Lamar Boulevard Austin, TX 78756 512-206-1266  www.bloodandtissue.org

10:00 - 11:30 a.m.  Board Meeting at Schlotzky’s on South Lamar at Toomey St., just South of the River.
11:30 a.m.  Romeo’s Italian Restaurant, A weekly social gathering

4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience TV

Monday Feb 13 7:00 p.m.  Godless Gamers

Tuesday Feb 14 7:00 - 10:30 p.m.  Unholy Rollers Skate Event

Thursday Feb 16 7:30 p.m.  Happy Hour at Antonio’s Tex Mex

February 19th ACA Lecture Series will host UT Professor Dr. Alan Cline, who will talk on “The Disregard of Science and the Responsibility of Citizens” at the Austin History Center

Sunday Feb 19 4:30 - 6:00 p.m  Atheist Experience TV

Monday Feb 20 7:00 p.m.  Godless Gamers

Tuesday Feb 21 7:00 - 10:30 p.m.  Unholy Rollers Skate Event

Thursday Feb 23 7:30 p.m.  Happy Hour, at Antonio's Tex Mex

Sunday Feb 26 11:30 a.m.  Romeo’s Italian Restaurant, A weekly social gathering

4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience TV

Monday Feb 27 7:00 p.m.  Godless Gamers

Tuesday Feb 28 7:00 - 10:30 p.m.  Unholy Rollers Skate Event

The Atheist Community of Austin  PO Box 3798  Austin TX 78764  Voicemail: (512)371-2911
Website: www.atheist-community.org
What an amazing concept this is. George Bush Jr., Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld in action with a battering ram of Democracy. It’s about the war, but I also saw another message in this cartoon.

This last Christmas season included yet another attack of words from the Religious Right against the so-called “War on Christmas.” All the conservative news stations and pundits were chiming in about how an evil attack on the sanctity of Christmas was playing out, organized by the ACLU and other liberal groups...who were trying to shut down and silence any mention of the real religious nature of that holiday. This, along with groups like ours. Atheists.

I think I’m pretty plugged into the Atheist movement. I don’t remember any meeting we had to conspire to shut down Christmas. If there’s been a push to recognize the diversity of our nations citizens, I applaud that, but we didn’t accomplish it. It seems that a larger, more diverse bunch than us Atheists and other civil libertarians insisted on some balance. In a more democratic way, more and more people seem to want fairness in observance of personal beliefs in public, at least when their kids are at school. If that’s political correctness, then so is democracy. It’s the popular opinion. And if it seems ironic that we’d have this cartoon here, just after the interview with the Atheist Air Force pilot flying combat and other missions in and around Iraq, well that’s something war can do. We feel that it’s patriotic to ask that our military troops be put in harm’s way ONLY if and when it’s absolutely necessary. JZ
ACA Event Details

----- Lecture Series We hold our monthly lectures at the Austin History Center, at the corner of 9th St. and Guadalupe St. We hold them on the third Sunday of each month and they start at 12:30pm in the “Reception Room.” Admission is always free, and it’s open to the public.

----- Board Meetings We hold our board meetings on the second Sunday of the month, and lately we’ve held them at the very large Schlotzky’s at the corner of South Lamar and Toomey St., just South of Town Lake. That starts at 10:00am and usually lasts till 11:30am. All members are welcome, but only board members may vote at those board meetings.

----- Happy Hour! We meet for Happy Hour at Antonio’s Tex Mex on Thursdays, at 7:30pm. That’s on I-35 Southbound side, just South of Research/183 and just North of St. Johns.

----- Regular Weekly Meetings Sundays at 11:30am at Romeo’s Italian Restaurant on Barton Springs Rd. just West of South Lamar. We meet in the front room, that’s separated a bit from the rest of the place.

----- TV Show The Atheist Experience is our tv show. It airs on Time-Warner Cable, public access channel 10, from 4:30pm - 6:00pm every Sunday. It’s a live call-in talkshow, so feel free to call in with comments and questions for the show and their audience. Members of the ACA are also invited to visit the tv studio during the show, as live studio audience members. This show is also repeated, taped, on Tuesdays at 4:30pm on Channel 10. We also need volunteer help on the show from time to time, so if you’re interested in helping out, or if you think you’d like to be a guest on the show, please e-mail: tv@atheist-community.org

----- Online Radio Show “The Non-Prophets” is a regular live internet radio show on the Freethought Radio Network. It airs on alternate Saturdays from 2 PM to 3:30 PM (3-4:30 PM Eastern time) at www.freethoughtradio.com. Just click on "Listen". The show is hosted by Jeff Dee, co-hosted by Denis Loubet and produced by Russell Glasser.

