

# The Bugle - Tattler\*

\* See Page 4

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Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara  
February, 2004

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## Humanist Happiness Harangue

**A**t our January meeting, we were enlightened and entertained by SBCC Philosophy Chair Joe White's talk on "Happiness."



**Joe White exudes the very topic he was speaking about.**

He used Aristotle as a basis for his definition of happiness and contrasted this with the idea of Disneyland as the "Happiest Place on Earth" and other uses of "Happiness." While Aristotle was his starting point for defining happiness, his talk ranged over a wide variety of other possibilities.

As a child, White remembers wanting to fly his kite to the moon and wanting to dig a hole so deep he could befriend a new Chinese playmate.

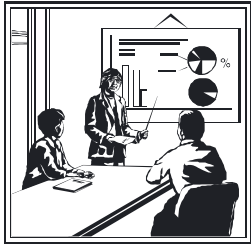
He likens this sort of wishful thinking to the religious person's view that happiness will come in the afterlife. That view is comical to him as he asks, "What do you do in Paradise for eternity... without a body?" Of course, the idea of suicide bombers hoping for 72 virgins after death leads to less than comical results, he points out.

White explained that happiness must be active. It comes from citizen involvement. It must be rational. And it must come from a sense of accomplishment. Winning the lottery rarely brings any such happiness. Princess Diana had fame, fortune and beauty, yet lacked a sense of control over her life and was not happy.

White asserted that happiness is uniquely human. His kids' turtles are always terrified at his entrance into the room and lack any sense of past or future. Only a rational creature can truly know happiness.

For example, the JPL people involved in the recent Mars landing showed true happiness at the success of the mission. They had worked long and hard and had something to show for it.

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**Humanist Society of Santa Barbara****Members of the Board**

and  
Chairs

**2003 - 2004**

Chairman: Richard Cousineau  
687-2371                      dkcggeo@earthlink.net

Secretary: James Kimberly  
969-9686                      dr.doboy@cox.net

Treasurer: Ron Kronenberg  
967-0883                      seelberg@cox.net

Publicity: Marian Shapiro  
968-0478                      marianshapiro@cox.net

Programs: Bea Duncan  
964-3109                      bfarwellduncan@cox.net

Social: Anne Rojas  
564-6086                      annehrojas@cox.net

Membership: Mary Wilk  
967-3045                      mwilk@cox.net

Editor: Roger Schlueter  
962-6316                      rogers@west.net

Web Master: Colin Gordon  
682-0545                      colin3@juno.com

At Large: Art Brody  
692-8898                      brodybiz@silcom.com

At Large: Don Young  
898-7000                      donandjuan@aol.com

Archivist: Hope Smith  
967-5143                      hsmith1923@aol.com

Board Meetings are scheduled on the Monday preceding the Saturday general monthly meeting of the Society and are usually held at the home of one of the Board members. All HSSB members are welcome at these meetings - contact any Board member for more information.

**Membership Memo**

by Mary Wilk

**H**umanist Society meetings are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month 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.

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**I**f you would like a copy of this newsletter mailed to a friend or someone you believe would be interested in our Society, please send their contact information to PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130. Alternatively, all of our newsletters are available at [www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org](http://www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org)

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**I**f you are not already a member, we encourage you to join our society. Annual membership dues are \$36.00 for single, \$60.00 for a couple and \$100.00 for a sponsor. Members receive the monthly newsletter and the option of attending meetings, outings and special events sponsored by the society. Those unable to join may subscribe to our newsletter at an annual fee of \$20.00, but are not entitled to other membership privileges. When attending our meetings a donation of \$2.00 from members and \$5.00 from non-members is appreciated. First or second-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis. For more information contact Mary Wilk or any member of our Society.

## Special Message from the Chairman

by Richard Cousineau, Chairman

Two important Board member and Committee Chair changes have occurred along with the arrival of 2004. First and foremost, our Chair, Bob Perry has resigned due to health reasons. We are sorry to lose Bob's heart-felt efforts as Chairman and hope that he will continue to be involved with the Society as his health permits.

As a result of Bob's resignation, much of the January Board meeting was devoted to electing a new Chairman. Dick Cousineau was selected as the new Chairman, pro tem and will serve in this position until the next Board election in June.

See Dick's first "Chairman's Chatter" column on page 4 for his own commentary on this change.

Recognizing that we cannot expect Dick to do everything, the Board elected Roger Schlueter as the temporary replacement Newsletter Editor, again until the next Board election in June. See Roger's Editorial on page 5 for his thoughts on this change.

[White, from Page 1]

White opined that Libertarians are like spiders, seeking their solitary fortunes. Conversely, the Greeks were like bees, seeing their fortunes as a collective and interconnected effort.

The Good Life for Greeks had a mix of good and bad. It was the sum total at the end of life that mattered.

Over a wide range of incomes, people "come up 20% short". They want more than they have rather than enjoying what they have. Happiness comes from enjoying and appreciating what one has.

He closed the formal part of his talk by saying that happiness involves doing the right thing at the right time and being good at what you are... and having good luck!

