

Atheist Coalition

AN INVASION OF ARMIES CAN BE RESISTED, BUT NOT AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

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They've Even Fu*!#d Up the Music

by **Malcom Lagauche**

The 1970 cult movie "Joe," starring Peter Boyle, depicted the times of the latter portion of the 1960s more accurately than I have ever seen on screen or in writing.

Boyle played the lead part, that of a working class bigot who was watching time pass him by. He was racist, homophobic and sexist. Joe yearned for a U.S. that had disappeared a few decades earlier.

At the beginning of the movie, Joe was in a bar mouthing off. Finally, the bar tender, tired of listening to the rants, gave him a quarter and said, "Here, Joe. Play some music." After a few minutes, the jukebox was still silent. The bartender then asked, "Joe, what's the matter? You seem to be so opinionated, can't you even choose a song?" Joe responded, "They've even fucked up the music. It's all nigger music."

Sadly, I must report that in San Diego they have fucked up the music. No, not because of racial designations. Joe was wrong in his assessment of blacks in music because it was the intervention of African-Americans that created the most dynamic music ever: rock n' roll.

Reasons other than race have made me sad about developments on the rock n' roll scene, but before I address them, I will regress and discuss the importance of rock n' roll music on society.

Rock n' roll music almost had a short history. In 1955, Bill Haley and the Comets' song "Rock Around the Clock" appeared as the theme song for the movie "Blackboard Jungle." The song was released earlier, but nobody paid attention. When the movie became popular, "Rock Around the Clock" sped to the number one position in record sales in the U.S. This was considered to be the first rock n' roll hit.

Shortly after, came many rock n' roll songs. Coincidentally, for a couple of years, many performers had experimented with this new style, but it was only after Bill Haley's record that the window became open for the new musical form.

The year 1956 saw performers such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, and, let's not forget, Elvis make their national appearances. By 1959, however, the distribution of rock n' roll records

had degenerated to the depths of seediness, putting the genre in the same light as that of used car sales and boxing promotions.

The "payola" scandal hit. Disk jockeys were being paid to push certain records and the gravy train was over. Rock n' roll music had a bad name attached to it. By 1960, the term "rock n' roll is dead" was often heard and was quite accurate.

But, the music form was still on life support. For a few years, feeble attempts were made at recording rock n' roll songs, but they sounded like middle-of-the-road ballads.

Then came The Beatles. In 1964, all rules were thrown out the window. After The Beatles, a torrent of British rock n' roll groups invaded the U.S. and threw back to the American public the style of music U.S. artists had devised in the 1950s.

From 1965 to 1970, we saw the unbelievable progression of rock n' roll music. It would now never die.

Today, rock n' roll is still popular and the basis for many other similar musical forms, such as hip-hop and rap. But, the five-year period I mentioned still is the music form's greatest hour.

All sorts of groups and singles performers came forth singing about subjects other than "boy meets girl." War, drugs, racism, hypocrisy, greed: it was all there.

People smoked pot in public. Females threw away their bras and many times donned see-through shirts. Magic.

The music was new. Old rules were tossed aside and new methods prevailed. In 1967, a member of the Grateful Dead was asked how his group could produce such creative music. He answered, "We smoke some good dope." Today, that statement would get the interviewee arrested and quickly imprisoned.

My favorite group of the 1960s was the British band "The Who." They wrote anthems as well as songs. For instance, in "My Generation," they sang, "I hope I die before I get old." And, their hit song describing political corruption, "Won't Get Fooled Again," ended with the message, "Meet the new boss; same as the old boss."

The Who sang about teenage masturbation in "Pictures of Lilly." "Substitute" took a look at hypocrisy and wanting to conform.

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For a few years, the group was known for its stage antics in which they destroyed all their equipment at the end of the concert. In 1967, at the old Rhode Island Auditorium in Providence, RI, I saw them put on a act of great music and then destruction. The stage became a set of smoke and fire. It was real, not contrived. When The Who left the stage, the overwhelming smell of smoke pervaded the arena. Again, magic.