----- Public Demonstrations Once in a while, we grab picket signs and cameras and hit the pavement in public on issues of importance to us. Usually these can’t be scheduled far in advance, so announcements about demonstrations will likely only be heard at regular membership meetings. The last demonstration we held was at the Texas State Capitol Building on 11th at Congress Ave. We picketed the National Day of Prayer ritual/rally/bad concert held on the steps of the Capitol Building. Around 20 Atheists picketed. It was fun!

----- Godless Gamers is held at Russell Glasser’s house, email rglasser@apollowebo..com for address and directions. We play all sorts of games. Strategy games, board games, card games, role playing games, party games. It just depends on what people bring. Some recent favorites: Siege of Avalon: a board game where all the players work together to fight back the forces of darkness, find the holy grail, and fill the round table with good knights. The interesting part is that there is sometimes a traitor who works against the others. Apples to Apples: A subjective word association game, where players vote on each other’s use of random objects to match a description. For instance, "scary" is matched with "Michael Jackson"; "enormous" with "black holes", and so on.

“Church, cult, cult church. So we get bored somewhere else on Sunday mornings...” Bart Simpson responding to the idea that switching religions and following “The Leader” and his cult is somehow any more silly than following their church leader in the first place.
The 2006 national convention for the Atheist Alliance will be at the Airport Marriott in Kansas City, where their special room rate for one to four people is $65 a night. Julia Sweeney will be there to accept the Richard Dawkins award. The first freethought lobbyist in Washington, DC, Lori Lipman Brown will speak, and author-activist Fred Whitehead will talk. Atheist Alliance 1-866-HERETIC or try this: http://atheistalliance.org/conventions/2006/index.html

The 2006 American Atheists national convention will be held in San Antonio, Texas at the Marriott Rivercenter in the heart of the Riverwalk District. Among their speakers will be Michael Shermer. Further into this newsletter, we feature more info on that, and for more info from American Atheists: (908)276-7300 and www.atheists.org

The American Humanist Association’s next national event will be the. 2006 AHA CONFERENCE: “The Wave of Reason.” It’ll be the 65th annual Conference of the AHA, and will be held May 11-14, 2006 at the lovely Tampa Airport Marriott in Tampa, Florida at the Tampa International Airport Phone: 1-813-879-5151, Toll-Free: 1-800-564-3440. Make sure to mention the American Humanist Association to take advantage of the $99 special guest room rate (single/double.) Reservations must be made before April 18 for this rate to apply. Speakers will include Lori Lipman Brown, Margaret Downey, and Michael Newdow. The American Humanist Association’s Washington DC office has more info: (800) 837-3792 or: Conference@AmericanHumanist.org

The Council for Secular Humanism just celebrated its 25th anniversary with a World Congress last month in New York state. As of press time, their website doesn’t list another upcoming national event. But they publish a fine magazine called Free Inquiry, and we strongly suggest that all Freethinkers check it out. For more info: 1-800-834-1610
The Democratic Alliance of Autonomous Atheist-Humanist Societies

A positive voice for Atheism

Po Box 26867, Los Angeles, California, 90026, USA

Phone: 866.HERETIC; Web site: www.AtheistAlliance.org

California Public Benefit Corporation, #1837864, EIN 94-3155036. IRS 501(c)(3)

Atheist Alliance International is pleased to announce the Community Cooperation Award

The Community Cooperation Award (CCA), made possible by an anonymous donor, will grant a single award of $500. To one Freethought organization each year to foster cooperation, ethical awareness and positive images in the Freethought community.

Applicants must be Atheist/Freethought organizations listed in the current edition of the Freethought Directory published by Atheist Alliance International. The applicant organization need not be a member organization of the Atheist Alliance. The Award money may be used for any purpose the organization sees fit.

