

"This would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no [organized] religion in it."  
— President John Adams

# Critical Thinker

The Bimonthly Newsletter of United States Atheists | July / August 2004

## A Letter from USA President James Archer and Vice President Nancy Powell:

### UNITED STATES ATHEISTS

Help United States Atheists fight the Religious Right for another year!

Are you tired of being asked for money over and over again? I am. That is why I, as president of USA, decided to suspend our usual fundraising activities since the beginning of 2004. No one has been asked to renew their membership, no fundraising letters have been sent, and except for our usual "passing the hat" at weekly meetings, no one has been asked for donations.

As president of USA my primary goal has been to improve the quality of what we do, and I feel real progress has been made. In the last year we have rebuilt our Web site and acquired over 60 new Web-based members. We have redesigned the *Critical Thinker* and distributed it on a bi-monthly basis. Our Atheist Community Center remains a refuge for Atheists in a hostile and irrational world.

It goes without saying, however, that we need funds to operate the Center and support the good name of Atheism in these troubled and troubling times. The need for USA has never been greater.

But there is good news. Thanks to a very generous offer from a fellow Atheist (who chooses anonymity) we have been offered matching funds! This means that for every dollar donated, we will get another dollar to support the work of the Center.

(OVER)

### Upcoming Events

#### Pizza Night!

**Tuesday, July 20, 7:30 PM** Join us for pizza during our Tuesday, July 20th meeting at the Atheist Community Center, 6514 SE Foster Rd., Portland! We'll order no later than 7:45 and have the nearby Round Table deliver some atheist pizza.\* Please bring \$5 per person to cover the cost of pizza. \*A prize will be given for the best definition of atheist pizza.

### Weekly Meetings

**Every Tuesday, 7:30 PM** Join us at the Atheist Community Center, 6514 SE Foster Rd., Portland. Guests and the public are always welcome to attend.

July 6, 13, 20, 27

August 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

### "Bunk Busters"

"Bunk Busters" is the cable TV show produced by USA and co-hosted by Jerry Billings and Kendall Auel. It is cablecast through Portland Cable Access. Contact: Alfredo Torrejon at [bunkbusters@unitedstatesatheists.com](mailto:bunkbusters@unitedstatesatheists.com).

#### Schedule (subject to change):

Tuesdays 7:30 PM Ch. 22

Saturdays 1:30 PM Ch. 23

Sundays 5:30 PM Ch. 11

#### Note new time on Sundays!

For an up-to-date program schedule: [www.pcatv.org/programming/tab.htm#m2681\\_](http://www.pcatv.org/programming/tab.htm#m2681_)

### Web Site

Check our Web site for the latest info: [www.unitedstatesatheists.com](http://www.unitedstatesatheists.com)

### Dial-An-Atheist

For a weekly message of common sense, dial 503-ATHEIST (284-3478).

### Critical Thinker

Deadline for next issue: August 15, 2004. Submission guidelines at: [www.unitedstatesatheists.com/criticalthinker](http://www.unitedstatesatheists.com/criticalthinker). Send submissions to the editor at [criticalthinker@unitedstatesatheists.com](mailto:criticalthinker@unitedstatesatheists.com), or mail in care of the USA address.

## Atheist News & Views

So I am asking each of you to make a contribution at this time. If our efforts are successful, you will not be asked to donate again until next year. If you care about USA and want it to continue to work for Atheist rights and a more just and rational world, then now is the time to give. Your money will be doubled and I promise that what you give will be used prudently and effectively.

As an Atheist I cannot offer you eternal life, miraculous healing, or assure you your prayers will be answered. What I can offer is the gratification of knowing that you have helped make the world safer for logic, reason, and human decency. Please give what you can.

Thank you,

James E Archer  
President, United States Atheists

PS: Here is a note from one of the great defenders of Atheist rights:

I am so grateful for United States Atheists. When I start to feel that I am alone in my values I come to a Tuesday night meeting and spend time with others who share my feelings. I can discuss issues of religion without the fear of offending anyone. I am with my own. We also celebrate the victories that come from standing up for our rights in the courts, schools, and government.

Thanks to James Archer, Jerry Billings, Nan Steinebach, Alfredo Torrejon, Kendall Auel, Chuck Landers, James Smith, John Aha and others, for all they do to maintain the Center. They donate time, energy, and money so that I have a refuge. Even if you have never come to the Atheist Community Center, it is here for you. A place of refuge for people like us: those without religion.

Enclosed is an envelope for you to send a tax-deductible donation to United States Atheists. And remember: your donation will be doubled!

Please dig deep into your heart and wallets. Thanks in advance for your generosity and friendship.

Nancy Powell  
Vice President, United States Atheists

# What Would Jerry Do?

by **Jerry Billings** Treasurer & Co-host of "Bunk Busters," United States Atheists

Today's column is a reversal of the ordinary format. Instead of the usual question or comment first and then my answer, this time we will have my experience followed by a letter from Mr. Frank Araujo of Vista, California. So here we go, first with Jerry's problem, then the better answer from Frank.