The Who, like other older rock n' rollers, still perform today, but at a much slower pace. Time has reared its ugly head. But, that does not take away from the incredible rock n' roll performances, many of which are legendary and a part of Western culture's history.

I just wanted to give a background of the times of the dynamic music that was produced from 1965-1970. I was there, right in the middle, and it would be difficult for people of a younger generation to understand, even though they like the 1960s music, what it really meant.

Now, let's get more current. For a few years, the San Diego area has had a few "classic rock" stations that highlight the music of the 1960s. They have come and gone.

About a year ago, a new station emerged that was not bad. The songs were great, but the station played them in groups of about 50, repeating them for a couple of weeks before highlighting a new group of songs, which were again heavily repeated. Something's better than nothing, I guess.

In November 2004, a statement came across the oldies station. It would no longer be in existence. However, it promoted a new station with a different frequency that would soon be on the air.

I listened to the station's offerings and was impressed. The choice of songs was excellent and there were very few repeats. Then, an odd thing happened. For three weeks before Christmas, the station broadcast only religious Christmas songs. Usually, a station may do this for a couple of days before the federal holiday. Three weeks was different from any time period I had heard before.

After Christmas, I began listening again. The songs were the same, but something was awry in the presentation. The presenters, one in particular, began talking about God. Statements such as "God bless you," "God loves you," and "God hears your prayers," were being broadcast. The regularity escalated.

Then, a few days ago, I heard a portion of Sherry Knight's show that put, in my opinion, the station's presentation over the edge.

Knight was the biggest offender of citing God, but her statements of January 31, 2005 went well beyond her norm. She began talking about the Iraqi elections, pronouncing Iraqi as "Eye-rack-ee." She extolled the virtues of the U.S. invasion and discussed how some dirty terrorists were making Iraq unsafe for U.S. soldiers. Then, she screamed, "And their freedom is all because of the U.S. military. God bless them all."

Knight's husband spent time in Iraq. She constantly told this to the listeners. To me, with a radio background, one of the most unprofessional things a broadcaster can do is to mention his/her personal life. Traditionally, if this happens, the person is fired on the spot.

I decided to write a letter of protest, but I thought I should look at the station's (99.3 FM) website first. Wow! What a bunch of horse merde!

The website included many references to God and several portions were dedicated to promoting the war in Iraq. God and country rule. Now, I knew the political philosophy of the station. Granted, one can have his/her opinion on anything, but I never saw the permeation of "God and country" into 1960s rock n' roll. And, from a straight perspective of professionalism, I know of no station, other than say a Christian station or a talk news station, that allows the presenters to delve into such subjects. It's just not done.

Here is my letter to 99.3 FM:

Dear People,

I enjoy listening to your music because it reflects that of what I consider to be the most creative time in the production of rock n' roll music — the 1960s.

However, your presenters are always mentioning God. I don't know if you realize that there are a substantial number of people who do not believe in God. After a while, it is quite irksome listening to something about God between the songs. How would you like a presenter saying, "And, let's use logic and not buy into that God myth. There is no God. Now, here's Tommy James and the Shondells with their first big hit, Hanky Panky." Preposterous? Yes. But no more preposterous than a presenter talking about God. To me, neither belongs in the presentation of classic oldies.

On Monday, January 31, 2005, your presenter stepped well out of bounds with good taste as well as stupidity. At about 5:30pm, she made a statement about the elections in Iraq. She evidently has no political knowledge as she attributed Iraqi freedom to U.S. military personnel. If you want, I can send you pictures of hundreds of Iraqis who were liberated from their lives by U.S. military action. Eight-year-old kids with their brains hanging out make for a very colorful, but gory, picture.

I realize that people have opinions, but your presenter has no intelligence whatsoever in her speaking of politics. Even if she did, what does this have to do with oldies?

The biggest insult came when she pronounced the citizens of Iraq as (I will phonetically spell it) "Eye-rack-ees." This is racist and bigoted. It is like calling a Polish-American person a "Polak" or a Hispanic a "beaner." And, she repeated this pronunciation several times.

