

SECULAR QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE STUART COFFEE HOUSE GANG

AKA The Aware Ones
AKA The Sunday Coffee-ers
AKA The Potluck Humanists
AKA The Secular Skeptics
AKA _____(fill in the blank)

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In this issue:

SECTION	PAGE
Introduction	2
Who We Are?	3
Meetings & Events	4
Member News	5
Commentary	5
Articles	7
Letters	10
Poetry	14
Comedic Corner	17

-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

INTRODUCTION

Ed Zillioux

The Secular Quarterly Newsletter is a quarterly newsletter (no surprise there) having its debut with this issue (yep, that's why it's called vol.1 no.1). The first thing members of the Stuart Coffee House Gang (SCHG [interim name]) may recognize is its surficial similarity to another newsletter which will remain unnamed. There's a logical reason for that. Most of the sections of the foregoing unnamed newsletter were initiated by members now belonging to the SCHG. So we are not plagiarizing, we're just taking back what's ours.

To wit, sections of the unnamed newsletter that were originated by the now members of SCHG include the following: Meetings & Events; Member News; Brief Communications; Letters (originally to the editor); Poetry; Comedic Corner. Doesn't leave much except for "Founder's Message" (we don't have one) and "Articles." I guess you could say we stole the Articles section. Mea culpa, but then who ever heard of a newsletter without articles?

Oh yes, and we don't have a "Businesses" section. That's because any business we may have would be a real event and that's already covered.

You also may notice that SCHG has several alternative names. Well, as they say, it's a poor mind that can't think of more than one way to name an organization. This may be sorted out in the future, or not.

Subsequent issues of Volume 1 of the Secular Quarterly will be issued on or before August 15 and November 15. Although this newsletter was initiated and produced by the TC Secular Writers, this is SCHG's newsletter and we are soliciting contributions from all of our members. Please give it your support and contribute.

WHO WE ARE

Bert Mautz

Members of our Sunday Coffee gathering ask whether a higher purpose is necessary for legitimacy, a cause, or better yet a project which would then lead as reason to give the dozen of us a name. Significant in these conversations has been the belief that merely social expectations for our gatherings is missing an opportunity, to somehow fail.

The intention here is to argue otherwise, to defend the worth of this socializing we enjoy, having become important to each of us, and is possibly a unique creation of this group and the personalities, intellects, life experiences, and maturity coming together every Sunday morning in a modest coffee shop, along the tracks in Stuart, Florida.

Elsewhere, I've attempted to understand voluntary organizations assembled to bring recreational sailors or humanists together, based on shared interests, but which, upon closer examination were mostly social with little energy or sense of purpose within the general membership. Mostly, just happy to be there. With a "third of a third," of the membership doing the heavy lifting, making the "little organization that could," at all viable.

Joe Beck was a life-long social worker. His ministerial side emerges, that wanting to do something for the less fortunate, following the striving for equal recognition with every other pastor in town comforting the dying in hospital, giving opening prayers for the County Commissioners' meeting. A year of trying to make HUMTC more about member value, and caring for each other failed. This was not the founder's concept of humanism; community service and vigilance of church and state separation are his priorities. Cerebral content, amusement, and mutual member concern form the core of ours.

Sunday coffee has both the intellectual and personal connection, further augmented by a writers' group providing opportunity to creatively self-express, or vent frustrations, or enjoy the entertaining pieces written by disagreeable, however bonded older men. Please understand, women are welcome, even desired, but, so far, the regulars have been all men.

Whether an organizational structure can or should be superimposed on this heretofore spontaneous success may be the question. HUMTC withdrew from these weekly get-togethers with coffee and muffins over a year ago. The remaining nucleus has added several members since then to average ten most Sundays, fluctuating up and down by as many as four to six. This core membership is highly dependable for the obvious reason of a unique shared camaraderie we find nowhere else and enjoy tremendously. One ought not underestimate our response to this "social stimulus."

The commitment is purely voluntary, sought because we simply enjoy the company and the caliber of the conversation in all its diversity and depth. In our case, the being "only social," grossly underestimates what is happening around that table on Sunday mornings and its importance to each of us. Several Sunday coffee regulars have said, and agreed that something unusual, something special happens at our table. Unknown previously in friendships, in conversational quality/interest, and that bonding phenomena, the simple pleasure of enjoying the conversations.

