NOSHA NEWS

Newsletter of the New Orleans Secular Humanist Association

Summer 2009

New Orleans Secular Humanist Association
520 St. Louis St., Apt. 3
New Orleans, LA 70130
www.nosha.info
(a 501c3 corporation)

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NATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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

MEETINGS

3rd Saturday of month, 2:00 pm
Dominion Learning Center
Audubon Park Zoo

N.O. COX CABLE TV

CH 76 "Humanist Perspective"
Sat. midnight, Sun. noon
CH 78 "Atheist Viewpoint"
Tues. 10:30am; 10:30 pm

NOSHA AD CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS

In our Fall 2008 newsletter, we asked our members and supporters to step up and help us launch an advertising campaign much as had been launched in other cities across the country and the world. We followed with a mail campaign asking for your donations. You stepped up, and in Winter 2009 our first advertising appeared on the Canal streetcar and ran through Mardi Gras.

We asked for more support so that we could go for a billboard. Thanks to your generous contributions and matching funds from two board members, the NOSHA billboard went up on May 26 and stayed up for 30 days. Many of you saw it on the westbound side of Interstate 10 going out from downtown New Orleans. Pictured here are NOSHA president **Harry Greenberger** and NOSHA secretary **Charlotte Klasson** "holding up" our billboard.

While we got little or no media publicity for this billboard, we know many people have seen it and that they know we are part of the community. **Dave Schultz**, who maintains the NOSHA mailing list reports the following.

"I began keeping track of the number of names on NOSHA's mailing list and the date those names were entered into the mailing list in January 2001. At that time there were 74 names on the list.

Recently there have been jumps in numbers that might be attributed in part to our advertising campaign. From January to March 2009, dates spanning our streetcar advertising, the number of names on the mailing list increased from 408 to 448 (9%). From April to July 2009, dates spanning our billboard advertising, the number of names increased from 463 to 500 (7%).

NOSHA's mailing list has now reached 500 names. It has doubled in size in just the past three years. The numbers clearly have not reached a plateau and the rate of growth appears to be increasing."

We know there are many more freethinkers in the New Orleans area as well as across South Louisiana and Mississippi, and hope they will all come to NOSHA with time.

I WISH ATHEISM *WERE* BORING
By William Sierichs Jr.

Charlotte Allen's May 17 criticism in the *Los Angeles Times* of "boring" atheism is ignorant of the histories of both atheism and Christianity.

Atheism was literally a life-and-death issue for centuries: Announcing a lack of belief in gods, or even just suspicion of such, could get you burned at the stake in Christian nations; thrown to the lions in Rome — the fate of some Christians for atheism about the gods; or forced to drink hemlock — Socrates' fate.

Allen, like many Christians, apparently does not know that the historical Christian definition of atheism included denying the divinity of Jesus. On that basis, Christians denounced pagans, Jews, Muslims, even Christian "heretics." Christians mixed this slur with a belief that, deep down, everyone knew the truth of the Christian god, and therefore were choosing Satan and immorality by refusing to convert. This underlies the claims atheists are not found in foxholes; are intrinsically immoral and criminal; and are even Satan worshipers. Their mere existence was considered an offense to God.

Some of England's American colonies mandated execution for blasphemy, which under English law then included denying God, Jesus' divinity or the Holy Ghost. I don't know of any colonial executions for atheism under blasphemy statutes (England had some burnings), but Massachusetts hanged four Quakers in the 17th century, and Quakers were considered atheists because of certain beliefs.

Thomas Jefferson noted that in Virginia: "… an act of assembly of 1705, c. 30, if a person brought up in the Christian religion denies the being of God, or the Trinity, or asserts there are more Gods than one, or denies the Christian religion to be true, or the scriptures to be of divine authority, he is punishable on the first offence by incapacity to hold any office … on the second by disability to sue, to take any gift or legacy, to be guardian, executor, or administrator, and by three years imprisonment, without bail"; and could even lose custody of his children permanently.

