

THE ATHEIST VOICE

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE METROPLEX ATHEISTS
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NEWS

"God's banker" murder trial begins

American Atheists

FLASH LINE

The trial has begun in Rome, Italy over the 1982 murder of Roberto Calvi, the man dubbed "God's Banker" who had close ties to the Vatican, global financial institutions, organized crime and a shadowy neo-fascist movement.

Calvi was found hanging with his hands tied behind his back under Blackfriar's Bridge in London on June 18, 1982. Bricks and thousands in British Pound currency were stuffed in his pockets.

Investigators originally ruled the death a suicide, but in 1998 an Italian judge ordered the exhumation of Calvi's body for a new autopsy and a subsequent probe into the incident. Authorities began a new investigation in 2002 after medical experts revealed that Calvi had in fact been strangled near the bridge and then hung from it. Several defendants, including a convicted mobster were indicted, and went on trial last month.

Legal proceedings will resume on November 28.

While the case has remained a sensation on the continent even after more than two



decades, news coverage of the trial by American media has been sketchy. Many of the personalities, events and details in the Calvi story involve Europe. But it is the recurrent "Vatican connection" through a Chicago archbishop, Calvi's indirect ties to the collapse of a major New York financial institution, and the peculiar relationship between the Holy See and the U.S. government which provides a distinct American

flavor to the mysterious case.

The man at the center of the story, Roberto Calvi, was head of Banco Ambrosiano, a private financial institution with links to the Vatican. The bank failed in one of the most catastrophic financial debacles in modern Italian history, with the equivalent of nearly two billion dollars vanishing into off-shore accounts. Banco

Continued on page 9

SOCAS

The Kansas School Board: Flat-Earth Society?

Jeremy Leaming

AMERICANS UNITED

Public school students were dealt a serious and troubling blow when the Kansas Board of Education approved a policy that undermines both church-state separation and the teaching of science.

By a 6-4 vote, the Board adopted highly controversial science standards that will affect the way science is taught in the state's public schools. The new standards promote the Religious Right-fueled myth that Darwin's theory of evolution is con-

troversial among scientists and that there are other valid scientific theories available for students to consider.

Most disconcerting is the state's new definition of science, which is not limited to natural explanations of life's origins. This means students in Kansas can be led to believe that there is a scientific theory that says the universe was created by supernatural forces.

Supporters of the neo-creationist idea, "intelligent design," (ID) could not be happier with the Kansas officials' actions. The Discovery Institute, a high-profile propo-

nent of ID, which posits that life is so complex that an intelligent force must be behind its creation, applauded the Kansas board's action, telling The New York Times that the state now has "the best science standards in the nation."

The Discovery Institute, supported by some of the nation's leading Religious Right figures, has long sought to undermine the teaching of evolution in the public schools. The Institute has spent years and lots of money attacking evolution as a

Continued on page 3

THE BACKSIDE OF AMERICAN HISTORY

Christmas in America

ED WALLACE

Now that Christmas time is once again upon us, it might be worthwhile to examine the holiday and what it meant to our ancestors in this country - which was absolutely nothing for hundreds of years. In fact, in the beginning, it was illegal even to acknowledge Christmas in America: It took too much time away from work.

It's true. The Massachusetts Bay Colony banned both the Christmas Holiday and the event's inherently celebratory nature in 1659. In fact, if you or your family were caught in the holiday spirit, you would be punished for it. The actual law read that anybody who was "found observing it, by abstinence from labor, feasting or any other way," would be "punished to a degree established by the Council."

As with most laws, this one came into being because someone perceived harm without it: In 1659, the colonies were barely surviving, hanging on by a fragile thread. Anyone who willfully did less than his full share to ensure the colony's success just wasn't tolerated very well. Twenty-five years later, when the colony was better established, the law forbidding the celebration of Christmas was taken off the books. But, after the holiday had been banned for a whole generation, not many people celebrated it, in spite of the fact that they could now do so legally. Even as late as 1685, Judge Samuel Sewall wrote gleefully in his legal diary that he hadn't noticed one person that year celebrating Christmas. Well, maybe he just didn't get invited.

In fact, as late as 1841, if you looked through the pages of the New York Tribune for that year, you'd find not one ad, not one story that mentioned Christmas or even gave the occasion a religious spin in print.

However, by then the idea of Christmas had at least started in this country. All thanks to Saint A. Claus.

Santa Claus himself is the real magic of Christmas today. The celebration surrounding that "jolly old elf" is actually a mixture and adaptation of many different cultures' ways of marking the holidays.

