

(212) 330-6794 PO Box 1187, New York, NY 10013
<http://nyc-atheists.org> info@nyc-atheists.org

Events

November Atheist Meetup

Casual dining or drinks with your fellow freethinkers.

Tuesday, November 18, 7-9 P.M.

Manhattan: V Bar and Cafe, 225 Sullivan St., just south of Washington Square Park (A/C/E/B/D/F/V/S trains to West 4th St.).

Westchester: WESPAC Foundation, 255 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., in White Plains.

Locations chosen by registering and voting at <http://atheists.meetup.com>. Atheist Meetups in Westchester, Long Island, and northern NJ will be promoted in e-mail if enough people register.

November Monthly Meeting

Thursday, November 20, 6:30 P.M.

Guest speaker: Bill Baird, reproductive rights activist

352 7th Ave., 16th flr.

(Between W. 29th-30th Sts., just south of Penn Station)

Donation requested

December Atheist Meetup

Casual dining or drinks with your fellow freethinkers.

Tuesday, December 16, 7-9 P.M.

Manhattan and other locations; call (212) 330-6794 to confirm.

Solstice Dinner w/ Show, plus Empire State Building Excursion

Join us for a 3-course Chinese feast featuring the live music of Leonid Hambro, who will review for us his career as principal pianist for the NY Philharmonic Orchestra, WQXR pianist, touring with Victor Borge, and working with the most famous orchestra conductors of the twentieth century.

After dinner and performance, we will go up the Empire State Building across the street.

Monday, December 22, 7 P.M.

Hunan Fifth Avenue

323 Fifth Ave.

(between 32nd and 33rd Sts.)

Dinner: \$33 incl. tax and tip, excluding beverages; pay at door

Optional excursion to Empire State Building observation platform: \$11



Bill Baird in November;

The November meeting's guest speaker will be Bill Baird, the nationally known reproductive rights activist. For close to four decades, Baird has dedicated his life to the belief that all people should have freedom of choice in matters of reproductive healthcare and to freely express their own individual sexuality.

Baird has long been a friend to atheist and other freethought groups, often lecturing at the national conventions of American Atheists, of which New York City Atheists is a local affiliate. Come hear Baird on Thursday, November 20, 6:30 P.M., at 352 7th Ave., 16th flr. (between W. 29th-30th Sts., just south of Penn Station). A donation requested.

October's meeting, featuring HumanLight cocreator Joe Fox, will be featured in the December newsletter.

See Page 9 for Membership Application.

D.C. Demo against Ten Commandments Monument

Atheists and other freethinkers from several groups massed on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol on Sunday, October 5, to protest backers of Alabama Supreme Court justice Roy Moore, whose resistance to move a Ten Commandments monument from the Alabama Judicial Building violated the constitutional separation of church and state.

Turnout estimates ranged from 200 to 350 for the religious, and 74 to 103 for the freethinkers.

The Washington, D.C., demonstration against the "Commandments Caravan" was led by the national group American Atheists. Some members of NYC Atheists went as a group after making arrangements in the members-only Yahoo discussion group <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nyc-atheists>, bringing with them the NYC Atheists banner.

"Roy Moore wasn't there. Then again I don't think the caravan was his idea," said Lauren, an atheist attendee, in the Yahoo discussion group GAM-Org (<http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/GAM-Org>). "Some of their speakers

didn't make it from Fredricksburg to D.C. They were arrested for reasons unknown. The dunderheads had a rock, some tablets, and a Moses guy lacking hair and beard; but they forgot an American Flag. Later they snagged a supporter who happened to be carrying one. It was a lie-fest of biblical proportions."

"This caravan originated in Alabama with a purpose to take Judge Roy Moore's historically inaccurate and bizarre viewpoint as to our nation's founding and its laws to our nation's capital," said Larry Darby, the Alabama state director for American Atheists, quoted by the Cybercast News Service. "The eventual end result of Moore's demands, should he ever prevail, is the destruction of our constitutional republic or the American way of life."

"Larry stood off to the sidelines and chatted with one of the honchos of that group and they compared notes," said NYC Atheists' Dennis, also writing in GAM-Org. "If memory serves me, apparently and not unsurprisingly, the Oct. 5 demonstrators are run by a cynical bunch of manipulators who are primarily in it for the money they can raise by appealing to the ignorance of spiritual children. Larry said that the paltry number of pro-Ten Commandments demonstrators has been pretty consistent all along. Our numbers, on the other hand, seem to be increasing every time a counterdemonstration is required."