Before the Civil War, slavery defenders routinely denounced abolitionists as atheists (or "infidels"), because they denied biblical statements supporting slavery, and connected abolitionism with the atheism and declarations of equality of the violent French Revolution.

Indeed, hostility toward atheism was part of the foundation of slavery in England and its colonies.

In 1608, famed British jurist Lord Coke declared in "Calvin's case" that all "infidels" were "perpetual enemies" of Christians and the Christian god. This was derived from founding Christian theology, beliefs and laws over the centuries. Although infidel was essentially a synonym for "pagan" or "heathen," it also encompassed "atheist."

Based at least in part on "Calvin's Case," as well as older jurisprudence, English courts ruled in 1677 (two lawsuits styled Butts vs. Penny, covering two different groups of black slaves in litigation) that "*negroes* were infidels, and the *subjects of an infidel prince*, and are usually bought and sold in America as merchandise … *negroes* being usually bought and sold among merchants, as merchandise, and also being infidels, there might be a property in them sufficient to maintain trover …" and in 1694 (Gelly/Gilly vs Cleve) that "trover will lie for a negro boy, for they are heathens, and therefore a man may have property in them, and that the court without averment made, will take notice that they are heathens."

Written defenses of slavery in the U.S., overwhelmingly by Christian clergy, attacked the "infidel" nature of the abolitionist movement — although many abolitionists were Christians — because it rejected the Bible's endorsement of slavery, thereby denying "God's word." For background, most opponents of slavery, including Abraham Lincoln (who was called an atheist by political opponents, with some accuracy, depending upon the definition used), were "emancipationists," who wanted slavery ended only when the freed slaves could be removed from the U.S. Abolitionists, both Christian and atheist alike, were a small, unpopular minority until Southern Christians decided that Lincoln's election was too great a threat to ignore and left the Union. "Infidel" abolitionism became the rage in the North as war casualties mounted.

One of the most-colorful expressions of this idea is in a widely reprinted Nov. 29, 1860, sermon in New Orleans, La., when Presbyterian Rev. Benjamin Morgan Palmer declared it a duty to defend slavery, even by secession. He said: "Last of all, in this great struggle, *we defend the cause of God and Religion*. The Abolition spirit is undeniably atheistic. The demon which erected its throne upon the guillotine in the days of Robespierre and Marat, which abolished the Sabbath and worshipped reason in the person of a harlot, yet survives to work other horrors, of which those of the French Revolution are but the type." One contemporary credited Palmer with swaying Louisiana's leaders toward secession.

Allen admits that some states ban atheists from office but pooh-poohs the bans as unenforceable. Tell that to Herb Silverman, who spent seven years in litigation in South Carolina in the 1990s merely to get a notary public's license without having to state a belief in a god.

Fear/hatred of atheism were elements in the Christian extermination of paganism in Europe and the repression of Jews by law, sometimes by violence. Laws prohibited Christians from marrying non-Christians on the grounds that such contacts would lead Christians to atheism, immorality and Satan.

In an attack on Christians in Antioch in the 4th century who saw nothing wrong with visiting synagogues, Bishop (St.) John Chrysostom, a vicious, early antisemite, declared: "If, then, the Jews fail to know the Father, if they crucified the Son, if they thrust off the help of the Spirit, who should not make bold to declare plainly that the synagogue is a dwelling of demons. God is not worshipped there. Heaven forbid! From now on it remains a place of idolatry." He emphasized: "You must apply the same argument to the synagogue. Even if there is no idol there, still demons do inhabit the place. … Does not greater harm come from this place since the Jews themselves are demons. … So the godlessness of the Jews and the pagans is on a par." Again: "Certainly it is the time for me to show that demons dwell in the synagogue, not only in the place itself but also in the souls of the Jews. … [Mt. 12:43-45, Lk. 11:24-26 quoted] … Do you see that demons dwell in their

souls and that these demons are more dangerous than the ones of old."

Atheist, demons and pagans, oh my!

Atheists could even be Christians.

