

The official newsletter of
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.



Five Questions with Eric Von Haessler

Regular Guy, Mad Pundit

Interview by Dan Barber

Eric Von Haessler is the 41-year-old soft-spoken half of the popular morning radio show *The Regular Guys*, which airs weekday mornings on Atlanta's 96 Rock. Eric had a tumultuous upbringing, moving from city to city - but he claims Rochester, NY as his hometown. He began what he calls his "angry phase" at age 12, when his "gypsy-hearted" father abandoned the family. Eric dropped out of high school and worked in the restaurant business for a while.

His life changed when he stumbled into a comedy club, meeting Larry Wachs (the other half of *The Regular Guys*). Eric credits Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, which he read at the age of 29, for helping him develop productive habits. "I'm glad I kicked the anger," he jokes. "Now I'm just neurotic."

Eric is married to his first love, and has two boys. His latest project is *The Mad Pundit* (which is both a radio show and a web log), which allows him to explore his political and social views - including his non-theistic beliefs - in a more personal way. Visit MadPundit.com, or listen every Saturday at 1pm on WGST 640 AM (which is also available live on the internet at WGST.com).

Q: Success is not an accident, so I would like to know what books, movies, or people have inspired you to (as you say in your bio) "think on your own terms." How did that lead to your success?

Eric: I discovered my older brother's albums when I was 10 years old. Because I liked the album cover I sat and listened to Sgt. Pepper's from end to end. Music has been the most important entertainment for me since. I listen to music constantly. I like too many artists to name but The Beatles, R.E.M., Peter Dinklage, Big Star, Talking Heads, Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan are a few - and Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde* is my

favorite album.

Ayn Rand, while wrong about many things, has influenced me tremendously with the things that she was right about. To clarify, I think she was right on the bedrock issues of philosophy and the mind, but turned goofy in her ongoing critique of everything in existence. Her opinion, for example, that movies are art but photography isn't is plainly absurd.

My favorite author is Dostoyevsky because I somehow resemble every character in every story he's ever written. My favorite book is his best work: *The Brothers Karamazov*.



Q: You've been very successful with *The Regular Guys*. How does the additional *Mad Pundit* "project" serve you in this stage of your life? How did you arrive at the idea? Does it serve a particular personal mission?

Eric: Financial success isn't necessarily tied to the things you're most interested in, or the things you're most interested in doing. This is probably true for most people, no matter their job, and it's no different for me. *The Regular Guys* is a great gig in many ways but it's a set thing. The show has a particular attitude and culture that are cemented and will never change - which is good for the show because it remains consistent to the listener, but it doesn't work all that well for me personally because I really like to work on new and different things. In a perfect world I would work on a project by

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Toastmasters: \$148 Member Benefit

Special Offer to FOR Members Only

The Fellowship of Reason, Inc. will refund your Toastmaster® membership dues up to \$148 on the following conditions:

- (1) You must be a member of the Fellowship of Reason, Inc. and remain a member until all conditions are completed;
- (2) You must join a Toastmaster® club after this offer and achieve Competent Toastmaster status;
- (3) You must give an Oratory at Forum; and,
- (4) You must keep and deliver to FOR, Inc. your receipts for dues.

If you comply with these conditions, FOR, Inc. will reimburse you for your actual Toastmaster® dues up to \$148.

Questions? Call Martin: 770-471-9800

... Eric Von Haessler (cont. from Page 1)

project basis, throwing myself into something for a few months until it's complete, then moving on to the next project. But it's not a perfect world, and so far the marketplace has only seen fit to reward me for the work I do in the "rock morning-show" format.

To ease the frustration I negotiated a weekly show on sister station WGST-AM into my 96 Rock contract. This means that you can hear the closest thing to a ratings-proof show if you tune into The Mad Pundit Show on Saturdays at 1pm.

