

THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

January, 2005

Happy New Year!

Meeting Plans

By Marian Shapiro

Our January meeting will feature Howard Zisser, M.D, Director of Clinical Research at Sansum Diabetes Research Institute, who will speak on "Diabetes Prevention and Syndrome X." Syndrome X is a metabolic disorder affecting 1 out of every 3 adult Americans. It is associated with insulin resistance, obesity, high blood pressure and elevation in lipid levels. People with this disorder are at high risk for developing Type 2 Diabetes. Zisser will point out the importance of identifying people with this disorder in order to prevent diabetes and its complications.

Dr. Zisser directs clinical research trials on new treatments for diabetes. He received his doctor of medicine degree from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and completed his residency in internal medicine at Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital. He has also worked as an internist for Santa Barbara County Public Health Department. Sansum Diabetes Research Institute is dedicated to increasing knowledge in the prevention, treatment, and cure of disease, especially diabetes.

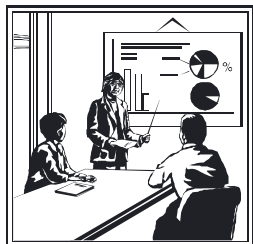
We will be trying out a new meeting format at our January meeting. The change is being made in response to comments from members who wish for a greater feeling of community

within the group. Some have commented that we rarely get to know others in the group because most of the time we look straight ahead listening to a speaker and rarely talk to those around us. In response to this desire for increased interaction, the board has decided to schedule some time to discuss issues in smaller groups, where people will be able to share ideas, and get to know others in the group a bit better.

We are excited about adding this new small discussion feature at the end of our meetings with food and drink as an enticement to stay and get to know others.

How will it work, you ask? Instead of having a cookie break before the Question & Answer segment of our program, we will have hors d'oeuvres with wine or cider served in smaller discussion groups after the Q&A. After the close of the small discussion groups, we won't go out for dinner after the program because we will just have eaten. This may be a way to involve more members in a more interactive way.

The board welcomes your feedback and hopes to hear from many members after we've tried the new format for a couple of meetings. If people like it, we'll keep it going. If not, we'll try something else.

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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. HSSB members are welcome to attend these meetings. Contact any board member for more information.

Membership Notes
by Mary Wilk

Humanist Society meetings are 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.

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

William Berry
7153 Emily Lane
Goleta, CA 93117
567-8134
wjberry@cox.net

Donald Gillies
623 Las Perlas Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93111
964-4947
dgillies8@cox.net

Ronald Holzwarth
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Goleta, CA 93117
967-5278
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Corinne Gallagher
1116 Calle del Sol
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
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Stephen Heller
6721 Sabado Tarde Rd.
Goleta, CA 93117
968-2602
scheller@verizon.net

John Warnock
599 Mountain Drive
Santa Barbara, CA 93103
965-4235
johnwarnock@cox.net

and we are happy to greet our returning members:

Dorothy Pearce
750 El Bosque Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
969-5344

Mariette Risley
1428 Cliff Drive Apt. #1
Santa Barbara, CA 93109
965-3866

and please note the following address correction:

Lynn Rose Ransom
1240-8 Franciscan Court,
Carpinteria, CA 93103
684-4214
lynnrose3@verizon.net

Meet the Founders

(Ed. Note: This event may be of interest to Humanists. The information came from a press release sent via e-mail.)

A virtual history experience will be held at the historic Castle Green in Pasadena. "Meet the Founders," the featured program, will transport attendees to an 18th century town hall meeting featuring Thomas Paine,

Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson (actor/historians). All those interested in democracy will have a chance to ask the founders for their perspectives on America today.

This celebration commemorates the 268th birthday of Thomas Paine and begins with a reception in the Grande Hall where costumed maids and yeoman will serve pub grub and libations. It will be held on January 29th at 7pm.

Getting to Know You: Marty Shapiro

By Diane Krohn

Most of you probably know Marian Shapiro, our Publicity Chair, but the other half of the Shapiro team, Marty, is an equally warm and engaging person. Here's his story (well, the condensed version)...

Marty was born in the Bronx and grew up in New York City. Although he was raised in a traditional Orthodox Jewish household, the various cultures and ideas found in New York City influenced his thinking. He attended the City College of New York (CCNY) which back in the 30's was called "The Little Red Schoolhouse" because of its socialist leanings. As Marty was growing up, he came to the realization that religions had many contradictions and arbitrary rules. These realizations, along with the liberal and socialist influences of the city and the college, resulted in him becoming a "card-carrying atheist" by the time he graduated from college.