For example, one of the biggest feuds in Christianity's history, little-heeded now except among historians, was the Athanasian-Arian war of the 4th century. Up until the 4th century, Christianity had not really settled on a way to describe the relationship of Jesus and the Christian god, especially as to whether Jesus was identical with that god or merely a lesser messenger. Many Christians would have said the latter.

In the early 4th century, after the Emperor Constantine had thrown his support to Christianity, a presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt, Arius, had written an argument that Jesus was created by and therefore inferior to God. The city's bishop, Alexander, and his aide and successor Athanasius wrote angry responses.

Bishop Alexander issued a letter (Athanasius likely wrote it for him) attacking Arian "heretics." His criticisms helped trigger the Council of Nicaea, 325, in which Constantine condemned Arianism and imprisoned bishops who supported Arius. In a letter to Bishop Alexander of Constantinople, the Egyptian Alexander started off: "Impelled by avarice and ambition, evil-minded persons have ever plotted against the well-being of the most important dioceses. Under various pretexts, they attack the religion of the church; and being maddened by the devil, who works in them, they start aside from all piety according to their own pleasure and trample under foot the fear of the judgment of God. …

"Arius and Achillas have lately formed a conspiracy …"

The Arians' "blasphemy," in Athanasius' view, was to deny the full divinity of Jesus. "If then they deny Scripture, they are at once aliens to their name [Christians], and may fitly be called of all men atheists, and Christ's enemies …" Athanasius called the Arians "atheists" repeatedly in his writings because in denying the divinity of Jesus was denying the Christian god, by his understanding. The followers of Athanasius and Arius both engaged in violence to suppress the other side. Several 4th-century Roman emperors and factions, such as the Vandals and Visigoths, were Arians, so the Athanasians had the worst of it for several decades. By the end of the century, however, the Emperor Theodosius (called "the Great" by the victorious Athanasians) had fully committed the empire to crushing the Arian "heresy." So all Christians today are "Athanasians" because a Roman emperor supported that theological belief against the "atheist" Arians.

Athanasian writers such as the historian Theodoret and apologist Marius Victorinus admitted that Arians were persecuted by quoting a letter Arius wrote to his ally Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia: "Arius, who is unjustly suffering persecution from Bishop Alexander on account of the all-conquering truth for which you also struggle … For this bishop is haughtily banishing and persecuting us and working all kinds of evil against us, in order to chase us from the city as though we were atheists. … And we cannot listen to these sacrileges even if the heretics threaten us with ten thousand deaths. … " In other words, the "atheists" believed that they were the true Christians battling the forces of evil, whom we now call orthodox (except that the orthodox are split among the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches and 2,000 Protestant sects, plus the Mormons).

Theodoret could not resist demonizing these dissenters, saying Eusebius of Nicomedia "vomited forth his own impiety" by writing to another ally. He quoted Bishop Eustathius of Antioch on the Arians: " 'Wholly bent upon establishing these plantations of tares [Mt. 13:25, 26, etc. tares=weeds], they shrink from the scrutiny of the intelligent, avoid the observant, and attack the preachers of godliness. But we do not believe that these atheists can ever thus overcome the Deity.' "

Of course, Athanasius never forgot that not all enemies were within Christianity; pagans were all around and always inherently wicked: "Therefore their worship and deification is no part of religion, but the bringing in of godlessness and of all impiety, and a sign of a wide departure from the knowledge of the one true God, namely the Father of Christ. Since then this is thus proved, and the idolatry of the Greeks [pagans] is shewn to be full of all ungodliness, and that its introduction has been not for the good, but for the ruin of human life …"

In another example: Roman Catholic crusaders waged a brutal, centuries-long campaign to exterminate paganism in Northeastern Europe and the Baltic States. This brought them into conflict with the expanding Orthodox Russian states. This statement is in the "Livonian Rhymed Chronicle," about the Baltic States crusade. I've added relevant information in []:

"Bishop Herman of Dorpat began to quarrel with the Russians in this period. [around 1240] They wanted to obstruct Christianity just as before, and their godlessness caused much harm. … [The Western knights captured a Russian fort at Isborsk] and let not a single Russian escape, killing or capturing all the defenders. Cries and shouts and a mighty lament arose throughout the land.

