

Dan Barker, of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, speaks at a solstice celebration at the Capitol Monday.

—State Journal photo by Carolyn Pfisterer

Equal time for solstice celebrants

By Terry Shelton

State government reporter

The winter solstice, and the official start of winter, arrives today.

But the Freedom From Religion Foundation saluted the season early when it sponsored its first Capitol Freethought Concert on Monday, celebrating the day with a "natural and secular" program of songs and speeches.

Annie Laurie Gaylor, editor of Freethought Today, said the program was intended as a protest to religious activities held recently in the Capitol, including erecting a "holiday"

Christmas tree, singing Christian carols and lighting a menorah.

"Our point is the state Capitol is not a church, but is has been used as one," said Gaylor, addressing a crowd of about 50 persons. "This is our 'equal-time' protest of sectarian religious festivals."

Gaylor, who sent a letter of complaint to the governor about the "sectarian religious rituals," said she hopes the state gets the message so that "next year, equal time will not be needed."

A staff member of the foundation, Dan Barker, played the piano and sang several non-sectarian seasonal songs such as "Frosty the Snowman," as well as original songs such as

"I'm Your Friendly Neighborhood Atheist," and "You Can't Win With Original Sin."

One of those who attended was Doug Quinn-Gruber of Madison, who brought his daughters Erin, 9, and Emily, 7.

Although he does not oppose "Christian-type celebrations," Quinn-Gruber said he does have second thoughts about having them represented in the Capitol.

"She (Gaylor) deserves equal time or they ought to remove everything," he said.

He said he attended the concert because "it is an exercise in freedom," adding: "I wanted my children to be exposed to a variety of different beliefs."

Gonzales to lead Senate Caucus

By Terry Shelton

State government reporter

A staff member of the National Education Association with strong Wisconsin ties has been chosen as the new chief of the Senate Democratic Caucus.

Gail Gonzales starts work Feb. 15, according to Sen. Joseph Strohl, D-Racine, the Senate's majority leader.

She is presently a government-relations specialist in Washington, D.C., with the NEA, the parent organization for many teacher unions, including the Wisconsin Education Association Council.

Gonzales was field coordinator of the unsuccessful campaign of Jim Wood in the 1982 Wisconsin Democratic gubernatorial primary.

She also worked for U.S. Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, from 1978-

81, and served as campaign manager for a NEA project to re-elect U.S. Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W. Va., and pro-education candidates in three West Virginia congressional districts in 1982.

Her husband, Charles Gonzales, is campaign manager for former Acting Gov. Martin Schreiber in his race for mayor of Milwaukee. He has also helped in several other state races, including doing some work to help re-elect members of the Senate Democratic caucus.

Gonzales, a New Mexico native, is a 1975 graduate of the UW-Whitewater. She replaces David Berger, whom Strohl fired in mid-August.

Berger, who said he quit before he was fired, is still on the caucus as a staff member and will be "until he finishes three or four projects for me," Strohl said.

Strohl, serving his first term as majority leader, said Gail Gonzales

was the unanimous choice of a committee set up to look for a replacement for Berger.

He said more than 100 people applied and 30 were interviewed. About a third of the applicants were from the Washington area, where advertisements were placed in the Washington Post and other publications.

Strohl said he has known Gonzales for years and said she "has a unique combination of management skills, policy background and political background."

The main function of the caucus is to help do public relations work and campaigning for senators, as well as preparing bills and amendments to the budgets.

Senate observers had said Strohl wanted to pick his own caucus leader as done by previous majority leaders.

Berger was elected to the Assembly in 1970 and the Senate in 1974. He served there until 1983, when he was

chosen caucus director under then-Majority Leader Tim Cullen.

Strohl said he did not have to get caucus approval of Gonzales, but said he did so because he "thought it was important to run the appointment by the members."

He said the majority voted for her, although there was some opposition from people who did not want to replace Berger or who were concerned about conflicts with her husband's career.

For example, Sen. John Norquist, D-Milwaukee, is also running for mayor of Milwaukee. Norquist could not be reached for comment on the hiring of Gonzales.

Strohl said disagreement in the caucus is not unusual.

"The vote to approve Berger was not unanimous, either," he said. "And I find it hard to believe that in this day and age we judge people by whom they are married to."

