

Cartoonist Draws Peace From His Faith

By STANLEY O. WILLIFORD

When Butch Hartman's kindergarten teacher made a big fuss over one of his early artistic efforts, she may have launched a career in the wonderful world of cartooning.

"The first cartoon I ever did was a drawing for my kindergarten teacher," says Hartman, 39. "She asked the class to draw a picture of her. She raved about mine. I realized this was a way to get attention from adults."

"I always watched cartoons as a child – 'Scooby-do,' 'The Wonderful World of Disney,' 'The Flintstones'.... I would sit and draw in front of the TV. I had to draw as fast as I could to catch the characters. Most of the kids were outside playing baseball and I was inside drawing."

Drawing may have been a way for Hartman to find peace in a world where there was little of it. [See, **Hartman's Featured Testimony elsewhere on this site.**] When he was nine years old, his parents divorced and his mother left him and his three brothers to be raised by their dad. But anger and bitterness remained in their Highland Park, Mich., home. At 18, Hartman left and moved to California. He enrolled at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia to study animation.

Afterward, he worked at Ruby/Spears Productions on the animated version of the sitcom "Punky Brewster," at Hanna/Barbera on such shows as "Tom and Jerry Kids" and "Droopy, Master Detective," and at Cartoon Network on "Dexter's Laboratory" and "Johnny Bravo."

At the urging of his wife, JulieAnn, Hartman began a spiritual quest for peace by visiting churches. He joined Crenshaw Christian Center in February 2000, and a little more than a year later his cartoon show, "The Fairly Oddparents," premiered on Nickelodeon. When he joined the Crenshaw, Hartman says, he was broke. Less than five years later he was able to give a large financial gift to members of the church.

"The Fairly Oddparents" has been doing "great" for about three and a half years, says Hartman. It's tied with "Spongebob Squarepants".for the number one show with kids, ages 2 to 11.

A second show on Nickelodeon called "Danny Phantom," an action adventure, was recently rated number one for kids ages, 6 to 11. Hartman describes it as "a kind of 'Ghostbusters meets Jonny Quest.'"

His company, Billionfold, has done a pilot episode for a third show called "Crash Nebula," about an earth kid who attends the Space Academy. It's a spin-off from "The Fairly Oddparents."

"I was an artist for many years. Now that I produce my own series I have a staff to help me," says Hartman.

"Inspiration," he says, "comes from every day life, but mostly my brain. I'm always thinking what could be funny. I mainly get inspiration from comic books. I'm a huge fan of comic books."

The cartoons are basically secular, but Hartman says, "I do try to infuse a message of love in them. When I started the cartoon ['The Fairly Oddparents'] I was just starting my walk with Christ. There are a lot of [negative] things that aren't in them because I'm a Christian. It's hard in Hollywood. Everyone wants you to do something edgy – the dirty joke, the mean joke – and I won't do that."



Despite Protest, L.A. Supervisors Vote to Remove the Cross

Disdaining a passionate and sometimes angry protest from more than a thousand citizens, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted a second time to remove a tiny cross from its 47-year-old logo. The protesters, though largely Christian, cut across ethnic, political, social, religious, and economic lines, and were solidly unified in their demand that the supervisors reconsider their stand or put the issue on the November ballot so that county voters could decide.

The supervisors did neither. Three of the five supervisors, a majority, said no, so the issues were defeated. The two supervisors in the minority – Mike Antonovich and Don Knabe – voted to maintain the seal as it is.

At issue is a barely noticeable cross, easily one of the least prominent items on the county seal. Supporters argued that the cross is a part of the region's history, reflecting the involvement of the Catholic Church, which built missions up and down the state of California. The most dominant image, a large vision of the mythological Pomona, goddess of fruits and vegetables, has never been contested. Only the cross has.

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Dr. Price, Other Black Clergy Take Same-Sex Union Fight to Washington

California pastor, Dr. Frederick K.C. Price, was among a group of black ministers who traveled to Washington, D.C., in May to call on the Congressional Black Caucus to oppose civil unions for homosexual couples. Dr. Price presides over the 27,000-member Crenshaw Christian Center, home of the FaithDome in South Central Los Angeles. The FaithDome is a large geodesic dome that seats 10,000 worshippers.

In a report in the San Francisco Chronicle prior to the trip, Price said the prospect of same-sex marriage had inspired his first foray into political activism. "I don't have the words to describe the importance of this issue," he said. "This is important to every ethnic Christian community."