"Myself and two or three other demonstrators," continued Dennis, "were in a heated discussion with a 12- or 13-year-old kid named David who was 'home schooled' and was arguing for the pro-Ten Commandments/creationist crowd. Needless to say, he was simply regurgitating the horseshit he had been fed by his parents and those teachers they allowed to indoctrinate him. He was an arrogant little shit, but I think that's a good sign because he was one of the few of that crowd that tried to engage us in discussion. 'You may say I'm a dreamer,' but I kept commenting to the kid and to others close by that he is a future freethinker. I invited him to 'come back and see us' in a few years after the crap he has been fed collides with reality and the only response he receives from his elders is more lies and/or punishment."

CNN quoted an atheist who said that the Constitution guarantees not only freedom of religion but also freedom from government-supported religious worship.



Winter Solstice: Sun, Moon and Worship

by Conrad F. Goeringer
Presented at the New Jersey Winter Solstice Luncheon, 12/17/00

One of the best ways to learn about any culture or period of history is to see what days of the year it honors. We're here to celebrate something called the Winter Solstice; and not by coincidence, this is also the time of year when one of the world's major faiths, Christianity, marks the birth of its god man Jesus Christ. So, if you pick, up the "Dictionary of Quotations" collected by Bergen Evans, you find that nearly every reference under the heading of "CHRISTMAS" pertains to religion. You'll find Byron's "Hymn for Christmas Day," Martin Luther's "Cradle Hymn," some angelic references from Tennyson and Charles Wesley.

But I like the "Crown Treasury of Relevant Quotations," arranged by Edward F. Murphy. Evans was a minted PH.D. from Harvard with a follow-up at Oxford, a seminal classicist. Murphy is altogether different; he takes irreverent quotes by Dorothy Parker (on drinking) and even Reggie Jackson on baseball. Evans is literary journals; Murphy writes for Playboy, Sports Illustrated and the New York Times. I like his quotes about Christmas and, for sure, Christianity. He chooses a gem from A.A. Milne, for example:

"I find it difficult to believe in

Father Christmas. If he is the jolly old gentlemen he is always said to be, why doesn't he behave as such? How is it that the presents go so often to the wrong people?"

There's a quote from John Andrew Holmes, who observed: "The Christmas season has come to mean the period when the public plays Santa Claus to the merchants." A line from Dylan Thomas informs us that the poet received a stocking full of cigars, cherry brandy and other delights. My favorite is from the acerbic P.G. Wodehouse, who admonishes:

"The first rule in buying Christmas presents is to select something shiny. If the chosen object is of leather, the leather must look as if it has been well greased; if of silver, it must gleam with the light that never was on sea or land. This is because the wariest person will often mistake shininess for expensiveness."

But we're Atheists, and if we celebrate anything at this time of year, it is probably the Winter Solstice. Any excuse to party and indulge, right? So, I'd like to talk to you briefly about the Solstice, what it is and how it came to be, and the fact that unlike the last Solstice time, this year has something special in store for us. We celebrate the solstice today, but it actually occurs on December 21 at 8:37 a.m. EST. For those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, that is when the sun reaches the lowest point in its annual apparent journey across the sky. If you went out every

day of the year (or even once a week), and carefully plotted the position of the Sun around midway, you would find that at the Summer Solstice, the sun is highest in the sky. The rays of the sun beat down on earth at their most direct angle, so the hemisphere receives the most energy per unit of the earth's surface. This heats up the air, and this is what gives us the warm months of our summer. During the winter, the opposite occurs. The sun is low in the afternoon sky, the rays are spread out, the earth and air cool. All of this is made possible by the fact that the earth is tilted about 23-degrees from its elliptical path around the sun.. We're actually closer to the sun when it is winter in the Northern hemisphere than we are during the summer, at perihelion. And that is because our path around this closest star is a very slight ellipse, not a perfect circle.

Just four days after this Winter Solstice, on Monday, December 25 — the day which non-orthodox Christians consider to be the holiday of "Christmas" — our part of the country is going to be treated to something a bit amazing, a partial solar eclipse of the sun. As seen from our area of the earth — this time, mostly the United States and parts of Canada, our moon moves across the face of the sun. Were you out in space in the right position, you would see the moon totally obscure the sun. That happens on earth, too, and if you travel to South Africa next June and the weather conditions are favorable, you'll see a total eclipse of the sun.

Solstices and eclipses are both grand displays of nature, and part of how we evolved — the sun and the moon are two of the engines which have driven evolution on this planet, and they are part of the elaborate story behind how human beings came to invent a perplexing array of religions.

Take Solstices. We find abundant cross cultural evidence that this time of year, especially in the Northern Hemisphere, was an important marker for so many different ancient societies. They built temples, monoliths, even laid out entire cities aligned with the motions of the sky; and the solstice was one of the most important. They also considered the skies the realm of powerful, supernatural entities which often became components in their religion. The Sun was frequently a major deity. The Egyptians called him Ra, and believed that human beings were born from his tears and that he created the first couple, Shu and Tefnut. The Greeks believed in Helios, who

drove the sun across the sky from east to west in a golden chariot. Eskimos invented Malina, a Sun goddess who lived together with her brother, the moon-god Anninga.