Integration plan needed, urges Travis

By Betty Brickson

Of The State Journal

The Madison School District should continue its integration plan so it can improve academic achievement by maintaining stability in the district, Superintendent James Travis told the School Board Monday night.

The plan, adopted in 1983, is due to expire in June unless it is renewed. It includes the controversial pairing of six schools, and busing, to achieve racial integration.

Critics say the plan sacrifices academic achievement for racial integration, places tremendous stress on school staff and discourages parental involvement in education by dividing neighborhood schools.

Travis presented his detailed evaluation of the plan to the board, which will vote on the plan in mid-February.

He made the following recommendations:

- ✓ that the integration plan boundaries and pairing pattern remain unchanged;

- ✓ that the current pattern of resource allocation continue for schools in the integration plan (included in the allocation would be special programs at the integrated schools, such as full-day kindergarten and smaller class sizes than at other elementary schools); and

- ✓ that special funds be allocated for the Midvale-Lincoln school pair.

The Midvale-Lincoln pair is designated for special funds under the plan due to the high concentration of "at-risk" students in those schools — students with special problems and educational needs that require extra attention. Due to the gap in student achievement levels in the school pair, the plan calls for extra resources and staff to ensure that students there receive equal attention, regardless of their level of progress.

The pairing matches two South Side elementary schools, Lincoln and Franklin, with two West Side schools, Midvale and Randall.

The plan evaluation states that, as class size and needs have risen at Lincoln and Midvale, resources have not kept pace and the stress on staff has increased.

The report said 46.7 percent of the staff at Midvale is "very dissatisfied with the program for at-risk students; at Lincoln, 40.7 percent is dissatisfied.

Peter Davis, whose child attends Midvale School, told the board the staff at Midvale is nearing the breaking point.

"My concern is that the staff in those two schools are being asked to do the impossible," Davis said. "Education is the bottom line. We must reduce the concentration of at-risk students in those two schools. Parents from both schools are pro-integration, but not at the cost of education."

Davis, who termed Travis's recommendations "status quo," said the data presented in the report showed the plan had failed to help at-risk students in both schools.

But Travis defended the plan, de-

signed to reduce minority enrollment at Franklin and Lincoln schools. He said the original goals had been met and changing the integration plan now would be disruptive.

"Stability is essential so we can concentrate on academic achievement," he said.

The gap is still too great between low achievers and high achievers, Travis said, and the progress to close that gap is too slow.

"We need intervention to correct this," he said.

Betty Franklin-Hammonds, representing Madison's Committee on Academic Achievement of Black Students, noted that academic achievement was not included as one of the plan's seven original goals. She said her committee supported integration as a way for blacks to achieve an equal education, but academic achievement should be the measure of success for integration, not statistics on the racial makeup of schools.

"The district spent so much time finding the right racial mix that academic achievement was placed on the back burner," Franklin said. "The present system does not accommodate the involvement of black parents, and parental involvement is essential. We need the stability of neighborhood schools."

Franklin said that lower achievement among black students is widespread across the district, from elementary through high school. A 1986 study of black students enrolled at La Follette, Memorial, West and East high schools showed the median grade given to black students was one point lower, on a four point scale, than that received by the general student population.

A public hearing on the integration plan will be held Jan. 4 at school district headquarters, 545 W. Dayton St. Franklin encouraged the board to hold another public hearing in South Madison and to consider returning an elementary school there.

School board member Rick Berg, who has proposed an alternative magnet-school integration plan, also endorsed a public hearing in South Madison as a "symbolic gesture" by the full board.

Madison's Affirmative Action Officer, Eugene Parks, spoke in favor of the Travis plan, with the additional recommendation that the school pairing be terminated in five years. Parks urged the city, county and financial institutions in the state to adopt policies that would eliminate the need for such plans by ending segregation in housing.

"The school system does not operate in a vacuum," Parks told the board. "If our community wants busing to end, to use that money for teacher's salaries, you must encourage integration."

He said that parental involvement should have been stressed more in the report.

Parks also said, "I don't care if (students) have the most racist teacher in the country, or the worst science lab, if they have supervision (from parents) and study three or four nights a week, they will succeed."

UW hospital additions start

By William R. Wineke

Medical reporter

UW-Madison will begin construction on \$12 million in additions to the Clinical Sciences Center — the building that houses University Hospital — this week.