What's next? Calling people niggers, kikes or slant-eyes?

I have a radio background both domestically and internationally. In each, it was paramount to pronounce the names of ethnic groups, people, or countries correctly. There was always someone at the studio to coach the presenters on proper pronunciation of such names. This is called professionalism. Evidently, that means nothing to your station.

Forget one's opinion, but I always thought media outlets presented their wares in a professional manner. And, for an oldies station to put forth half-baked political ideas boggles the mind. I can see if you are a political talk station, or a Christian station, but God and politics do not seem to mix with classic oldies.

The music you play represents the most vibrant and creative times in U.S. history. Yet, your people have dragged the music into the gutter with their unknowledgeable and outright stupid remarks. How sad.

Sincerely, Malcom Lagauche

Here is their response. Note there is no introduction or even a name affixed to the message. Internet e-mail communication has totally taken away any form of courtesy in writing letters, but a large radio station should know enough to keep up the previously-used norms in such matters:

“Thanks for your note, Malcom. I don’t think it proper to address your comments on God. Some believe, and some don’t. In our music the Beach Boys did with “God Only Knows”. But I will pass your comments on to Sherry in regards to her pronunciation of Iraqis. Being of Italian descent myself, I have come to forgive people who mention ‘Eye-Talians’. You may not know (nor care) that Sherry’s husband is a member of the U.S. Army Reserve - and spent 8 months in Iraq. He wasn’t corrected then - but I will be happy to pass your comments along. Please stay in touch, and thank you for your comments.”

Not once did the writer (he or she; I can’t tell) address my complaints. Even the one about the pronunciation was tossed aside with a “forgive people” message. The writer never said he/she would at least change this abomination.

In my years of radio broadcasting, professionalism and pronunciation were paramount. One never gave views on issues not perti-

nent to the music or subject at hand (sports, entertainment, biographies, etc.) and the presenter was always being told how to pronounce names that came up in the news, such as foreign countries or people from these nations.

The music that 99.3 FM plays is by far the best testimonial to the 1960s. Anti-war and unconventional messages were the main themes. To me, a station specializing in these songs that promotes war, is confusing. I would not expect to hear rap music 24 hours a day on a station owned by the Ku Klux Klan. Nor would I expect to here “Dixie” or “Cotton Fields” as anthems on black-owned radio stations.

Times have changed but the music and its message haven’t. For instance, Barry McGuire sang the anti-establishment song “Eve of Destruction” in 1965. Today, McGuire is a born-again Christian who wears an American flag on his shirt and sings about the glory of and supports the U.S. “war on terror.” Eve of Destruction, however, still remains an anthem. In this case, it’s the song, not the singer, that will endure.

Here in San Diego I have two choices. Either I switch to the 1970s oldie station that is well-presented with astute announcers, but lacks the creative element of 1960s rock n’ roll, or I listen to my music of choice while being told that God loves me.

Joe was right. They’ve even fucked up the music.

What Would Republican Jesus Do?

Miracles of the Trickle-Down Messiah

by Ted Rall

(In the last issue, I said I would not publish articles from other publications just to have a newsletter. I lied. This piece by my friend Ted Rall, syndicated columnist and political cartoonist, is well worth reading. JA)

NEW YORK—And it came to pass that Republican Jesus met with His advisers, strategists and corporate cronies. He took them and withdrew apart to a deserted city called Bethesda. But the multitudes followed Him nonetheless. So Republican Jesus asked His cronies to build Him a great stadium where He could welcome members of the multitudes able to pay Him an admission fee and purchase vast quantities of licensed merchandise at exorbitant prices.

He welcomed these people and sent off those who needed medical attention to a land called Canada.

The light of the day began to wane, so His toadies said to Republican Jesus: “Send these stinky riffraff away, that we may cross the Beltway to our home, and get steaks and baked potatoes and double martinis and crème brûlées, for here we are in a barren place with naught but a TCBY and a vestigial relic of the Hardee’s chain.” He answered them: “Stop whining, for God’s sake. You will soon have more than enough to eat.”