During the Q&A session, White agreed with Robert Bernstein's suggestion that one does not have to experience the bad to know what feels good. He said knowledge of homelessness, not the experience of homelessness, is sufficient to appreciate having a home.



*Ed. Note:* Many thanks to Robert Bernstein for the photo and substantial contribution to this article. More pictures are available at:

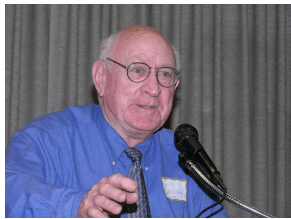
[www.swt.org/events/whitehappy](http://www.swt.org/events/whitehappy)

Our February meeting will feature The Rev. Ken Collier, Minister of the Santa Barbara Unitarian Universalist Society, will give us "A Unitarian Universalist Take on Humanism." And vice versa - Roger Schlueter will respond for the Humanist Society.

## Chairman's Chat

by Dick Cousineau

**W**hat an honor to be chosen by the Board to be the Chairman of this Society to complete the term of Bob Perry who needed to resign for medical reasons. I assure you of my best efforts to promote and lead this group for the next six months. I am constantly thankful for the talent, depth of intellect, and interest of our members to keep this society vibrant and growing.



At the invitation of Dudley and Bea Duncan we were able to hear and experience a truly fine and inspirational talk by Professor Joe White, Chair of the

Philosophy Department at SBCC, at our last meeting.

Over the past few years the Program Committee (Bea and Company) has worked very hard to bring us fine speakers from throughout the Country, State, and City; a veritable litany of excellent presenters (oh, okay there were a few duds along the way, but very few). There are many other fine speakers in the wings, awaiting their opportunity to talk, inform, and challenge us. I encourage all of you who know of a possible guest speaker to contact me (687-2371). Bea and I will attempt to contact and invite her/him to address our group.

On another topic of interest to me is Critical Thinking. Often times I hear that Critical Thinkers are negative, cynical, and nitpicking nerds, but in reality their approach to unusual claims and complicated statistics is one of thoughtfulness and rationality. It is important to avoid the extremes of naivety and outright

rejection. I hope to understand the definitions, measurements, and examples of the claims as rationally and reasonably as possible and to look at statistics with the knowledge that they are in themselves choices by people to define categories broadly or narrowly. Obviously, the Critical Thinker need not investigate the origin of each and every statistic, (that is what honest statisticians are for), rather it means not being too incredulous nor too accepting of every statistic at face value, but to reserve judgment until the facts are presented. As a sideline, I am enjoying subscribing to [www.FactCheck.org](http://www.FactCheck.org), an apparently unbiased and balanced report of the "facts" and "claims" made in most of the important political speeches of our day.

More on this subject in later columns.



## \*Newsletter Naming Contest

by Roger Schlueter, Editor

**I**t was a dark and stormy night..." Remember that line? It was the winning entry in a contest held long ago to write the worst possible opening paragraph for a novel. Background info is at

[www.bulwer-lytton.com](http://www.bulwer-lytton.com)

As the new Newsletter Editor, I would like to give a name to our monthly publication but I want to involve everyone in deciding what that name ought to be. But we have to begin somewhere so I picked the worst possible name I could think of for this, my initial issue as Editor. Could anything be worse than the "Bugle-Tattler?" Well, OK, maybe the "Religious Rapper" but don't get me started.

So now is your chance to be a part of HSSB history by coming up with the best name for our newsletter. Please send your suggestions to me by phone, e-mail or whatever. The initial judging will be done by, er, me! But the Board will have the final say-so. So get your entries to me by Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup> (your lucky day, right?).

But wait, there's more. The person who submits the winning entry will get their dinner paid for after the February general meeting. And we'll even throw in a dinner for any guest the winner might chose.

## The Exercised\* Editor

by Roger Schlueter

Until his death, our founder, Keith Bailey, admirably fulfilled the role of newsletter editor. After Keith's death, Dick Cousineau volunteered without hesitation to take his place. Under their "care and feeding" this newsletter has been a major communications forum for our Society and, in my opinion, they consistently produced one of the highest quality newsletters within the Humanist community. Thanks Keith (posthumously) and Dick.

I hope to continue this tradition while, at the same time, make changes to the format, content and distribution that will make this newsletter even better. As you see these changes, please let me know what you like and don't like, other changes you would like to see, etc.

In addition, Hope Smith, our able archivist informs me that the newsletter editor has thrown in his "two-bits" since 1997 so I hope to continue that tradition on a space-available basis in the future.

One interest that our current Chairman, Dick, and I share is loosely named "critical thinking." Humanism is often seen as primarily (or, wrongly, as exclusively) a rational alternative to religion. It is, indeed, that, but it is much more and unfortunately some of its other dimensions don't get their due. Thus, I hope to invigorate the "Critical Thinking" column that Dick initiated in last month's newsletter.

Speaking of invigorating, putting together this first issue under my editorship has invigorated my respect for the work Dick has done to publish out newsletter each month. Please have some patience with the layout and distribution as I learn the "ropes."

Finally, I should repeat the obvious: your voice is always welcome. Add your \$0.02! For example, last month's edition featured letters from Verdun Trione and Dudley Duncan which, in my opinion added substantial content to that edition.

