

The official newsletter of
Fellowship of Reason, Inc.

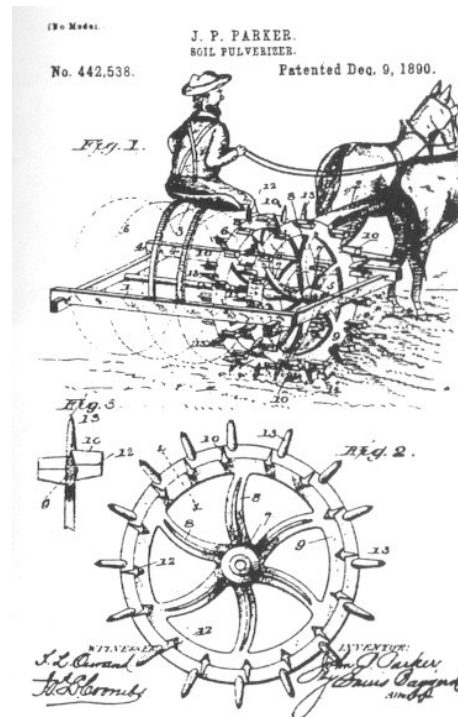


John P. Parker Runaway Slave Become Inventor

By
Tom Welch © 2007

This is the story of John Parker

When John P. Parker was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1827, one could have been forgiven for thinking he did not have a bright future ahead of him. You see, John P. Parker was human chattel: a slave. Now, you may have heard it said that force and mind are opposites, that the mind cannot function at the point of a gun. How, then, does an active mind respond to such circumstances?



At the age of eight, Parker was sold away from his mother to a doctor in Mobile, Alabama. He walked there all the way from Virginia, chained to other slaves. Years later, Parker told of smashing flowers with a stick along the way, taking out his wrath on nature because it was free while he was not. Fortunately, Parker would later find more constructive ways to channel his anger.

His new master's sons taught him to read and write, although teaching literacy to slaves was illegal (force and mind are opposites). When the sons left to go to college, the master apprenticed Parker to a plasterer. He meant well: slaves who learned a trade could sometimes earn enough to buy their freedom. However, the plasterer beat him, and he soon ended up in hospital for slaves run by a woman who was scarcely less cruel than the plasterer was. When Parker thrashed her for beating a patient, he fled the hospital and escaped to New Orleans.

He then embarked on a picaresque adventure in which he was captured and escaped more than once. It should be noted that his ability to read helped him out more than once. The journey ended when, quite by chance, he ran into his owner on the streets of New Orleans.

The owner still meant well for him and apprenticed Parker in an iron foundry. His pride would not let him be ordered around, and his competency and efficiency earned him the jealousy of his co-workers and superiors. As a result, he had difficulty holding down a job. Nonetheless, he convinced an old widow to buy him. Despite his penchant for getting into trouble, through hard work he earned enough money in eighteen months to buy his freedom from the widow. The price was \$1,800, plus interest. Now, one should not have to pay for one's freedom. Nonetheless, I imagine that Parker would have paid much more for it, and gladly. He was eighteen years old at the time.

Once he gained his freedom, his impetuosity but also his spirit and pride showed through when he stopped by a former employer's place to engage in a fistfight a superintendent who had once stolen Parker's idea for an invention and made a great profit from it.

After that incident, Parker promptly left Mobile and headed north. He eventually ended up in Ripley, Ohio. By that time, he had already become involved in the Underground Railroad, spirited escaped slaves to freedom in Canada. Situated just across the Ohio River from Kentucky in an area known as the Borderland, Ripley was a hotbed of Underground Railroad activity. Despite being in a free state, however, the abolitionists in Ripley worked in a hostile environment and had to

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John P. Parker (continued from page 1)

be on constant guard against slave owners trying to recapture their escaped slaves. There was no shortage of individuals willing to help the owners out, since the return of a runaway slave often carried a reward.

For many years, Parker led a truly heroic double life, working by day as an iron molder in a foundry, working at night with the Underground Railroad to rescue fugitive slaves. Often this work entailed crossing the river into Kentucky under the cover of darkness to spirit away slaves, perhaps right off their masters' property. In doing so, Parker put his own life, liberty and property in peril. He was shot at several times, and there was once a \$1,000 reward for his capture dead or alive. The Federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 made aiding runaway slaves a crime punishable by six months in prison and a \$1,000 fine; the Commonwealth of Kentucky often handed out harsher sentences. Nonetheless, Parker kept at his work, driven by his fury against a dehumanizing institution. By one reckoning, he aided some 900 slaves through his efforts.