[Jerry] I was once thrown out of an Oregon State Fair booth that displayed a sign, "Will you go to Heaven? Just answer two questions." The first question was, "Do you believe that you will go to Heaven?" My answer being, "No," the booth's operator then refused to ask me question number 2. Oh, that I had the presence of mind to tell the operator as did our friend, Frank Araujo, what Jerry would do if he had been raised as a Roman Catholic and if he were clever enough to have given such a great response. I would have acted like this when Frank Araujo passed the Jews for Jesus table.

[Here's Frank] I was asked to take a survey. I said, "Sure. Why not?"

Q: Do you belong to a religious organization or consider yourself a member of a recognized faith?

A: Yes.

Q: What faith?

A: I'm a Roman Catholic.

Q: Do you believe that when you die, you'll go to heaven?

A: No.

Q: (Some surprise expressed) Why?

A: I don't accept the concept of heaven.

Q: (Silence and stares) Huh? Do you mean that you don't believe in heaven?

A: I think you could say that.

Q: Do you believe in God?

A: If you mean an anthropomorphized spirit who created the universe by some magical deistic fiat, no.

Q: (Eyes narrowing) Do you believe

the *Bible* is the word of God?

A: Certainly not.

Q: (Eyes very narrow at this point) Then, what do you believe the *Bible* is?

A: A collection of writings written by men with a political agenda, compiled and edited by men with political agendas and used by people with political agendas.

Q: How can you consider yourself a Catholic if you don't believe in God or the *Bible*?

A: Culture. It's part of my ethnic identity. Besides, I enjoy going to mass and losing myself in the mystery of the moment. It's just that I'm willing to leave my ideology where it belongs: at the church's doorstep. It'll be there when I come back next week.

Q: Does your priest know this?

A: It's really none of his business. At this point, the "survey" ended. I was thanked and told by body language that the conversation had ended.

[Jerry, again] Doesn't it make one feel humble to see how someone else has really handled himself?

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Here is an unsigned postcard from someone who apparently watches our cable TV show "Bunk Busters" as a form of self-torture. The spelling and punctuation are those of the writer.

*Dear Atheists,*

*Since you believe in science then refuse (?) to consider analysis of "paranormal" phenomena could be inconsistent! See the TV show "Unexplained Mysteries" (Ch. 12, 6-7 PM scheduled for documentation of some very interesting phenomena: ET craft ("UFOs"), ghosts (implying life after death) and so on.*

*I still think your show is "funny" in a tragic sort of way.*

— Watcher

Dear Watcher,

So you have an opinion. And what's new about that? Everyone has opinions but that does not entitle every opinion to be given respect. Many opinions are about things which no rational person is willing to consider even for a moment. Ghosts, fortune telling, ESP and other paranormal events are a fine example of that type of irrationality. Since there is absolutely no evidence of any connection of those things to reality, there is also no reason for our typically rational person to sacrifice even a minute of time upon those beliefs.

It is alright to watch programs that are built around fictional events and imagine that they are real. We all do that. But we, being rational, do not really believe that what we have seen portrays an actual event. You were watching a TV show that was produced for only one purpose — to get you and the other viewers to watch the advertisements. Network television exists solely as an entertainment medium with commercials, not to disseminate knowledge. If you believe that a TV show is the place to get serious information then there is a danger that you will also believe whatever a car salesman, politician or preacher tells you. Do you believe for a second that John Edward actually gets messages from the dead? Have you fallen into the trap set by Benny Hinn and his fake healings? Can Marion "Pat" Robertson really control the path of a hurricane? Do you accept that Bigfoot stalks the Northwest timber country? And don't forget, do you believe that O.J. is really innocent?

— Jerry

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\*\*DSL or Cable connection recommended. Site Building software not Mac compatible.

# Join United States Atheists!

## Credits & Contacts

James A. Smith, Editor & Designer  
criticalthinker@unitedstatesatheists.com

### Contributors:

James E. Archer, USA President  
president@unitedstatesatheists.com

Nancy Powell, USA Vice President  
vicepresident@unitedstatesatheists.com

Jerry Billings, USA Treasurer  
treasurer@unitedstatesatheists.com

Nan Steinebach, USA Contacts Manager  
contacts@unitedstatesatheists.com

Alfredo Terrejon, "Bunk Busters" Producer  
bunkbusters@unitedstatesatheists.com

George DuBois, Proofreader

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United States Atheists  
6514 SE Foster Rd.  
Portland, OR 97206-4659  
503-ATHEIST (284-3478)  
www.unitedstatesatheists.com

**I am an Atheist and would like to join United States Atheists.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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If you provide your e-mail address we will add you to our e-mail list to keep you updated on USA news and events. If you do **not** wish to be added to the list, please check this box:

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Please make check or money order payable to United States Atheists and mail to:

United States Atheists

6514 SE Foster Rd.

Portland, OR 97206-4659

You may also join at any of our regular meetings, held every Tuesday evening at 7:30 at the above address. Contributions are also gratefully accepted at our meetings.

United States Atheists is a 501(c)(3) educational charity run by volunteers. Donations are tax-deductible. Consult a licensed tax expert for details on how it would apply in your tax situation.

*Critical Thinker* July / August 2004



Join us for  
Pizza Night  
on July 20th!

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

United States Atheists  
6514 SE Foster Rd.  
Portland, OR 97206-4659

FIRST  
CLASS  
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