According to Christian history from the 4th century he was really St. Nicholas of Myra - the Bishop of Myra, in what is now Turkey. Born to a wealthy family, legend says, he took pity on three poor girls and bought them presents one year. It was also said that he once stopped a storm at sea to save three sailors, and that he threw his inherited wealth down the chimneys of his town's poorest people. From that tradition, we get the one of hanging stockings on the fireplace mantel: According to legend, it was stockings being dried near a fireplace that caught the gold coins dropped by Saint Nicholas.

Here's the bad news. It looks like this story is nothing more than a myth created by the church. For no historian has ever found a record of a Bishop Nicholas in Myra during this period. It is believed that Turkey's "Saint Nicholas" combined the attributes of the Greek god Poseidon and the German god Nickar. One saved sailors; the other gave gifts to the poor.

Five hundred years later, when the Vikings invaded Europe in the 9th century, they brought their own tradition, laid down by their God Odin, of giving small gifts during the winter months. The custom eased the stresses induced by their land's harsh climate.

Now, you already know part of this story, you just didn't know where it came from. The Viking God Odin had 12 children, one for each month of the year. His twelfth child, a daughter, represented December, or Jultid (Yool-ted), in the Vikings' language. Odin's daughter's name was Yalka, or Jule (Yool). December, or Jultid, the Viking name was Anglicized by the British as Yuletide.

So, we have the Vikings bringing their



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winter traditions to Europe from the West in the 9th century, and two hundred years later we have the story of Saint Nicholas reaching Europe from the East.

The two stories seem to have merged into one in Holland, where Sinter Klaas rode through the villages on December 6th, dressed in a Bishop's gown and riding an eight-legged horse, which is what the Viking god Odin rode.

And now, the dark side of the story, which lives in one variation today. With Sinter Klaas rode an elf named Black Peter, who instead of giving gifts whipped the bad children of the houses they visited. And in the late 1600s, the Dutch brought that legend to their American settlements in the New York area. Black Peter disappeared from the story once it was resettled in America, too scary for kids. Of Black Peter, our Christmas legend retains only helper elves. Santa now does the "knowing whether you've been naughty or nice" part, too.

Continued on page 5

METROPLEX ATHEISTS

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Kansas – From page 1

shaky and controversial theory and advancing a religiously based approach to life’s origins.

The National Academy of Sciences, chartered by Congress to provide the nation with information on scientific discoveries, has not supported the Kansas School Board’s actions. In late October, the NAS said the Board’s new standards “distort the definition of science.” The NAS and the National Science Teachers Association also announced they would not allow the Board to use any of their publications in conjunction with the new science policy.

The new Kansas science standards are more troubling than the ones approved by the Board in 1999. Those standards downgraded the teaching of evolution in the public schools by removing questions about evolution from statewide student tests. Board members who supported those standards were subsequently ousted in 2000. But the Board was again taken over by Religious Right activists in 2004, and they proceeded quickly to throw the state back into the creationism/evolution debate.

The situation in Kansas has drawn concern from many quarters. Americans United for Separation of Church

and State is looking into the constitutionally troubling situation. And Kansas Citizens for Science believes the new science policy must be corrected. Jack Krebs, the group’s vice president, told Reuters that the state school board is really “advancing a sectarian religious view. They’re treading on constitutional grounds.”

While Kansas is heading in the wrong way on the creationism/evolution issue, things are looking up in Pennsylvania.

In Dover, Pa., the school board passed an anti-evolution policy that opens the door to discussion of ID in the public schools. That policy spurred a costly federal lawsuit and resulted in the defeat of the policy’s supporters in yesterday’s school board elections. Eight school board members who backed ID were voted off the board. They were replaced by candidates who ran against the ID policy. The Times reported that many of those new board members said they were ready to scrap the ID policy.

The change of board personnel will not affect a lawsuit against the Dover ID scheme filed by Americans United and the Pennsylvania ACLU. However, it probably means that the upcoming federal district court decision in the matter will not be appealed to higher courts.

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SOCAS

City drops threat of property seizure that would benefit church

American Atheists

FLASHLINE

The Mayor of Jersey City, NJ announced Friday that he was ending a ploy to use the municipality's authority of eminent domain to seize a privately owned business and transfer the land to a Roman Catholic school.

For Mr. Cheng Tan, owner of the Golden Cicada Tavern and Restaurant it is, for now, the end of a legal nightmare that began when the city's redevelopment agency attempted this past summer to grab the business and the apartment where he lives so that St. Peter's Preparatory School could expand its athletic field.

