

LOVE BEING A FREETHINKER

Being a Freethinker has brought me an unending series of interesting experiences. I had one today that was, well, inexplicable. Here's what happened:

I was waiting for Elaine at a gas station/repair place in downtown Fargo. It is on a busy corner and I was enjoying the fall day and hubbub. Suddenly, the sound of brakes and squeal of tires. I turned and saw a pickup headed my way. Looking in the windshield I did not recognize the driver. "Hey, Mayor. I saw you standing there and thought,



"Man. That's the guy I need to tell about this!" the driver said.

"Great." I replied. "What's up?"

"Well, I work at a place where there are lots of foreign people. Bosnians, Somalians and others. The problem is they just don't know about this country. Now, don't get me wrong. They are good people. Heck, if I went to their country I wouldn't have a clue. But, they need to learn about our culture. They do things like, well, spit on the sidewalk--and lot's of other stuff. They need to learn.

"So, my thinking is, they need a class in how to live in this country. I know you are with the Freethinkers. You do a lot of good for other people. I think the Freethinkers should give them a class in how to live in this country --the culture and stuff. I mean, you know all that stuff. You could tell them more in an hour than I could in a week. I know the Freethinkers do good things like that."

"Gosh," I said, "That's an interesting idea."

"See they are from all over the world," he began to repeat, "And, you Freethinkers could teach the stuff they

need to know ...". He continued to recycle his request for the Freethinkers a couple more times. I hoped Elaine would show up soon.

"Here comes my ride," I said. "Great idea. Let's get together and talk about it some more. Thanks for stopping." He looked pleased and roared down the street.

The experience was topped off by Elaine's observation. "Freethinkers teaching new immigrants about American values. There are some folks who would not like that?"

Jon Lindgren
Fargo, ND

<http://www.redriverfreethinkers.org>

The mission of the Red River Freethinkers is to advocate for a skeptical view of the role of religion in society and to promote critical examination of religious authority and dogma.

Articles in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the ideas or opinions of the Red River Freethinkers organization.

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RED RIVER FREETHINKERS

THE RED RIVER RATIONALIST

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GIVING THANKS

The origin of Thanksgiving dates back to Fall harvest festivals held to celebrate the successful completion of gathering the season's crops. These festivals have been traditional in many parts of the world since ancient times. Americans trace their traditional Thanksgiving holiday back to one celebrated in 1621 during which Governor William Bradford of New England proclaimed a day of "thanksgiving" and prayer to celebrate the Pilgrims' first harvest in America and to express gratitude for God's blessings.

Among the early Pilgrims was a group of separatists, members of a radical religious movement that broke from the Church of England during the 16th and 17th centuries. These separatists were the Puritans and Puritanism was the dominant religious force in New England throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

Puritans advocated for greater purity of worship and vowed to create a theocracy in which the church ruled over all civil matters; a pure and Christian city upon a hill that would set an example for the rest of the world. Puritanism emphasized a strict, fundamentalist adherence to the letter of the Bible, especially regarding the roles of men and women.

Puritan social order lay in the authority of the husband over the wife and the parents over the children. Allowing children to act in a



disorderly manner was a departure from God's grace and, since the responsibility of early childcare fell almost

entirely upon women, the apparent strength of a woman's Puritan faith depended significantly on the observable goodness of her children. Women

introduced all children to reading, and men taught the boys in "higher" pursuits. Boys could go hunting and fishing and become apprentices to carpenters and smiths. Girls, on the other hand, were trained from an early age to spin yarn, cook, sew, weave, and be servants to their husbands, mothers, and children.

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HAIL TO THE NEW CHIEF!

On November 4th, 2008, Americans voted for change in this country by electing Barack Obama to be the 44th President of the United States of America.

The likelihood is that President Obama will be responsible for making up to four U.S. Supreme Court ap-

pointments in his first term alone. The effects of Obama's Supreme Court nominations will long outlast his Presidential tenure and will have an effect on the judiciary that could transform the American political landscape for decades to come.