Could we be convinced, be accepting that the "seldom before in our lives," quality is enough, to be satisfied that we are experiencing doing good? The dynamic among us is to be savored while we can. Perhaps, just perhaps, a somewhat more formal structure may help ensure that it lives on.

Member List

This section is password protected. Access limited to AOTC members only.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Stuart Coffee Company, 10 a.m.

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 p.m.; May 5, 19; June 2, 16, 30.

Events

March 21: Summer Equinox Pot Luck gathering. A resounding success! (No further Pot Lucks scheduled at this time.)

April 25: Ed Zillioux proposed that we accept a 2/3 majority on any voting issue. According to Gloria's list we have a total of 15 members. Thus, 10 yea's would constitute a 2/3 majority and would carry any voting issue. The proposal passed unanimously.

MEMBER NEWS

This section is password protected. Access limited to AOTC members only.

COMMENTARY

30 Ideas Looking for a Home

Jim Longo

1. Does the title count as an idea?
2. You can always get more money, but the amount of time you have on this planet is limited. Why is the first so valuable and the second so ignored?
3. Why hasn't anyone come up with the concept that the whole multi-verse is God, and the reason we can't find God is that we are part of it?

4. Can the word multi-verse be considered an idea to itself?
5. How much thought is required before it is an idea?
6. Why isn't the concept of being kind, the universal rule of mankind?
7. Why does being kind have so much to do with being our kind?
8. If you can figure out what the other person is going to say why even have that conversation?
9. If it is all the mystical law of cause and effect, why do anything? You could cause a negative effect by accident.
10. And why do we need two words for affect and effect? How about just A- Effect or does that sound too much like defect?
11. Why am I so anxious when the net effect of this existence is suffering and dying?
12. If we know everyone is guessing, why do we tend to follow the guy that makes off he knows what he is doing?
13. Who decides who's in charge? And lately why do they never feel like the brightest bulb in the pack?
14. If it is the end of the world as I know it, how come I don't feel fine?
15. They say it is easier to take a position than change one. Why? Is it laziness to re-visit a subject you have already made a decision on, or the ego you might not have gotten it right in the first place?
16. If failing is part of life, why do we fear doing it so much? Because it hurts, we take it personally, or do we just hate going back to that drawing board?
17. Why does debt and death sound so much alike?
18. The pessimist has already failed, because he didn't even get out of bed this morning. Sometimes I wonder if the pessimist has it right.
19. Life is easy it's the people who screw it up. On the other hand, it is awful lonely without them.
20. When you break down the word diet, it has two syllables the first is die as in dead, the second is et which means little in French. So diet really means little death.
21. If life is made up of just a series of decisions, why does it all seem so fateful?
22. How come so much energy is spent trying to keep the status quo, and so little energy spent trying to get where we want to go?
23. If success is getting what you want, how come I spend so much time not knowing what I want?
24. If desire is the root of all suffering, and I haven't any desires why am I still suffering?

25. What is charisma and how do I get some?
26. Aren't we just working to die?
27. If I fake laugh using each vowel, by the time I get to the sometimes y, I am really laughing.
28. Once you have taken the lead role in the cage, can you go back to that walk on part in the war?
29. If do unto others as you would like them to do unto you, is really the motto of a billion people, there are a hell of a lot of masochists being sadists just because people aren't treating them the way they want to be treated.
30. Peace on earth good will towards all. Why not?

ARTICLES

The Origin of Misogyny

A Proposed Hypothesis¹

Ed Zillioux

The subject of misogyny, which has been called a "male gender neurosis," has long intrigued me. It has been around at least as long as recorded history. Organized religions are notoriously misogynistic: the Christian Bible, Muslim Koran, Hebrew Torah and sacred Buddhist and Hindu texts all criticize women for various moral defects and condemn woman's body for the lust it inspires in men. The ancient Greeks described woman as one of the plagues inflicted upon man by the gods. Classical antiquity was full of she-demons and sorceresses, sirens, maenads, nymphs and lamias; Furies and Harpies persecuted men and boys, sea viragoes drowned sailors off of Sicily, the sinister Circe turned men into pigs, Medusa turned men to stone, and poets depicted women as the source of all evil in the world. We all know of many other misogynistic examples but these suffice to make the point.

