



Platinum

By
Ronald P. Menich

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The spot price of platinum the other day was \$1526 per ounce and gold was \$812 per ounce; thus, platinum was 88% more precious than gold.

Platinum is precious because it has many uses but the world supply is small. Platinum is a grayish-white metal used in catalytic converters, jewelry, the tips of glow plugs, fuel cells and many other applications. Is anyone here today wearing any platinum jewelry? Platinum is very rare: the world production or supply of platinum in 2006 was 217,000 kilograms¹, less than a tenth the production of gold¹. Platinum is incredibly dense, denser than gold, almost twice as dense as lead, and all of that yearly world production would fit in a cube 7' 2" on a side in one corner of this room, and that cube would be worth \$11 billion. (Of course, if that cube were placed in this room, this building would immediately collapse under the half-million pound weight of it.) The top two producers of platinum are South Africa with 78% of world production and Russia with 14%. Whereas the US relies only 60% upon imported petroleum, it relies 93% upon imported platinum¹.

It turns out that platinum and other platinum group metals or PGMs such as rhodium, iridium, osmium and palladium are found in meteorites. An asteroid is a rock floating in space; when a part of one falls to the Earth and makes it to the surface it is called a meteorite. One particular type of meteorite called an LL chondrite has total concentrations of PGMs of 50 grams per ton¹. That does not sound

like a lot, but it is considered to be a very rich ore and at that concentration one ton of rock is worth a couple of thousand dollars. By comparing the appearance of meteorites with known compositions to spectra collected from telescopes, planetary astronomers are able to make educated guesses as to the compositions of asteroids. Near Earth asteroids are those asteroids that pass closer to Earth than any planet. You may have recently read in the paper or elsewhere that near Earth asteroid Apophis will pass very close to Earth in the year 2029 and with extremely low probability might actually hit the Earth in 2036. (Just to be clear... Apophis is not the same as 2007 WD5; the latter is a 50 meter-wide near Earth asteroid which has a 3.6% chance of colliding with Mars on January 30th of this year.) Observations suggest¹ that Apophis matches the composition of an LL chondrite meteorite. Apophis is only a quarter of a kilometer in diameter and would easily fit within Stone Mountain. But even this one small asteroid represents several year's worth of world platinum production¹ and over 10 million kilograms total of platinum group metals, tens of billions of dollars' worth. It is estimated, furthermore, that there are many thousands of near Earth asteroids the size of Apophis or larger.

John S. Lewis, a respected near Earth object expert at the Lunar and Planetary Lab at the University of Arizona, Tucson, notes that the large majority of near Earth asteroids contain high concentrations of extremely valuable precious and strategic metals, such as the platinum group metals and

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semiconductor components such as germanium, gallium, arsenic, antimony and indium¹. With respect to the last of these, indium is used in solar cells and it is estimated that there is only a 10 year known supply of indium left on Earth at current rates of consumption¹. But what is rare and precious on Earth is found in abundance in asteroids.

Precious metals are not the only mineral resources to be found in asteroids. Ten percent of the world's nickel is produced in a single mining area in Canada, near Sudbury, Ontario. The entire reason that that mine exists where it does is that a long time ago a nickel-bearing asteroid over 6 miles in diameter slammed into the Earth there, carving a huge crater, the outlines of which are still faintly visible in satellite photos of the region¹.

There are an estimated 100,000 or so near Earth objects¹ or NEOs, but there are a million or more asteroids in the Main Belt between Mars and Jupiter, and the sizes of many of the Main Belt asteroids dwarf even the largest of the near Earth asteroids. But near Earth asteroids such as Apophis are much easier for spacecraft to reach than are the Main Belt asteroids, so it is likely that humanity will establish mining operations on near Earth asteroids long before similar ones are established on Main Belt asteroids. Spacecraft have already passed through the Main Belt several times, so getting to the Main Belt is indeed possible, but reaching near Earth asteroids often takes much less energy. Perhaps surprisingly, some near Earth asteroids are even easier to reach than is the surface of our own Moon¹.