They said to Him: “But we have a mere five Power Bars and two Diet Cokes. We are twelve advisers, strategists and corporate sycophants, and many of us are portly, and with all due respect, that sucks hard.”

He told His hangers-on: “Sit down, shut up, and give me all of your money.” After exchanging cynical glances, they did dig into their wallets and gave Him their loot. With that Republican Jesus raced to his waiting SUV and ordered his chauffeur to fly like the wind.

“As a rising tide lifts all boats,” He cried from his speeding automobile, “so shall you benefit from the increased economic activity generated by the money you have given Me! I will buy Myself a sumptuous banquet and several portable electronic devices and also ho’s, creating jobs in the food/electronic/ho sectors that you will take in order to feed yourselves. Give a man a fish and he eats a fish, but teach a man to fish at rock-bottom wages and we all shall eat his fish.”

After Republican Jesus performed this miracle, his erstwhile suck-ups drew lots to determine which of them would be eaten first.

Then Republican Jesus turned his attention to household affairs. His mother Republican Mary said to Him: “Your father Republican Joseph is away on business, but do not worry, for he has left

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us with ample savings. Moreover, positive cash flow is projected for many years to come. Republican Jesus said to her: "What does that have to do with me?"

Now there were six bricks of cash hidden by the elder Mr. Christ in a lockbox, containing one trillion dollars each. Republican Jesus ordered his mother: "Set Dad's money on fire." Republican Jesus had been hitting the sauce and talking crazy, so she complied. "Now go to the temple," He continued, "and borrow ten more bricks from the moneylenders."

When Joseph returned, he didn't know where the extra four bricks of cash had come from. (Mary knew, but didn't dare tell him.) Joseph told Republican Jesus: "I don't know how you did it, but our days of independent carpentry are over. Let's launch a hostile takeover of Home Depot!"

Spying one of the moneylenders walking toward them, Republican Jesus took his leave.

As He was later walking through the grounds of his whites-only country club, behold, there was an African groundskeeper suffering from AIDS. When he saw Republican Jesus, he fell down and begged Him, saying, "Lord, if you want to, you can cure my affliction." Cannily recoiling to avoid infection, Republican Jesus directed the man to a website that pledged millions of dollars to fight AIDS in Africa. "You took that money away from AIDS spending here," the diseased man tried to point out, but the official chroniclers deemed

his comment uninteresting and unworthy of investigation. And so it never occurred.

It was at this time that someone came to Republican Jesus to tell Him of the death of a certain man, Lazarus. So Republican Jesus appealed to the Roman military governor, Pontius Pilate. "Proconsul," He said in the city forum, "evildoers from the east have slain Lazarus and other taxpaying citizens. We must therefore assemble a great army of slaves equipped with the sharpest swords to invade Parthia and its allies. Only by making the sands of Parthia run red with Parthian blood shall we avenge Lazarus, liberate Parthia's oppressed vassal states and eliminate the threat posed by their illegal and illicit catapults."

Pilate tried to argue with Republican Jesus. "Our glorious emperor Augustus has exchanged observers with the Parthian court at Nisa as part of a treaty of peace. No one has seen the catapults you describe. And Lazarus died from medical malpractice. Parthia had nothing to do with it."

"Can you take that chance? Do you trust your safety to Parthia?" Republican Jesus goaded the crowd. "Will you stand idly by while Parthia re-arms on the road to a smoky cloud over a burning Rome? Are you wussies?" "No!" the crowd roared as He rolled his eyes. And so one Roman army after another marched east, never to return. And this became known as the miracle of the vanishing soldiers.

BOOK REVIEW

Ice Age Mammals ...

A convincing exposition for the evidence of evolution

by Heather Campbell

Imagine an armadillo six feet long, three feet tall, and weighing nearly 600 pounds. Or, imagine a beaver nine feet in length and over 400 pounds in weight. Or, how about a grazing ground sloth standing 12 feet tall?