"We need somebody who's got the heart, the empathy, to recognize what it's like to be a young teenage mom. The empathy to understand what it's like to be poor, or African-American, or gay, or disabled, or old ... and that's the criteria by which I'm going to be selecting my judges."

POINTS OF INTEREST

- *The November RRF meeting will be held at Atomic Coffee on Broadway from 1-3 on Sunday November 16. Mr. Scott Forschler will be presenting his talk entitled "The surprisingly simple secular source of morality".*
- *The Science Religion and Lunch Seminar (SRLS) is held every Tuesday from 12-1pm at NDSU.*
- *MSUM's Campus Free-thought Alliance (CFA) meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday each month at 7pm.*
- *Philosophy for All Fargo Moorhead meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month in the Plains Art Museum Presentation Center at 7:00pm.*

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According to Puritanism, both men and women carried the stain of original sin, but women had more sin than men to bear. Eve's corruption extended down through the generations to all women. By some accounts, women were not even allowed to speak in church after 1636. Puritanism called for women to be completely subservient to men. Women were considered to be lustful by nature and were far more likely to collude with the Devil than men were.



So, with these fond memories of the American Pilgrims in mind, with their bonnets and dark clothes, tall hats and shoes with big buckles, I would like to give thanks to the authors of our First Amendment for establishing a wall of separation between church and state, so that our laws may be guided by our ever-evolving moral zeitgeist, and not by the scriptural interpretations of the Puritans of yesterday, or the Fundamentalists of today.

**Jason Schoenack
Fargo, ND**

**NEW ATHEIST GROUP
IN EAST GRAND FORKS**

There is new atheist group that is meeting each month in East Grand Forks, MN. The group is called Grand Forks Atheists and they are currently meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at the Cambell Library in East Grand Forks. Meetings are being held from 6:00pm to 7:30pm.

Teressa Wilde is the organizer of this group and she would like to invite anyone interested in atheism to attend their monthly meetings.

THOU SHALT NOT SUE GOD

On September 14, 2007, Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers filed a lawsuit in Douglas County District Court against God, seeking a permanent injunction ordering God to "cease certain harmful activities and the making of terroristic threats...of grave harm to innumerable persons, including constituents of Plaintiff



who Plaintiff has the duty to represent". Chambers says in his suit that "God has spread fear across the globe causing widespread death, destruction and terrorization of millions upon millions of the Earth's inhabitants. [God also caused] fearsome floods, horrendous hurricanes, earthquakes, plagues, famine, genocidal wars, birth

defects, terrifying tornadoes and the like." On October 14, 2008, Douglas County District Court Judge Marlon Polk threw out Chambers' case stating that, under Nebraska state law, a plaintiff must have access to the defendant for a lawsuit to move forward and that the Almighty wasn't properly served due to his unlisted home address. "The court itself acknowledges the existence of God," Chambers said. "And a consequence of that acknowledg-

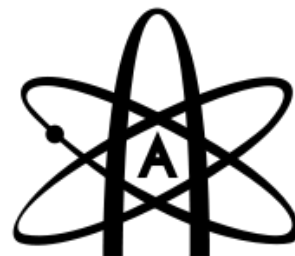
ment is a recognition of God's omniscience. Therefore, since God knows everything, God has notice of this lawsuit." Chambers, a Nebraska state senator for 38 years, said that his suit was a response to another case filed in the state court that he considered to be blatantly frivolous. He also wanted to make the point that "anyone can sue anyone else, even God". Chambers has 30 days to decide whether to appeal.

NEW AMERICAN ATHEISTS PRESIDENT

It was announced in September that Dr. Ed Buckner would serve as the new President of American Atheists. For many years, Dr. Buckner served in the Atlanta Chapter of the Society of Separationists, helping to grow the Atlanta Freethought Society.