Even Neolithic peoples were acutely aware of the sun and the moon. Until last year, the oldest recorded map of the moon was one drawn by Leonardo daVinci about 1505. That was until a Canadian archaeologist discovered a rock carving depicting the surface of the moon in a prehistoric tomb in Knowth, County Meath in Ireland that is nearly 5000 years old.

What made the winter solstice so special? Well, it marked the mid-point of winter, and it was one of the four cardinal points of the year, the others being the summer solstice, and the two equinoxes; and in many cultures, all of this had a special metaphysical significance. It was all part of a sensibility about the orderly periodicity of the universe, the oscillation of the yearly cycle, a process of continual birth, death and renewal. All of this mirrored itself in the lives of animals and human beings, too. There is good reason to suspect that funeral rituals and belief in some kind of afterlife evolved, in part, from the perception that nature renewed itself; that crops and plants grew again after the dormancy of winter.

Equinoxes and solstices were "marked" by the alignments of temples, graves and habitations all over the world. The Anasazi Indians who inhabited Chaco Canyon in New

Tabling Boosts Mailing List

Several street-fair tablings between March and October have increased New York City Atheists' mailing list to 469 names. Up to 15 members per tabling day have helped pitch organized atheism in New York City, in sun and rain, talking to passers-by; giving away newsletters, flyers, and pens; and also promoting the national group American Atheists and the local WBAI-FM program *Equal Time for Freethought*.

Thanks to everyone who has helped at the tablings. We hope we can count on you in 2004. It's been the best publicity, and has combined activism with fun. Tabling had been planned in July 2001, four months after NYC Atheists' foundation, but the group was then too new to make it happen.

Mexico drew precisely aligned petroglyphs to construct an accurate and precise calendar. Throughout Britain, many of the 900 (and counting) known stone circles and monoliths which likely served as ceremonial temples have curious alignments to events like the winter and summer solstice. The same is true of some of the stone circles and other monuments throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

In Mexico, for instance, there is an abundance of ancient sites where astronomical alignments seen to be an important feature in the construction of



temples. These places were likely more ceremonial than scientific, so they weren't "observatories" in our modern sense of the word. They were ritual venues and celebratory centers which honored the cosmic significance not only the solstices, but the rising of other celestial objects, too, such as the Pleiades or the star Capella, that had both a calendric and religious significance. In Mesoamerican cities like Uxmul and Monte Alban, there were often separate temples built and carefully aligned to mark the summer and winter solstices.

Even though this time of year focuses our attention on the sun, the Christmas day eclipse involves another important body in our sky, and that is the moon. Without the moon, solar eclipses would not occur. There is also the probability that you and I wouldn't be here either, because the moon has played such an important part in the evolution of all life on this planet. Without the moon, there might still be waves and sloping beaches, because these are the result of storms and other wind patterns which, in turn, are driven by the heat from the sun. There would still be high and low tides, but they would only be about half of what we have today thanks to our moon.

Some scientists have suggested that without the moon, there would not have been those tidal pools and other mechanisms that energized the so-called "primordial soup" of chemicals out of which elementary life started. Even if that isn't the case, life on earth — if it arose — would be very different if our planet did not have its moon. Because

the moon torques the earth and exerts other influences on its rotation and orbit, the tilt of the earth's axis might not have occurred, and we might not have the seasons we know today. Some very different bio-communities may have evolved. The length of the day might be considerably different. The moon has been slowing the rotation of the earth ever so gradually for billions of years; so if the moon weren't around, that process would be taken over by the sun, but it would be much slower. With faster rotation come higher winds on the surface of a planet — Jupiter, which rotates every ten hours is a good example. Without our moon, winds of up to 100 mph would be common. Life, if it evolves on a moonless earth, could take longer, and it would have to adapt to higher wind speeds. One astronomer suggests that those high winds would mediate against tall life forms that are not stabilized by their weight or deep roots, and so tree dwelling life would have a very rough time of it.

With only a few hours of sunlight every day, life forms would evolve different biological clocks and rhythms. Animals that exist today and which depend on the present cycles of nature, such as turtles and salmon, probably wouldn't exist. Low waves would make surfing a ho-hum sport. The earth would probably be bombarded with more space debris — just look at the cratering on the moon! There would be no lunar calendar, no fables about werewolves, no theme for love songs, none of those wonderful autumn moon rises, and no eclipses.