If you could travel back in time (say 30,000 years or so) you would not have had to imagine — you would have been able to see such strange beasts right here in North America. *Ice Age Mammals of North America: a Guide to the Big, the Hairy, and the Bizarre* by Ian M. Lange (Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2002) takes the reader back to the Pleistocene epoch, from two million years ago to ten thousand years ago, to survey the strange creatures afoot at the time.

Sharing the landscape with grotesquely oversized armadillos and sloths were other animals somewhat closer to their modern successors. Yet the following would still be quite impressive in the flesh:

- Titanotylopus nebraskensis, a camel 12 feet high at the shoulder and weighing quite a bit more than one ton. Compare this to the modern dromedary, which stands six to seven feet high at the shoulder.
- Giant bison, with horns spanning seven feet. Modern American bison have a horn base of up to three feet across.

- Pronghorns with four or even six horns.

A quick glance at the book's cover illustration of a bull mammoth, as well as the numerous lively depictions by Dorothy S. Norton gracing the inside pages, might give the impression that this is a book for kids. But scratch the surface and you will find an explanation of the Pleistocene that is detailed and sophisticated enough to satisfy any adult short of a specialist. The first third of the book explains the geology and geophysics of the ice ages; most of the rest of the book describes the various animals; the last chapter discusses likely reasons for the die-off of most of these creatures by about ten thousand years ago. Almost every two-page spread in the book boasts at least one illustration, clade diagram, photo of excavation or skeleton, map, or other graphic to complement the text.

Of course, for kids and adults alike it's fascinating to learn about big, strange creatures and their origins. As explained in the book, South American animals evolved in splendid isolation because South America was long an island continent until it drifted into contact with North America at Panama about three million years ago. Porcupines and armadillos — among other South American oddities such as 150-lb. rodents — were able to come north via Panama. The

exchange was two-way: camelids went south to later become llamas.

As the sea levels dropped because so much water was trapped in ice sheets, Asia and North America became connected at “Beringia” (now the Bering Straits and sea). Most of our North American mammalian carnivores migrated over from Asia, following such herbivores as mammoths and mastodons. America sent to Asia camels and horses, which later became extinct here.

As fun as such factoids may be, the final chapter ends on a sobering note: evidence suggests that human hunters contributed to the extinction of many of the large animals by about 10,000 years ago. Most of these animals had somehow survived the advances and retreats of the ice through the ages (geologists believe there were 17 or more major glaciations during the Pleistocene), but “Clovis” Stone Age technology proved ultimately lethal. Comparing the present to the past, one can see that the loss was massive:

“The grasslands and tundra of North America in late Pleistocene time teemed with great numbers of both large and small grazing animals and must have resembled the East African game parks of today.”

Lange ends with a call to preserve and protect our remaining biological heritage.

Ice Age Mammals is educationally valuable in two timely areas: it presents an engaging, convincing exposition of the evidence for evolution, and a clear introduction to the science of natural climate change.

Evolution and the age of the earth are supported in several sidebar essays such as “How do we know how old fossils are?” with an explanation of carbon-14 and other dating methods; “Evidence for Pangaea” (the supercontinent that started to break up about 180 million years ago); and even “DNA and dung.”

Lange also explains the pattern of glaciation and deglaciation in his remarkably accessible introduction to the Milankovitch cycles: the amount of sunlight energy which reaches Earth varies because the earth’s orbit is an ellipse, not a perfect circle; the tilt of the earth’s axis changes from 26.2 degrees to 20.4 degrees; also, the axis itself is subject to cyclical wobbling. These different cycles interact in complex ways, resulting in patterns of glaciations from 20,000 to 100,000 years apart. Planetary physics is dense stuff, but it is of the utmost importance that we all have some acquaintance with this material so we as a society can intelligently discuss global warming, which has the potential to re-write the surface of the Earth.

Several appendices round out this information-rich book — a glossary (although technical terms are mostly explained as they come up), a comprehensive bibliography, and a listing of museums, fossil sites, and websites. In fact, the design of this book shows the influence of website layout, with appealing graphics to draw the reader in and dynamism of content to keep attention riveted. Anyone who would like to see the general public more engaged with science would do well to pick up a copy of *Ice Age Mammals*.