To qualify for this award, applicants must submit a completed entry form, as well as information and evidence of their positive influence during 2005. Examples include:

* Media coverage
* Community Volunteer work
* Cooperation with civic or religious leaders in the community
* Listing with local Better Business Bureau’s Wise Giving Alliance or other philanthropic guide
* Tapes or transcripts from meetings/events
* Relevant articles from the organization’s newsletter

The object of the award is to foster cooperation between Atheist/Freethought organizations and the larger communities in which they are based. Cooperation, ethics, and positive image are the elements which will be considered by the CCA committee during review of the applications. Consideration will be given to the size of the applicant organization relative to its achievements. It is our goal to motivate organizations to look for ethical means to solve problems, controversies or disagreements they may encounter, either within the organization itself or otherwise. Finally, the organization should project a positive image of atheists and freethinkers both as individuals and as a movement. Applicants are responsible for providing proof of claims.

To enter, fill out the entry form [which is in a folder “Community Cooperation Award,” along with a WORD copy of this announcement] and submit it with all supporting documentation via postal mail before February 15, 2006. Mail to:

Community Cooperation Award

C/o AAI

PO Box 26867

Los Angeles, CA, 90026

Atheist Alliance International will choose the winner. The decision will be final, and the right will be reserved to withdraw the award after it is announced, but before it is paid, if there is substantial evidence of undesirable behavior on the part of the proposed recipient. A runner-up may also be chosen in case the winner is deemed no longer worthy. The winner will be announced in April.
ACA People & Products

Below and to the right is a photo by Don Rhodes of a press conference held by the ACA on the steps of the Texas State Capitol recently.

On December 6th, 2005, several members of the ACA joined Houston resident and attorney Kay Staley on the steps of the Capitol building for a press conference. Kay Staley had filed, and won, a lawsuit in Harris County, Texas which resulted in an order to remove a King James Bible from the monument which stands in front of the Harris County Courthouse. Harris County officials appealed the case to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in a foolish attempt to overturn a just verdict which upholds the First Amendment.

While media attendance and coverage was minimal, the ACA had a number of representatives on hand to support Kay Staley and her attorney. In addition to a visible support presence, we also read a press release on behalf of the ACA. The full press release is archived on the ACA website (http://atheist-community.org/news/news.php?id=46). The ACA plans to participate in similar events in the future and we'll be taking extra steps to ensure that all members are aware of events, in advance. As our participation in these activist events increases, so does the impact we can have on the community. Events like this one allow us to serve as representatives of atheism and the ACA, and make our existence known to potential new members.

Below is a photo of some members of the ACA just after the lecture in the cave. There were a few more of us in the lobby at the time. Thanks to Don Baker for this photo.

In the cave, we got to see two hibernating bats up close, and at least one ACA member says they saw a flying bat. The bats are really fast and quiet when they fly, so sometimes it takes a keen eye to spot them at all.

By the way, the religious part of the cave, the new light and sound show for the Flowing Stone of Time, was NOT yet up and running during this lecture! Let’s hear it for theistic laziness! Yess! :o)

We also sell godless coffee mugs Three bucks cheap!!

In our next issue...

----More Wacky Theist News!

---The Atheist Agenda UTSA - the article we promised you for this issue. A very hectic month caused several delays, but better late than never! :o)
What is the extent of your Atheism? In other words are you strong in your Atheism? If someone asks you up front, do you tell them up front exactly what you are? Is it the "Positive Atheism" that shouts out that there definitely is no god, or the "Negative Atheism" of just living without religion, or do you even bother with that distinction?

Obviously I am an atheist, and will remain so until someone provides some evidence that convinces me formulate a new outlook on the world. That's really about it. From what I understand that would characterize me as a 'weak' atheist, but such distinctions don't hold much weight in my opinion. Being a weak or strong atheist wouldn't change my understanding on how the universe worked, nor would it have any effects on how I live my life. Do I wear my lack of faith on my sleeve? No, not at all. But I don't really wear anything on my sleeve. Very few people know I'm an atheist, but very few people know much about me at all. Plus, even when I was Christian I always believed that someone's religious beliefs, or lack thereof, were a private matter. I only talk about religion under two circumstances; when someone's making ignorant statements about atheism, other religions, science, etc, or when I'm in a forum in which religious discussion is encouraged. Besides I've always tried to judge people based off their actions, not their beliefs, and I hope others do the same with me.