While he has "nothing against homosexual individuals," Price said his reading of the Bible tells him that "marriage is a union created and recognized by God" and that "homosexuality is an abomination." Conservative evangelical groups – including Promise Keepers, the Christian men's movement – helped mobilize African-American church leaders for the campaign against same-sex marriage.

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Prophecy by Kenneth Copeland

The year of 2004 will be known as the year of fullness. By the close of 2004, all callings will come to fullness – the apostle’s ministry, prophet’s ministry, evangelist’s ministries, pastoral ministries, teaching ministries. That includes all ministries. All that will obey Me will come into full manifestation.

The gifts of the Spirit will be manifested in fullness, as they were when Jesus was on the earth. Families will come into their called places and know the fullness of joy on earth as it is in heaven. All forms of prosperity – to excel, to go to the high places in God – will come into fullness of manifestation, spirit and soul and body, health, wealth, assets and influence to the glory of God the Father.

Follow My leading. Listen to Me. Listen to My Spirit. Things are changing. Things that now look impossible and unchangeable will suddenly turn around, to the world for no apparent reason. But you will know the reasons, for your knowing what I am doing will increase and also come to fullness. Many who have never heard the voice of My Spirit will be hearing and following fully by the end of 2004.

I have taken over the politics and the politicians. Listen to My voice. Vote the way I say in all elections. America’s place as a nation is coming to its fullest and finest hour, not just as the military power but as the source and supply of the gospel – My gospel – in power and witness to the whole earth.

This is the time you’ve been waiting for, hoping for, and believing for. You will know My ways that up to now you’ve never heard of before. Stay close to Me. Keep yourself in love. Obey My every command. Stay in My Word continually. Keep yourself and your prayer life fresh daily. Live by faith.

2004 will be the fullest year of your life. 2005 is the year of overflow. How much overflow depends on how much you sow towards it in 2004.

Jesus is Lord!

Despite Protest, L.A. Supervisors Vote to Remove Cross on County Seal

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The furor over the county seal began shortly after a similar controversy over the seal for the California city of Redlands, which also contained a cross. Two Redlands residents complained to the American Civil Liberties Union in February that the cross was a religious symbol. An ACLU attorney wrote a letter informing Redlands stating that the U.S. Supreme Court had declared that government logos and seals bearing such symbols were unconstitutional.

Faced with a possible lawsuit, Redlands immediately buckled and ordered the cross removed from every city logo.

The ACLU then received calls complaining that there was a cross in the Los Angeles County seal. The organization wrote the Board of Supervisors, giving them two weeks to act on removing the cross. Despite objections by supervisors Antonovich and Knabe, the Board voted to remove the cross and avoid a legal fight.

The rationale of those who voted to replace the cross – Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Gloria Molina and Zev Yaroslavsky – is that a legal fight to maintain the seal would cost the cash-poor county dearly and probably result in a loss in court. Around the country, such symbols have been ruled unconstitutional by the courts, they said.



Kingdom Briefs

A Record Sign-Up to Oppose Gay Marriage

The highest number of signatures ever submitted for an initiative in Oregon’s history was turned in by the Defense of Marriage Coalition, a group opposed to same-sex marriage. The Coalition amassed the record number of signatures in order to place a proposed constitutional amendment banning gay nuptials on the ballot, said officials in Salem. The 244,587 names was more than twice the necessary amount. (Source: Los Angeles Times)

Pirating ‘The Passion’

Mel Gibson’s blockbuster movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” has garnered close to \$400 million in box-office receipts. However, in April it broke the record as the most pirated movie on Internet file-sharing networks. Retailers and industry insiders are anxiously awaiting the August 31 release of the DVD. (Sources: Los Angeles Times, Christian Retailing)



Andrae Crouch Gets His Hollywood Star

Songwriter Andrae Crouch last month joined the Reverend James Cleveland and Mahalia Jackson as the only two African-American gospel artists with stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Crouch, who pastors the New Christ Memorial Church of God in Christ in Pacoima, California, is an eight-time Grammy winner. The famed walkway runs along Hollywood Boulevard. (Sources: Charisma, Wave Community Newspapers)

Pastor at No Loss for Words

Pastor Roger Huang let his stomach do the talking in May when a gay strip club set up operation next door to his rescue mission and Christian school in San Francisco. Huang went on a hunger strike. As he sat on a chair in front of City Hall, Huang called for, among other things, close of the Chez Parea strip club and a ban on liquor licenses. Apparently, the owner of the strip club heard him. He offered to sell Huang the building for \$1.4 million. The ministry is working to raise the funds. (Sources: Charisma, San Francisco Examiner)

On the other hand, several law organizations, the American Center for Law & Justice among them, have reportedly offered to defend the county on a pro bono basis, meaning that the county would not have to pay legal costs to fight against a change of the logo. Various protesters proposed that the churches pay the legal fees. However, the three majority voters on the Board were unwilling to defend the cross.