But for a moment let me discuss one fascinating Main Belt asteroid, by the name of Kleopatra. Kleopatra is a dog bone-shaped asteroid that might actually be two similarly sized objects in contact with one another or orbiting close to one another. Earlier I mentioned a type of meteorite called an LL chondrite that is mostly stony with some metal grains in the mix. Kleopatra, however, is an M-class asteroid, which is mostly or entirely metal. Whereas the near Earth asteroid Apophis is smaller than Stone Mountain, by

contrast each lobe of Kleopatra is the size of a large metropolitan area. And I'm not talking about something flat, but something that has three dimensions to it. Thus, even a minute fraction of 1 percent of Kleopatra represents more metal of all types than humankind has mined in all of history.

Amun is an M-class or metallic near Earth asteroid. It is only two and half kilometers in diameter, trivial in size in comparison with Kleopatra. But the iron, nickel and cobalt within Amun have an estimated value of \$20 trillion¹. Let me repeat that for effect: there are 100,000 or so near Earth objects, and Amun, just one of these, has a metallic content estimated at \$20 trillion.

The bottom line of this discussion is that the mineral wealth of the asteroids is not accurately described by the word large; rather, this wealth is absolutely stupendous, mind-boggling, almost beyond our imagination. In his book *Mining the Sky*, John S. Lewis estimates that the metals of the asteroids are worth more than \$100 billion per person for every person on Earth¹. But it is not simply the mineral wealth of the asteroids that beckons to us.

Imagine the sunniest place on Earth on the sunniest day of the year at the sunniest time of day. A solar panel would work well in such an environment, I'm sure you would agree. On or in the vicinity of a near Earth asteroid, solar panels have access to solar energy more intense than that in the middle of the Sahara, 24x7x365. A one square meter solar panel in space but near Earth is bathed in 1.3 kilowatts¹ of uninterrupted energy from the sun, all day every day, and it never rains. Solar panels could be placed in several locations on or in the vicinity of a near Earth object ensuring that one or more is always in sunlight. The solar energy available to us in space is intense, continuous and limitless.

Most folk, I conjecture, have not heard the "good news for modern man" I have just related. Many folk, however, do know about objects far more distant than the

About the name "The Eudaimonist"

A eudaimonist (pronounced "yoo-DIE-mon-ist") is one who believes that the highest ethical goal is individual happiness and personal well-being. The term is derived from the ancient Greek word eudaimonia, which means, roughly, "well-being."

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The Fellowship of Reason® is dedicated to the personal flourishing of our members through reason.

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FOR Polo Shirts and T-shirts are also available. Members Price is \$25 for Polo Shirts and \$15 for T-Shirts.

Prices include domestic shipping, inquire for international shipping.

Contact us at any FOR function (see page 9)

Questions? info@fellowshipofreason.com.



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asteroids on our cosmic doorstep. Astronomers seem obsessed with new findings of hundreds of planets surrounding *other* stars. In popular science fiction movies we often see government employees fighting aliens and flitting about the galaxy at speeds which our knowledge of physics declares to be impossible. Many people marvel at pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope of beautiful objects many, many light years away. There is a great deal of public fascination with black holes, pulsars, quasars and other such distant and exotic objects. But I would like to impress upon you that for the next several hundred or even several thousand years, everything we need as far as energy and resources can be found well within the orbit of Jupiter. Currently there are 6.6 billion people on the Earth and there are many who believe that that number is too high. But the inner solar system could comfortably support trillions of very wealthy people¹.

Everything we need for a thousand years can be found well within the orbit of Jupiter. But in a millennium or so when we do eventually need to expand civilization to the orbit of Jupiter, we will find another set of asteroids rich in resources waiting for us there. The Jupiter Trojan asteroids orbit 60 degrees ahead and 60 degrees behind Jupiter in the same orbit as

Jupiter. Scientists believe that there might be as many Jupiter Trojans as there are Main Belt asteroids¹, so perhaps the Trojans might keep us busy for yet another millennium.

