



# THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

March, 2008

<http://www.sbhumanists.org>

## Losing Faith in Faith: A Presentation by Dan Barker, Co-President of the Freedom From Religion Foundation

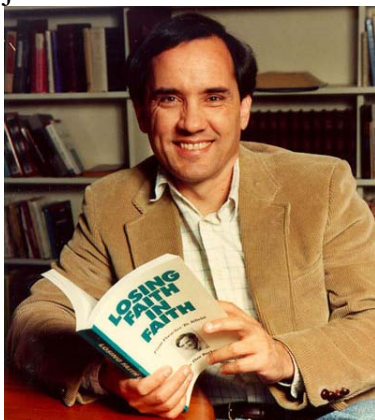
By Andrew Hankin

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) works for those who are free from religion and are committed to the cherished principle of separation of state and church. Incorporated in 1978 in Wisconsin, the FFRF is a national membership association of freethinkers, atheists, agnostics and skeptics of any pedigree, working to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

The Foundation recognizes that the United States was first among nations to adopt a secular Constitution. The founders who wrote the U.S. Constitution wanted citizens to be free to support the church of their choice, or no religion at all. Our Constitution was very purposefully written to be a godless document, whose only references to religion are exclusionary.

The Foundation acts on countless violations of separation of state and church, on behalf of members and the public, including: Prayers in public schools, payment of public funds for religious purposes, government funding of pervasively sectarian institutions, and the ongoing campaign against civil rights for women, gays and lesbians led by churches.

Dan Barker was PR Director of the Freedom From Religion Foundation from 1987 to 2004. He was elected co-president of the Foundation with his wife, Annie Laurie Gaylor, in 2004. He will talk about his journey from teenage evangelist, through 17 years in a touring musical ministry, to years of reading that caused him to outgrow his Christian faith; he declared his atheism in 1984. An accomplished musician, fluent in Spanish and other languages, Dan plays solo piano and in jazz combos.



Dan Barker

**Dan Barker**  
**Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008, 3-5 p.m.**  
**In the Patio Room at Vista Del Monte**  
**3775 Modoc Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93105**

Join us for socializing at 2:30 p.m.  
The meeting will start promptly at 3 p.m.

## Contact Information

Board of Directors 2007-2008

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## Membership Notes by Mary Wilk

Humanist Society meetings are usually held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month at 3 pm in the Patio Room of Vista Del Monte, 3775 Modoc Road, Santa Barbara, CA. More information is available at our web site:

[www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org](http://www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org)

or by contacting any of the board members listed in the left-hand column of this page.

If you would like a copy of this newsletter mailed to a friend or someone who might be interested in our Society, please send their contact information to: PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, or call Mary Wilk. Alternatively, all of our newsletters are available at the web address shown above.

If you are not already a member, we encourage you to join our Society. Annual membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) for a sponsor. Members receive the monthly newsletter and have the option of attending meetings, outings and special events sponsored by the Society.

Those unable to attend our monthly meetings may subscribe to our newsletter for an annual fee of \$20, but are not entitled to other membership privileges. When attending our meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First or second-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis. For more information, please contact Mary Wilk or any member of our Society.

## News About Members

### By Hope Smith and Mary Wilk

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

Adam Robert Haas  
426 Lincolnwood Place  
Santa Barbara, CA 93110  
698-7710

John Martinez  
736 N. San Marcos Rd.  
Santa Barbara, CA 93111  
845-5791

Feb. 3, the *News-Press* in a report on the Santa Barbara International Film Festival's opening-night party to benefit Direct Relief International, included among attendees event-committee member Nancy Walker Koppelman, and Film Festival board members Judy and Rolf Egenolf.

Feb. 7, Merle Betz had a Letter to the Editor in the *Independent* about behavioral problems at Hendry's Beach.

Feb. 10, the *News-Press* featured on its front page a color photo of Marian Shapiro talking to students in her Psychology of Human Sexuality class at S.B. City College. This was part of a pre-Valentine's Day article, which also included a discussion of Marian's teaching methods for this subject.

Feb. 10, the *News-Press* in a report on the Women's Fund of Santa Barbara's annual luncheon for monetary awards to non-profits serving women, children and families, listed Carol Palladini as chair of the Fund's founding members, and also showed her in a color photo with some of the non-profit executives. This event was also written up in the Feb.15 *Goleta Valley Voice*.