According to published reports, the school built its new field last year. School authorities, though, were told that the facility was 7 yards shy of regulations that would permit varsity games to be played there. The school says that it spent over \$4 million assembling the property.

St. Peter's first tried to purchase a garage behind the tavern, but Mr. Tan declined to sell. The church then approached government leaders, and they ordered the redevelopment agency to begin proceedings to seize the entire property in a forced transaction which would have given Tan

\$500,000 for the real estate.

In court, City Planning Director Robert Cotter argued that the need for St. Peter's to have its athletic field trumped Mr. Tan's rights to own the disputed property and operate it as a tavern and restaurant.

"A lot of people who send their kids to school may not be able to stay in Jersey City if not for the school," Cotter explained to reporters. "A school, whether public or private, is considered an inherently beneficial use."

The incident underscores the expanding national debate over government use of eminent domain, as well as efforts by religious groups to use this powerful legal instrument, and conversely exempt themselves from government-mandated expropriation of property.

Governments have usually employed the distasteful practice for "public" projects such as constructions of roads, airports and similar facilities. In the 1950s, eminent domain was invoked for purposes of urban "redevelopment," as entire neighborhoods were torn down and replaced by new housing projects and businesses. Critics of the practice have accumulated evidence over the years suggesting that the benefits of such undertakings come with a steep price, and may not outweigh consequences like

the destruction of entire neighborhoods or the weightier ethical and legal problems of forcible property seizure.

Now, much of the fight involving eminent domain is focused on cities and states seizing homes or parcels, and then transferring the land to private developers. It is, for opponents, a frightening trend, one that benefits big money interests and those with powerful connections.

Commenting on the Jersey City dispute, attorney Steve Anderson of the Institute for Justice in Washington told the Newark Star Ledger newspaper, "This is one of the most egregious cases of eminent domain in the country." Reporter Steve Chambers described St. Peter's Preparatory School as "a respected institution with powerful political ties."

The Jersey City case along with other incidents across the country has fostered an unusual alliance of conservative property rights organizations like the Institute, libertarians and even the American Civil Liberties Union. Ed Brocas, ACLU's director of legal affairs for New Jersey said, "It's inappropriate for government to take land from one person and give it another for their personal use. It's even more inappropriate to take it to benefit a particular religion."



TEMPTED?
www.metroplexatheists.org

Christmas – From page 2

The Dutch also gave us the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas, albeit small food gifts for children.

From them also we get the part about Sinter Klaas' living at the North Pole and using reindeer instead of horses.

The first printed story on Sinter Klaas in America was printed in 1773; his name was anglicized to Saint A. Claus.

In 1822, a scholar and organist named Clement Clarke Moore wrote the poem "An Account of a Visit from Saint Nicholas." Moore called his poem "nothing more than a trifle," but it is the one thing he is remembered for today: You may know his poem better as "The Night Before Christmas."

And at that point, most of the American Christmas story's ingredients were in place.

At the same time, in Europe, the story was evolving again. Now Christkindlein, or the Christ child, who passed out gifts to children with the help of Pelaznickel - also an elf, but one with St. Nicholas' attributes, had replaced St. Nicholas.

In time, the stories again would merge into one, but two more things happened first. In 1863, the famous American illustrator, Thomas Nast, drew the first modern Santa Claus for Harper's Magazine. And almost immediately, Santa was drafted into our first known use of psychological warfare. It's true. Abraham Lincoln had Nast draw Santa Claus in a Union Army

camp. That photo was copied and distributed throughout the South, to demoralize the Confederate Army. No word on whether it worked. But, we do know the war went on.

Santa was put to work again just after the Civil War. Northern merchants, needing to improve their sales in the dead of winter, merged all of the stories together and created the modern Christmas holiday. They blended the gift giving and Sinter Klaas of the Dutch with the German Christkindlein, the Turkish St. Nicholas, the French Père Noel and the Viking Jultid. All of them had magically morphed into the image Nast had drawn: A distinctively dressed, kindly, jovial, cuddly, downright nice old bearded guy with a big lap - basically the one we now see in smart stores everywhere, guarded by elves, at the head of a line of acquisitive kids.

Well, the next thing we knew, by 1870, Christmas giving had become so popular that, from that year on, America's best retail month of the year has been December. The last little piece of the story pranced into place when Rudolph, our little red-nosed reindeer, made the scene in 1939. Robert L. May, a 34-year-old copywriter for the Montgomery Ward chain, created Rudolph's story as a Christmas promotion.