But the moon does exist, and it allows us to see eclipses, like the one on December 25. It so happens that right now the moon is about 1/400th the distance from earth that the sun is, and it is about 1/400 the diameter of the sun, so the propitious mathematics means that on occasion the moon will pass in front of the sun, obscuring it completely. That allows astronomers to observe features like the sun's corona that otherwise are lost in the solar glare. Now, the orbit of the moon around the earth is an ellipse, not a perfect circle, so that means that sometimes the moon is just a bit too far away to totally obscure the sun, and you have what's known as an annular eclipse. Other times, if earth isn't positioned just so, we have a partial eclipse of the sun — as we will on December 25.

Just as they did with the sun, ancient peoples from all over the earth had myths and legends about the moon and eclipses. Many believed that an eclipse was an omen of impending disaster, or the downfall of a ruler. Some developed rituals on how to counteract the effects of an eclipse, like banging pans, shooting arrows into the sky and firing cannons. The earliest record of a solar eclipse comes from ancient China, October 22, 2134 BCE, and it is recorded that "the sun and moon did not meet harmoniously." Two astronomers named Hsi and Ho reportedly were beheaded for failing to predict this event. Millennia later, in the waning days of the empire, the Chinese Imperial Navy blasted its ceremonial canons during an eclipse.

The Bible has one certain reference to an eclipse, found in AMOS 8:9 where God is throwing one of his customary Old Testament style temper tantrums against human beings and talking about lamentation and earth quakes and mourning and wrapping peoples' genital areas in sackcloth, and making people bald — that's actually in there, in verse 10 — and He adds, "that I will cause the sun to go down at noon and I will darken the earth in a clear day." It is likely that the writer of AMOS, who often referred to contemporaneous events, was talking about the eclipse of June 15, 763 BCE that was recorded by the Assyrians. If god did cause this event, well, it was scheduled to occur anyway, because you can take PC planetarium software that costs about \$100, and punch in the numbers and you'll actually see a rendering of the sky, and the eclipse from that part of the earth on June 15, about 2760 years ago.



The most famous eclipse of ancient times actually ended a war between the Lydians and the Medes, two Middle Eastern kingdoms that had been slugging it out for nearly five years. There is a record that their respective armies were locked in fierce battle when “the day was turned into night,” and that was the solar eclipse of May 5, 585 BCE.

It’s interesting that during most of ancient times, and even into the modern age, eclipses have been considered omens along with other celestial events, such as the appearance of comets. The Greek historian Thucydides, who wrote about the Peloponnesian War often cast eclipses in the same category as other calamities such as earthquakes. And there is the 17th century writer of poems and madrigals, John Milton, who in his classic *Paradise Lost* informs us...

*As when the sun, new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air,
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the
Moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations and with fear of
change
Perplexes monarchs.*

There is another chapter in this tale of romance between the sun and the moon, and this has to do with fertility, blood, the mystery of life and the possible origin of early religions. . At Stonehenge and other monuments, not only are the movements of the sun embedded in the layout, but so are those of the moon. There is a “moon circle” of rocks, based on the lunar calendar; and as with the sun, cultures throughout the world have bestowed a special significance on the moon, usually as a symbol of fertility, female wisdom and periodic order in the cosmos.

This moon calendar is important; it runs 29.53 days from full moon to full moon which is a period known as the Lunar Synodic Month, which means that it is out of sync with other calendars. And there is compelling evidence to suggest that this lunar month was closely associated with the menstrual cycle in women, and became entangled in a whole elaborate tapestry of beliefs having to do with menstruation, duality of the sexes, procreation and fertility. The human female menstrual cycles average between 26 and 30 days, so let’s settle on 28. Monthly bleeding marked the time a girl came of procreative age; and it also underscored an important difference between men and women. Women had children, women reproduced, and there is a good deal of



literature which discusses how this fact became part of the folklore, rituals and religions in early societies. And again, there is a cross-cultural similarity here that’s worth noting.

The Maoris believed that menstrual blood coagulated to form human souls; so did Aristotle. The Roman scholar Pliny (who lived from 23 to 79 CE) wrote that menstrual blood was “the material substance of generation.” And this idea that a human being somehow “congealed” out of the menstrual fluid persisted well into the medical schools of the 18th century.

South American Indians believed that all humanity was formed from “moon blood” at the time of creation. In the creation mythos of Mesopotamia, the Great Goddess Ninhusag fashioned human beings from clay and her “blood of life,” and Mesopotamian women constructed ceremonial fertility charms from clay and their own menstruation. There has been some interesting writing to suggest that the Biblical story of Adam was rooted in older female-oriented myths of creation involving moon blood. Moses ben Maimonides, the 12th century Jewish philosopher who became Rabbi of Cairo, wrote that the worship of the moon was the religion of Adam.