"Those from Pskov [Russia] were unhappy about this news. This is the name of a neighboring town in Russia, whose inhabitants were extremely evil."

Of course, in the 1940s, millions of Europeans saw themselves as warriors for God against "godless Judeo-Bolshevism" from Russia. To understand this 20th-century anti-atheism crusade, some background is needed:

In the 19th century, many Christians decided that Jews' atheism and alleged immorality could be explained if Jews were an inferior race. Although racial antisemitism gained little traction before World War I, it soared in the 1920s. This was why Germans — more than 98 percent avowing theism — were willing to elect a Christian chancellor in 1933, knowing he was a racial antisemite who led a party of mostly church-going Christians and routinely denounced atheism, in the forms of church-state separation, communism and Jews, as a moral pollution destroying Germany that had to be annihilated.

Although secular factors figured in the rise of Nazism and similar rightwing movements in Europe, Christian leaders and clergy had often called for a religious and legal campaign against an alleged Jewish conspiracy to foist atheism upon the public for Jews' greedy purposes. Many Christians also proclaimed the Soviet Union the sinister promoter of atheism that had to be destroyed to save Europe, and saw the 1941 German invasion as a crusade.

As one of many examples, in 1921, the unofficial Vatican newspaper "Civiltà cattolica" ran a story from Austria that claimed Jews were swarming over the country, taking all its wealth, and that it was "the common opinion among Catholics that behind Bolshevism and Communism is none other than Jewish masonry which, by means of the total confiscation of Christians' wealth is moving toward Judaism's absolute rule."

Such fear/hatred of atheism played a significant role in Adolf Hitler's rise to power. In a 1933 speech, Hitler declared that under him, Germany was led by "Christians and not international atheists … I am not merely talking about Christianity. I confess that I will never ally myself with the parties which aim to destroy Christianity. Fourteen years [the secular Weimar Republic has] gone arm in arm with atheism."

Pro-Nazi "German Christians" won two-thirds of Protestant church offices in a 1933 national election. This group had declared: "Every Protestant pastor should be deeply grateful that at last no atheists are at the head of the German people, but rather Christian men. … Hitler fought fourteen years for Christianity and church, misunderstood and opposed by many Christians. Next to God, the church and Christendom has the National Socialist leader Adolf Hitler to thank for its existence in the face of the attacks of Bolshevism." Not surprisingly, a German Christian preacher declared at a 1933 rally, "the godless movement in Russia and in Germany is mostly propagated by Jews."

Finally, Prince Erwin Lobkowicz, representing the murderous Catholic Ustasha regime in Croatia, recorded that Pope Pius XII said Jan. 31, 1943: "During the rest of the conversation the Holy Father told me he was disappointed that, in spite of everything, no one wants to acknowledge the one, real and principal enemy of Europe; no true, communal military crusade against Bolshevism has been initiated."

In effect, some 6 million Jews and 20-30 million Russians died in part because of historical Christian beliefs about and fear of atheism.

Hear one more voice on this. American clergyman Stewart W. Herman, Jr., lived in Nazi Germany for six years and wrote an account of events from a religious perspective in 1943. He argued that a radical wing among Nazis wanted to establish a new religion, although he had doubts Hitler intended this. He considered the movement to be basically a new religion, but acknowledged that 95 percent of Germans were Christians and "most of [Hitler's] Nazis are still nominally Christian. Additionally, Herman noted that a 1939 census put avowed atheists at 1.5 percent of a German population of 79.4 million people. "The atheists may immediately be discounted as exercising any perceptible influence on German religious thought today. … [Freethinkers had increased previously, but] their influence declined gradually in the days of the Republic and has been suppressed completely by the new regime which places 'godlessness' in the same category with anarchistic Bolshevism." Herman added that even Germans who cared little about religion "disliked and distrusted people who renounce all faith in God" and noted that, until the Weimar Republic, church membership was required to hold any public office.