Such fears about cost and the likelihood of a court loss clearly left the protesters – who wanted the supervisors to stand up and fight for the seal – unsatisfied. The fact that the supervisors caved in to the ACLU’s demand so quickly angered many. Supervisors Molina and Burke came under particularly heavy attack for not being responsive to the desires of their communities, which are largely African American and Hispanic, respectively.

Supervisor Burke, her voice rising as protesters interrupted her explanation for voting to remove the cross, referred to the protest as a “religious frenzy.”

“There’s no way we’re going to be able to please this crowd,” Molina said.

Among the speakers representing churches in Los Angeles County were Jack Hayford of Church on the Way, Kenneth Uhlmer of Faithful Central, L. Craig Hay of Crenshaw Christian Center, and James E. Price of Long Beach Christian Center.

Members of the dissenting majority had requested that the ACLU agree to let them phase in the removal of the cross rather than replace all the emblems immediately. For example, only new vehicles would have the redesigned seal, as the old vehicles are put out of service. The procedure would work the same for county business cards, stationery, paper products and all other replaceable materials. However, the giant seals on county buildings, and those on the county websites would be replaced immediately.



Rocky Mountain Town Profiled as Strongly Christian, Conservative

The headline in the Los Angeles Times was enticing. It blared: *"In Colorado, a wellspring of conservative Christianity."* The city under discussion is the home of Focus on the Family, the Fellowship of Christian Cowboys, Hoops of Hope, New Life Church, and a host of other Christian organizations.

In fact, according to the article, "A combination of five military bases, 110 evangelical organizations and domination by the Republican Party has made it a kind of draw for religious conservatives and an epicenter of the cultural wars raging throughout the country today."

"I think God had a plan for this city," Ted Haggard, 47, founder of New Life Church, told The Times. "For years it was Wheaton, Ill., then Tulsa, Okla., and now it is Colorado Springs' time."

Colorado Springs, the article said, was founded in 1874 "as a showcase for religion, education and clean living." The city of 400,000 has "evolved from a sleepy, insular community to a vigorous, influential bastion of the Christian right."

Nestled at the eastern base of Pikes peak, it's fine climate and scenic attraction has made it one of the most popular tourist centers in the Rocky Mountains.

James C. Dobson's Focus on the Family is clearly the major player in town. The Focus on the Family compound sits on 81 acres and employs 1,300 people. It has its own freeway exit sign, its own ZIP Code and its own full-time postal worker assigned to it to handle the four million pieces of mail it sends out each month. Dobson's radio broadcast is said to reach 220 million listeners a day around the world.

Haggard's New Life Church, with 11,000 members, is another major player. Both ministries strongly oppose gay and lesbian marriage and are staunch supporters of traditional matrimony.

"This is a place where uniformed soldiers stroll downtown and B-52 bombers soar overhead. It's a city of megachurches and Christian radio stations, a place where 30,000 people turn out for a passion play and religious conservatives intervene in local politics," the article said.

Black Clergy Takes Same-Sex Union Battle to Washington D.C.

Continued from page one

As some of the nation's best-known black clergymen, including Pentecostal Bishop Paul Morton of the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, were gathering in Washington to denounce homosexual unions, judges in Massachusetts began issuing marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples. The Supreme Court had refused to intervene and block clerks from issuing the marriage licenses.

The gathering on Capitol Hill was followed a week later by a large rally in Texas called "Not on My Watch." Organizers of both events challenge comparisons many gay rights leaders have made between the campaign for same-sex marriage and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.



"Gays have never gone through slavery nor been put down and abused like Blacks," said Bishop Frank Stewart of Zoe Christian Fellowship, a group of 21 churches in Southern California. "It's an insult to use that parallel."

In San Francisco before the trip, a coalition of seven African-American pastors called San Francisco Tabernacle Clergy told the Chronicle that they had prepared their own joint statement condemning same-sex marriage and comparisons to the Civil Rights Movement.