Almost universally, the Moon is a female symbol. Plutarch informs us that Egyptian priests considered the Moon as “mother of the Universe.” The Babylonians gave precedence to the moon over the sun in their theology. The Greek lexicon uses “menos” to

signify both “moon” and “power.” And the first century Greek biographer Plutarch declared, “The effects of the moon are similar to the effects of reason and wisdom, whereas those of the sun appear to be brought about by physical force and violence.

The Moon Goddess was giver of life but in some culture She executed the role of destroyer, and roamed the dark skies of night looking for souls to devour. Some ancients considered the moon to be the realm of the afterlife. But it was mostly as a symbol of life, regeneration and fertility that she is best and most widely known. The ancients knew that the moon controlled the tides of the sea; and it was said that she also controlled the tidal oscillations of life itself.

There is a residue of moon Goddess worship today in Christianity, and it is the cult of the Virgin Mary. It’s interesting that one of her most evocative forms, as the lady of Guadalupe, shows her surrounded by rays and standing on the horns of the crescent moon. The main shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe is built over the ruins of an ancient Aztec fertility temple. Some things never change...

It was Frederick Nietzsche who said that Christianity denaturalized the world by constructing a religion where the god or gods were remote and distant. As it spread throughout the western world gaining cultural and political hegemony, the Christian church absorbed many of the symbols and ritualistic trappings of those earlier pagan belief systems and

cultures. Solstice, sun and moon were no exception. The thirteen months of the lunar/menstrual year were detested by Christianity, and some have suggested that this may account for superstitions and hostility to the number 13.

The pagan practices, including the celebration of solstice, though, have lived on, even unconsciously. We decorate at this time of year with evergreens, Yule logs, the custom of giving and receiving gifts — and all of this dates back to those earlier, pagan rituals and customs which, we though, we had left so far behind. The American Puritans and other Protestants knew this, which is why they didn't celebrate Christmas.

The Solstice is a reminder of many things, including those ancient sensibilities of nature and cycles, and the belief systems which arose from them. Christianity had its roots in earlier religions. It never had a monopoly on themes such as resurrection and the renewal of life, a God man-Savior born of a Virgin, and saints and sub-deities who rule over certain times of the year. Christianity is the Johnny-come-lately kid on the block, and even most of its fervent adherents have little idea of how it really began.

I think that the solstice should remind us that we are very much a part of the natural world. An eclipse, even the partial eclipse that we'll be treated to on Christmas day, is a spectacular reminder, too.

Can You Be Fired for Your Atheism?

by Dennis Middlebrooks, FANNY (Freethinking Activist Non-Believing New Yorkers)

The Business section of the 10/14/03 edition of the *New York Post* contained a lengthy article on investment guru Leo Wells, the founder and CEO of Wells Investment Services of Norcross, Ga. The article describes Wells as a "religious zealot" and indicated that in his firm casual dress, long hair, drinking and "atheism" were grounds for dismissal. The latter, of course, is in direct violation of civil rights laws. The article mentioned that Wells was being fined \$150,000 for misuse of company funds. Apparently imposing a religious test for employment is acceptable. This article provides conclusive proof that discrimination against non-believers is alive and well in the USA. Do not expect the Ashcroft Justice Department to take any action on behalf of atheists

in this matter.

The headquarters of Wells Investment Services should be picketed by local freethinkers. In addition, if this company has any offices in other cities, its policy of religious discrimination should be brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities. Other companies that refuse to employ atheists should also be identified and targeted for reprisals.

Imagine the uproar if Leo Wells was an atheist who fired anyone professing religious beliefs!

Treasury Report

As of November 3, New York City Atheists' bank account balance was \$2,704.77.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to New York City Atheists. Membership and our monthly newsletter are currently free, but we depend on donations to maintain events and mailings. Make your check payable to "NYC Atheists" and send it to NYC Atheists, PO Box 1187, New York, NY 10013.

Letter to the Editor

Dennis Middlebrooks's following letter to the editor was published in the *New York Post* on October 19:

Your editorial on the Pope ("John Paul's Legacy: He Changed the World," Oct. 12) overlooked one of the pontiff's less savory accomplishments; namely, the disastrous consequences his virulent opposition to birth control and family planning have had in the Third World, particularly among women of child-bearing age.

The Vatican's efforts to combat U.N. programs designed to bring reproductive choices to impoverished women throughout the world is a stain on the papacy of John Paul II.

Your editorial also made no mention of the John Paull II's outspoken opposition to free market capitalism and capital punishment, both of which are supported by a large majority of Americans.