Where did this counterproductive and apparently misguided hatred of women come from? I can't accept the simple street explanation that it comes from men being rejected by women with respect to the sexual advances of the former. A synopsis of this rejected male theory can be found at, of all places, the Feminist eZine in an article by Charles Moffat, March

2007 (<http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/malefeminism/The-Origins-Causes-of-Misogyny.html>). Although this seems to make a modicum of sense, at least from the point of view of a pimple-faced adolescent, or a perpetually immature male who can't stand or deal with rejection, it tells me nothing with respect to its ultimate origin.

Many other theories from the absurd to the more tenable have been proposed to account for the phenomenon. Almost all of these, to their credit, have emanated from men, so this, at least, indicates that there has been a desire to understand the underpinnings of this bad behavior. For example, Sigmund Freud was somehow convinced that the cause of misogyny was connected to castration anxiety. It seems that diabolical women would taunt men with their penis-less crotch. This would, in turn, trigger a man's fear of losing his own penis ("If it happened to her it could happen to me!"). Freud reasoned that since all men suffer from castration anxiety, those who were particularly sensitive to these fears would of course hate not only the first woman who so exhibited herself but, as soon as he discovered they all are devoid of penises, would naturally hate all women. As further evidence of his hypothesis, Freud reasoned that the flow of menstrual blood reminded men of the cut penis. It seems Freud was not very big on the scientific method.

Moving on from Freud, Thomas Gale writing in 2008 for the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, cited other theories for the origin of misogyny. For example: many men feel inferior to women and dependent upon them for nonsexual needs (for food, caretaking, comforting, mothering) but "cannot tolerate such imagined weakness in themselves, so they attack women as a way of restoring their damaged self esteem." Another theory attributed to Chodorow, 1994, suggests that many men are deeply disturbed by their own feminine side, and "attack women as a way of denying or distancing their inner female."

Looking at the larger picture we need to acknowledge the misogynic-moderating effects of womb envy and vagina envy that are probably more commonplace than most of us guys would like to admit. As a biologist, I stand in awe of the whole human reproductive process. But let's face it, the contribution by males, albeit essential, pales in comparison to the incredible role that evolution has handed to the gals. All things being equal (which they are most definitely not), there seems to be a more honest justification for feelings of womb envy among guys than there would be for penis envy among the girls. However, comparing penis envy with womb envy is like apples and oranges, or maybe an even greater disparateness, like chalk and cheese. I've already pointed out the justifiable envy that some men have for

the role women have in the making of a baby, but what is the justification of penis envy? I see only two possibilities: first there is the righteous envy women may have for the higher social/economic status that unfairly accrue to men in the gross inequality of the modern era; second, there is the envy that women may have for the more intense orgasms, on average, that men have over that of the more mild clitoral or vaginal orgasm, again on average, that women typically have. Note that only the second justification would have been likely to have occurred during the early stages of our evolution as a species.

All of these theories, most of which seem to border on the apologetic, if not defensive, leads me to ponder whether it has always been this way. If the answer is yes, then it's time to consider whether misogyny's roots could be found in the evolution of our species. Could misogyny be connected to a survival advantage?

Consider this. In the early dawn of our species, males may not have even put it together that the birth of a new member of the species had anything to do to with an instinctive act that gave a moment of intense pleasure nine months earlier. No, he'd be out looking for another hit, oblivious to whether the female got equal pleasure or not. Thus, for all apparent functional perspectives, the ability of a species to replicate, the very foundation of what it means to exist as a biological entity, was all on the shoulders of the female. In human reproduction, then as now, the female does all the heavy lifting. Males, at best, are merely incidental contributors.

The way humans evolved, and this is virtually unique among primates (with the sole exception of the bonobos), males did not have to wait until a female came into heat. She was virtually always ready. And if not, it didn't even matter to the forever-horny male.

So reproduction, the glue that holds our species together, for all outward appearances, fell entirely to the female. It was like males were not even necessary. Women were the baby-making machines! And this *gave them power!* This led to different bonding intensities and the women were in control. The female took the initiative to bond, unbond, or switch bonds to advantage their progeny, thus giving whatever pairing provided the optimum survival advantage priority at the expense of individual males, essentially making them feel dispensable.