The additions will add 47,000 square feet to the 666,000 square-foot building, according to Dr. Jay Noren, UW Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences.

The center houses the hospital, the UW Medical School, the Nursing School and the Wisconsin Clinical Cancer Center.

One module will provide a home for a surgical sciences laboratory. The laboratory will be used principally for research related to organ transplants.

Dr. Folkert Belzer, chairman of the surgery department, is an internationally respected expert in the development of fluids to preserve organs for transplant.

Another part of the addition will house offices for hospital administrators, who now occupy first-floor of-

fices near the main entrance. The present administrative offices will be remodelled for an ambulatory surgery center, Noren said.

The surgery laboratory and the administration offices will be the seventh and eighth floors of the hospital's 11-4 module.

The construction project also includes a two-story building to be built north of the emergency department entrance. That building will house medical records and space for the hospital's radiology department.

Noren said the medical records space is particularly needed.

The Clinical Sciences Center was completed in 1978 and was the most expensive building project — costing more than \$100 million — in Wisconsin's history.

Even so, many UW leaders considered the building too small for the expanding needs of the Center for Health Sciences.

According to Noren, the cost of the additions will be covered by gifts and grants to the Medical School, program revenue bonds and by hospital revenue.

Accused city policeman's 'anguish' spurs resignation

By Joe Beck

Of The State Journal

Suspended police officer Robert Balistreri quit the Madison Police Department late Monday morning, citing "personal anguish" that makes him unable to continue working.

Balistreri, a 14-year veteran of the department, was scheduled to appear Monday night before the Police and Fire Commission to face administrative charges of racially motivated vandalism on the South Side. Police Chief David Couper was seeking to have Balistreri fired.

Balistreri's resignation makes it unnecessary to fire him and renders further commission proceedings against him unnecessary, said Assistant City Attorney William Jansen.

A charge of arson is still pending against Balistreri, 35, in Dane County

Circuit Court where he is accused of setting fire to a wooden statue in Neville Park in October 1986. The statue was of a black woman and her child.

Balistreri is also accused of trying to get a witness to change a statement made to police about the fire.

Another suspect in the case, Daniel Workman, 22, of 6510 Raymond Road, is charged with criminal damage to property for being an accomplice in the statue fire.

Couper's charges before the commission also accused Balistreri of spray-painting racist graffiti in March 1986 on Mr. P's and Zinger's, two South Side taverns. The department suspended him without pay in July.

Balistreri's resignation coincided with a decision by Circuit Judge P. Charles Jones, denying a motion by Balistreri's lawyer, John Markson, to

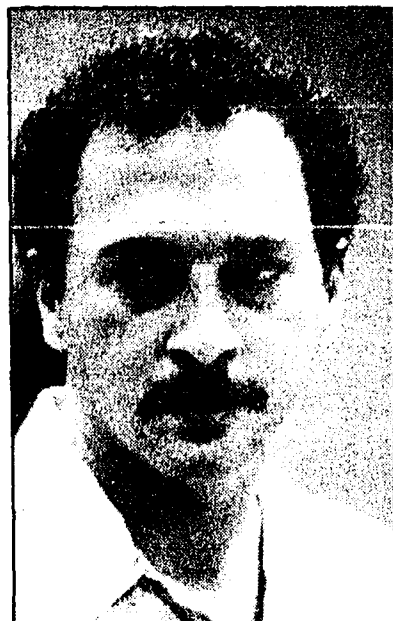
delay the commission hearing until after the Circuit Court trial.

Markson linked the resignation to Jones' decision.

"We felt that officer Balistreri had an absolute right to have his case determined by a jury before his job was taken away from him," Markson said. "We pressed that right for as long as we were able to do so."

Balistreri wrote in his resignation letter that continuing as a police officer "would only worsen my personal anguish, and, more importantly, might put at risk the public which I have sworn to serve, as well as my fellow officers that I have sworn to serve with."

Balistreri has asked the Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations for disability retirement. His complaint cites mental problems caused by harassment from



Robert Balistreri

members of the police department.

Balistreri has also filed a vandalism complaint with the police stating that his garage door and a friend's car that was parked in his driveway were spray-painted last week.