Dennis Middlebrooks
Brooklyn

Heart of the Beholder Hopes Again for Funding

In August, Darlene Lieblich, a network television executive in Los Angeles and

a lifelong freethinker, faced the end of a fundraising deadline for *Heart of the Beholder*, her planned film of how an average American family stood firm against a fanatical religious group. The project's minimum film production goal was \$500,000, with a maximum goal of \$2 million. \$200,000 would come from own Lieblich's own money, plus donations and loans from personal lenders approached through grassroots efforts. Most of the cast and crew would be working for no pay, or for deferred pay, because they believe so strongly in this film.

Lieblich had campaigned hard for funding, even pre-selling DVDs and videos, but in the end raised \$437,681.25, a little over sixty thousand dollars too short. In September, Lieblich announced the failure of the campaign and, as she had promised previously, returned all money to donors.

"With an estimated twenty-plus million freethinkers in the U.S. alone, we were optimistic that we could rally grass-roots supporters to buy a DVD or video of a movie that could focus national attention on our philosophy and hopefully bring freethinkers out of the closet to forge a campaign for acceptance the same way gays and lesbians have done over the last five years," said Lieblich on the film's Web site. "Yes — we were naive. But it's better to try and fail, then to never know what could have been. Does this mean we are giving up? Not a chance. This ten-year-long battle may take another ten years. Regardless, we will never give up." A new fund drive, as of mid-October, has so far achieved pledges of \$256,125.

"*Beholder* has been called *Pulp Fiction* meets *Inherit the Wind*, but we prefer *Rocky* versus the Religious Right," says the film's Web site, <http://www.beholder.com>. "Never before has a movie been produced by using grass roots funding. But thanks to the Internet and freethinkers around the world, we're going to make sure that the first film that is made this way, is an important one." Attempts to fund the film commercially have failed since 1992 thanks to religious-right pressure against Hollywood producers, says Lieblich, who has been a television producer for twenty-five years.

Heart of the Beholder will be based on a true story published in *The Humanist* in 1988 about how a young couple was ruined by a group of religious fundamentalists because they were the only video store owners who dared to carry Martin Scorsese's

controversial film *The Last Temptation of Christ*. The couple stood up against relentless harassment, intimidation, and even death threats. When the couple refused to buckle, the religious zealots blackmailed the district attorney into destroying their business and family.

“When I read [the script of] *Heart of the Beholder*,” said Lieblich on the Web site, “I found an incredibly powerful story, told in a unique voice, which roused me to laughter, to righteous anger, and ultimately to immense satisfaction. Based on real people and real events, the film’s structure is flawless and the writing excellent in every aspect.

“I support the funding of this film by freethinkers — 100 percent,” says D. J. Grothe, director of campus programs for the Center for Inquiry and national field director for the Council for Secular Humanism. “Not only have I read the screenplay, but I am intimately knowledgeable about the story because it took place in my home town of St. Louis and at the time [a decade ago], I was involved in the religious fundamentalist movement there. In my opinion, this movie has everything it needs to be an award-winning film, from humor to suspense and drama, to many unexpected twists and turns. It also can bring positive publicity to our movement, which can open many doors toward bringing other freethinkers out of the closet. I am personally supporting this project in every way I can. I ask that my fellow freethinkers and humanists do the same and rally behind this project.”

Heart of the Beholder has begun a new fund drive, asking for nonbinding pledges of loans (two years, interest bearing, minimum \$100) to be e-mailed to pledge@beholder.com. On achieving \$500,000 in pledges, the producers will set a funding date that will give the lenders enough time to download promissory notes from a Web site, get any legal advice they need, then send in their checks. Each lender will receive one DVD or VHS copy of the film once it has been sold or picked up for distribution. For more information on the loan terms, see the Web site http://www.beholder.com/promissory_info.htm, or contact the producers via phone or fax at (310) 861-5583, or by mail at Beholder Productions, LLC; 10061 Riverside Dr., Suite #324; Toluca Lake, CA 91602.

The local WBAI-FM radio show *Equal Time for Freethought* interviewed Lieblich this past July; you can hear that program online at

<http://foody.org/freethoughtradio/show50.html>

The producers are considering for the film songs from Universal Dice (<http://www.universaldice.com>), the band led by Gerry Dantone, president of the Center for Inquiry on Long Island (Long Island Secular Humanists).

On the Air

Equal Time for Freethought. Sunday evenings at 6:30 P.M. EST on WBAI-FM (99.5). A radio show produced by members of NYC area freethought groups. For audio and text notes, see the Web site <http://foody.org/freethoughtradio.html>.

Atheist Viewpoint. Sundays at 1:30 P.M. on channel 56 on Manhattan Neighborhood Network, Saturdays at 4 P.M. and Sundays at 6 P.M. on channel 35 on Staten Island, and Mondays and Tuesdays at 7 P.M. on channel 20 on Long Island’s Hauppauge and Brookhaven Cablevision. See the Web site <http://atheistviewpoint.tv>. If you are a member of NYC Atheists and want to be on the show to talk about current events and your own personal experiences relating to your atheism, e-mail Ellen Johnson (ej@atheists.org).