Perhaps we will send people to some other star in the next several hundred years; after all, the space probe Voyager 1, launched in the 1970s, has already passed the solar termination shock and will leave the solar system in a few years. But if we do send probes or people to other stars, it will be because of our curiosity, not because of any economic need: there are enough resources and enough energy in the inner solar system to support a prosperous and growing civilization for the foreseeable future.

At the end of World War II, over a hundred German rocket scientists were whisked out of the ruin of Nazi Germany and imported to Texas. Many of these men later helped the U.S. build its first ICBMs and then helped to get the U.S. to the Moon before the Soviets. One of these Operation Paperclip scientists was Kraft Ehricke, a space visionary who wrote at length concerning the bright future of humanity in space. Fifty years ago, just before the launch of Sputnik, Ehricke formulated the following Three Fundamental Laws of Astronautics¹:

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1. Nobody and nothing under natural laws of this universe impose any limitations on man except man himself.

2. Not only the earth, but the entire solar system, and as much of the universe as he can reach under the laws of nature, are man's rightful field of activity.

3. By expanding throughout the universe, man fulfills his destiny as an element of life, endowed with the power of reason and the wisdom of the moral law within himself.

I think Dr. Ehricke would have felt at home in the Fellowship of Reason, don't you think so?

Our future is incredibly bright. It is not a future in which billions of earthbound humans fight viciously over a small and diminishing pool of resources, a future of stasis or stagnation. No, our future is a dynamic one in which our descendants will become embarrassingly wealthy. We can foresee that for dozens of generations to come, each generation will see their children have opportunities better than the good ones they themselves had. Our descendants will live amongst the asteroids and they will flourish.

Thank you.



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Letters to the Editor

Regular membership:
\$35 per year

Contributing membership:
\$70 per Year

Lifetime membership:
\$700

Contact Information

To talk to somebody about
Fellowship of Reason call:

Martin at 770-471-9800

Dan at 770-831-3010

In response to "Why I am not an Atheist" *The Eudaimonist* October 2007, **FOR Charter Member Vera Norman** writes:

Curse me if you must, But don't label me in a manner implying my consent!

By Vera Norman

Recently there has been some discussion about whether it's a good idea or not to identify oneself as an atheist. The conversation started as a response to FOR's link to the Atheist Meetup website and evolved into a new question: should I or should I not identify myself as an atheist?

How to answer that question is a decision best left to individuals. I think the real issue is: does it serve the Fellowship of Reason to align itself with any organization whose reason for existing is to defend atheism?

What is the difference between an alignment with the Atlanta Freethought Society and one with the Atheist Meetup website? For me, the big difference is that the Atlanta Freethought Society defends the rights of those holding unpopular ideas, such as atheists and agnostics, to speak freely and openly about the advantages of non-theism. This is a far cry from making declarations about how atheists, unlike theists, are emotionally mature, intelligent, fair-minded, and altogether more honest and realistic than those unfortunates who still believe in fairy tales. Believers are caricatured as boobs. Atheists are presented as courageously outspoken guardians of truth as if they are all incipient Galileos.

These claims, uttered with the same mindless dogmatism that some religious believers trot out in favor of godliness, are supported by various arguments against the dangers of allowing believers any say, qua believers, in how ethical, legal, and practical considerations of living ought to be formulated. The hyper-vigilant prayer posse fears that a strict division between church and state is ever in danger—that the "In God We Trust" logo on quarters is the slippery slope leading to the next American Inquisition.

My problem is that not all of these arguments are good. In fact, most of them are as simplistic as the beliefs they purport to put down. In an argument, if you ever had on your side someone who agrees with you but offers such moronic notions in support of what you both believe that you cringe when his mouth opens, you understand what it's like to be aligned with nit wits.