I'm not suggesting that our primitive forbears could get their heads around this intellectually, but they *knew*. Most importantly, the males

sensed that females were somehow superior to them and this, more than anything else, engendered a certain resentment that I propose to be the ultimate origin of misogyny. This hypothesis elevates the origin of misogyny above the small-minded resentment a guy may have over not getting laid as often as he would like, to being intrinsically tied to the reality of the respective roles that nature has dealt to the sexes of our species. A benevolent creator might have been more fair, but real life, AKA evolution, just isn't fair.

On the other hand, males had one inherent advantage that gave them a way to at least try to even the score over females. They were generally physically stronger than their female counterpart. This, of course, did not alter the fact that females still held the ace card in what really mattered, i.e., the reproductively superior role. But males, being males, made the most of what they had, thus setting the stage for the so-called war between the sexes. And here we are, after some 100,000 years or so, still awaiting enlightenment.

¹ Since the foregoing hypothesis is neither testable nor falsifiable, it does not qualify as a *scientific* hypothesis.

LETTERS

Letter to President Barack Obama*

5 January 2016

(*Neither answered nor acknowledged)

Dear Mr. President,

I have felt the need to address you in a personal letter so that I can be perfectly honest in my remarks. I will assume that you will receive this letter and read it, and take interest in the points, concerns and praise alike, that I bring up. Assuming a lot, I know, but it helps me focus.

To begin on a positive note, I think you have done a hell of a job these past seven years. The path you have chosen to take has been nothing short of courageous, considering the fact, as I'm sure you were aware of, that you were setting yourself up as an easy target for your detractors. It seems everything you did set you up for right-wing ridicule. You gotta admit that some things you said, or were reported to have said, were pretty dumb, at least from the perspective of a savvy politician, which of course you were not. Like the time you were saddled with the memorable quote that you were "leading from behind" in Libya. So maybe it wasn't you directly, but you seem to have lost control of your advisors so it worked just as well for your Republican opponents who had a veritable field day. Nobody seemed to catch on to the meaning of the phrase, that we should be using our influence and leadership position to advocate for more inclusive action by our allies and, most importantly, the engagement of the governments and populace, and, yes, militia, of the countries where that action is needed. Nevertheless it has worked to a greater extent than you will ever be given credit for. Well, perhaps future historians will get it right.

But I said I was going to begin on a positive note. Sorry, I got sidetracked. Here's where we are. It seems there are just two ways this country is going to go. Either we will follow your leadership and continue on the path of reasoned diplomacy that may just have a chance for success or at least a beginning of real progress, or we can engage in frenzied calls for military action that seem to follow each new political issue, including saber rattling, or worse, some variant of the debacle we inflicted on Iraq.

But alas, I see no one willing to stand up for seeking diplomatic solutions. It's not popular. The Neoconservatives, or Neocons, have all reinvented themselves but their actions and ideals have not changed. They're the same folks who advised W on Saddam's WMDs and pursued a war that had no meaning, no strategic value, and no end. Back in the '90s they formed a club called The Project for a New American Century founded by [William Kristol](#) and [Robert Kagan](#), editor of Murdoch's *Weekly Standard* and a *Washington Post* columnist, respectively. Of 25 initial signups, 10 went on to serve in W's administration including [Dick Cheney](#), [Donald Rumsfeld](#), and [Paul Wolfowitz](#). Following their published set of principles, the PNAC was viewed by the European press as "drawing up plans for an era of American global domination, for the emasculation of the UN, and an aggressive war against Iraq." After the folly in Iraq played out, the PNAC fell into disrepute and quietly ceased operations. Three years later the very same group of neocons rebranded themselves as the [Foreign Policy Initiative](#). So why is this important now? The FPI has been busy drafting speeches and talking points

advocating militaristic responses to every global political or criminal development that could be crafted as a "threat" to the US of A and provided this vitriol to 12 out of the 14 current Republican candidates for presidency. And they have all embraced it. Your diplomatic efforts, and particularly your successes, are all turned into evidence of your weakness, and every one of them are posturing their toughness by promising everything from boots on the ground to carpet bombing. And what kind of an electorate is being energized by this constant hammering on tough responses, each trying to outdo the other, in a seemingly endless continuum of Republican debates? One who's rallying cry is "BOMB THE BASTARDS!"??

