



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

August, 2008

<http://www.sbhumanists.org>

The Evolutionary Origins of Religion: God In Our Genes? A Presentation by Jay D. Glass, Ph.D

By Andrew Hankin

Jay D. Glass, Ph.D. will talk about the basis of human behavior. He has published books with provocative titles and subject matter, including:

Soldiers of God: Primal Emotions and Religious Terrorists, examines the human motivations that can so bend a person's mind as to make them give up their lives and/or kill for their concept of God.

The Power of Faith: Mother Nature's Gift: Glass probes the theory that belief in God is a valuable tool for the human species' individual and collective survival, and thus part of Mother Nature's programmed design.

Jay Glass received a dual Ph.D in neurobiology and psychology from the Center for Brain Research at the University of Rochester, NY. From 1972 to 1981, he was on the faculty of the School of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, PA. In 1981, he obtained an EMBA and career-changed to venture capital, specializing in medical technology companies. Now retired, he writes about the evolutionary origins of human behavior, and works for wilderness and species conservation.



Jay Glass, Ph.D

The Evolutionary Origins of Religion

Saturday, August 16th, 3-5 p.m.

In the Patio Room at Vista Del Monte

3775 Modoc Road, Santa Barbara

Join us for socializing at 2:30 p.m.

Meeting starts promptly at 3 p.m.

Contact Information

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If it's the Psychic Network, why do they need a phone number?

--Robin Williams, American comedian

Membership Notes

By Mary Wilk

Humanist Society meetings are usually held on the 3rd 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

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.

Any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child, cannot be a true system.

-- Thomas Paine, Anglo-American political philosopher

News About Members

By Hope Smith and Andrew Hankin

We are pleased to welcome the following new member to our Society:

Maddie Smith
111 El Arco Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
682-6477

Please note the following change of address:

Helen Gordon
5358 Calle Real #2C
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
964-3734

Letter to the Editor: Hugh Smart, July 16th, *News-Press*, questioning the Supreme Justices' understanding of a "well-regulated" militia.

Carol Palladini and husband Bill were among sponsors of an event at Goleta's Stow House for the Environmental Defense Center.

We send all best wishes to May Smith, currently in Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, for a speedy recovery and return to Vista Del Monte. If you want to send her a card, you can address it to May at (Vista Del Monte) 3775 Modoc Rd, Apt. #120, Santa Barbara, CA, 93105. May's daughter Debbie collects mail for May and takes it to the hospital, so we can send cards addressed to May, and they will reach her via Debbie.

Syd Smith visited Russ Boggie at his new home in Villa Santa Barbara

On Saturday, July 5th, Andrew Hankin hosted a film screening in the downtown Public Library; Ellie Lambrou, Louis and

Josette Barsky and almost 100 others attended. The film was "Kill The Messenger," a 2006 French documentary showing the true story of FBI translator Sibel Edmonds, who was fired when she became a whistleblower trying to flush foreign spies out of that federal agency. In the years that she has been trying to get her job back, her information has been confirmed by US Senators on the Senate Intelligence Committee. It's likely that the FBI has been infiltrated by Israeli and Turkish spies, interfering with criminal investigations on behalf of US arms dealers. Also that nuclear detonators shipped to South Africa have illegally ended up in Pakistani atomic bombs.

On Sunday, July 13th, local talk radio host Nick Beeson mentioned HSSB several times, praising our educational events and reading Newsletter Editor Diane Krohn's selection of quotes about religion by the late George Carlin. Nick Beeson's radio program is broadcast on AM1340 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Sunday; the call-in number is 805-879-5478, and he's always keen to hear fresh voices, even those who disagree with him. Nick shares many Humanist ideals (for Universal Healthcare, against the Death Penalty and in favor of separation of Church and State), although he calls himself a Catholic.

Upcoming Events

By Dick Cousineau

For our meeting on September 20th, Fred Glynn, a biblical scholar, who comes highly recommended by the Bay Area Atheists, will speak on The Human Side of the Bible. His talk will consider the historical search for those persons who actually wrote down their impressions and interpretations of the events of the Middle East 2600 years ago.