The idea for the WGST show grew out of the website, and the idea for the website was to have a place where I could explore some of the more abstract comedy ideas and political thoughts that were rolling around my mind at the time. I began working with Greg Russ, who started as a Regular Guys intern and has since mutated into Dekker on another sister station called The Buzz, and we liked writing together so I began to conceive of the website as a place to present our comedy material and my political commentary in one place. Then I brought in Autumn Pritts, another former intern, to help us get it all done and the three of us took on the project with a passion.

Everything went pretty well until The Regular Guys were tossed off the air [in March 2004, for allegedly violating FCC obscenity regulations, after mishandled gag playing "backward porn"] just a month after [The Mad Pundit] went online and the promotional lights pretty much went out. We kept [the Mad Pundit website] alive and kicking for a good long time, then it slowly became a mess when I returned to 96 Rock [in April 2005] and Dekker landed a gig at 99X. But at least we have the little Saturday radio show, and we're actually about to re-ignite the website in a few weeks.

Q: Your latest article is entitled "The Morality of Looting." What are your thoughts about morality - what is it exactly? And why is it (or is it not) a valuable concept?

Eric: I'm nothing more than a dime-store philosopher but I think morality is the choice to do things as you "know" them to be right. The problem is that different types of people are raised to believe different things about what is wrong and what is right. So morality has no value if it isn't grounded in a sound philosophy. But it has to be a sound philosophy sought out by the individual and not just a handed-down set of intergenerational moral values that one parrots for life.

Q: You have positioned yourself to be an opinion leader here in the South, and you have also been quite open about your atheism. How has that admission affected your progress in achieving your personal goals? Has it helped, or hindered?

Eric: I don't even know if I'm an actual atheist. All I know is that I don't believe any story about the origins of creation or the destiny of man that I've ever been told by any scripture I've ever been exposed to. I don't feel qualified to say what is or isn't going to happen when we die, but I suspect it's a lot like before we were born: pure nothing. But I could be wrong.

Being out of the closet about my strong non-belief has helped me immeasurably personally by allowing me to be comfortable with myself and my public image. I'm sure it has hurt my PR on some level but I've never been confronted by a lunatic - and that's all I would worry about

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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."

"Five Questions with..." is an occasional series featuring interviews with notable personalities in the worlds of philosophy, science, history, business, art and literature.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in the columns appearing in this newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily the views of the organization. The Fellowship of Reason, Inc speaks only through its Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws, and the actions taken by the Board of Trustees as a board and recorded in the minutes of the corporation.

Fellowship of Reason, Inc.**Mission Statement**

The Fellowship of Reason® is an open, benevolent, and vital rational moral community in which we celebrate our lives, our freedoms, and our philosophy of reason. We study ethics.

Fellowship of Reason, Inc. is a Georgia nonprofit corporation and a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) corporation

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Subscription Information

12 monthly issues of this newsletter is \$15 per year.

You Want this. Trust us.

The mug you have to have.

FOR coffee. FOR tea.

FOR a friend.

\$6 each or 2 for \$10, Contact us at any FOR function (see page 9)

Questions? info@fellowshipofreason.com.



2005-2006 Trustees Elected

The annual meeting of the membership to elect trustees of the Fellowship of Reason was held November 6.

59% of the membership participated in the election. Four trustees were elected from eleven nominees, Martin Cowen continues in his position as founding trustee.

The new board of trustees consists of Allison Byrd, Martin Cowen, John Grover, Vera Norman, and Chris Snider. Congratulations and thanks to all for agreeing to serve.

The functions of the board of trustees include approving the budget of the Fellowship of Reason, electing the officers of the Fellowship of Reason, and electing individuals to membership

in the Fellowship.

The Trustees will soon meet to elect officers, who function to perform the business of the Fellowship of Reason. Officers are the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Following election of officers, directors will be selected to assist the officers in specific matters such as membership, marketing, education, Forum, and so on. There are plenty of opportunities to become involved in leadership within the Fellowship of Reason.

Members who are interested in becoming an officer of the Fellowship of Reason should contact a trustee as soon as possible.

Letters to the Editor

Write us at:
Fellowship of Reason
P.O. Box 5564
Atlanta, Georgia 31107

Or, E-mail us at info@fellowshipofreason.com.