It's easy to win an argument with a simple mind which paints a three layered cake of heaven, earth, and hell governed by the old man bookkeeper in the sky. But not all believers are simple-minded. There are extremely sophisticated arguments that defend the idea of a creator. These are not anti-intellectual, anti-scientific, or anti anything at all. A good example is the argument between Bertrand Russell and Father Copleston about the

existence of God.
(<http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/p20.htm>)

If anyone is going to speak on my behalf, I want the opportunity to vet that talk. It is one thing to share ideas, to disagree, even to postulate unpopular opinions. It is quite another to get one's claim to intellectual superiority by jousting with fundamentalists who may not have made it out of third grade.

Friend of FOR Charles Lantz writes:

Atheist and Proud!

by

Charles Lantz

I read with interest and intent Martin Cowen's article rebutting the atheist label (Why I am not an atheist, October 2007). While the introductory paragraphs are a bit apologetic and wistful, I was immediately struck by his claim against 'authenticity' in the selection of one's 'religion'. Having been through several stages of religious evolution, I think I take exception to his initial assertion (which appears to have little to do with the rest of the argument). I say 'I think', because it is not at all clear what he means by 'authenticity'. While it sounds daunting, it is not clear where the authority arises (for the authenticity) and how or why one cannot rise above it. It appears, almost, as if one's religion is genetically determined (the ultimate authenticity), or, at least familiarly determined (once a Methodist...always a Methodist). So, from whence cometh this authority? I think this concept needs more development as its meaning is not apparent 'prima facie'. Having converted from Methodism to Baptism during puberty and from Baptism to Agnosticism in early manhood and finally acknowledging Atheism in my maturity, I could not disagree more with this premise of authenticity (or inauthenticity, as the case might be). Simply citing an instance of conversional inauthenticity hardly solidifies the concept, and citing Strauss fails to solidify the position. But, as with the article, this really takes us far afield of the main issue of 'Why [He is] not an Atheist'.

While there are several threads of logic that weave through Cowen's argument, there is one in particular that I find vulnerable to criticism. I worked through his argument and was initially swayed toward agreement. In fact, I still agree in large part with the intent of his argument. Why, after all, be labeled anything? The more positive stance is appealing for many reasons, not the least of which is the humanistic positivistic attitude (as distinguished from the philosophy of positivism). Like 'The Little Engine that Could', it is better to think in positive terms than in negative ones.

But there is another part of me that sees this as just so much polemics. Plays on words to sway the crowd rather than fess up and be what you are. A manner of word play that is self-indulgent and vacant. Word-games in the worst sense of this Wittgensteinian term. Of course, it would be

Letters to the Editor

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absurd and trivial for someone to label me as A-Wiccan or A-unicornist or A-Yahweheist or A-communist. But, in truth, these are not 'authentic terms' in the way that 'atheist' is an 'authentic term'. (The 'authority' for this 'authenticity' comes from the social context of the terms used.) To be sure, 'atheist' is a label with negative connotations to the broader community of American society. That is unfortunate, especially for those professing atheist beliefs (or would we more properly say 'belief in atheism'), but it is, as we say, 'a matter of fact'. But 'philosopher' is no less a label than 'atheist', so what is the gain in trading one label for another. Many have given their lives in the past... and willingly so, rather than adopt one label over another. Fundamentally, however, it is less about the label than about the behavior. Do we prostrate ourselves five times a day and pray facing Mecca? Do we attend Mass regularly and accept the Eucharist? Would a rose, by any other name, smell as sweet? To what end do we accept or reject labels and abide by the rituals thereto ascribed?

But my greatest objection to this word-play lies in the inherent contradictions that it evokes. While there appears to be linguistic rigor in Cowen's arguments, it is clear, if you follow other strands of this logic, that there are egregious inconsistencies in it. Consider the devout Christian, for instance. One could hardly argue against calling this person a theist. To do so is a tautology and to deny thus is an absurdity. Belief in a god is central to the purpose of the Christian, and one can reasonably argue that belief in multiple gods is consistent with Christian belief as well (as so well argued by Dawkins in 'The God Delusion'). Nor can it be denied that, like hand in glove, Christians believe in Satan. It stands to reason, therefore, that Christians are Satanists. ('God forbid' that someone take this out of context and say that I think Christians are Satanists...for I do not!) Now we all know what a Satanist is...at least we think that we do. Satanists worship Satan as a deity and participate in 'dark rituals' of untold cruelty and inhumanity in pursuing their 'religion'. A Satanist is defined by the rituals they perform and not by the label that is applied to them, so we cannot affix the label 'Satanist' on the whole of Christendom simply because they believe in Satan!