The 18% Solution

by Malcom Lagauche

The numbers are gradually increasing. But, in the wrong way.

A couple of months ago, polls showed that 50% of the U.S. public believed that humankind was put on this planet exactly the way it appears less than 10,000 years ago. Today, poll results indicate that the number has increased to 55%. Add to that the figure of 27% of U.S. citizens who believe that humankind is older than 10,000 years, but that God played the role of change in homo sapiens, not nature, and you come up with 82%.

What an incredible figure! Eighty-two percent of the U.S. public denies science and evolution. This denial is more than merely a difference of opinion about faith values. It is a refuting of the laws of physics.

Physics is quite a profound science. It matches and equates various aspects of the physical universe and makes sense of the data. Everything balances. Everything is explained. Chemicals, time, space, elements; they’re all a part of physics.

Most of the creationist version of things of this Earth and beyond break the laws of physics: laws that in everyday life are impossible to be broken. Invisible living dinosaurs

and a 6,000-10,000-year-old Earth just don’t make sense, just as $2 + 2 = 3$ doesn’t make sense.

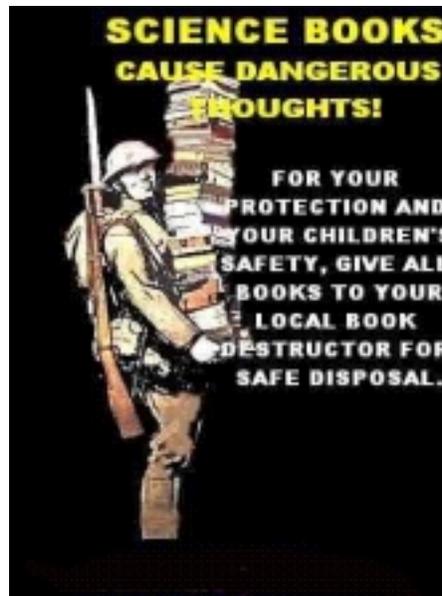
How did we get to the point where 82% of the most powerful country on Earth rejects physics? The relentless efforts of certain segments of fundamentalist Christianity brought us here.

Currently, 18 states have movements to bring “intelligent design” into the classroom. Intelligent design is nothing more than creationism with a different name. The proponents allege that nature is so complicated that it can’t be explained. However, if they sat down and listened to a biologist or a chemist talk of the molecular content of living things, it will be easily understood.

Opponents of evolution call it a “theory.” This is correct, but they don’t define the word “theory.” In this case, it is much more than a hunch. A theory is something that has been tested time and time again and may still need more information before it becomes a law. The theory of evolution has been verified many times. It is not just one person’s opinion. Many people get hoodwinked and think the word “theory” means loose speculation.

Nothing is further from the truth.

To me, the saddest part of the opposition to the theory of evolu-



tion is the assault on science. Creationist proponents automatically discount anything to do with evolution. Those people who know little about evolution can be quickly swayed to the creationist or intelligent design side because of its simplicity: God did it all.

Youngsters are not learning about science today because of the politics of the fundamentalist Christians who want science obliterated from the thought process of U.S. citizens. Most of science contradicts creationist ideas, therefore, science becomes the enemy.

I am curious and outraged about one aspect in this evolution/creationism debate. I can not understand how people with average intelligence and little creativity can refute scientists in such a vile manner. I have heard many Christians call scientists many vile names because their findings do not coincide with the creationist side. These scientists are highly intelligent and have worked for years at their trade with the most available hi-technology equipment. Can they be wrong? Of course. But not too much of the time.

For someone who has a hard time writing a correct sentence, or who can not point out where his/her state is located on a map, and then chastises scientists, virtually calling them nitwits, boggles the mind.

Let's use the same illogic that fundamentalist Christians use in

denigrating science and apply it to other fields. For instance, I am a fan of rock n' roll music. Rarely do I listen to classical music. However, if I used the illogic I have mentioned, I would state that all the classical masters were fools because I don't follow their music. This is the same mentality used against scientists: I don't believe in their message, therefore, they must be stupid.