My military service in a relatively standard format nutshell: I'm currently a C-130 copilot serving with the 40th Airlift Squadron 'Screamin' Eagles' at Dyess AFB in Abilene, Tx. I was commissioned in 2003 through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, Detachment 305, at Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, La, after earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Professional Aviation with a minor in Physics.


Flight Information: Rating: Pilot Flight Hours: >600 Aircraft Flown: C-130E/H, T-37, TC-12, and various civilian models.

Without saying anything you shouldn't, what all are you doing overseas these days and in which countries? About how dangerous is the work you're now doing for our country?

I deployed to Southwest Asia in mid October, and will be here until the end of February or possibly the beginning of March. My unit flies combat missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and we fly humanitarian and counter terrorism missions in east Africa. The C-130 is the world's premier tactical airlifter, which we use to transport people and cargo in and out of places ranging from large international airports to small dirt strips in the middle of nowhere. Our airdrop capability allows us to resupply ground units in difficult terrain too remote to be reached by ground. Every ton of supplies, every soldier or marine we fly in, out, and around the theater is one less that has to be taken by truck via the IED laced roads of Iraq, or the snowed in, mined, or otherwise impassible roads of Afghanistan.

For the first two months of the rotation I worked in the C-130 tactics office, planning and overseeing all C-130 missions launched from this location, while flying on my days off. About mid December I began flying full time and have so far flown over 20 combat missions, logging over 130 hours combat time. I've carried over one thousand passengers, including The Director of Iraqi Reconstruction, one congressman, and the Chief of Staff of the Army, and have hauled one hundred fifty tons of cargo into nine counties spanning two continents.

It is a dangerous job, with threats such as crowded airspace, weather, mountains, and enemy fire almost always present. To my knowledge three C-130s have gone down with two crews lost since the beginning of OEF in 2001. Two were due to accidents, and one was shot down over Iraq.

Have you seen or been made aware of any religious ritualizing and/or religion being pushed on anyone while serving where you are now?

The military is filled with a fairly accurate cross section of American society. Just like in the US population you'll find people of different religions, creeds, and attitudes in the armed services. While I've never personally seen religious discrimination happen in any unit I've been in, I have seen religious prejudice. While I was attending Field Training (equivalent to boot camp), I witnessed a Major say in front of my entire squadron that those who don't believe in any gods don't deserve commissions. Two years late I received my commission and proved him wrong on that one. It goes both ways though. As an example my pilot training class at Laughlin was composed of myself, a Wiccan, a Muslim, and a fundamentalist Christian, with the other twenty probably being your garden variety 'Sunday morning only' Christians. No one said anything about the three heathens, but the fundamentalist with his 'holier than thou' attitude was universally disliked by pretty much everyone. In a way being in the military is just like having a civilian job; if you go in, do the best job you can, and don't get in people's faces you'll do just fine. If however on your first day you come in waiving you hands yelling 'I'm an atheist, look at me', or you're all going to hell because you don't believe in Jesus', things might get ugly. That has been my experience, but I do recognize that there are situations like that at the Air Force Academy where the atmosphere allows for a majority to harass a minority. We still have a way to go.

When certain unaware media pundits happily announce that "there are no atheists in foxholes," what do you have to say to them regarding that old claim?
On the Murder of Larry Hooper

by Arlene Marie

On October 18, 2004 Arthur Shelton, a self described Christian and Eagle Scout, murdered his friend and roommate, Larry Hooper because Hooper didn't believe in God.

After many months of postponements and on December 18, 2005, Arthur Shelton, with his defense attorney, Seymour Swartz, appeared at the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice in Detroit, Michigan before Judge Gregory D. Bill to face charges of murder in the first degree brought by Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Christina Guiruis.

The trial began with the taped phone call Arthur Shelton placed to the Taylor police department in Taylor, Michigan October 18, 2004 at precisely 12:44 AM. Shelton sounded calm and prideful when he told the dispatcher he had just shot "the devil himself" with a revolver and a shotgun because "he [Hooper] didn't believe in God." Shelton told the dispatcher he was "still armed and ready to shoot again in case he moves. I want to make sure he's gone." When the dispatcher asked how many times he shot the victim Shelton replied, "hopefully enough." Throughout the 15 minute phone call Shelton often repeated, "I'm a Christian and an Eagle Scout and I wouldn't lie," and "don't worry about me, I'm fine, but he's the devil." The dispatcher struggled to persuade Shelton to lay down his weapon and go outdoors with his arms raised. Eventually Shelton complied but resisted, as he feared Hooper might not be "dead enough."