Presidential Ponderings By Roger Schlueter

Those of you who are on the HSSB e-mail list have already received this notice but I want to repeat it here to make sure everyone is informed. My electronic notice was:

My editorial in the July, 2008 *Secular Circular* thanking departing Board members for their service to the Society made the grievous mistake of omitting Richard Martin from my comments. This was an serious error on my part for which I offer no excuse other than simple oversight.

Richard was our Treasurer for two years and did an excellent job of maintaining the Society's books and keeping the Board fully apprised of all financial information related to our operations. Richard served the Society well during his tenure and worked with his successor to make a smooth transition to the new Board.

By this message, I wish to fully acknowledge Richard's contribution to the Society and to publicly apologize to him for my careless omission.

Looking forward, there are at least two events in the next several months that will be of interest to all of us. One, of course, is the November election highlighted by the enormously important presidential contest. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation the HSSB cannot and will not take a position on this race. That said, I do think some observations on the race from a First Amendment perspective are in order.

While both the Republican and Democratic primaries have had an inappropriate religious component, the nadir came in September, 2007, when Tim Russert asked

of the then Democratic candidates, "What is your favorite Bible verse?"

Of course, every candidate offered some Christian platitude. Oh, how I wished one of the candidates would have responded, "Mr. Russert, that question violates one of the core concepts of the United States Constitution that prohibits a religious test for qualification for office. You should be ashamed for asking that question!"

On the other side of the aisle, Senator McCain's campaign has also been plagued by religious controversy. Rev. Hagee was first a courted supporter, but then was dumped when his extremist views became evident. Dobson first said he could not support McCain based on fundamental religious principles, but lately has endorsed McCain. Apparently religious principles have an expiration date.

What's a Humanist to do? First and foremost, let's be honest. Our passion for the separation of church and state is not going to be a significant election issue. We'll have to make our candidate selection on other matters. But after the election, no matter who wins, we must keep up our advocacy for the First Amendment.

The other upcoming event? Darwin's birthday celebration. In contrast to the national election, this will be a local event that all of us can enjoy. I'll have more to say in the months ahead.

There must be no barriers to freedom of inquiry. There is no place for dogma in science. The scientist is free, and must be free to ask any question, to doubt any assertion, to seek for any evidence, to correct any errors.

--J. Robert Oppenheimer, *American physicist*

Social Scene

By Anne Rojas

We had a wonderful turnout for Walter Kohn's presentation. He and his charming wife, Mara, greatly enjoyed the interaction at the Ming Dynasty dinner afterward. I believe everyone who wanted to sit at the table with the Kohns was able to do so.

My feelers for the theatre evening of *Twelve Angry Men* produced very little interest, and I believe I did not plan the outing far enough ahead of time. I will be looking for a local production and give you more time to let me know of your interest.

I would greatly appreciate any suggestions for a specific play and a possible dining venue prior to curtain time. Does anyone have ideas or suggestions?

We have not selected the Dining Out location for the August meeting at this time. I will be e-mailing you with that information. Your help, suggestions, and comments are always welcome.

Is there any interest in the Wednesday Lobster Buffet at the Chumash Casino?

You see, one thing is, I can live with doubt and uncertainty and not knowing. I think it's much more interesting to live not knowing than to have answers which might be wrong. I have approximate answers and possible beliefs and different degrees of uncertainty about different things, but I am not absolutely sure of anything and there are many things I don't know anything about, such as whether it means anything to ask why we're here.

--Richard Feynman, Nobel Prize-winning American physicist

HSSB Book Club

By Marty Shapiro

Have you ever read Ken Smith's notorious *Ken's Guide to the Bible*? It's a short but sweet romp through the Bible, with all of its contradictions and incredibilities, and it's our Humanist Book Club light reading selection for August.