Now who will build on your legacy of seeking diplomatic solutions for the World's problems? In this pervasive atmosphere of bellicosity, who in either party has the political chutzpah to pull it off? Maybe Bernie, but that's precisely why he is most unlikely to get the nomination. Even Hillary has of late adopted the tough talk in hopes of offering a Democrat alternative to the growing mass of voters now clamoring for a blood solution to solve what should be political issues and to revive or build on W's image of a militaristic/nationalistic America!

Dear Mr. President, please tell me that I am wrong. Tell me how your diplomatic initiative will survive the advancing thrusts of the Neocons and a solid front of Republican presidential candidates chanting their brand of toughness.

Well I tried to start on a positive note and I'm sorry if I got carried away. I do have one more point to make that is more by way of a complaint. I listen faithfully to all of your public speeches which always end with "God bless you, and God bless the United States of America." I have no problem with this, but you do seem to ignore the fact that one out of five Americans has no religious affiliation. You ask that people of all faiths (Christians, Jews and Muslims are always specifically named) come together to defeat the growing threat of Islamic Extremism. But you rarely even mention the full 20% or more of voting Americans who have no religious faith. In this time of neoconservative assault on our most precious humanistic values, it is time to recognize that the greatest and most solid block of support you have for your values and your zeal for diplomacy rather than bombs comes from the atheist/agnostic community.

Thank you for your time.

Edward Zillioux
White City

Letter to the editor, Stuart News*

3/10/16

(*Rejected)

Dear Editor,

Once again (Feb 24), former aquafarm researcher Ed Klima wrote a denial of human influence on global warming, calling it a "Crazy ... scam," saying that most of the CO₂ buildup in the atmosphere is caused by volcanoes: "Whatever its role in the climate, man-made carbon dioxide is minimal," adding that the Philippines' Mount Pinatubo in 1991 spewed out more greenhouse gases ... "than the entire human race has ever emitted."

If true, that statement would prove his point. However! Ninety percent of all climate change scientists disagree, as do NASA, Scientific American, NOAA, and The US Geological Survey, which point out the facts. Google them with "climate change." Their findings: Global warming increases with the burning of fossil fuels. The 10 hottest years on Earth since measurements have been taken (134 years) are all in this, the 21st century. For 150,000 years, average atmospheric CO₂ stayed between 180 to 280 ppm, until 65 years ago, and is now rising from 402 ppm. Arctic sea ice has shrunk from nearly 8,000,000 square kilometers in 1996 to barely 4,500,000 today. This year 35.6 billion metric tons of CO₂ is expected to be released from fossil fuels, with volcanoes contributing between their long term range of 180 to 440 million tons yearly, a 0.5 percent to 1.25 percent contribution.

Mount Pinatubo released 250 million tons of gas, nearly all water. Exxon offered \$10,000 for articles disputing this science and tobacco PR firms were hired to write denials. Should we paraphrase Pascal's Wager for the skeptics? If human activity is not causing global warming, what will it hurt to act as if it is, and work to to slow it, anyway? Otherwise, if human activity is causing global warming, our denial will cost us all life on Earth. Did Klima get his \$10,000 from Exxon?

Dan Vignau, Stuart

POETRY

A Group Without a Name

Dan Vignau

I would like to add:

We'll be known only as rejects,
A group that no one respects,
'Less we come up with a name.

We can rant and hoot and holler,
but we cannot further swallow,
Our group without a name.

Feel My Pain

John Lynch

I am the one who was taught violence is right,
hurting others was my right.
Feel my pain.

I am the racist who judges by color,
in the end it makes us much smaller.
Feel my pain.

I am the bigot, a marriage is between a man and a woman,
too bad gays, yours is not the way we function.
Feel my pain.

I am the drunk who abandons children and wife,
my life is a blur and I lead a pointless life.
Feel my pain.

I am the rapist who doesn't understand his actions,
power over women is my satisfaction.
Feel my pain.