Humanist Perspective. Hosted by Joe Beck and aired on Cablevision Public Access, it can be seen on Wednesdays at 6:30 P.M. on channel 71 of the Woodbury system, and on Wednesdays at 7:00 P.M. on channel 70 of the Hauppauge and Brookhaven systems.

What Is Secular Humanism? Produced by Long Island Secular Humanists and aired on Cablevision Public Access, it can be seen on Tuesdays at 6:30 P.M. on channel 71 of the Woodbury system, and on Sundays at 2:00 P.M. on the Hauppauge and Brookhaven systems.

Twelve-Step Alternatives

The Center for Inquiry recently held the seminar “SOS: Providing an Alternative to the 12 Steps” in Manhattan, northern New Jersey, and Long Island to introduce Secular Organizations for Sobriety to service providers, medical professionals, and people in recovery, and to show how to promote this new local alternative to religious addiction recovery. For more information, call the Center for Inquiry at 212-265-2877.

These are the existing secular alternative groups in New York City:

Agnostic AA is a secular alternative to Alcoholics Anonymous. In Manhattan it meets on Sunday and Thursday afternoons, and on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings. In Brooklyn it’s on Saturdays at 11:30 A.M., and in the Bronx on Wednesdays at 7:00 P.M., all at various locations. For more information call New York Inter-Group at (212) 647-1680 and ask about Agnostic AA, or see their Web site <http://www.agnosticanyc.org>.

Moderation Management is another alternative. In Manhattan it meets on Tuesdays from 6 to 7 P.M. at: New York Spaces, 131 West 72nd Street, New York, and on Thursdays from 7 to 8 P.M. at the Harm Reduction Coalition, 22 West 27th Street, on the 5th floor. For more information about Moderation Management meetings, call 212-462-9469 or see their Web site <http://www.moderation.org>.

LifeRing Recovery is yet another secular alternative. It meets on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month, 1-2 P.M., at Cabrini Medical Center, 227 East 19th St. (between 2nd and 3rd Aves.) in Manhattan. For more information e-mail jsnow@panix.com or see their Web site <http://www.unhooked.com>.

2003 Newsletters on Web Site

All of New York City Atheists’ 2003 newsletters, the product of the production skills of members Ileen and Jake, are available on our Web site at <http://nyc-atheists.org> as PDF files. You can view them with Adobe Acrobat Reader, a free download at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readermain.html>.

See our Web site for news, commentary, photos, and resources since NYC Atheists’ foundation in early 2001.

Newsletter and Mailing List Help Needed

New York City Atheists urgently needs members to edit its monthly newsletter and maintain its mailing list. Editors should have experience compiling information from different sources. The mailing-list manager will update the list and generate mailing labels and an e-mail distribution list. If interested, e-mail info@nyc-atheists.org.

NYC-ATHEISTS INC.
LETTER TO THE EDITOR CONTEST

Dollars for Letters to the Editor

Sanity pays. Be eligible to win up to \$100 for your published letter to a New York City area newspaper or magazine!

Eligible publications: Daily, weekly, or monthly print newspapers and magazines published and distributed in the New York City metropolitan area.

Awards: \$100 for a published letter in the New York Times, the New Yorker, New York, or Time Out. \$75 for a published letter in the Daily News, New York Post, or Newsday. \$50 for a published letter in the New York Press, Village Voice, New York Observer, The Sun, or The Resident, or Westchester, New Jersey, or Long Island daily newspapers. \$25 for a published letter in other journals. \$100 for the best published letter of the year.

Rules:

- 1) You must be a member of NYC Atheists Inc.
- 2) The letter must be related to NYC Atheists Inc.'s purposes and goals:
 - To promote total and absolute separation of church and state.
 - To educate and inform the public about atheism.
 - To provide a forum for the inquiry and discussion of atheism.
 - To develop and engage in educational, cultural and social activities that are beneficial to the members of NYC Atheists Inc. and atheism.
- 3) An original, dated copy of your published letter must be submitted to NYC Atheists Inc., PO Box 1187, New York, NY 10013.
- 4) The decision of the NYC Atheists Inc. board of directors is final.

Use this list of most major local print media (plus USA Today) to send letters. Letters should respond to a journal's specific article or general coverage, and opinion/"op-ed" commentaries should reflect a journal's general style. When writing, include your name, address, and daytime and evening phone numbers. The shorter the letter or commentary, the better the chance it will be used. All journals reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity. This list includes contact information, when available, "op-ed" commentaries. Always check journals for the most current submission information and expected style. If the journal you want is not listed below, try <http://go-newyorkcity.com/media>.