Marty started out as an engineering student for the first two years at CCNY, then he got involved in folk music, and from there, started focusing on more of the liberal arts. He received his degree in Music, and then attended graduate school at UC Berkeley, receiving a degree in Music History. He and Marian met while at Berkeley. From there, they moved to Santa Barbara and lived here for four years while Marty was in the doctoral program for Music History at UCSB.

After getting his doctorate, Marty decided that a job was the next thing in order and was hired at Fort Hays University in Hays, Kansas. He taught music and he and Marian

raised their two children there. He was a "closet atheist" during their time spent in Kansas, with a few "aware" friends that were of like thinking, but otherwise kept a low profile. Marty says that the questions about religion in Kansas were not "Are you religious?" but "What church do you go to?" He could duck the questions by stating that he was Jewish, and because there was no temple in Hays, he could also avoid any questions about *when* he attended services.



Although Hays was a good place to raise a family, it was not a great place to retire. After teaching music for 31 years, Marty and Marian returned to Santa Barbara in 2002. They always knew that they wanted to return here, so they had planned ahead and saved well for that Santa Barbara house. Marty loves films (and musical events, of course!) and he ushers for the Santa Barbara Film Festival and various concerts. He is also a "visitor-host" for the Historical Society Museum, and he mentors a 9-year-old boy once a week. Marty is very happy to be back in Santa Barbara, and especially back in a community where one doesn't need to dodge the "church" question (at least too much).

While Marty was still living in Hays, he kept abreast of various humanist and atheist organizations by looking at their newsletters. During a visit to Santa Barbara, he contacted Dick Cosineau and met with him for lunch. Who wouldn't want to be a member of an organization in which Dick was involved? Marty and Marian joined the HSSB in 2002, when they moved back to Santa Barbara.

Chairman's Chat

By Dick Cousineau

Over the past month, I have been reading Walter Isaacson's biography of Benjamin Franklin. This book has further opened my eyes regarding this major force in the building of our country's democratic values in the years just prior to the revolution. Franklin's consistent goal of persuasion through rational discourse and critical thinking, his unbounded enthusiasm for the common man, and his constant inquiry into the nature of things makes him a model of the self-educated, bootstrap lifting, deeply ethical person of the age of enlightenment. From him came the



prediction that the government "is likely to be well administered for a course of years and can only end in despotism as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic government, being incapable of any other."

In the midst of this effort, I came across Perry Treadwell's commentary in the December 16th edition of the *News-Press*. As he so aptly points out, it took over 200 years for the government to become so corrupt that a despot is needed by the people. Major issues such as the obscene and endless illegal war,

the death of thousands of our young people, the failing economy, the proposals for constitutional amendments to limit rights of citizens, and the worsening environment are practically ignored for the issues of security, the redefinition of terrorism, tax cuts for the wealthy, Michael Jackson, and the Wal-Mart mentality. The so-called Bible Belt of our country (with its worst educational systems, most primitive religion, highest divorce rate, best football teams, most time-spent-watching TV, and overall poorest health) has taken ascendancy as the "moral fiber" of this nation. Gad, what a realization!

Please read Mr. Treadwell's Commentary if you can, for in it he says "The life of the Constitution is being smothered by the theocrats and plutocrats" and the founders' fears have come to fruition. We have watched this corruption occur in our lifetimes. When over 75 percent of the key lobbyists in Washington are former congressional and/or governmental retirees, and when the sitting members of Congress condone such activity because they will also be doing it soon, how can the average citizens, the average critical-thinking humanist like you and me, have any remaining faith in government?

I am tempted to follow Voltaire's advice about one's own garden, but I get infuriated with our political system, not because one party or the other is in power, but rather because of the drift toward an unenlightened electorate that has been fed bread and circuses (cheap goods and the NFL) as the good and acceptable life style. I will stand to protest the redefinition of our values, the growing ignorance of our nation, the mounting threat of the "know-nothings," and the shouting and fear mongering of the religious bigots. Stand with me to hold back the deluge.

Web Site of the Month

By Colin Gordon

Founded in 1999 as an educational non-profit organization, the Institute for Humanist Studies (IHS) runs the web-site:

www.humaniststudies.org

The IHS is a think tank whose mission is to promote greater public awareness, understanding, and support for Humanism. As a non-membership organization, it is able to complement other Humanist organizations rather than competing for members and subscribers. It is a Specialist Member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), a worldwide humanist federation.