Many foreign countries, such as France and England, are now experiencing a golden age of scientific research. Their public and cultures do not impede such actions. In fact, some British scientists are quite happy that the U.S. is in a quandary about stem cell research; research that will lead to the savings of millions of lives. The Brits have no such barriers put in their way and now are thrilled that they may become the number one group of scientists in the world.

We have regressed over the past few decades into a society that ignores or challenges legitimate science. This will be harmful in the future. At least some foreign countries will pick up the slack and, if concepts ever change in the U.S., at least the knowledge will be there for the U.S. to embrace. Only this time, the U.S. will be followers, not leaders.

We always hear the term, "Be a part of the solution, not the problem." In this case, I am happy to say that I am a part of the 18% solution.

The Bible Says So

by Jeff Archer

No, Archer has not "seen the light" or turned into a born-again Christian. I have some knowledge of the Bible from listening to its proponents recite verse-after-verse, but I find the book quite contradictory. And, until today, I would never use a Biblical quote to justify anything.

That all changed when I read an article in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* about a couple given probation for locking their son in the trunk of a car while they went into an establishment to celebrate the mother's birthday. The son was found by police and he was sent to a foster home.

In researching, the authorities found that the couple did this regularly, but they had the trunk fitted with air vents and food. To make a long story short, the couple attended various parenting classes to make them aware of the severity of their actions.

Along the way, the child told the police that his mother and father smoked pot. He said, "They feel better after they smoke the pot." A probation officer asked the father about his marijuana use and he stated, "It is our human right to smoke marijuana. It's in Genesis, 'all herb-bearing seeds are for the services of man.'"

That's it. The Bible condones the use of marijuana. It must be okay. Most of the Bible-thumping born-againers who oppose the use of marijuana are wrong. Now, all one has to do is point right to the book they use to determine right and wrong.

What a relief. I, and millions of others who light up, are not sinners after all. We may be law-breakers, but the Lord has given us permission.

The U.S. government, always trying to up the religious ante, must have a re-think. They have stormed into states that have made

medicinal marijuana legal and arrested doctors and users alike.

Faith-based initiatives are now fact. Various government officials are constantly talking about the similarities of the U.S. and the Bible. Many state that Biblical law should take precedence over secular law. In fact, there is a bill now before Congress that could overturn court judgements if they are deemed to run contrary to one's religion.

Let's take the marijuana issue and run with it. If the Bible condones its use, all us commie pinko hippie long-haired freaks should use the book to our advantage. Let's inundate our officials with Biblical statements about marijuana.

Fat chance. These idiots would come up with another Biblical quote stating that we should be hanged by our toenails for using marijuana. So much for a good idea.

However, let's get real about marijuana use. It was legal in the U.S. until 1937. Racism and the cotton industry worked in tandem to make it illegal. No research was or has ever been conducted to verify or contradict the government's message that marijuana is a deadly and addictive drug.

In 1992, while researching an article on illegal drugs, I called the head of the DEA in San Diego. He told me that marijuana was the most deadly drug in the world. "Just one hit and you're hooked for life," he explained. "Go one day without marijuana, and the veins in your forehead stick out and you are constantly sweating," he added. I immediately touched my forehead and felt no veins and it was completely dry.

The problem with such an uninformed statement is that anyone who calls the DEA and has no idea, pro or con, about marijuana gets the same horror story.

The Dutch have allowed marijuana use for years. Restaurants list various types of marijuana or hashish on their menus as starters. This makes good business sense because if one gets a buzz prior to eating, he or she will want to eat everything in the establishment. As far as I can tell, this side-effect of the herb (the munchies) is the only negative aspect of using marijuana.

In The Netherlands, marijuana is smoked openly. But, unlike the predictions of U.S. “experts” in the field, the Dutch have not turned into a brain-dead society. Quite the contrary. They have an economy and a standard of living that exceed those of the U.S. Their scientific and medical researchers are world class. And, for a country of its size (14 million people), it has produced a disproportionate number of internationally-acclaimed athletes.