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\* A note about the name of my column: The word "exercised" is intended to mean, "To occupy the attention and effort of; to task; to tax, especially in a painful or vexatious manner." (Definition 3 at [Dictionary.com](http://Dictionary.com)) I am often painfully taxed by politics, religion, the paranormal, etc. The "Exercised Editor" will rail against this pain.



## Redd's Rants

by Loretta Redd

As the Presidential election of 2004 draws closer, issues dividing the country between culture and catechism are likely to grow more pronounced. Last year, a poll by

the Pew Charitable Trust discovered that religious practice is one of the strongest predictors of political party affiliation.

Attitudes predicting a Bush re-election followed the frequency of church attendance. Those who attended church at least once a week had Bush winning by a majority of 26 percent. Those attending once or twice a year predicted a democratic future President by a narrow margin, while those who attended "rarely or never" preferred a democratic candidate by 24 percent.

Sociologist Alan Wolfe's book, "The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith," includes a statement the Religious Right must find appalling: "Talk of hell, damnation and even sin has been replaced by a nonjudgmental language of understanding and empathy."

But as conservative columnist, Cal Thomas, recently noted, "Such contented worldliness is the great enemy of the church." With the coming election, the battle between faith and culture is likely to grow.

Karl Rove, reelection strategist for George W. Bush, knows the future of this Presidency lies in the motivation of the electorate. Between his brilliant organization of the evangelicals and the Presidents' promise of federal tax dollars to fund church programs, Rove has secured a powerhouse of support.

In Bush's State of the Union address, he gave more than a nod to his ultra-religious base by denigrating recent court decisions, and challenging the audacity of judges to uphold the separation of church and state.

Bob Perry tells of author Paul Kurtz' assessment of humanism as, "the role of science and reason

in the search for truth, individual freedom, democracy, and the separation of church and state."

The 2004 elections have enormous potential consequences, far beyond shifting dollars from governmental to religious oversight, or even ending a woman's reproductive rights. It is a battle between the 'freedom of self-determination' and the constraints of the 'self-righteous.'

Humanists have the capacity to comprehend the difference between the valuable lessons encompassed within basic Christian philosophy, and its damaging consequences when used for political power and control. Or as George Bernard Shaw replied when asked what he thought of Christianity, "It's a great idea, too bad it never caught on."

It's your future, and your country. Every vote counts.



## Web Site of the Month by Colin Gordon

I don't know how I missed this one for so long, but better late than never. The Council for Secular Humanism Web Site <http://www.secularhumanism.org/> provides timely information concerning the activities of the Council for Secular Humanism, which describes itself as "... North America's leading organization for non-religious people. A not-for-profit educational association, the Council supports a wide range of activities to meet the needs of people who find meaning and value in life without looking to a god. Its activities range from magazine publishing to campaigning on ethical issues, from conferences to support

networks, from educational courses to conducting secular ceremonies, from local groups to international development. Officers of the Council for Secular Humanism include Paul Kurtz (Chairman).”

It is perhaps best known for Free Inquiry, the magazine that celebrates reason and humanity with many thoughtful articles of interest. This months edition includes *The Free Market with a Human Face* by Paul Kurtz, *Less than Miraculous* by Christopher Hitchens and *Atheism is not a Civil Rights Issue* by Grothe and Dacey. You can also browse back issues way back to 1995, so there is plenty of reading available.

Many articles in the Secular Humanism Online Library appear in no other national or international forum. You can only find them on the Council for Secular Humanism Web Site. Their list of links to related sites is impressive and will take you anywhere you want to go in the world of Secular Humanism.



## Social Scene

by Anne Rojas

**W**e had a delightful evening at the Biltmore Buffet. About 11 in attendance. The usual problems with the individual checks, but one day we'll have them trained! The ambience and cuisine make up for the hassle.....You are all welcome to join us in March. Check with John and Pat Coppejeans for reservations.

Last month's Dining Out at Yen Ching had 24 diners! That's the good news. The bad news is that the owner (whom I have know for several

years) told me that 2 persons left without paying! She showed me the tickets confirming the number of dinners served. She graciously would not accept my money to make up for the two dinners. Please; if you forgot and left without paying, contact me so I may pay her! This will be confidential – hey, we all forget lot's of stuff!



Dining out this month will be at Sizzler. Convenient to the program and the food has been good lately. Hope many of you will come.

It appears that the last Sunday of the month Brunch has met it's demise. Only 3 persons showed up the last Sunday at Hola Amigos. We will temporarily suspend this activity.

A few of you have contacted me regarding the **atheist convention** in San Diego on Easter weekend. Since I need to arrange the van pick up at the train depot, please let me know if you **are coming**. [You can get details at the American Atheists website](#). The hotel is beautiful and only \$99 nightly! Don't miss out on this mini-vacation.

You are always welcome with your suggestions! A special thanks to Parkie and Dianne Freeman for arranging the refreshments. If you would like to volunteer to bring drinks or cookies, please contact one of them. Your turn is about one time every 2 years!! (The same few people bring the goodies all of the time.....) Please do your part!