May based his book, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, on the story of the Ugly Duckling. And at first May called him Rollo, then Reginald, before he settled on Rudolph. But name aside, Montgomery

Ward executives had a problem with Rudolph's red nose; 1939 wasn't that long after the end of Prohibition, and red noses were associated with hardcore alcoholics. May had to take his boss to the Lincoln Zoo to sketch reindeers to prove that Rudolph's red nose wouldn't be associated with drunks.

The promotion went well, but the Rudolph phenomenon didn't really catch fire until May's brother-in-law, songwriter Johnny Marks, developed the lyrics and melody for a Rudolph song. Singing cowboy Gene Autry recorded Marks' musical version of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" in 1949; it sold two million copies that year, and went on to become one of the best-selling songs of all time (second only to "White Christmas"). Have you ever met a kid who didn't know the words?

And that, my festive friends, is the story of the evolution of Christmas in America. Once outlawed here, Christmas has absorbed the festivals of many cultures. And we Americans have added our own little twists to make it the special time of year it is today - at least, for every good little girl and boy.

Ed Wallace is both an automotive analyst and historian, who is often quoted in major newspapers across America for breaking automotive news and when his historical background is needed on an automotive story.



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HELL HOUSE 2005

Sinner's souls saved, 10 bucks each

William McEwen
METROPLEX ATHEISTS

For 15 years, Trinity Church of Cedar Hill has been doing its best to scare teens into loving Jesus through its annual Hell House Halloween fundraiser.

At least that's how the church characterizes it. I attended Hell House last year and was troubled by what I saw. It was just gratuitous violence, a sure draw for teens paying \$9 each to get in, making it a great source of income for the church. From what my fellow Metroplex Atheists told me, the scenes inside the haunted house haven't changed much over the years.

In an Oct. 21 e-mail message to his followers, Trinity Church executive minister Tim Ferguson announced:

HellHouse launched with great favor! Performances are scheduled for this weekend starting at 7:00 pm. Many of the scenes have changed and the ministry is very entertaining and effective.

I decide to go again this year. Might the changes Pastor Ferguson mentions be reforms? Perhaps criticism from Metroplex Atheists played a role in making the fundraiser more age-appropriate for the thousands of teens who flock from all over?

I arrive on Friday, Oct. 28, 30 minutes before showtime. It's ten bucks this year. I'm ninth in line. Much better than last year, when my wait was more than three hours. The first 24 of us are put on a trailer and driven to Hell House. All are teens with a few exceptions. The biggest exception is me – at 45 years old and there by myself, I must stick out like a sore thumb. A twenty-something mom is there, and I'm disturbed

to see she's brought her five-year-old son Tyler. He is way too young to be here.

The show begins, and it looks like a repeat of last year. First we see a video of a guy dressed as a cop welcoming us to Hell House. In the next room, another video. This time it's a scene from Dallas! A bunch of teens are riding on DART – Dallas Area Rapid Transit. The theme this year is "DARKRAIL" and the story zeros in on a terrorist who is traveling on the same DART train as the teens. The train makes it to the DART station, and the terrorist leaves his book bag in the station.

We're supposed to be wondering if the book bag contains a bomb. But instead, I'm wondering, isn't DART a government agency? Why are they part of Hell House?

Next a live action classroom scene. Last time the school kids were taken hostage by a mad gunman. This time, there's no shooter. The students are harassing each other. The official Hell House staff ghouls tell us about the students. One is a fag (her term, not one I would use). One is a whore (ditto on the source). Another is spoiled by her father, who, we learn, is also molesting her. And there is Michelle, the one Christian in the class. She is mocked by the others.

Eventually, the straight kid beats up the gay kid. A change from last year, when the bad guy was a mad gunman who shot everyone. The lights go out, the strobe lights come on, and we're escorted to the next room.

Now we're in a locker room. Nick and Brian, teen homosexual lovers, are arguing. They are wearing football uniforms that say "Gophers." A guy named Chris shows up.

The ghoul takes credit for making Chris gay. Chris learns that Brian isn't really gay then Nick (or is it Brian) shoots Chris and then the lights go out, the strobe lights come on, and we're escorted to the next room.

Now it's spring break, and we're at a bar. A girl pressures her friend to "find a guy," but she doesn't like the idea. Then three guys show up. Guy One is drunk and wants to find a girl. Guy Two tells him "It's what is inside that counts."

Guy Three slips something into the sweet girl's drink. Then he drags her out of view and rapes her. He soon returns to the dance floor claiming victory.