Feb.12, Dick Cousineau, Ray and Louise Stone, Sydney and Hope Smith, were among members attending an illustrated lecture "Charles Darwin: Then & Now" given by UCSB Prof. Mike Osborne at the S.B. Museum of Natural History, on the 199<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Darwin's Birthday.

Feb. 23, Marian Shapiro was not only on the organizing committee for the 2008 Jefferson-Jackson Dinner but also was part of the musical entertainment. In the program, Carol Palladini (with husband Bill) was listed among sponsors of the event.

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## Upcoming Events

### By Dick Cousineau

This month we welcome Dan Barker, Co-President of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), of Madison, Wisconsin. Mr. Barker, who has visited us some 10 years ago, is the author of *Losing Faith in Faith*, and with his wife Annie Laurie Gaylor, have witnessed phenomenal growth of their Foundation from a few hundred in the Madison area ten years ago, to now over 12,000 throughout the country. The Foundation has initiated and sponsored accountability of public officials in regards to displays of icons and symbols of religious belief in public squares throughout the nation. In addition, the Foundation has brought, and won, lawsuits to preclude government agencies from promoting any specific religion.

The monthly newsletter of the Foundation, *Freethought Today*, is a highly-acclaimed publication that includes serious articles, First Amendment news, events, many items of humor, and the infamous "Black Collar Crime Blotter," two full pages each month itemizing crimes of every description perpetrated by the clergy. What a hoot! Dan is most welcome in Santa Barbara.

## Notes from the President: Power and Control By Adrian Wenner

Americans United for the Separation of Church and State and other groups recently informed the FBI that the preacher in a Baptist church urged in the church bulletin that members should vote for presidential candidate Huckabee. That action means that the FBI could then investigate and recommend cessation of tax-exempt status for that church (as it had earlier threatened a Pasadena Unitarian church).

The Baptist pastor got very upset and urged his congregation to vote for the death of officials in those organizations that had exposed the violation of the tax code by his church. As far as I know, though, no such “guilty” officials have died as a result of any such prayers. The power of that pastor thus seems quite limited. Either that, or control of his congregation (or control of God) lacks some punch.

Pursuit of power and control seem far more important even than quest of money — the extra money merely being a means to gain more power and control. Why otherwise do billionaires strive to get ever richer, when they already have more than they can spend in many lifetimes (which they won’t have)?

The Catholic, Mormon, and Islamic religions have hierarchical structures that lock in power and control over congregants. Martin Luther broke ranks in that regard in his insistence that worshipers should have direct access to God and not through intermediaries. (I remember once being astonished in downtown Tucson to see Native American Indian women step off the sidewalk into the gutter and bow down as two priests walked by — with the priests behaving as if they deserved such respect.)

Scientists, erroneously extolled for their presumed objectivity by our February philosopher speaker, often fall much into the same trap. Many university science faculty members now oversee mini-empires. To obtain grant funding and get their manuscripts into print, chief investigators must all too often cater to the “giants” in the field, lest antagonistic and anonymous referees pressure for denial of grant applications or manuscript acceptance.

Fortunately, I see little or none of that behavior in our Humanist groups. The Golden Rule serves us well, as exemplified by Paul Kurtz’s Affirmation of Humanism: See:

<http://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/pdf/HumanismPrinciples.pdf>.

We don’t have a hierarchy, are not beholden to authority, and have no creed. Our members include atheists, agnostics, Christians, non-believers (such as myself), and others. That doesn’t make us better than others — just more free (no “religious enslavement”), for which I am grateful.

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## HSSB Bookstore By Ray Stone

HSSB has a bookstore, open for business at our meetings. Books will be both new and used. If you have books of interest to Humanists, and the books are in good condition, please consider donating them to the store. Just bring them to the next meeting, or alternatively, contact Ray at 682-2123.

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If the answers to prayer are merely what God wills all along, then why pray?  
-- Dan Barker, *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist*

## Social Scene By Anne Rojas

The Chumash Casino is again advertising their Wednesday night Seafood Buffet. I believe the price is around \$24. No lobster on this one, however. Would anyone be interested in going? Carpooling? Let me know and we can pick a date.