Daily News: Letters to the Editor
The New York Daily News
450 W. 33rd St.
New York, N.Y. 10001
E-mail: voicers@edit.nydailynews.com

The Jersey Journal (Jersey City)
In Your Opinion
The Jersey Journal
30 Journal Square
Jersey City, NJ 07306

The Journal News (Westchester)
1 Gannett Drive
White Plains, NY 10604
E-mail: letters@thejournalnews.com
Web: www.nyjnews.com/contact/letters.php3?address=letters

New York Magazine
Letters to the Editor
New York Magazine
444 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022
E-mail: NYLetters@primediamags.com
Web: <http://www.metronewyork.com/index.htm>

New York Post
Letters to the Editor
New York Post
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036-8790
E-mail: letters@nypost.com
Web letters submission:
www.nypost.com/postopinion/letters/letters_editor.htm

New York Press: Letters to the Editor
New York Press
333 7th Ave., 14th Fl.
NY, NY 10001
E-mail: mugger@nypress.com

The New York Times
Letters to the Editor
The New York Times (or) The New York Times Magazine
229 West 43rd Street
New York, NY 10036
Fax: (212) 556-3622.
E-mail (newspaper): letters@nytimes.com
E-mail (magazine): magazine@nytimes.com
Web forum:
<http://forums.nytimes.com/comment/>
Length: approx. 150 words
Op-Ed submissions: oped@nytimes.com

The New Yorker
The Mail
The New Yorker
4 Times Square
New York, N.Y. 10036-6592
Fax: 212-286-5047
E-mail: themail@newyorker.com

Newsday: Letters to the Editor
Newsday
235 Pinelawn Rd.
Melville, NY 11747-4250
Web:
<http://cf.newsday.com/newsdayemail/email.cfm>
Viewpoints commentary submission:
oped@newsday.com

The Star-Ledger (Trenton)
Letters to the Editor
The Star-Ledger
1 Star-Ledger Plaza
Newark, N.J., 07102-1200
E-mail: elletters@starledger.com
Opinion: Richard Aregood, Editorial Department, raregood@starledger.com

The Sun: Letters to the Editor
105 Chambers St.
New York, NY 10007

The Times (Trenton)
Letters to the Editor
The Times
P.O. Box 847
Trenton, N.J. 08605
E-mail: letters@njtimes.com

USA Today
Letters to the Editor
USA Today
1000 Wilson Blvd., 22nd
Arlington, VA 22229
E-mail: editor@usatoday.com
Length: 250 or fewer words

The Village Voice
Letters to the Editor
The Village Voice
36 Cooper Square
New York, NY 10003
E-mail: editor@villagevoice.com
Web: <http://www.villagevoice.com/aboutus/contact.shtml>

The Wall Street Journal
Letters to the Editor
4300 Route 1 North
South Brunswick, NJ 08852
E-mail: editors@interactive.wsj.com

ADDRESS: NYC ATHEISTS INC. P.O. BOX 1187 NY, NY. 10013
WEB SITE: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG
PHONE: 212-330-6794

NYC ATHEISTS INC. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

WEB: NYC-ATHEISTS.ORG

PHONE: (212) 330-6794

(January 1 to December 31, 2004)

Name: _____
(Required) First Last

Address: _____
(Required) Number Street P.O. Box/Apt.

_____ City State Zip

Email: _____@_____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____

NYC Atheists Inc. is a non-profit (501c), non-partisan, and educational association with the purposes and goals:

1. To promote the total and absolute separation of church and state
2. To educate and inform the public about Atheism
3. To provide a forum for the inquiry and discussion about Atheism
4. To develop and engage in educational, cultural, and social activities that are beneficial to the members of NYC Atheists Inc. and the Atheist community

YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

I support NYC Atheists Inc. purposes and goals and apply for membership which entitles me to voting and nominating rights (except organizations*) and a mailed copy of the newsletter as an:

Individual member: (\$ 25) (\$ 100) (\$ 250) (\$ 500) (\$ 1000)
 Basic Supporter Fellow Patron Founder

Senior (Age 65 or greater): (\$ 20) Full Time Student: (\$ 10)

Military (Active): (\$ 15) Organization* (\$ 25)

ADDITIONAL DONATION: (\$ _____) TOTAL AMOUNT: (\$ _____)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Organization: _____ Title: _____

How did you learn about NYC Atheists? _____

Reason for joining NYC Atheists? _____

Skills? _____

SEND APPLICATION AND ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES TO:
NYC ATHEIST INC. — MEMBERSHIP
P.O. BOX 1189
New York, NY 10013