After the end of slavery in the United States, Parker's active mind focused on business pursuits. He bought an iron foundry in 1865 and later owned several other businesses. The inventiveness he had demonstrated in his earlier days did not diminish: not only did he receive several patents for his inventions, he successfully manufactured and marketed them as well. In addition, he and his wife raised six children who were all highly educated and successful. When he died in 1900, we can suspect he left few regrets.

There are many themes that run through John P. Parker's life: the usefulness of education, the morality of righteous anger, the power of persistence. However, perhaps the most important theme is the necessity of freedom for the mind to function—that is, for human flourishing. As

such, Parker realized that the great evil of slavery is its effect on the mind. "It was not the physical part of slavery that made it cruel and degrading," he told an interviewer, "it was the taking away from a human being the initiative, of thinking, of doing his own ways."

He recognized that his owners had treated him well—but resented the fact that anyone should need to rely in such a way on the good offices of another. "So far as my masters were concerned," he said, "most of my life as a slave was a pleasant one, so far as my bodily wants were concerned. But I hated the injustices and restraints against my own initiative more than it is possible for words to express. To me that was the great curse of slavery."



Most of what we know of John P. Parker is from an interview he gave sometime around the 1880's which has only been recently published. Who knows how many other John P. Parkers were out there whose stories were never told? Worse still, how many potential John P. Parkers were there who were crushed by the institution of slavery? We can only bring out the best in ourselves when we are free—and we should cherish, celebrate and nurture that freedom.

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."

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 dedicated to the personal flourishing of our members through reason.

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

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Subscription Information

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

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FOR Merchandise

The mug you have to have.

FOR coffee. FOR tea. FOR a friend.

Mugs are \$6 each or 2 for \$10.



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.



FOR's Talking Points

1) Social Opportunities, Fellowship, Friendship, Community (pick your term)

The Fellowship of Reason provides a variety of social events and a social support system for our members and nonmember friends, who identify themselves as 'non-theist'—people who do not carry a faith-based belief or belong to a faith-based community. In two words, FOR provides "secular fellowship." Aristotle viewed mankind as social by nature and friendship as essential to happiness or flourishing. FOR offers a benevolent environment in which the individual can experience meaningful relationships with others, who share a common perspective, as well as common values such as personal fulfillment, a reason-based approach to life, and a desire to learn and share ideas.

2) A Reason-Based Approach to Life

FOR regards reason as the best method for understanding the universe, human nature (including

emotional needs), and our individual lives. FOR asserts that mankind can sufficiently know the world to advance our own flourishing in the world, that humans have the capacity to choose what is good for themselves. FOR does not rely on the claims of faith or mysticism as a guide to individual action or well-being, but rather relies on a reason-based approach to life (study, analytical thinking, logic, evidence, one's own good judgment). FOR focuses on the flourishing of our members and friends in this life. FOR offers learning activities that promote the use and development of reason. FOR combines our philosophy of reason with a program of social and educational opportunities to give the experience of living by reason.

3) Support of Personal Mission or Goals, Purposeful Living, Individual Flourishing (pick your term)

FOR supports our members and friends in purposeful living, encouraging individuals to select their own purpose(s) and/or goals and to systematically pursue them, keeping in mind that the means of 'getting there' is as important as the goal. In

FOR's Talking Points (continued from page 3)

educational parlance, finding fulfillment in the process is as important as the product. Members and friends are encouraged in their pursuits of activities about which they are passionate, career paths, and various other personal endeavors.

4) An Ethical Community (Eudaimonism)

FOR subscribes to a philosophy called Eudaimonism (from the ancient Greek "eudaimonia", meaning roughly "well-being") that emphasizes the use of reason and virtue. Eudaimonism asserts that an action is right (good) if it leads to individual well-being, and that individual well-being is at the core of any valid ethical system. Eudaimonism should not be confused with the view that pleasure is the highest good; that view is called hedonism. Well-being or flourishing is an individual matter and multi-dimensional, but in each person's case requires ethical behavior. FOR studies ethical questions and seeks to sponsor a moral community based on reason.

5) Lifelong Learning

FOR provides a variety of learning activities such as FORum presentations, adult education, taped lectures, and fiction and nonfiction book clubs. FOR regards knowledge and understanding as necessary for flourishing. Learning is further promoted through opportunities for voluntary speaking and writing and the exchange and discussion of ideas. FOR includes the enjoyment and study of the arts in our regular activities.