So...like it or not...accept it or not...if you do not believe in gods or other supernatural beings...if you do not believe in 'miracles' in the theistic sense...if you are not a 'faith-driven' disciple in theistic sense, then you ARE and atheist. Further, the label 'philosopher' is not exclusive of theism. Many philosophers have theistic leanings (St. Augustine, as an example, Calvin, as another) and many have strictly atheistic leanings (Nietzsche, Dawkins, etc). So it is not as if assuming the label 'philosopher' relieves one of their

atheistic tendencies nor of the view society has of them in general. Strauss, himself, noted that most people who call themselves philosophers are really just scholars...the distinctive quality being a boldness on the part of philosophers to form a position and defend it staunchly. If that is the case, then it is not likely that simply proclaiming everyone in the Fellowship of Reason to be philosophers makes it so. It would be interesting to see what the results would have been if the surveyor mentioned in Cowen's article had asked "Would you vote for a philosopher?" I believe this question would have ranked far lower than 'atheist'.

So while I sympathize with the idea of shedding the label atheist to avoid discrimination in society, and I applaud the ideal of 'positive mental attitude' (although I believe many humanists abuse the concept), I cannot abide by linguistic games that turn into overt contradictions. Words are not simply Lego blocks that are assembled and amended to suit the writer; and creating 'non-sense' words to drive a point home is not good philosophy. The words must be respected for the meanings they carry in society. It is one thing to think in positive ways about one's newly diagnosed cancer, it is another to cure that 'disease'. But whether one dies of it or goes into remission, the worst thing possible for the victim is to stop trying to overcome it. This should not be taken to suggest that atheists (or philosophers) should strive to defeat theism, for theism is not a disease (in the strictest sense), but an opinion. It is to say that one's attitude should be positive and forward looking rather than defeatist and reflective. In this, I agree whole heartedly with Cowen. Life is good; there can be no doubt about it. The surest path to misery and death is to think otherwise. I have witnessed this personally (i.e. anecdotally).

I salute the Fellowship of Reason for its positive direction and its commitment to Fellowship. I bask in its warmth and acceptance. But to deny my atheism solely to avoid 'an inconvenient truth' is inconsistent with my constitution. I am an atheist in the fullest sense of the word...not simply to be against theism but as an expression of belief in the natural world as revealed to us through human enterprise. The culmination of this enterprise (for the moment) is the flashpoint between theism and humanism...the concept of Darwinian Evolution. Unfortunately, simply donning the robes of philosophy will not hide the fact that one is an atheist. Nor is this the time to do so. In a very real sense, the moment for atheists is now, like the moment for blacks (African-Americans) was in the sixties: Atheist and Proud! This does not mean that one must assume a dire attitude or take an aggressive stance against theism. I relish the fellowship and community fostered by the Fellowship of Reason, but I am a 'Died in the wool' atheist and proud of it.

Adieu,
Charles Lantz

FOR's mission is to promote the personal flourishing of our members through reason.

February 2008

February 2008							March 2008						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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24	25	26	27	28	29		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					February 1	2
						Wendell B. bd 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve Whiteman's house)
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12:00pm FORum (NWUUC)		Michael N. bd 7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)		7:30pm Atlanta Opera	Alan C. bd 11:00am Nonfiction Book Club (Allison's house) 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve)
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Reg G. bd 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)		7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			1:30pm FOR live HD opera (Manon Lescaut Puccini) 7:30pm Potluck (Leanna / Jim)
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)		7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)			Ellen bd 6:30pm Movie Night (John's studio)
24	25	26	27	28	29	
8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)			7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	8:00pm FOR pub		