Here are a couple of knowledgeable but succinct reviews of the book, from Amazon.com:

This book is an attempt to read the Bible as it is. It does not try to interpret or skew the actual description in the Bible by historical understanding of the times, and takes everything at its face value (fundamentalism at its extreme, you might say). And it's fun! Makes you want to actually look into the Book. Hey, no disrespect or anything, but who in the history of Christianity has ever made Bible reading into something fun? Not Martin Luther, it's Ken.

Ever wanted to get the short, short version of the Bible in a highly humorous fashion? Then this is the book for you. Easily readable in a day, this book gives a brief synopsis of all the books in the bible and then proceeds to highlight those passages they probably didn't assign you in Sunday school....The best sections are the overviews of the prophets, virtually all of whom are exposed as the insufferable doom-sayers that they were

When: Wednesday, August 20th, 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

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I'm no Bible scholar, but I AM the average guy the Bible was written to reach. If it looks immoral or completely wacko to me, then what is it doing in my holy book?

--Ken Smith, author of *Ken's Guide to the Bible*

July Meeting: The Power of the Sun

By Jim Balter

In July, our radiant activities director Anne Rojas (who has a solar panel installation at her home) gave a glowing introduction to her neighbors, the brilliant Nobel Prize laureate Dr. Walter Kohn (founder of the Kavli Institute of Theoretical Physics housed in Kohn Hall at UCSB) and his warm wife Mara.

Dr. Kohn told us that in 1905, what physicists call the “Miracle Year,” the scintillating Albert Einstein published three epoch-making papers, which dealt with: 1) relativity, 2) the dual wave/particle nature of light, and 3) statistical mechanics. Dr. Kohn had been thinking about how to commemorate that second paper for its centennial when, on one of his regular bus rides to UCSB, he met a fellow who was writing a book on photovoltaics -- the conversion of light/photons into electricity. The two of them pooled their interests, resulting in the film “The Power of the Sun,” narrated by Santa Barbara luminary and Monty Python star John Cleese. This fine film covers, as Dr. Kohn said, “various aspects, historical, scientific, business, and whatnot” of solar energy, as well as touching on wind power. His hope is that the film will spark interest, personal action, and pressure on the government in regard to the deep energy crisis “that scientists foresaw and pointed out a long time ago,” but on which vested interests have blocked action, and in which the current administration is “in denial.” (Ironically, George W. Bush used the phrase “addicted to oil” in his 2006 State of the Union speech, which he apparently got from the film. PBS had demanded that the phrase be deleted because it might

alarm viewers. Dr. Kohn refused to do so, and bypassed national PBS distribution; instead, the unaltered film was distributed to 77 local affiliates.)

After the film came our usual Q&A session. The first questions from our bright audience were about the commercial potential of quantum-dot photovoltaics and superconducting technology. Dr. Kohn explained that the former is scientifically a very interesting phenomenon where one photon generates up to seven electron-hole pairs, but the chance of this occurring is minuscule, and we're very far any commercial application. Superconductors, on the other hand, are a serious possibility for storage, because current can theoretically be maintained in a superconducting ring for years and then tapped ... but the implementation is very difficult.



Left to Right:

Roger Schlueter (HSSB President), Dr. Walter Kohn, Anne Rojas (HSSB Activities Director), and Dick Cousineau (HSSB Programs Chair), at our July meeting. Photo by Marian Shapiro.

On the more prosaic question of the cost of converting a home to use solar energy, Dr. Kohn told us that he and his wife converted their 3-4 bedroom house about 3 years ago, for \$13,700 total, supplying on average 90% of their electricity, with the cells guaranteed for 25 years.

(See **Balter**, page 7)

(Balter, continued from page 6)

In regard to Al Gore's call to switch to green electricity in 10 years, Dr. Kohn said that it could be achievable with a new administration that takes an attitude toward photovoltaics like that of China, which has become number one in production in less than a decade.

Thank you, Dr. Kohn, for shining so much light on an important subject.