I'm concerned about five-year-old Tyler. He's watching it all and I'm doing my best to resist the urge to scream at the mother, "What the hell is wrong with you? Take him out of here!" But remember, this is all under the auspices of Trinity Church of Cedar Hill. So it has to be OK, right?

Next room. Five kids are sitting on a couch watching TV. The ghoul tells us it's the party of the year. One teen is snorting cocaine, and likes it a lot. "This is off the chain!" she exclaims, which I take to be a compliment. On the table are beer bottles, a bong, and What-a-burger cups.

Some of the partying kids leave, and we find Rachel and Mark alone together. They are arguing. Then a teen with a gun arrives, demanding money from Mark. The guy shoots Mark. Then the lights go out and a strobe light comes on. Like Pavlov's dogs, I've learned that strobe lights mean the scene is over.

I notice our group of 24 customers has

Continued on page 8



*Metroplex Atheists:
No fire and
brimstone required*

www.metroplexatheists.org



Photo by Richard Cotter

MARCH ON WASHINGTON

The historic "Atheists in Foxholes" event took place this Veterans Day (November 11, 2005) and included a Parade down the Mall in Washington, DC to a rally featuring a program of speakers, music and video.

"Atheists in Foxholes" was being organized by American Atheists, and is supported by Freethought, Humanist and other nonbeliever groups across the country. The purpose is to build awareness of the contributions of "Atheists in Foxholes," men and women who have served in our nation's armed forces or are currently on active duty with the military. James Harwick (Left) represented the Metroplex Atheists in during the event. Harwick served in both Korea and World War II. He joined the war effort at the age of 15.

A large graphic featuring a stylized American flag as a background. The stars and stripes are rendered in a soft, slightly blurred style. Overlaid on the right side of the flag is the text: "To the 'Atheists in foxholes' proudly serving the United States: Thank you for your unselfish sacrifice so that we may all live in a safer world." On the left side, there are three sections of text, each starting with a war name in italics: "WWII & Korea:", "Korea:", and "Iraq:". Each section lists the names of individuals who served. At the bottom of the graphic, the website address "www.atheistfoxholes.org" is written in a lowercase, spaced-out font.

To the "Atheists in foxholes" proudly serving the United States:

Thank you for your unselfish sacrifice so that we may all live in a safer world.

WWII & Korea:

James Hardwick (Ret), Navy

Korea:

Chris Gregory, Air Force

Iraq:

Brian McIntosh (Ret), Marines

Shawn Ruzek, Marines

Deanne Dice

www.atheistfoxholes.org

Hell – From page 6

grown. Many of the teen actors from the earlier scenes have joined us.

Next, an examination room. The ghoul informs us we will witness the “American version of the Holocaust.” This is the abortion scene, and it too is different this year. Last year, a teen bled between the legs after an untidy abortion. This time, Heather and her boyfriend discuss whether she should have an abortion. He pressures her to go ahead, then it’s legs up and open on the table. A nurse places forceps (kitchen tongs, actually) under Heather’s gown and pulls out a slimy brown thing that is supposed to be a tiny head.

Heather screams she’s changed her mind, but it’s too late. Heather faints and dies. The ghoul tells the boyfriend, “Leave! No one knows you’re here!”

Like last year, video of aborted fetuses plays on monitors above us. Disturbing images of small bodies and body parts. Not suitable for anyone to see, in my opinion.

We are escorted out of the room as the ghouls sing, “Hush little baby, don’t you cry, ‘cause your daddy wanted you to die.”

Next we’re in a living room, and there is a lot of booze around. A television plays porn. On the screen we see skin and couples, but no naughty bits. The TV goes black and now it’s time for more live action. A lawyer brags to his wife that his rapist client was declared innocent today. The evidence “disappeared” he boasts. He also declares, “Money is god!” Wife is not amused by any of this. They argue, then it comes out that he routinely rapes their daughter Elizabeth. There’s a big fight, and the lawyer stabs his wife with an ice pick. Once again, the ghoul takes credit.

Great stuff. Are you enjoying this Tyler? I want to admonish Tyler’s mom, but I’m still trying to be a fly on the wall. Then – thank goodness (not god) – Mom and Tyler find an exit. The show is over for Tyler.

Next we go into Elizabeth’s bedroom. She is planning to shoot her murderous/incestuous father. She gets a gun. The bedroom door opens, and Elizabeth shoots. But it isn’t her dad! It’s Mom, who had somehow survived. Until now. This is the first sight of blood tonight. Elizabeth then commits suicide by slitting her wrists.