Canada is now beginning to embark on its road to destruction by making the use of marijuana as Canadian as ice hockey and Mom’s maple syrup. Something tells me, however, that we will not see a diminishing of the culture of Canada. Sure, they now allow the homos to enjoy similar rights to “normal” people, but this may not stem from extended use of marijuana. It may be because the Canadian people consider equality of all humans to be more important than the destruction of humans and other life forms in foreign countries.

Virtually all of Europe (old and new) now considers the use of marijuana a right of its people. The countries involved have not reported an increase in zombie-like people walking their streets.

No, leave it to the regressive attitudes of the U.S. to re-demonize an herb. Ask any naysayer about the research into why marijuana should be illegal and you will get a blank stare. The stories are all old wives’ tales.

Don’t get me wrong. I do not advocate people smoking marijuana every hour of the day. It will make one lethargic and unproductive. One glass of wine a day is healthy. Two gallons a day will be a ticket to the grave. A joint a day will be helpful for the individual, but six a day will lead one to constant state of numbness.

Finally, brain scans have shown that the brain on alcohol or meth-type drugs loses brain cells. You can see them diminish in front of your eyes. The same brain on marijuana has been shown to advance the size of brain cells. They become coated and extend in length.

The old idea that all drugs “fry the brain” has about the same validity as the “research” that says the Earth is 6,000 years old. Hey, wait a minute. I just contradicted myself. The book that says the Earth is 6,000 years old is the same one that says, “all herb-bearing seeds are for the services of man.”

This is a quandary. If I light up tonight, I may pay homage to the Bible. However, the vast majority of Christians would say I will go to hell for smoking pot. Who’s right, the Christers or the Bible?

The chances whether I burn in hell or if I am a Bible-following adherent are 50-50. To break the tie, I will revert to the words of the fellow at the San Diego DEA office. Just in case he’s right, I won’t take the chance of having protruding veins or buckets of sweat pouring down my face.



*Party time in Holland for the owner of this car.
Jail time in the U.S.*

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Atheist Coalition of San Diego will be held on Tuesday, February 22, 2005 at the North Park Recreation Center, 4044 Idaho Street, San Diego at 7:00 pm.

Our speaker will be Rowena Oesting of the La Jolla Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

She has been a Quaker for more than 30 years. Oesting will give an overview of the doctrine and history of Quakerism as well as discuss the future direction of the religion. For example, a current debate among Quakers concerns how “christocentric” they should be. Quakers have an interesting theology and practice, unlike that of many Christian denominations. Oesting’s speech will help us to learn more about the Quakers.

Bring a friend or comrade.

ATHEIST COALITION

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES [BYLAWS, ARTICLE 2, SECTION 1]

The primary objectives and purposes of this organization shall be:

To promote separation of government and religions, which means to educate the public about the value of secular government, alert the community to government/religion separation violations, and work in all lawful ways to ensure separation of governments and religions;

To promote atheism, which means to educate and inform the public about atheism, presenting it as a worthwhile, life-affirming, and wholesome point of view, protect the civil and constitutional rights of atheists, clarify and explain atheist ideas for atheists and non-atheists, and develop opportunities for atheists to learn more about each other, and;

To coordinate activities with other groups to achieve common goals and objectives, in affiliations which do not compromise the autonomy of ATHEIST COALITION;

To educate means to disseminate ideas and materials by publication, lecture, broadcast, tape.

I am an atheist. I have read and agree with the objectives and purposes of the ATHEIST COALITION and hereby apply for membership. My annual dues for \$20 are enclosed.

Membership becomes effective at the meeting following the meeting at which the application is completed and dues are paid.

[A "low income" applicant may pay annual dues of \$10 in lieu of the standard dues by sending a letter or any other document showing "low income" status. A majority vote of the Board of Directors approves a "low income" dues application.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

TELEPHONE (DAY): _____

SIGNATURE _____

Atheist Coalition
P.O. Box 4786
San Diego, CA 92164-4786

FIRST CLASS

2/05