If you want to order a DVD of the film, go to: <http://powerofthesun.ucsb.edu/>

Ongoing Summer Events By Andrew Hankin

Brooks Institute hosts award-winning photographs by Joe Melchione. "Year of Rebellion, The 1970 Isla Vista Riots" features pictures taken in Santa Barbara and Isla Vista during an unprecedented time of social unrest and outcry. The images record history through the lens of political activism, letting the viewer experience first-hand the raw emotion, idealism, passion and even empathy that characterized an explosive point in Southern California's history. The photograph exhibit is open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays, and 10 a.m. to 9 pm. weekends, at 27 East Cota Street, downtown Santa Barbara, until September 12th, 2008.

<http://www.joemelchionephoto.com/index.htm>

Free summer music concerts in Chase Palm Park continue on the Santa Barbara Waterfront, between Garden Street and Calle Cesar Chavez, 6-8:30 p.m. Thursdays. August 14th: Lisa Haley & The Zydekats play spicy Southern Roots intertwined with West Coast Rock.

August 21st: Raymond Michael (a Moorpark schoolteacher) dons outfits made by Elvis Presley's costumer and puts his opera-

trained vocal skills to work in a glorious tribute to The King Of Rock-n-Roll.

Web Articles of Interest By Ray Stone

Here is an article that might be of interest to our members:

Opponents of Evolution Adopting a New Strategy site:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/us/04evolution.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

Here's another that Richard Martin sent around a little while ago:

Title: Darwinmania!

Site:<http://judson.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/06/17/darwinmania/index.html?scp=1&sq=olivia%20judson&st=cse>

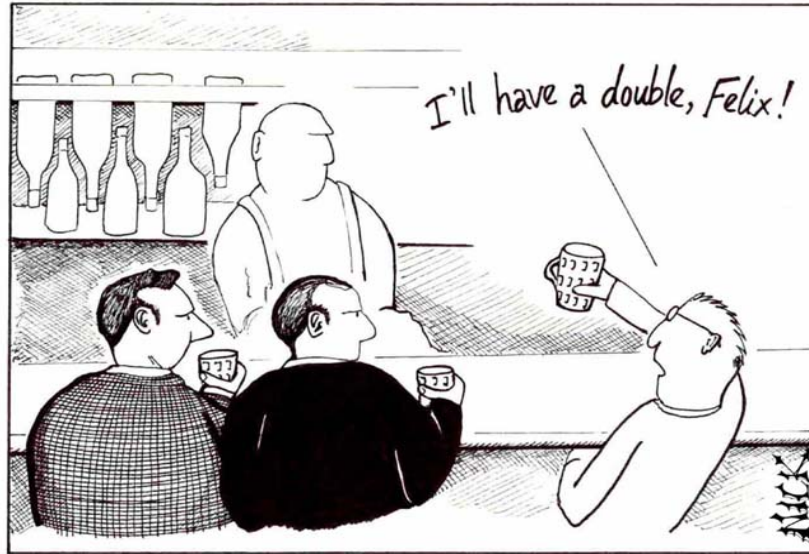
The Lying Boys

A clergyman was walking down the street when he came upon a group of a few boys about 10 years of age, surrounding a dog. Concerned that the boys were hurting the animal, he went over and asked them what they were doing.

One of the boys replied, "This dog is an old neighborhood stray. We take him home with us sometimes, but only one of us can take him home. So we're having a contest: whichever one of us tells the biggest lie can take him home today."

Of course, the Reverend was shocked. "You boys shouldn't be having a contest telling lies!" he exclaimed. He then launched into a 10-minute sermon against lying, beginning, "Don't you boys know it's a sin to lie?" and ending with, "Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie."

There was complete silence for about a minute. As the Reverend smiled with satisfaction that he'd gotten through to them, the smallest boy gave a deep sigh. "All right," he said, "give him the dog."



Cambridge, 1953. Shortly before discovering the structure of DNA, Watson and Crick, depressed by their lack of progress, visit the local pub.



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Santa Barbara
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