I notice that a few of the teen girls in our group are crying. This scene got to them.

The next room is more video. I find all the watching TV at Hell House annoying. Here we see video of the twin towers collapsing, the Columbine shootings, and Hurricane Rita flooding. In the corner of the hurricane video is the NBC network logo. I wonder if anyone at NBC knows their news footage is playing at Hell House. Then there’s more video from the DART station.

Next we’re placed into small closets, three at a time, and told we’re in coffins. A recording warning us of the “wages of sin” plays. The ghouls outside are tapping and knocking on the coffin walls. I knock back, which seems to alarm the two strangers sharing the small dark space with me. Then we go into another room and watch a video about heaven. “No one knows what heaven is really like,” the announcer tells us.

Oh, really? I want to say, “Check out Revelation. It’s a book in the bible.” But I keep my mouth shut. Just a fly on the wall.

We watch video of families, people floating, and then Jesus being tortured and hanged on a cross. It’s very bloody. One of the teens in our group is sniffing and wiping away tears.

Next we’re shown our other choice. Hell! Trinity Church might not know what heaven is like, but they know what hell is like. It’s live action and a bit of a disappointment. A dark cavern, a dirt floor, and kids getting kicked. Severed heads on poles. But no fire, no pitchforks, and no sign of Satan. Must have been the dark master’s day off.

And now it’s time for the lecture. We’re led into a room where a man named Larry speaks to us. He’s in his 40s. “I hope you enjoyed it,” he tells us, which I find a little strange.

“Is your whole group here?” he asks.

“No,” I tell him. “There was a little five-year-old kid with us, but he’s gone now.”

Larry doesn’t care, and begins his speech. Larry assumes that Hell House has been a profound experience for all of us, and he wants it to be a catalyst to changing our lives.

A tall blond teen girl in our group wearing a Turner Volleyball sweatshirt is weeping. Most of the others look disinterested. Larry rambles on and on, just winging it.

No script or apparent plan other than more or less imploring us to resist evil temptation if we want to prevent the bad things we just saw from happening to us.

Larry reminds us that any of us could die at any time. We need to make sure we’re right with the lord. He tells us the next room has counselors we can talk to and pray with. He tells us to take it seriously and not joke around.

These are the volunteers the church is always desperate to recruit. In fact, the Oct. 23 Trinity Church Sunday Bulletin urged members to become Hell House counselors, adding, “Don’t miss this opportunity to minister to hundreds who are hurting and looking for the way.”

We go into the counseling room. About six or seven in our group head straight outdoors. They’re done. Not me. I sit and look at the form we’re supposed to fill out. Name and address, and a few questions. Two counselors eye me with anticipation. I stare at the form for 30 seconds and write nothing. I look up and tell them and say, “I think I’m done.”

They say, “OK.”

That’s it? I thought I looked like someone who needed spiritual counseling! But they just smile and let me slip away into the night. I’m surprised and disappointed. It might have been fun to open their eyes a little with bible verses that are unknown to them. Jesus quoted in Matthew 16:28 is always a good conversation starter: “Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, ‘til they see the son of man coming in his kingdom.” Jesus lied to his disciples about the second coming! What do you say about that, volunteer counselor?

Next time I’ll do my best to appear as if I’m hurting and looking for the way.

I walk back toward the parking lot and see hundreds of teens in line. As I pass the ticket counter, I hear a staff member tell a group that the wait is approximately two hours. More paying customers. More and more and more.

The changes to Hell House this year were minor and none were reforms. That’s a sound business decision by church leaders who exploit thousands of kids who pay ten bucks each, drawn by the irresistible allure of violence and gore.

Nuts in the news

Fort Worth, TX

In our July/August issue, we told you about a water stained apartment window in Fort Worth, which Christians had declared a vision of Jesus. Hundreds of believers flocked to see and touch the stain, and many claimed it to be the source of miracles.

In June, the sacred pane was removed and relocated to St. Augustine Old Roman Catholic Church in Fort Worth. The window soon vanished, but no one is talking about miracles this time. Clara Martinez, the owner of the window, is now at odds with church leaders about where the window is and who is responsible for its disappearance.

Cincinnati, OH

The state Parole Board has revoked the parole of a mentally ill man, Melvin McMurray who is serving time for killing a co-worker, after officials received a disturbing psychiatric report on him. "Once we got that evaluation, the board decided it was in the best interests of the public not to release him," said James O'Keefe. His violence has continued during his years in prison. He cold-cocked another inmate and told guards he did so because the person was evil. Fifteen minutes later, he kicked a

guard in the mouth, saying the Holy Spirit told him to do so. Another time, he stabbed an inmate with a pen, saying God told him to. McMurray also told police that God had told him to kill his co-worker.