Dead enough was an understatement. When the police arrived they were confronted with the grizzly scene of Hooper sitting upright on the couch with his head blown away and his brain laying on his hand. The autopsy report presented by the prosecutor was gruesome to be sure, but for the record, Larry Hooper tested negative for all narcotics and alcohol.

Testimony by the arresting office and the transporting of Shelton to the police station revealed that while the officers were interested in gathering details about the incident, Shelton was obsessed with talking about God, the Eagle Scouts and stating he "would not talk to anyone who didn't believe in God but that he would talk to the police because he felt they believed in God."

On the second day of the trial the court played the videotape of the late night interrogation with Arthur Shelton. He appeared calm, cooperative and enjoyed the cookies and milk he was served. Once again Arthur was obsessed about talking about God and the Eagle Scouts. He stated he "was not sorry for a second that he killed Hooper." He stated, "In the eyes of the law I was wrong and will probably spend the rest of my life in prison, but in the eyes of God I have killed an evil person -- the devil himself." And when Arthur took the witness stand in his own defense he reiterated many of the same ideas.

Day three of the trial we heard summary arguments. The defense had little problem proving that Arthur is obsessed with religion, God and Eagle Scouts and pleaded for a verdict of not guilty due to insanity. The prosecution had little problem proving that Arthur was competent, knew the difference between right and wrong and called for a verdict of guilty of murder in the first degree. As this was a wavered trial Judge Bill rendered his verdict quickly -- guilty of second-degree murder with mental illness.

On December 19, 2005, we returned to Judge Bill’s court to witness sentencing of Arthur Shelton. The prosecution asked for the 'high end' of punishment - 25 to 45 years, while the defense was still pleading for not guilty due to insanity. The prosecution had little problem proving that Arthur was competent, knew the difference between right and wrong and called for a verdict of guilty of murder in the first degree. As this was a wavered trial Judge Bill rendered his verdict quickly -- guilty of second-degree murder with mental illness.

Judge Bill proceeded to tenderly read letters written to him from Shelton's family members pleading for leniency. Shelton sat facing the audience and blew kisses to his tearful and sometimes sobbing family. In the end, the now stern faced Judge Bill pronounced sentencing - 25 to 45 years. Shelton was stunned and tried to negotiate the sentence stating, "I'm 50 years old and that is as good as a life sentence." Judge Bill responded with, "Mr. Shelton you gave Larry Hooper a life sentence by committing one of the most heinous murders to come before my court." (Note) In a private conversation, the Prosecutor, Ms Guirguis explained that Michigan law requires that Shelton must serve 25 years before being eligible for parole.
For those in the military who are religious, I have no doubt that religion pays a key role in their life, and has helped them develop the internal strength to overcome some of the tougher challenges of military service. This would be especially true for those who've been in combat. For them it wouldn't seem like such a far stretch to believe that no one could overcome hot lead flying in their direction without the thought of some god looking down protecting them. And if they've never met an atheist during all their time in service that would just reinforce that belief. I for one have never met another atheist in uniform. I know they exist because I've met atheist veterans in the ACA for example. I also correspond online with atheist currently serving in every one of the services, and even some serving in foreign militaries. But it has been my experience that the majority of people don't wear their faiths on their sleeve, and as I said before I consider someone's religious outlook to be a private matter, so I don't go out querying people on their beliefs. Even though the non religious probably make up better than 10% of the armed forces you still have to actively go looking to find them. Most Christians aren't going to have a reason to do that, and as such can easily conclude that none exist. So for some people I can cut some slack on a 'no atheist in a foxhole' statement, but I will, and have before corrected them on it.

For those in the media though, who've never been to war, who've never done anything in defense of this country, who say things like this to further some anti secular agenda, I find particularly disgusting. If I had a forum in which I felt I could adequately respond I probably would. But you must remember that I'm not the activist type. I'd prefer not to dwell on these people and their comments, but let the experts with the connections handle them. I wish I could tell you that I was more involved with this battle, but unfortunately I cannot.

As we know, many Atheists served proudly in our nation's military in combat, but then went home and didn't mention to anyone that they also had no religion at the time. Would you please do our movement the great favor of reminding people here in America when you return, that you served proudly as a non-religious American?