So atheists have good reason to fear Christianity. Yet, contrary to Allen's claims, most atheists would prefer to ignore religion as too silly to discuss. Atheist arguments generally are answers to relentless Christian demonizing.

Yet, a compelling moral reason can be advanced for atheist criticisms. Year after year, studies have shown the most-secular countries, particularly in Europe, have overall the best social statistics — higher levels of health and education, lower levels of crime, teen pregnancies, etc.; while the most-religious countries, such as the U.S., have overall lower quality of life — more crime, violent crime, sexually transmitted diseases, health problems, etc. Even within the U.S., the most-secular regions, such as the Northeast and West Coast, have much-better social statistics than religious regions, such as the South. Although religion might not be the only factor here, it plays a significant role, sociologists say.

So I'd argue there is an urgent moral need for boring "militant atheists" to save lives, not souls, put at risk by religions and theism.

(***William Sierichs Jr**., of Baton Rouge, La., has been a reporter, editor and occasional columnist on daily newspapers in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas/Arkansas since 1974, and has won several state awards for news reporting and column writing. He has been a NOSHA member for several years.*)

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DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE ATHEIST?

Some of you are familiar with NOSHA's weekly television program, "The Humanist Perspective," broadcast only in New Orleans on cable NOA-TV, channel 76. Recently, the program host and NOSHA president Harry Greenberger asked for volunteers to appear on the program to make 10 minute presentations on their "favorite atheist."

The first such program aired on Saturday, August 22. Favorite atheists covered on that program were Richard Dawkins, Freidrich Nietsche, and Margaret Sanger. Six volunteers have been lined up for the next two tapings (first Saturday of the month). Topic atheists for those programs include Robert Ingersoll, Carl Sagan, Gene Rodenberry, Christopher Hitchens, Baron D'Holbach, and Dan Barker.

If you have a favorite atheist (historic or comtemporary) and would like to appear on the program, please call or e-mail Harry Greenberger at 504-282-5459 or hpgreenx@yahoo.com.

To access these and other programs, you can now see them on YouTube. The link may be found on the NOSHA website at www.NOSHA.info.

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"In religion and politics people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second-hand, and without examination, from authorities who have not themselves examined the questions at issue but have taken them second-hand from other non-examiners, whose opinions about them were not worth a brass farthing."

--*Autobiography of Mark Twain*

"If we go back to the beginnings of things, we shall always find that ignorance and fear created the gods; that imagination, rapture and deception embellished them; that weakness worships them; that custom spares them; and that tyranny favors them in order to profit from the blindness of men."

--Paul-Henri, baron d'Holbach/*System of Nature* (1770)

PUBLISHED LETTERS

(*Perusing the local and area newspapers, we try to collect whatever is published by members and friends of NOSHA. We usually find three or four in a three-month period. It is disappointing that we only found one since the last newsletter publication. Come on folks, don't be afraid to express your freethinking opinions. And if I missed your letter, let me know and send me a copy to* crgordo@bellsouth.net.)

The following letter by **Patrick Murphy** appeared in the *Houma Courier* on May 24, 2009:

A brief response to the harsh letters and the clashing views on abortion. An acquaintance is a highly respected legislator who was publicly denied the Eucharist by his bishop for his pro-choice views**.**

The legislator's 14-year-old niece was brutally raped by her stepfather. Within one week of the forced pregnancy, and after gut-wrenching counsel, the niece chose to abort. Some anti-choice propagandists branded this 14-year-old as morally callous, selfish and irresponsible.

I empathize with this family and make a prediction. The legislator and his bishop are waiting in line on Judgment Day. St. Peter recognized the legislator and welcomed him with open arms. "Well done, good and faithful servant." The bishop protested vehemently that the legislator was not worthy to enter heaven. To which St. Peter responded, "And who are you?"

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LET'S ADOPT ONE

There are programs for state roads and city neutral grounds allowing organizations to adopt some small area to be kept clean of trash and weeds, and possibly to add some plantings. The group then is allowed to erect a sign identifying it as the one maintaining the area. It is a great opportunity to have New Orleans Secular Humanists semi-permanently advertised. The first step is to identify the areas we would like to serve, and if advised that it is open for adoption, we must then sign an agreement specifying what we will do.