Stuart, FL

Residents have been blasted three hurricanes in the past two years, but that's not stopping their annual Bible Reading Marathon from taking place. "We're holding it because God told us it would be protection for our city, our country and our nation,"

organizer Donna Healton. Healton's home was destroyed last year when Hurricane Jeanne battered the state. She and her husband Gene have been residing in a FEMA trailer ever since.

Chattanooga, TN

Philip Badowski, who said he was heeding a call from God when he gunned down his parents and used a chain saw to cut up his mother's body, pleaded guilty to first-degree murder. Badowski told officers who interviewed him

that he killed his parents because "God told me to." He also said the killings were "spur of the moment" after his parents scolded him when they returned from a weeklong mission trip to Haiti, where they worked drilling wells.

Charlotte, NC

Two high school students threatened to shoot other students and staff at Bible Baptist School. Other students heard the comments and foiled the plot by informing school leaders. Both students were immediately expelled and are now being held at a juvenile detention facility. However, the families are still members of the church. Parishioners there said that rather than being angry at them, they are praying for them.

Athens, Greece

A prisoner in a Romanian jail is suing God. "God received different material valuables from me, as well as prayers in exchange for promises of a better life. In reality, this did not happen - I found myself in the devil's hands," the plaintiff said. He blames God for the troubles in his life and wants God brought to account for failing to fulfill the commitments He undertook and for taking bribes. The plaintiff said that when he was baptized, he entered a contract with God that had legal effect - God was supposed to protect him from evil. According to the plaintiff, the Romanian Orthodox Church directly represents God and should compensate him for the alleged God-inflicted damage.



Murder – From page 1

Ambrosiano was also involved with the Vatican Bank, benignly titled the "Institute for Religious Works" or IOR. Subsequent investigation uncovered a rogue cast of characters, and evidence that the IOR and Ambrosiano were financial safe havens and pipelines for "flight capital" and other illegally laundered monies.

Among those linked to Calvi was Archbishop Paul Marcinkus. Ordained in Chicago, Marcinkus was posted to the Holy See in Rome, and served in the Vatican Secretariat of State. He rapidly moved up within Vatican bureaucracy

from personal papal bodyguard to head of the IOR – a post he held from 1971 to 1989. There he worked closely with international financier Michael Sindona to expand the Vatican's portfolio of international holdings, transforming the Institute for Religious Works into a quiet but reliable shelter for questionable capital. Sindona, laundering money from associates in organized crime, funneled huge sums of money through Banco Ambrosiano and the IOR. The Vatican Bank also worked closely with the United States government as a cover money conduit to groups like the Solidarity Trade Union in Poland. Thanks to

Marcinkus, Sindona was to become a "man of confidence" within the Vatican who enjoyed unique access to officials of the Holy See, even the pope.

Michael Sindona had been among Calvi's patrons at the Banco Ambrosiano, and helped expand the small "Catholic bank" into an international financial institution. Sindona's financial manipulations make a story of their own, and investigations after the Ambrosiano collapse would document how his elaborate international network of banks and offshore companies served as vehicle for laundering dirty money earned from everything from heroin traffic to "soft money" investments.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Business Meeting

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING:

What: Meeting to decide general business of the group and to discuss current events

Date: Third Sunday of the month

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Place: TBA; For the scheduled location, visit www.metroplexatheists.org

Social Meetings

DALLAS / PLANO ATHEIST MEETUP DAY:

What: Meet with other local Atheists to talk about your beliefs

Date: Every Tuesday

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: TBA; For locations near you visit: atheists.meetup.com

J. GILLIGAN'S:

What: "My dinner with Atheists," social time with a bunch of heathens

Date: Every Wednesday

Time: 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Place: J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill (Meet on the grill side)
400 E. Abram Street
Arlington, TX

DFW ETHICAL FELLOWSHIP:

What: All the things you want in a church, without the gods

Date: First and third Sunday of the month. For information visit: www.dfwfellowship.com

Time: 11:00 PM – 12:00 PM

Place: Humanist Hall
414 N. Main St.,
Grapevine, TX

DFW ETHICAL FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH:

What: Sunday brunch without the gospels

Date: Second and fourth Sunday of the month.