I promise only to be myself.

TODD WALKER, let
C-130 Tactics, 745 EAS
Al Undead AB, Qt
ATHEIST COMMUNITY OF AUSTIN, Inc.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Please print) Last ____________________ Name ____________________ Initial _______
                  First ____________________ Name ____________________ Initial _______

Street Address _________________________________________________________________

City ____________________
State ______    ZIP__________

Phone (_______)__________________
e-mail ______________________________________

ACA PURPOSES (ACA Constitution, April 6, 1997)

The Atheist Community of Austin is organized as a nonprofit educational corporation to develop and support atheist community, to provide opportunities for socializing and friendship, to promote atheist viewpoints, to encourage positive atheist culture, to defend the first amendment principle of state-church separation, to oppose discrimination against atheists, and to work with other organizations in pursuit of common goals.

I affirm that I am without belief in god(s), and, that I have read and agree with the "Purposes" of the Atheist Community of Austin.

Affirmation Signature ________________________ Date ___________

ACA membership begins on March 1 of every year.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

$________ Individual $24 per year. Prorated at $2 per month for remainder of current membership year, through next February.

$________ Student/Retired $12 per year. Prorated at $1 per month for remainder of current membership year, through next February.

$________ Family $36 per year. Prorated at $3 per month for remainder of current membership year, through next February.

$________ Lifetime membership. $1,000.

And lastly, how did you first hear of the Atheist Community of Austin?
Killer of 'devil' sentenced to 25-45 years

Victim said he didn't believe in God, so his friend shot him

BY JOEL THURTELL, FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

December 29, 2005

It was one of the five "most heinous" crimes Wayne County Circuit Judge Gregory Bill has ever seen.

Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Christina Guirguis called it the "most gruesome" crime she's ever prosecuted.


"He blew the guy's head off," said Shelton's attorney, Seymour Schwartz.

Following a three-day bench trial, Bill found Shelton guilty Nov. 30 of second-degree murder for killing Hooper in the living room of his Taylor home, where Hooper was staying.

At 12:44 p.m. that October day, Shelton called Taylor police and told a dispatcher that he'd just blasted a man with a revolver and a shotgun because the man said he didn't believe in God.

The dead man was "the devil himself," Shelton told the dispatcher.

How many times did you shoot him? the dispatcher asked Shelton.

"Hopefully, enough," replied Shelton. "I want to make sure he's gone."

Shelton fired four or five revolver bullets and at least three shotgun blasts into 62-year-old Hooper's head, Guirguis said.

"This is a sort of victory," Schwartz said of the sentence. The judge could have sentenced Shelton to life in prison. At 51, Shelton will be 76 when he gets out of prison -- if he's released after 25 years. He could be held for the full 45 years, Schwartz said.

In addition, Bill sentenced Shelton to two years in prison for his conviction on a charge of using a firearm during the commission of a felony. The two-year sentence, minus time served awaiting trial, must be served first.

Before the shooting, Hooper had told Shelton that Shelton couldn't say anything to convince him to believe in God, according to police.

Shelton left the room, took off his shirt, shaved his face and tried again to convince Hooper there is a God. But at that point, Shelton had a 12-gauge shotgun.

"How long would it take you to believe in God?" Shelton said he asked Hooper.

"Not until I hear Gabriel blow his horn," replied Hooper.

Hooper tipped his hat and Shelton fired the shotgun at Hooper's head.

"I did it because he is evil; he was not a believer," Shelton said.

Later, Shelton told cops he might have second thoughts about the existence of God. "Maybe there's not" a God, he said.

But in his house that day, police could not persuade Shelton to come out the front door. He didn't want to pass Hooper's body because Hooper's "evil soul" might jump into him, Shelton later said, according to Schwartz.

Bill found him guilty of second-degree murder but mentally ill, Guirguis said.

Schwartz said religion wasn't the motive for the shooting.

"Shelton was a nut," said Schwartz.

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Florida School Voucher Program Struck Down  On Thursday, January 3, 2006, the Florida State Supreme Court struck down that state’s private school voucher scheme, which was enacted as a state law in 1999. The vote wasn’t very close either: 5-2. In that ruling, the high court said that the private school voucher system there undermines public schools and violates the Florida Constitution’s requirement of a uniform system of free public education. Chief Justice Barbara Pariente said that the program “diverts public dollars into separate private systems parallel to and in competition with the free public schools.”

Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Member Arrested in Gay Solicitation Lewdness In Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in the first week of January, 2006, Lonnie Latham, senior pastor at South Tulsa Baptist Church was arrested on a misdemeanor charge of offering to engage in an act of lewdness, and later released on $500 bail. The arrest came as part of a plainclothes police sting outside the Habana Inn, which has been the scene of a lot of male prostitution in the past. The charge carries a penalty of up to one year in prison and a $2,500 fine. Lonnie Latham has been a strong proponent of Baptist churches’ attempts to convert gays and lesbians to heterosexuality, stressing that homosexuality is a “sinful, destructive lifestyle.”

Austin Classic Rock Radio Station Switches to Religius Format Austin’s only Classic Rock radio station has gone Christian. On December 26, 2005, KPEZ-FM, 102.3, which played only Classic Rock music for many many years, became Clear Channel Communications Inc.’s first contemporary Christian radio station in the nation. CCC said that the move was intended to gain “more ratings traction.” The station is now known as “The River.” Now Austin has no classic rock station, and KLBJ-FM, 93.7, Austin’s most popular NEW rock station is not expected to take up any of the slack by playing classic rock any more than they already do.

Christians Angered by Democrats’ “Hypocrite Fish” The Washington State Democrats recently removed from their website their new fish design, a fish with the word “Hypocrite” in the middle, surrounded by red flames, due to complaints found on a weblog. On the weblog, writers called the new fish design an example of hostility that the Democratic Party supposedly has towards religious people, mainly Christians.

Navy Chaplain on Hunger Strike Over Christian Prayers A Protestant Navy chaplain is on a hunger strike in protest of restrictions on how he prays publicly at Navy religious services. Lt. Gordon J. Klingenschmitt had been praying out loud at services “in Jesus’ name.” But recently the chief of Navy chaplains informed Lt. Klingernschmitt that praying “in Jesus’ name” denigrates other faiths. During chapel services, which are said to be optional, Navy personel of many different faiths attend, not just Christians. However Lt. Klingenschmitt had been praying to Jesus, and also had said that “Jesus is the way to heaven.” The chief of Navy chaplains instructed him to stop referring to Jesus that way, and in response, Lt. Klingenschmitt has begun a hunger strike - in front of the White House. He also referred to a law that permits individual chaplains to conduct public worship “according to the manner and forms of his own church.” That law was passed in 1860, years before the end of the civil war, and over 100 years before the 1963 Supreme Court Decision banning mandatory prayer and Bible-reading from all public schools. It was also before blacks and women gained the right to vote. Obviously a lot has changed in America since 1860, including the recognition of the existence of non-Christians’ rights in America. Also since 1860, HUNDREDS of new religions have been invented, and lots of them have thrived and are prominent today, in civilian circles, as well as the military.
I add now a disgusting chain of events that took place in the courtroom, the hallways, the lobby of the court building, the staircase outside of the courthouse and even the ladies bathroom. George Shiffer and myself attended day one of the trial. Upon arrival we were asked who we were and I gave the court my American Atheist business card. Word that we were Atheists traveled fast in this court room that offered very limited seating and the only others in attendance were 11 members of Shelton's family who immediately began taunting George and me with "the people from hell, evil, and devils." At breaks they waited for us in the hall and continued with more of the same while adding "God loves you" and blowing us kisses and shoving their crosses worn on chains around there necks in our face. Several of the women even followed me into the bathroom and did their best to intimidate me with their crosses. Through it all George and I never flinched, but at the conclusion of the day I reported this taunting to the Officer of the Court who admitted that they were aware of the problem and escorted us to the elevator, past and to the disappointment of the waiting group of 'good Christians.'

On Day two when George and I, together with Joe Milon, entered the court room the taunting began immediately. Within an hour the Judge announced that those making gestures and faces had better cease or they would be removed. For the balance of the day the Christians wore their neck crosses on their backs, as we were seated in the back row, while constantly flopping them about with their hand. Upon returning from lunch and without court escort, the Christians were waiting for us on the seventh floor and lunged at us with small signs they had painted - Jesus lives, God loves you and again their crosses thrusting all of this within 2 or 3 inches from our noses. Tempers flared and a brief shouting match began. Brief because the court officers were there in a flash.