All letters must be signed to be considered for publication.

... Eric Von Haessler (cont. from Page 2)

from those folks. It's okay for people to hate me, so long as they stay away from me.

Q: What are your thoughts on the future of modern religion? Where do you think we go from here?

Eric: I don't have a very good understanding of modern religion. It really does strike me as anachronistic at this point. It's the mathematicians and scientists that have led us into the modern age, not the shamanistic types. It's all voodoo to me. I have a personal preference toward Toa-ism because it is a philosophy of living and doesn't predict the afterlife. Modern religion has had to make way

and moderate their teachings continually since they lost the power to persecute the Einsteins of the world.

About the interviewer: Dan Barber is a past President of the Fellowship of Reason. He's also the owner and operator of AutoStop, supplying high quality automobile and philosophical service in Buford, GA.

Meaning of Membership

Regular membership:
\$35 per year

Contributing membership:
\$70 per Year

Lifetime membership:
\$700

Contact Information

To talk to somebody about Fellowship of Reason call:

Chris at 678-585-0406
Vera at 404-577-7968
Martin at 770-471-9800
Dan at 770-831-3010

In order to enjoy the benefits of the Fellowship of Reason, you need not be a member. All of our activities are free and open to the public. A number of non-members regularly participate with us and are most heartily welcome.

Why then become a member of the Fellowship of Reason?

The Fellowship of Reason exists by virtue of the generosity of its members and friends. People you know contribute money, property, services, and time in order that the value we all enjoy continues to exist. The services by performers at FORum, by executive committee members, by hosts and hostesses, and by planners of events are vital to the existence of FOR. Those volunteer services are, in fact, FOR.

Membership is, simply, a clear statement that you wish the Fellowship of Reason to continue to exist. Membership is not the only way to make this statement. Some non-members are generous contributors of money, property, and services. In fact, we all benefit by the mere attendance of non-members at FOR events.

If you want FOR to continue to exist, won't you clearly say so by becoming a member today?

It is wiser to find out
than suppose.
-Mark Twain

Birthdays

November Birthdays

November 2	Mary
November 3	John
November 12	Randy
November 13	Sky

December Birthdays

December 5	Carolyn
December 18	Deryck
December 21	Bill G
December 22	Frank
December 25	Marianna
December 27	Leanna
December 29	Andrew
December 30	Mike



The Silken Tent

Robert Frost (A Witness Tree, 1942)

She is as in a field a silken tent
 At midday when the sunny summer breeze
 Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
 So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
 And its supporting central cedar pole,
 That is its pinnacle to heavenward
 And signifies the sureness of the soul,
 Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
 But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
 By countless silken ties of love and thought
 To everything on earth the compass round,
 And only by one's going slightly taut
 In the capriciousness of summer air
 Is of the slightest bondage made aware.

Non-FOR activities of interest

- Invisible College, tuition-based philosophy lectures by Dr. Gregory R. Johnson (\$100 for 6 lectures), meets Wednesday's at 7:30 p.m. at John and Beth's house. Contact Dr. Johnson at invisiblecollege@mindspring.com
- Atlanta Freethought Society, <http://www.atlantafreethought.org/>, meets on the second Sunday at 1 p.m. in Roswell
- The Humanists of Georgia, <http://www.geocities.com/gahumanists/>, meets on the fourth Sunday at 12:30 p.m. in Roswell
- C.G. Jung Society of Atlanta, <http://www.jungatlanta.com/>, meets at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Atlanta
- Southern Order of Storytellers, <http://www.southernorderofstorytellers.com>

November 2005

November 2005							December 2005						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		November 1	2	3	4	5
		7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)	Mary bd 7:30pm Invisible College (#2)	John bd		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
12:00pm Adult Education 1:00pm FORum (NWUUC)	12:00pm Deadline for FOR newsletter submissions	7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (#3)			Randy bd 11:00am Nonfiction book club (Chris and Allison's house)
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Sky bd 8:00am Reason Runners		7:30pm Philosophy Club (Sally's house)	7:30pm Invisible College (#4)	7:00pm FOR Symphony		7:30pm Potluck
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
8:00am Reason Runners				Thanksgiving		6:30pm Movie night (John's studio)
27	28	29	30			
8:00am Reason Runners 10:00am FOR Business Meeting			7:30pm Invisible College (#5)			