Time: 10:15 AM – 11:30 AM

Place: TBA

METROPLEX ATHEISTS READING GROUP:

What: The Metroplex Atheists Reading Group discusses selected books. Come join in, even if you didn't read the selection. For the latest book, visit:

www.metroplexatheists.org/read/

Date: Third Sunday of the month

Time: After the regular meeting

Place: Heritage Park
217 Main St. at Second
Irving, TX

INFIDELS BASH:

What: Celebration of the Winter Solstice with a sacrilegious slant

Date: December 18

Time: TBA

Place: TBA

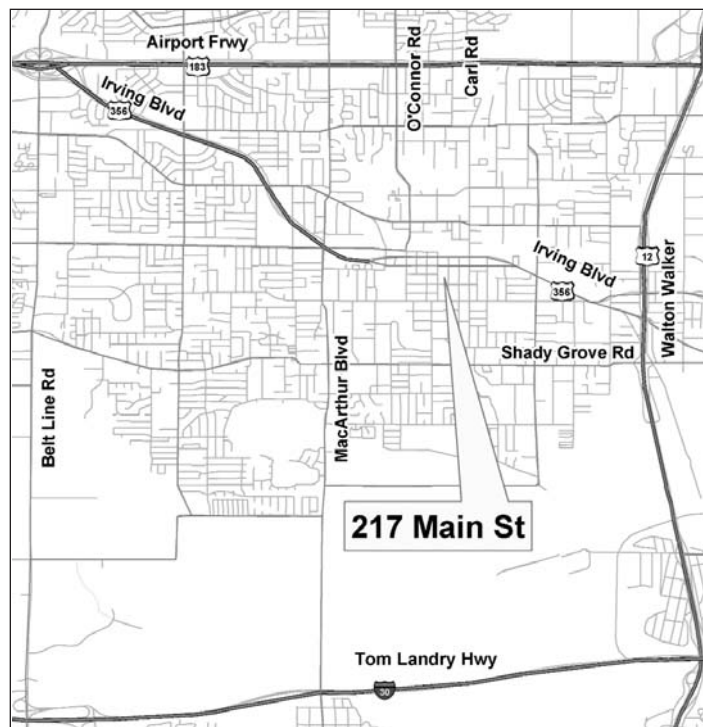
To have your events listed email:

The Atheist Voice Editor at
editor@metroplexatheists.org

METROPLEX ATHEISTS

COME
JOIN
US

EVERY THIRD SUNDAY
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM



November 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 D/P AMD	2 J. Gilligan's	3	4	5
6 DFW EF	7	8 D/P AMD	9 J. Gilligan's	10	11 <i>Veteran's Day</i>	12
13 EF Brunch	14	15 Atheist Meetup	16 J. Gilligan's	17	18	19
20 RM & MARG DFW EF	21	22 D/P AMD	23	24 <i>Thanksgiving Day</i>	25	26
27 EF Brunch	28	29 D/P AMD	30 J. Gilligan's			

December 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 DFW EF	5	6 D/P AMD	7 J. Gilligan's	8	9	10
11 EF Brunch	12	13 D/P AMD	14 J. Gilligan's	15	16	17
18 Infidels Bash	19	20 Atheist Meetup	21 J. Gilligan's <i>Winter Solstice</i>	22	23	24
25 <i>Christmas</i> EF Brunch	26	27 D/P AMD	28 J. Gilligan's	29	30	31 <i>New Years Eve</i>

January 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 <i>New Year's Day</i>	2	3 D/P AMD	4 J. Gilligan's	5	6	7
8 DFW EF	9	10 D/P AMD	11 J. Gilligan's	12	13	14
15 Reg. Meeting & MARG	16 <i>MLK Day</i>	17 Atheist Meetup	18 J. Gilligan's	19	20	21
22 DFW EF	23	24 D/P AMD	25 J. Gilligan's	26	27	28
29	30	31 D/P AMD				

***THE ATHEIST VOICE* is a bi-monthly publication of Metroplex Atheists.**

For more information, please visit our website: www.metroplexatheists.org

To submit an article or letter to the editor, please email us.

The Atheist Voice Editor: editor@metroplexatheists.org

THE ATHEIST VOICE
c/o Metroplex Atheists
3333 Southlake Park Rd.
Southlake, TX 76092

Deliver to:

“Because we must. Because we have the call. Because it is nobler to fight for rationality without winning than to give up in the face of continued defeats. Because whatever true progress humanity makes is through the rationality of the occasional individual and because any one individual we may win for the cause may do more for humanity than a hundred thousand who hug superstition to their breasts.”

— Isaac Asimov, when asked why he fights religion with no hope for victory

WHY DO WE FIGHT?