Day three found Atheist Lee Helms in the same taunting position of the previous days though he was not known to the court or the Christians. At the conclusion of the day an off ricer of the court detained him stating they have been having trouble with 'those' (Christians) people and given an escort to the elevators.

But, having all that behind us, December 19th, the day of sentencing was a horrific experience for myself, George Shiffer, Joe Milon, Lee Helms and Marty Maier. When leaving the courtroom the 'Christian' Shelton family lay in wait for us in the hallway. Their tears dried and surrounding us shouting these comments, "The one good thing of all of this is that another Atheist is dead and the world is better off for it." And, "the only good Atheist is a dead Atheist."

Submitted by: ARLENE-MARIE, Michigan State Director, American Atheists amarie@atheists.org (313)388-9594 www.michiganatheists.org PO Box 0025, Allen Park, MI 48101

American Atheists is a nationwide movement that defends civil rights for nonbelievers; works for the total separation of church and state and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy.

Your Editor Comments...

I think all Atheists and other Freethinkers need to be made aware of this. There are more than ten Shelton family members who have already exposed themselves as religious extremists who embrace the concept of killing Atheists for their god. We know there are thousands of Christians, Muslims and others out there with the same mindset. We need to be vigilant around them, and we also need to be aware of whenever one of our own is oppressed. In this case, it’s even more important because the oppression came in the form of flat out murder.

We’re constantly told that our complaints of being pushed around by Christians are exaggerated and based on lies. Let us never forget these extreme cases, and how they are sometimes documented by the government. In this case, it was documented and acted upon by police, court clerks, investigators, a judge, and now officials at a prison. It’s hard to believe that such a disturbing turn of events could be ignored by the media, but so far, apart from The Detroit Free Press, the media has been mostly silent about this. I believe it behooves us Atheists to talk about this out loud, and remind Christians that we’re aware of how our people are treated so badly by so many Christians. And that it’s no joke. JZ
For those of you on the ACA e-mail list, but not in Austin, the ACA produces both a cable access TV program called the Atheist Experience and an Internet radio program called the Non Prophets. The Atheist Experience is geared at a general audience and the Non Prophets is geared more at an atheist audience.

Audio from the Atheist Experience TV show has been available on the web for a while now. I don't know if it ever got announced. It's available in MP3 format and via the OGG format, which doesn't require proprietary software on your computer. We provide a little applet that will load via your web browser and play the episode.

Just recently, the audio from the shows have been packaged as a "Podcast", which is a simple syndication mechanism for audio channels. The Atheist Experience is now visible in many of the Podcast syndication hubs. For those not familiar with it, it helps the automatic pulling of content to you so that you can listen to it at your leisure with an MP3 player or on your computer. It makes it convenient to listen to keep up with the shows as they are produced.

If you're interested in video from the Atheist Experience, we have DVDs for sale ($5) on the products section of the ACA web site.

The ACA's Non Prophets Internet radio show has had these features for a while.

Anyway, I wanted to make people on this group aware of these developments.

The Atheist Experience web site is <http://www.atheist-experience.com/> and the Atheist Experience podcast feed is <http://www.atheist-experience.com/podcast.php>. This latter link is something you'd need to put into your iTunes program or other program for pulling content. iTunes can be downloaded for free from apple.com, regardless of whether you have an MP3 player. It works best with an iPod MP3 player, but it's not required.

The Non Prophets web site is <http://www.nonprophetsradio.com/> and their podcast feed is <http://www.nonprophetsradio.com/nonprophets.xml>.

While I'm on the subject, American Atheists also has a cable TV show which they broadcast this way. Their show is called Atheist Viewpoint. (See <http://www.atheists.org/> and scroll to the bottom of the page for the podcast feed.) Of course, there's the Infidel Guy, who puts on a good show, as well. (See <http://www.infidelguy.com/>.)

I think as far as quality, our productions are at least as good as the "national" ones.

--Don Baker

ACA members who appear on the Atheist Experience, our cable public access channel TV show. Sundays at 4pm on Channel 10, Time Warner Cable in Austin

The Infidel Guy is Reginald Finley, Sr.. You may remember Reginald and the Finley Family on ABC’s Wife Swap recently. He has a great online radio show too, called the Infidelguy Show and you can find out more about it by going to www.infidelguy.com