March 2008

March 2008						
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April 2008						
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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27	28	29	30			

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						March 1 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve Whiteman's house)
2 12:00pm FORum (NWUUC)	3	4 Scott C. bd 7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	5 Lois bd 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	6	7	8 11:00am Nonfiction Book Club (Allison's house) 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course (Steve Whiteman's house)
9 9:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)	10	11 8:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	12 8:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	13	14	15 1:30pm FOR live HD opera (Peter Grimes) 8:30pm Potluck (Volunteer)
16 9:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)	17	18 8:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	19 8:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	20	21	22 Toni bd 12:30pm FOR live HD opera (Tristan und Isolde) 6:30pm Movie Night (John's studio)
23 9:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)	24 John B. bd	25	26 8:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	27 9:00pm FOR pub	28	29
30	31					

Events

For detailed info on all upcoming events, visit
<http://www.fellowshipofreason.com/calendar.htm>

FORum: A Celebration of Human Achievement

First Sunday noon
 FOR's premier event. Starting at noon with an InFORmation Hour conducted by Dan Barber for visitors and new members. Meet and greet at 12:30 p.m. The program starts at 1 p.m. and lasts one hour. We enjoy post-program conversation until 3 p.m. when those interested adjourn to The Loop restaurant for further fellowship. Children's Program from noon to 3 p.m.

Martin Cowen director: 770-471-9800.

FOR Runners: Sunday 8 a.m.

We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, at the southwest corner of Piedmont Park on 10th Street. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit (corner of Piedmont and 10th Street) follows at 9 a.m. Breakfast lovers, walkers, and joggers welcome!

Martin Cowen coordinator: 770-471-9800.

Philosophy Club: 1st/ 3rd Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.

Philosophy tapes are played to a small group of friends in a private home on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month. Free.

Sally Hull coordinator: 404-257-0454

Fiction Book Club: 2nd Tuesday 7:30 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at John and Beth's house. For book selections and more information, go to www.fellowshipofreason.com/fiction.htm

Beth Holley coordinator: 404-372-7378

Non-Fiction Book Club: 2nd Saturday 11 a.m.

Members and friends of FOR meet 11 a.m. on the 2nd Saturday of every month at Chris and Allison's house. For book selections and more information go to:

www.fellowshipofreason.com/nonfiction.htm

Allison Byrd coordinator: 404-372-4089

Potluck: 3rd Saturday 7:30 p.m.

Our next Potluck is Saturday, February 16, 2008, at Jim and Leanna's house at 7:30 p.m. Remember it is potluck, so bring something good to eat and drink to share.

Pub Night: 4th Thursday, 8 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR meet on the 4th Thursday of every month at Manuel's Tavern at 8 p.m. for adult beverages and adult conversation. FOR's next pub night is Thursday, January 24, 2008 at 8 p.m.

Scott Carper coordinator: 404-964-6697

Movie Night: 4th Saturday, 6:30 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR meet on the 4th Saturday of every month at John Grover's photography studio to enjoy potluck and a movie. FOR's next movie night is Saturday, January 26, 2008, at 6:30 p.m.

John Grover coordinator: 404-872-4555

*Join us for our
 next monthly
 FORum:*

**February 3,
 2008**

Sunday at 1 p.m.
 (Meet, Greet at 12:30)

Come early for the
**InFORmation
 Hour**

At noon
 Moderated by Dan Barber for
 visitors and new members

FOR FAMILY FRIENDLY

Children's program
 from noon to 3 p.m.

Birthdays

February 2	Wendell B.
February 5	Michael N.
February 9	Alan C.
February 10	Reg G.
February 23	Ellen L.

March 4	Scott C.
March 5	Lois C.
March 22	Toni B.
March 24	John B.

Celebratory Announcements

Do yourself a favor and remember a good thing that happened to you this month:

Please, write it down: _____

Now do the membership of FOR, Inc. a favor by relating this fact during FORum next month!



Fellowship of Reason

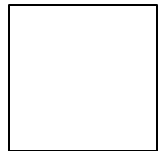
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