NOSHA now requests that you pick areas which you see as potential adoptees that you would be willing to participate with others in maintaining, and advising me of your selection. Also needed will be those who do not pick a site, but are willing to join with others in a maintenance program. If you're interested, contact Harry Greenberger at (504) 282-5459 or hpgreenx@yahoo.com.

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THINKING BIG

Our year to date has been successful in terms of interesting speakers and programs, a new meeting venue, signs and billboards, social events, and increased numbers on our mailing list. Now we are planning for more successes.

Our first celebratory banquet in September has already been announced. On October 24 (the 4th Saturday of the month), Vic Stenger will address NOSHA and sign copies of some of his ten critically acclaimed books that interface between physics and cosmology and philosophy, religion and pseudoscience. In November we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.

Next year will commence with a major event. NOSHA has agreed to host the Deep South Humanist Conference on January 16, 2010. This follows the successful Midwest Humanist Conference held in Lincoln Nebraska on August 15. Many volunteers will be needed for our part in hosting this event.

And probably most important is the opportunity to get to know personally more of our fellow secularists as our meeting attendance continues to grow.

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A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF VIC STENGER

It is not too soon to reserve Saturday, October 24, for a special NOSHA meeting. On that date Victor J. Stenger, adjunct professor of philosophy at the University of Colorado, emeritus professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Hawaii and author of ten books will address NOSHA. His two most recent books, *God the Failed Hypothesis* and *Quantum Gods: Creation, Chaos, and the Search for Cosmic Consciousness*, will be available for purchase and dedication.

Vic Stenger received a PhD in Physics from UCLA in 1963. He then took a position on the faculty of the University of Hawaii, retiring to Colorado in 2000. His current position is adjunct professor of philosophy at the University of Colorado and emeritus professor of physics at the University of Hawaii. Dr. Stenger has also held visiting positions on the faculties of the University of Heidelberg in Germany, Oxford in England (twice), and has been a visiting researcher at Rutherford Laboratory in England, the National Nuclear Physics Laboratory in Frascati, Italy, and the University of Florence in Italy.

Dr. Stenger's research career spanned the period of great progress in elementary particle physics that ultimately led to the current *standard model*. He participated in experiments that helped establish the properties of strange particles, quarks, gluons, and neutrinos. He also helped pioneer the emerging fields of very high-energy gamma ray and neutrino astronomy. In his last project before retiring, Dr. Stenger collaborated on the underground experiment in Japan that showed for the first time that the neutrino has mass. The project leader received the Nobel prize in 2002 for this work.

Vic Stenger has had a parallel career as an author of ten critically acclaimed popular-level books that interface between physics and cosmology and philosophy, religion, and pseudoscience. His 2007 book *God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist* was a *New York Times* bestseller. His book *Quantum Gods* came out earlier this year. He will talk about his latest book, *The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason.*

* * * * *

"I believe that traditional religious belief and scientific knowledge depict the universe in radically different ways. At the bedrock they are incompatible and mutually exclusive."

-- E. O. Wilson, naturalist

"Religion is comparable to childhood neurosis."

--Sigmund Freud, Psychoanalyst

WHAT'S NOSHA BEEN DOING?

At the regular monthly meeting on June 20, the speaker was Dr. Mark Phillips, an Instructor in Philosophy at the University of New Orleans. Dr. Phillips' topic was "Is There a Difference Between Politics and Religion?" But in addition to the discussion, NOSHA took the opportunity to honor Dr. Phillips for his continuation of an annual Darwin Day event at UNO. Below is pictured NOSHA vice president **Dave Schultz** (right) as he presents Dr. **Mark Phillips** (left) with the NOSHA Humanist Award.