Ming Dynasty, a perennial favorite, drew over 30 people. The Singles Table had about 10 persons, and most wanted a Singles Table offered often, or at every other dinner.

Therefore, our next Dining Out at Palapa on March 15<sup>th</sup> will **not** have a Singles Table.

I will begin taking reservations around March 5<sup>th</sup> for the March 15<sup>th</sup> Dining Out at Palapa. The same very few people are “no shows” and prevent inclusion by others who want to come. Please don't continue to do this on a non-emergency basis!

Any ideas for activities are welcomed!  
Another theatre night?

Don't forget the monthly Brunch, Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 10 a.m., at Cody's Café, 4898 Hollister Avenue, in the Turnpike Shopping Center, Goleta. No reservations necessary; just show up and join the group.

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## Judges Needed for Science Fair!

By Ray Stone

If you have a science background, consider applying to be one of three judges we need for the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual Santa Barbara County Science Fair. HSSB is presenting awards this year for projects that best demonstrate or explain Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

Judges will need to spend a few hours on Friday, April 18, examining the science projects submitted by Junior and Senior high school students. If you would like to apply, contact Ray Stone at [rstone@west.net](mailto:rstone@west.net) or at 682-2123. More information about the Science Fair can be found at: <http://www.sbsciencefair.org/>

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## Book Club By Marty Shapiro

Jennifer Michael Hecht is surely no stranger to us - she visited HSSB in 2005, to discuss *Doubt*, her monumental history of “The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson.” Now she's come forth with another spirited volume, *The Happiness Myth - The Historical Antidote to What Isn't Working Today*. At our next meeting, our Humanist Society Book Club will be discussing Jennifer Hecht's *The Happiness Myth*, a smart, clever, and happy-making book.

**When:** Wednesday, March 19, 1:30 p.m.  
**Where:** Art and Elaine Brody's house  
1125 Camino del Rio (off Cathedral Oaks, between Tucker's Grove and Highway 154)  
692-8898

[brodybiz@cox.net](mailto:brodybiz@cox.net)

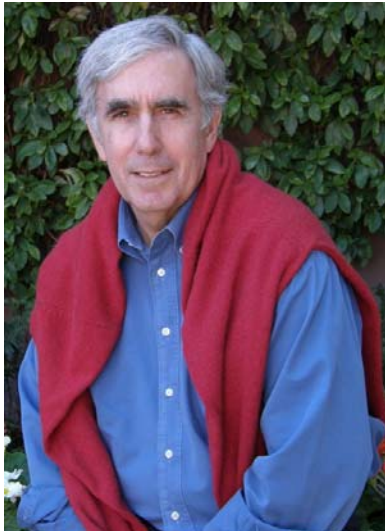
Faith can be a wonderful thing, but it is not the only wonderful thing. Doubt has been just as vibrant in its prescriptions for a good life, and just as passionate for the truth. By many standards, it has had tremendous success.

--Jennifer Michael Hecht, *Doubt, A History*

## February Meeting: Dr. David Krieger on Nuclear Weapons and the Human Future

By Jim Balter

Dr. David Krieger, co-founder and President since 1982 of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and author of earnest poetry about atomic bombs, war, and sometimes peace, has a powerful message that he shared with us: Peace is an imperative of the Nuclear Age. We need not only to control and abolish nuclear weapons because they ultimately would be capable of destroying cities, countries, civilization, even our species, but it's time to abolish war as an institution.



*Dr. David Krieger. Photo by Robert Bernstein.*

The Foundation, with a staff of eight people in Santa Barbara and one in Washington DC, was created with the idea that citizens need to make a difference, in the year that Samantha Smith sent a letter to Yuri Andropov asking what he would do to prevent war. The problems that still exist today demand citizen activism. "To be silent on issues of life and death, war and peace, is an abdication of responsibility."

The International Criminal Court, signed and ratified by over 100 countries, was created to embody the Nuremberg trial principles opposing crimes against humanity, trials that the U.S. agreed to on August 8, 1945, ironically between the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Bill Clinton signed on with the Court, but George W. Bush "unsigned," and the U.S. has coerced countries around the world into bilateral agreements that they will not send a U.S. citizen to the Court.

Dr. Krieger views the threat of nuclear weapons as "another inconvenient truth, as important, or more important, than the dangers of global warming." He questions whether we can control the destructive forces that we have created through our cleverness, and gives us a failing grade on our efforts so far.