Such comparisons, the clergymen said, "are offensive and belittle the cause of freedom and racial justice."

Bishop Donald Green, the pastor of San Francisco Christian Center and chairman of the coalition, said they were not part of the new national campaign organized by the Traditional Values Coalition. But they make similar arguments based on their understanding of the Bible and experience in black churches.

"As African American pastors, teachers, counselors and leaders, we see and live with the horrors of a declining society," they said. "Same-sex marriage would serve to advance the decline of marriage and ... family values in the African-American community."

Joining Green in that statement were the pastors of San Francisco's Bethel AME Church, Missionary Temple CME Church, First AME Zion Church, Jones Memorial United Methodist Church, True Hope Church of God in Christ and Providence Baptist Church.

Of course, not all African-American church leaders in San Francisco agreed, reported the Chronicle.

The Rev. Cecil Williams, the longtime leader of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, said Christian right leaders mobilizing black clergy are "attempting to divert attention from the real issue."

"They need to open up to other perspectives," Williams said. "I've said this (the gay rights movement) is a part of the Civil Rights Movement. The issue is to bring out freedom in people's lives."

But Williams appeared outnumbered by black clergy opposed to same-sex marriage.

"It would be a historical error to equate the civil rights struggle for racial equality with the movement for civil accommodations based solely upon sexual behavior," said Promise Keepers President Thomas Fortman, an African American who grew up in the Civil Rights Movement and was named the head of the evangelical men's movement last October.

By actively backing the May 22 "Not on My Watch" rally in Arlington, Texas, Fortman gave same-sex marriage opponents the resources of Promise Keepers – which has brought an estimated 5 million men to stadium-sized rallies over the past 13 years.

Meanwhile, another powerful conservative evangelical lobby, the Traditional Values Coalition, lined up nationally known African-American church leaders for the start of "a state-by-state grassroots effort to pass legislation protecting marriage."

Former NFL star Darrell Green was among those involved.

(This article was adapted from a report in the San Francisco Chronicle.)



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MSN'S Top 10 Campsites

For those who can no longer bear to be cooped up in the city and long for the wide, open spaces, MSN's Top 10 Campsites may be just the right outing. California tops all other states with three great places to rough it under the stars. Texas has two, and New York, Oregon, Colorado, Massachusetts and Virginia each have one.



- 1) **Bear Mountain State Park**, Bear Mountain, N.Y. (845) 786-2701. This Catskills retreat offers spectacular views of the Hudson Valley and a scenic mountain lake where campers can fish and boat. Bring your horse, or let it bring you. There are tie-down stalls at the park. Sorry, no hookups for trailers and recreational vehicles, and no showers. Composting toilets and potable water are available.
- 2) **Enchanted Rock State Natural Area**, Fredericksburg, Texas. (325) 247-3903. Price: \$5. This real western site has all the eastern amenities of restrooms with showers, walk-in water sites with tent pads, picnic tables, fire rings, as well as hiking and camping areas with composting toilets. Only one drawback: Early Native Americans believed the rock was haunted. Oh well. Not an RV park.
- 3) **Fort Stevens State Park**, Astoria, Ore. (503) 861-1671. Price: \$3 day use; \$25 yearly day use; \$15-\$19 tent site. Once a primary military site, beginning with the Civil War, this 3,700-acre park comes with high recommendations for scenic beauty and facilities. There are a large number of campsites, some with ADA accessibility, as well as yurts. There is fishing, boating/canoeing, bicycling, all at the mouth of the Columbia River. Hookups available.
- 4) **Golden Gate Canyon State Park**, Golden, Colo. (303) 582-3707. Price: Daily pass, \$5; annual pass, \$50. This is a legal Rocky Mountain high, all 14,000 acres. The park features hiking, picnicking, camping, and riotous outbursts of wildflowers, pine-tree-covered hills and aspen-filled meadows. Ideal for photography and sightseeing. Reverend's Ridge Campground has sites for trailers, pickup campers, and tent. Cabins and yurts are also available. Aspen Meadows is a tents-only campground.
- 5) **Henry W. Coe State Park**, Morgan Hill, Calif. (408) 779-2728. More than 80,000 acres makes this the largest state park in Northern California. It is primarily a wilderness park, and is hot and dry in summer. You've missed most of the great wildflower displays, which occur in spring, but the park boast several lakes and ponds. There are sites for tents, trailers, and RVs, but no hookups. There are restrooms with toilets, but no showers. Ponds and lakes are accessible only by bike or horse.
- 6) **Malibu Creek State Park**, Malibu, Calif. (818) 880-0367. Close to the famous movie colony, this 4,000-acre park has verdant ravines with pools, wildflowers and, of course, wildlife. The park's namesake creek runs from Boney Mountain to Malibu Lagoon on the Pacific Ocean, offering more than 15 miles of streamside trail to explore. Camping facilities allow for a mixture of tents, trailers and RVs. Campsites for individuals and families are on the reservation, with cook stoves allowed. Dogs are okay.
- 7) **McKinney Falls State Park**, Austin, Texas. (512) 243-1643. Price: \$2; children under 13 free. At approximately 740 acres, this is one of the smaller state parks. A 2.5-mile hike-and-bike loop winds through shade and sky among live oaks, Ashe juniper and mesquite trees. Along the trail are rock shelters once used by Native Americans. The falls itself is the product of the earth's volcanic forces. Other evidences of the planet's geologic violence add to the scenic wonder.
- 8) **Mohawk Trail State Forest**, Charlemont, Mass. (413) 339-5504. Called one of the most scenic woodlands areas in Massachusetts, it is a perch of fast moving streams in the Berkshires. A clear, cold river cascades through the historic state forest. There are cabins, as well as individual and group campsites. There are also overnight log cabins. The park has more than 18 miles of rivers and streams for excellent trout fishing and a swimming area.