The award reads:

NEW ORLEANS SECULAR HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION
PRESENTS ITS
HUMANIST AWARD
TO
Mark Phillips, Ph.D.
For his dedicated effort to foster a broader
Understanding of the importance of the
Application of science and reason to the
Betterment of humanity through his diligent
Efforts to continue Darwin Day as an annual
Event at the University of New Orleans.
AWARDED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
This 20th day of June, 2009

On June 27, marking the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, several NOSHA members lent our organization's support to the annual New Orleans LGBT Pride celebration. Pictured below are **Charlotte Klasson** and **Doug Stewart** at the NOSHA table showing our support in the struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights.

Following a lively discussion on NOSHA's on-line forum, member **Patrick Lestrade** agreed to present the topic at the regular July NOSHA meeting on the 18th. The topic was the "Milgram Experiment." The decades old experiment was one which tested people's willingness to do harm to others at the behest of those in authority even though one might feel it wrong or harmful.

With suggestions from several NOSHA members, the topic of the August 15 meeting was about the legalization of marijuana. Local attorney, **Bill Rittenberg** (pictured below) presented the topic, "Reforming Marijuana Laws" to a large interested audience. He has been part of the fight to decriminalize marijuana possession since 1976, a time when all the Democratic candi-dates for president favored legalization. Those laws still have not been changed.

And, finally, many thanks to **Ricky Adams** for hosting and end-of-summer pool party at his home on Sunday, August 23. All those who attended reported much fun, good food, and great conversation. One person expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to get to know fellow NOSHA members better. Another highlight was Ricky's talented display of guitar and singing (seen below).

Here are more pictures from the pool party. This is bathing beauty, Charlotte Klasson in the pool.

Pictured below from left to right are unknown lady, Will Hunn (in hat), Robert Carver, Harold Dundee, and Doug Stewart.

And here are Harry Greenberger and Charlotte Klasson enjoying a cupcake.

Thanks to Lucy Tierney, Charlotte Klasson, and Robert Carver for the photos.

Thanks again to Ricky for providing the venue for this party. Everyone agreed we need more social gatherings like this. If anyone has a good space for a potluck movie night or another type of social gathering, please let us know.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

September 18 - NOSHA 10th Anniversary Banquet, Smilie's Restaurant, Speaker, Sean Faircloth, Executive Director, Secular Coalition for America: "One Nation Under the Constitution"

October 24 - NOSHA meeting (one week later than usual) Speaker, Vic Stenger (see page 5 above) will talk about his latest book, *The New Atheism: Taking a Stand for Science and Reason* (copies will be for sale)

November 21 - NOSHA meeting commemorating 150th Anniversary of the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* including a short film and commemorative events (announcement forthcoming)

December 19 - NOSHA meeting – topic to be a announced, But probably some acknowledgement of the Winter Solstice (volunteers and topics welcome)

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SPECIAL THANKS

NOSHA would like to single out two individuals for special thanks.

On July 18, NOSHA member **Marshall Harris** appeared in a local production of the "Rocky Horror Show" and procured a free ad for NOSHA in the production program. Thanks Marshall.

And you may notice that the front of the newsletter has a new look. That is thanks to the new NOSHA logo which will now appear on all correspondence, announcements and on our website. A very special thank you to Mr. **Carter Hooper** who designed the logo for us.

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Congratulations to Doug Stewart whose picture appeared in the August edition of *Freethought Today*, the monthly publication of the Freedom from Religion Foundation.

Doug (right wearing his NOSHA t-shirt) posed with Dan Barker of the FFRF next to his car when he attended the 4th of July event at Lake Hypatia sponsored by the Alabama Freethought Association. Doug said that Barker has recently released a book entitled *Godless*, so Doug was glad to lend his license plate as an obvious marketing point.

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

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

Check one: ___New Member ___Renewing Member ___Mailing list only ___ Newsletter by mail

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone and/or e-mail: _____

2009 Annual dues are $15.00. Make checks payable to "NOSHA" and mail to Connie Gordon, 2509 Giuffrias Ave., Apt. 603, Metairie, LA 70001.

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

NOSHA
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New Orleans, LA 70130