December 2005

December 2005							January 2006						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
							29	30	31				

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				December 1 8:00pm Pub Night	2	3
4 12:00pm Adult Education 1:00pm FORum (NWUUC)	5 Carolyn bd 12:00pm Deadline for FOR newsletter submissions	6	7 7:30pm Invisible College (#6)	8	9 8:00pm Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus (Christmas Concert)	10 11:00am Nonfiction book club (Chris and Allison's house) 2:00pm Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus 8:00pm Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus
11 8:00am Reason Runners	12	13 7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	14	15	16	17 7:30pm Potluck
18 Deryck bd 8:00am Reason Runners	19	20	21 Bill bd	22 Frank J. bd 8:00pm Pub night	23	24
25 Christmas Marianna bd	26 Alexander Cowen bd	27 Leanna bd	28	29 Andrew bd	30 Mike Brady bd	31 7:00pm New Year's Eve Party

Events

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

Reason Runners: Sunday 8 a.m.

We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, at the southwestern entrance to Piedmont Park on 10th Street. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit follows at 9 a.m. Walkers and joggers welcome!
 Coordinator is Martin: 770-471-9800.

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

Philosophy tapes are played to a small private audience in the living room of a volunteer on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month Free. Coordinator is Sally: 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 to discuss a marvelous book. Coordinator is Beth: 404-754-7519.

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 to discuss a marvelous non-fiction. Coordinator is Allison: 678-585-0406 or Allibyrd@charter.net

Potluck: No potluck is scheduled for November. Members and friends of FOR meet monthly for a potluck supper. Bring something good to eat or drink to share. – The next potluck will be December 17 – Holiday Party

Movie Night: Saturday, October 15, 2005

Members and friends of FOR enjoy a monthly movie night at John's studio using his extraordinary equipment. FOR's next movie night is Saturday, November 26, 2005. Arrive at 6:30 p.m. Doors will be locked for safety! Movie starts at 7:15 p.m. Free. Coordinator is John: 404-754-7519

Pub Night: 4th Thursday 8 p.m.

Members and friends of FOR meet on the 4th Thursday (**Note change from Wednesdays**) of every month at Manuel's Tavern at 8 p.m. for adult beverages and adult conversation. Coordinator is Scott: 404-964-6697

FOR Symphony:

Six Thursday nights in the 2005-2006

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Concert Season

Next concert is Thursday, November 17, 2005. We meet at 7 p.m. to hear the pre-concert lecture. Coordinator is Martin: 770-471-9800.

Join us at FORum:

1st Sunday at 1 p.m.

December 4, 2005

Oratory by
David Ziebell:
"Art Anticipates
Science –
Robert Frost's
The Silken Tent"

Join us at Adult Education

1st Sunday at Noon

Both events are held on the campus of the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation*

1025 Mt. Vernon Highway,
NW, Atlanta, GA 30327.

*The Fellowship of Reason is a non-theistic organization that is not affiliated with the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Call for Submissions

FOR members are encouraged to contribute items for our monthly newsletter, The Eudaimonist. Suggested topics include: the use of reason in daily life; personal improvement; ethics and happiness; friendship; and celebrations of heroes, freedom, science, culture and the arts. Essays/articles 750-1,000 words; book/movie/TV reviews 250-500 words; letters 100-250 words. Submissions are subject to acceptance based on quality and relevance, and may be edited for spelling and grammar, or trimmed for space. Poetry, photographs and artwork are also welcome.

Direct all inquires to Martin Cowen, Newsletter Editor, mlcowen@yahoo.com or call 770-471-9800.

Celebratory Announcements

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

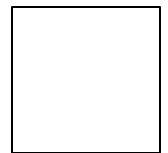
Please, write it down: _____

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



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