- 9) **Mount Tamalpais State Park**, Mill Valley, Calif. (415) 388-2070. Mount Tam, as it is called, has one of the most enticing networks of trails, and is a popular destination for hikers and bikers. Near East Peak summit, are some of the most popular climbing spots, and on a clear day much of Marin County, San Francisco and the East Bay are visible. Among the many places to camp, Steep Ravine Campsite is one of the most notable. Cabins offer a secluded getaway for only \$30 a night, but plan far ahead.
- 10) **Pocahontas State Park**, Chesterfield, Va. (804) 796-4255. Price: \$3 weekdays; \$4 weekends. Near the capital of Richmond, this popular park offers hiking, biking and horseback riding. There is an Olympic size swimming pool where visitors can cool down from the summer heat. The campground is replete with electric and water hookups, centrally located restrooms with showers. There are grills, picnic tables and lantern holders. Each campsite has a steel fire ring to be used for cooking and campfires. Great for family outings.

(Adapted from MSN's July 1 listing)

Another Megachurch Will Make an Abandoned Sports Arena its Home

Finally, the media are catching on to church mega-growth.

An article in the Los Angeles Times reported: **Players Give Way to Prayers**. In other words, just as the played-out Inglewood Forum was snatched up by Faithful Central Bible Church some years ago, so another aging sports venue is being taken over by a Texas megachurch.

The latest conversion is Houston's Compaq Center, a former basketball and hockey mecca. By next April it will become the nation's largest sanctuary, and the home of Lakewood Church. Its seating capacity will eclipse that of the famous Forum and Crenshaw Christian Center's landmark FaithDome. The Center's 14-month renovation is estimated to cost about \$75 million.



"With 16,000 seats, two waterfalls and interior cameras ready for Sunday broadcasts, the reborn structure dovetails national trends that promise to shake up the economics of urban real estate: the increasing number of obsolete sports stadiums and the meteoric growth of huge religious congregations that need 'megachurches,'" said the article.

Joel Osteen, the 41-year-old pastor of Lakewood Church, told the Times that

"half a dozen pastors from around the country had asked him how he went about signing the 30-year, \$12.3-million lease on the Compaq Center." This may mean that other city arenas may receive new life as churches. Such churches require thousands of seats and vast parking lots. In today's market, sanctuaries that are large enough are very "expensive to build and demand large plots of land that are difficult to come by in urban areas," the article said.

"In 1970, there were ten megachurches in the United States. Today there are an estimated 850 non-Catholic megachurches, with four of the six largest in Texas," John Vaughan, director of Church Growth Today, a think tank in Bolivar, Mo., that publishes an annual listing of the world's largest and fastest growing churches, was quoted as saying.

The Houston Rockets of the National Basketball Association for years made their home in the Compaq Center, but "team leaders were itching for a building that had a separate practice area, a restaurant, more luxury suites, ample parking and nicer locker rooms," said the Times. They found what they wanted in the glitzy new \$235-million Toyota Center.

No one is happier over the team's departure than Lakewood Church.