More recently, Dr. Buckner has served as the Executive Director of the Counsel for Secular Humanism. Dr. Buckner has represented nonbelievers and secular humanists on MSNBC, Good Morning America, CBS Evening News, Fox News, CNN,

and NPR. He has also delivered the keynote address for Atheists Alliance International. Dr. Buckner earned a doctorate (1983) and M.Ed. (1975) from Georgia State University and a B.A. in English, Rice University, (1967).



UND ROTC CADET DELIVERS SECULAR INVOCATION

In August of this year, University of North Dakota Army ROTC cadet Julia Cicci was given the honor of delivering the commissioning ceremony invocation to her class of graduating ROTC cadets. Because Julia believes that a person's religious views and beliefs are a personal affair, Julia decided that the invocation should be secular.

"I have felt a deep and moral obligation to begin voicing my opinions on the continual degradation of the constitutional rights of nonbelievers."

Julia denounced religion in pursuit of science and reason at the age of 14 and is a staunch believer in the separation of church and state.

Julia's journey to delivering her secular invocation began in January 2008 when she contracted with the Army ROTC Program at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, ND. She had just completed roughly eight and half years with the U.S. Air Force and was excited to continue to serve her country and begin her new mission as a commissioned officer.

After joining the Army ROTC Program at UND, Julia began noticing instances of Christian prayer at ROTC ceremonies, gatherings, and events. Julia felt that the Christian observances were unnecessary and unjust because they excluded not only the people of other faiths but also the people of nonfaith.

"As a future lieutenant and leader in the U.S. Army, it

will be my duty and responsibility to ensure the well-being and that the needs of all of my soldiers are met, regardless of faith."

Julia delivered her secular invocation to her graduating class of cadets on August 1, 2008.

"After the ceremony, I received quite a few compliments. I am very proud of my secular invocation and con-

sider it a victory because it focused on the true meaning of the commissioning ceremony, the cadets, opposed to a higher being."

Julia was awarded the 2008 Thomas Jefferson Youth Activist Award by the Freedom From Religion Foundation

"Over the years, Christians have associated my lack of belief with anarchy, devil-worshipping and evil, which

couldn't be further from the truth. Call me what you will (infidel, blasphemer, nonbeliever) but I am a good person. Just consider me a U.S. Army Soldier."

Julia's invocation was patriotic and inspirational and secular. I have included it below.

**Jason Schoenack
Fargo, ND**

2008 UND ARMY ROTC COMMISSIONING CEREMONY INVOCATION

August 1, 2008

Commander, Cadre, staff, families, friends, believers and nonbelievers; we have come together to represent our diverse cultures and beliefs on this beautiful and prestigious day to honor the past, present and, now, future, leaders of the United States Army. For this invocation, I come to you, not as a chaplain or any other person of God, but, as a U.S. Army Soldier in hopes that we can take a moment for ourselves and reflect on the true meaning of today's University of North Dakota Army ROTC's commissioning ceremony.

Let us recognize the devotion and sacrifices that the cadets have made and will continue to make throughout what I hope will be long, prosperous and fulfilling careers as commissioned Army officers. Yet, I imagine these sacrifices could not have been accomplished without the love and support from all of you. Therefore, we wish to continue to invoke your strength, love and wisdom so that our future leaders will always know that they have the continual and undivided support of the United States of America behind them throughout their entire lives. So, I now ask, on this grand day, August 1, 2008, let us unite as one today in celebration, and recognize the exemplary and dignified achievements each cadet has earned.

May they invoke the power and courage to remain forever faithful to the U.S. Army values in which they will bear true allegiance to our nation's most sacred document, the U.S. Constitution, as well as maintain the integrity and honor necessary to lead this great nation to victory.

We should also take a brief moment to remember the family members and friends that could not be here with us today and may we never forget the fallen soldiers who died for us so we didn't have to; we are grateful and forever in debt.

It has been a true honor serving with these cadets. I thank you for your magnanimous service and abiding dedication to one of our nation's finest military branches, the United States Army. On behalf of everyone here, let me wish all of you all the happiness and success in your future endeavors. Thank you for your time; please be seated.

Cadet Julia F. Cicci
UND Army ROTC