Dr. Krieger's case against these weapons:

They are catastrophically dangerous: There are 26,000 nuclear weapons, 12,000 operationally deployed, and 3500 on hair-trigger alert in the U.S. and Russia. Seven other countries have these weapons, and dozens of others are nuclear-capable. If a nuclear weapon fell into the hands of an extremist group who exploded it in a major city, the death toll could exceed 1 million. The number of deaths due to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is over 200,000, and the average modern weapon is 10-30 times as powerful.

They are incompatible with global security: Nuclear deterrence requires rational decision making under circumstances of extreme stress, communication of intentions, believability, and reliable command and control.

*(See **Balter**, page 7)*

*(Balter, continued from page 6)*

It can fail from technological malfunction, accidental launch, miscalculation, etc., and there have been many close calls. We can't deter those who are suicidal, mad, or not locatable (e.g., Osama bin Laden).

They are enormously costly: The U.S. has spent \$7.5 trillion on nuclear weapons since the beginning of the nuclear age, and still spends \$50 billion per year, more than during the cold war.

They are illegal under international law: Nuclear weapons kill indiscriminately. In 1996, the International Court of Justice opined that any use would be illegal, and that there is an obligation to complete negotiations for nuclear disarmament under strict international control.

They are immoral: they are indiscriminate, they cause immense suffering, and nuclear testing has killed hundreds of thousands of innocents. Interfaith groups, the Dalai Lama, and the Pope have all made statements about the immorality of nuclear weapons.

What is needed is compliance with existing obligations under international law, the political will of nuclear weapons states, and an international treaty regime.

What you can do: Pay attention to what the candidates say and vote your conscience, join others who care, make your voice heard, and share the message. See <http://wagingpeace.org> for more information.

Note: The audio of the February meeting can be found on the HSSB website: <http://www.santabarbarahumanists.org/Calendar/Audio%20of%20meetings/Feb%2008%20Krieger.MP3>

## Event: Day of Action By Andrew Hankin

On Saturday, March 15th, Humanist Society members are invited to participate in a Day of Action in downtown Santa Barbara, to commemorate the upcoming fifth anniversary of the attack on Iraq.

Beginning at 10 a.m. in Vera Cruz Park, across from the Farmers' Market in the 200 block of East Cota Street, will be a "marketplace of ideas." Alongside other progressive groups will be Andrew Hankin and Ellie Lambrou, representing HSSB. Hopefully, more humanist, freethinker and atheist readers of this newsletter will be able to show up, to promote church/state separation and other issues important to our group. Please visit our table, to help us talk with members of the public about why it's important to be a member of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara.

At 12 noon, a march of thousands will take to the streets, heading from Vera Cruz Park, up State Street to the Santa Barbara Courthouse Sunken Garden. Around 1 p.m., participants will form a human peace symbol in the Garden, which will be filmed from the Courthouse tower. The theme of the march is "Five Years Too Many," to call for ending the U.S. occupation of Iraq and to take care of our soldiers as they return home.

There should be time after participating in these events to pick up a lunch, then head to Vista Del Monte for our 3 p.m. meeting, described on the front page of this issue of the Secular Circular.

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## Quotes from Dan Barker

The next time believers tell you that “separation of church and state” does not appear in our founding document, tell them to stop using the word “trinity.” The word “trinity” appears nowhere in the bible. Neither does Rapture, or Second Coming, or Original Sin.  
-- **Dan Barker**, *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist*

It is wrong for a secular government to promote prayer. We think the National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional. What if the president declared a National Day of Cursing God because He failed us on September 11? Americans would say, “You've overstepped your authority.” That's how we feel when he promotes prayer.

-- **Dan Barker**, in Ed Culhane, “Some Say Prayer Day Out of Bounds” (May 2, 2002: *Appleton [Wisconsin] Post-Crescent*), sidebar to “National Day of Prayer Offers a Pause for Reflection.”

Prayer never changes the laws of nature.

-- **Dan Barker**, in Ed Culhane, “Some Say Prayer Day Out of Bounds” (May 2, 2002: *Appleton [Wisconsin] Post-Crescent*), sidebar to “National Day of Prayer Offers a Pause for Reflection.”



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