6) Living Reflectively or Consciously

FOR encourages our members and friends to be reflective about their lives and personal progress. FOR encourages each individual to take him/herself seriously, exercising self awareness, and considering how individual actions/choices promote or hinder one's own flourishing or that of others. FOR provides opportunities to reflect on the good things in life and on the people most important to us.

7) Recognition of Life Events and Human Excellence

FOR celebrates or marks the significant life events of our members and friends, such as births, marriages, or deaths. FOR also engages in an active admiration of human creativity, excellence, and/or achievement, recognizing the accomplishments of our members and friends, and honoring those of the great men and women of the ages. In examining the achievements of others, we gain inspiration and learn better how to flourish.

"If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants."

Isaac Newton

Meaning of Membership

Regular membership:
\$35 per year

Contributing membership:
\$70 per Year

Lifetime membership:
\$700

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, why not clearly say so by becoming a member today?

Classic Film Appreciation Course

Classic Film Appreciation Course
By Steve Whiteman

Throughout 2007 FOR member **Steve Whiteman** will teach a free course in the appreciation of classic film and associated early and mid-20th century popular culture. The course is full, but seats may become available to see individual films.

For more information, or to receive e-mail, contact Steve at classic.film@yahoo.com

The movies will be acknowledged classics, the majority from Hollywood's Golden Age—the 1930s and 1940s—and the rest from other eras or other countries. The program usually will include a cartoon or a short subject, coming attractions, the feature film, and commentary on the careers of key personnel, filmmaking techniques, and relevant history and popular culture. Discussion will follow the commentary.

First and Second Saturdays in 2007
Doors open 6:45 p.m. program starts at
7:30 p.m.

Contact Information

To talk to somebody about Fellowship of Reason call:

Martin at 770-471-9800

Dan at 770-831-3010

Looking Forward

**FORum, Sunday,
April 1, 2007 at
12:30 p.m.**

Master of Ceremonies: **Mike Brady**
Celebration of Freedom: **Chris Snider**
Celebration of Talent: **Jerry Pease**
Oratory: **David Ziebell**



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



FOR Symphony Renewal

We have greatly enjoyed attending, together, six Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concerts this year. Why not join us for next year's spectacular season? Among the performers will be **Leila Josefowicz**, one of the world's greatest violinists.

FOR Opera HD

We have discovered high definition broadcast of live opera from the Metropolitan Opera. Join us at the Hollywood 24 on the I-85 access road Saturday, April 24, 2007 at 1:30 p.m. and enjoy Puccini's *Il Trittico*. Tickets are \$18 for stadium seating in a comfortable movie theatre.



March 2007

March 2007							April 2007						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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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					

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

April 2007

April 2007						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May 2007						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat/Sun
					April 1 12:30pm FORum (NWUUC)
2	3 Theresa bd 7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	4 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	5 Christopher bd	6	7 7:00pm Classic Film Appreciation Course
					8 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
9 Kate M. bd Kathleen A. bd	10 7:30pm Fiction Book Club (Beth's house)	11 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	12	13	14 11:00am Nonfiction Book Club 7:00pm Classic Film
					15 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
16	17 7:30pm Philosophy Tapes (Sally's house)	18 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	19	20	21 7:30pm Potluck (Christopher Sulentic)
					22 8:00am FOR Runners (Flying Biscuit)
23	24 Peter bd	25 7:30pm Invisible College (Greg's house)	26 8:00pm FOR pub	27	28 Larry bd 6:30pm Movie Night (John's)
					29
30					

Events

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

FOR Runners: Sunday 8 a.m.

We meet every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, at the Flying Biscuit on McClendon Avenue. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit follows at 9 a.m. 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 private 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

FOR Symphony: Thursday, May 1, 2007, in Symphony Hall. This is the fifth of six concerts (Stage 1) in the 2006-2007 ASO Concert Season.

Martin Cowen coordinator: 770-471-9800

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

Our next Potluck is Saturday, April 21, 2007, at Chris Sulentic'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, March 22, 2006 at 8 p.m.

Scott Carper coordinator: 404-964-6697

*Join us for our
102nd
consecutive
monthly FORum:*

**April 1, 2007
Sunday at 1 p.m.**

(Meet, Greet at 12:30)

Birthdays

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

April 3	Theresa B.
April 5	Christopher S.
April 9	Kathleen A.
April 9	Kate M.
April 24	Peter B.
April 28	Larry C.

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

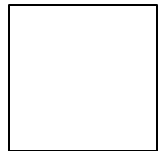
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A Reason-Based Moral
Community for the 21st
Century

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See us at:

fellowshipofreason.com