The president, Larry Jones, is a vice-president of the IHEU and a Humanist representative at the United Nations. The Executive Director, Matt Cherry, represents IHEU and the humanist perspective at the United Nations where he is president (and first elected humanist officer) of its Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

With credentials like those we just have to explore this site. Right on the home page is a link to "Humanist Network News - Current Headlines" that has a good selection of subjects including a piece on Newdow's "Under God" lawsuit and a fascinating item about Michael R. Harvey of Atheists of Florida concerning an invocation he was invited to lead before a meeting of the Common Council of Tampa. Three out of the six council members walked out rather than listen to an invocation from someone who does not believe in God. Before Harvey could even begin, a councilman motioned to cancel the invocation or invite someone else to deliver it. And there is much more.

Happy browsing for 2005.

Social Scene

by Anne H. Rojas

Happy New Year to All Humanists!

We finished 2004 with a very successful Winter Solstice Party at the Sizzler. The musical group of Two Hearts provided wonderful entertainment and was enjoyed by everyone. Don Young was the winner of the Grand Prize which was a gift certificate to Staples. Thank you to Diane Freeman, Suzanne Spillman and Jim Balter for helping with the check-in desk.

When you bring guests who are of like mind, but can't decide whether to join or not, please remind them of the old adage, "There is strength in numbers."

For example, the first question possible speakers often ask is: "How many people are in your organization and how many do you think would attend my program?" Naturally we can attract the better speakers if we show ourselves to be a solid organization with a healthy membership.

I was visited by an old member, Robert Michael who has moved to Colorado but expects to spend several months a year back in SB. He now has e-mail so can be kept current on our activities. Should anyone want to contact him, his address is:

Robertmchl@aol.com

I am looking forward to a wonderful 2005 for the HSSB.

Program Notes

By Nancy Wahl

Mark your calendars with these interesting and provocative programs scheduled for the next several months.

Date: February 19

Speakers: Richard Appelbaum
Nelson Lichtenstein

Topic: Do Corporations Rule the World?

Location: Vista Del Monte

UCSB professors Richard Appelbaum and Nelson Lichtenstein will discuss how corporations now have unprecedented power to break trade unions, globe-trot in search of cheaper labor and lighter regulations, and squeeze the middle class – all while multiplying executive profits. They'll examine the consequences of these changes, as well as the prospects for containing them.

Date: March 19

Speaker: Glenn Branch
Deputy Director of the National
Center of Science Education

Topic: Assaults on Evolution: From
Darwin to Today

Location: SBCC's Fé Bland Forum (same
location as our November Sam
Harris

Date: April 16

Speaker: Pulitzer Prize-winning Professor
Edward J. Larson

Topic: Scopes Monkey Trial, Part II?

Location: Fleischmann Auditorium
Santa Barbara Museum of Natural
History

Date: May 21

Event: Our Tenth Anniversary Celebration

Speakers: Tom Flynn, Editor of Free Inquiry
William Edelen, News-Press
columnist
Eddie Tabash, Civil Rights attorney
and Honorary Chair for CFI-West

Location: Holiday Inn in Goleta

Letter to the Editor

from Gordon Burgett

(Ed. Note: This letter takes the form of an e-mail from Gordon to Chairman Dick, which he asked to be posted to the newsletter)

Dick,

Enjoyed the gathering last night (*Ed. Note: this refers to the winter solstice party*) and it was good to talk with you.

I thought about what you said during the drive home (one blessing of not having a babbling mate) and I matched it with a question I have wanted to ask other members: "Do they tell others that they are atheists?"

It might be interesting to provoke some print responses to share through the newsletter, if you think the question has merit.

So, to start that once-removed dialog, let me share my response, hoping that others will, in turn, briefly share theirs:

I don't swagger around shouting ATHEIST, but if one asks I say, "Yes, of course." If they don't flee in horror, I add more, "A deu, without god, is accurate. I don't believe in some divine creator or a bearded string-puller. I think we are, plain and simple, creatures of

nature, as is everything else we sense and perceive. If there is such a thing as a 'miracle' it's us, scrawny, clawless critters surviving because we have the ability to think, to reason.

"But atheists, as humans, can also love, feel awe, share compassion, decry injustice, and sometimes act foolish. We can do just as others do, often with less encumbrance.

So, yes, I am an atheist, but one full of mercy."

If that helps, and inspires some sharing through the very enjoyable newsletter, great! Use it.

Gordon Burgett

Board Meeting Notes

By Anne Rojas

I would like to offer a special invitation to all members to attend the next Board meeting which will be at my house on January 10th at 5:00 pm.

New members, especially, should be aware that all Board meetings are open to the membership and everyone is welcomed – even encouraged – to attend.

Since I will be serving a light dinner, I would appreciate it if you would let me know if you plan to come.



Founder Keith Bailey

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