I am the preacher who preaches much hate,
this I learned at a much earlier date.
Feel my pain.

I am a misogynist who watched his father behave,

I thought women as no more than an obedient slave.

Feel my pain

I am the one who treats our fellow animals so cruel,

It's time to establish a humane ground rule.

Feel my pain.

I am the one hungry and homeless and depressed,

has empathy in this world been repressed?

Feel my pain.

I am the one who judges others,

the poverty ridden and unwed mothers.

Feel my pain.

I am the only one whose opinion is true,

your view I will tell you doesn't have a clue.

Feel my pain.

I think I have covered the entire human race,

it is our reflection in the mirror we must face.

Let's feel each other's pain.

COMEDIC CORNER

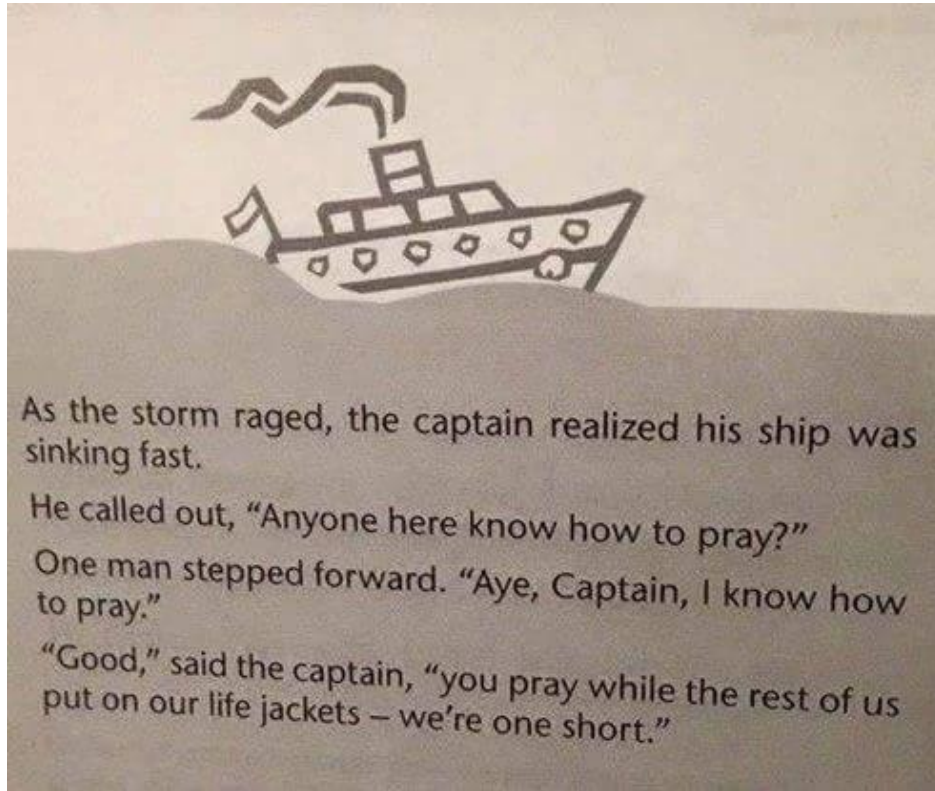
SMOKE AT YOUR PERIL

For a contemplative moment a small ascot cigar is nearly perfect. Double timing with The morning paper it can be a soothing few minutes under the umbrella on my water side patio. Other occasions call for watering the ornamental palms; a hose nozzle in one hand and a cigar in the other.

This particular hand wrapped cigar was packed tighter than usual requiring harder pulls (inhalations). I was reading the *Times* Wednesday food section, absorbed in a restaurant revue by Frank Bruni. A particularly strong pull and the short stub slid between my index and middle fingers. The fire hot ash seared the delicate inner finger skin. Reflexively letting go entirely of the stub while gasping in pain I inhaled further, taking the entire remains full into my mouth. Now choking on the ash and burning my tongue I had the self preservation instincts to spit or cough it back out, setting the restaurant review aflame. Spitting and screaming not under complete control, I extinguished the blazing paper showering my clean t-shirt with more ashes. One of those curse or cry moments.

Contributed by: Bert Mautz

You Pray



Contributed by Dan Vignau