



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

July, 2009

<http://www.sbhumanists.org>

July Program The “Good News Club” in Our Schools

By Dick Cousineau

For our July 18th regular meeting at the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, we are pleased to welcome journalist and author **Katherine Stewart** and business consultant and author **Matthew Stewart**. The Stewarts are actively behind the expose of how the Child Evangelism Ministry, in the form of the Good News Club, has begun to infiltrate our public elementary schools here in Santa Barbara and Goleta. The story was printed in the *Santa Barbara Independent* on Thursday, May 7, and it has caused a firestorm of indignation in those of us who believe in the separation of Church and State. Come to be informed and help minimize this intrusion into our schools by the extreme religious right.

Katherine and Matthew Stewart
Saturday, July 18th, 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.
Dining out will be at Mediterra Café
(See the Dining Out column on page 2)

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Dining Out for July

By Roger Schlueter

For our July dining out, we are going to do a bit of an experiment and try a new Greek restaurant in Goleta called Mediterra. It is located at 5575 Hollister Avenue, which is easy to find because it is in the same plaza as the Sizzler; just look to your right as you

face the Sizzler and there it is. It is a small, charming place that will be open exclusively for HSSB members and guests.

The following menu items will be available for selection:

- **Moussaka Plate:** A baked dish consisting of layers of grilled eggplant, zucchini, and ground beef or turkey, served with green salad. \$8.95
- **Veggie Plate:** Baba ghannouj, (eggplant/garlic puree), tabouli, (finely chopped tomatoes, onions parsley, bulgur wheat in lemon juice and olive oil), dolmas and tzatziki sauce, (yogurt, cucumber and garlic sauce), served with green salad. \$8.95
- **Borek Plate:** Three homemade feta cheese- spinach-filled pastries with hummus, dolmas, (rice stuffed grape vine leaves), and green salad. \$8.95
- **Avgolemano (egg-Lemon) chicken soup.** \$3.50
- **Greek Salad:** romaine lettuce, feta cheese, Kalamata olives, cucumber, tomatoes, red onions, pepperoncini with herb vinaigrette. \$7.95
- **Baklava.** \$1.50
- **Drinks are extra; beer and wine are **not** available.**

We are also going to experiment further by trying the idea of not requiring an advanced reservation. This is a bit risky since the Mediterra is opening only for us without requiring that we commit to a minimum number of participants. I encourage you to join us for the good dining, intimate atmosphere and camaraderie. There would be a maximum of 30 accommodated on first come first served basis.

We do need to get a menu count however. Please submit your menu choices to ellielamb@gmail.com by **July 14, 2009.**

News About Members

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

Rev. Charlie Archibald
526 Adina Way
Nipomo, CA 93144
619-7139

Patricia Edgerton
3116 Calle Fresno
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
562-1512

Judy Fontana & Philip Holland
259 Moreton Bay Lane #2
Goleta, CA 93117
967-7911

Lolly Quackenbush
3775 Modoc Rd., Apt. 225
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
879-5537

Carol Weingartner
157 Santa Elena Lane
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
969-1558

Member Carol Palladini recently participated as a host for the Annual Benefit Auction of the Environmental Defense Center, an organization that was formed to assist efforts to protect our local environment, public health and quality of life.

Long-time HSSB Sponsor Robert Bernstein again rode his unicycle in the Summer Solstice Parade, up State Street in Santa Barbara on Saturday, June 20th, this year decorated as an orange and yellow sea-horse. Photo.jpg attached is by Paul Wellman of the *Santa Barbara Independent*, and Robert was also featured on film by KEYT-TV3 News.



Robert on his unicycle, as a sea-horse! Photo by Paul Wellman

Letters to the editor:

Robert Bernstein had his letter about the California budget printed in *The Santa Barbara Independent*. See:

<http://www.independent.com/news/2009/jun/25/how-fix-budget-2>

Also in the *SB Independent*, Dick Cousineau submitted an on-line reponse to the article by Katherine Stewart.

Weblink:

<http://www.independent.com/news/2009/jun/25/schoolyard-preaching>

HSSB Brunch

Join us for a social brunch, a secular gathering for humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, singles, couples and families without religion; at 10 a.m. Sunday, July 26th at Cody's Café, 4898 Hollister Ave., Turnpike Center, Goleta. No cover charge - pay only for your food and drink. Membership and reservations aren't necessary.

For information, phone 805-967-3045 (Membership Chair Mary Wilk, a regular attendee; e-mail mwilk@cox.net).

Pleasant Grove v. Summum

By Roger Schlueter

Can a governmental entity prohibit the display of a non-Christian religious monument in a public park that already contains an existing ten commandments monument and remain in compliance with the First Amendment? On February 25th, the Supreme Court *unanimously* said, “Yes,” although some concurring opinions tried to limit the scope of the ruling. Because it is a very interesting case, I’d like to take a look at the reasoning behind the ruling, then raise what I believe to be a larger issue. But first some background information.

The governmental entity in this case is the city of Pleasant Grove, Utah, which has a small city park across the street from city hall which contains about a dozen privately donated monuments and buildings. Among these are a wishing well, a millstone from the city’s first flour mill, and a red granite monument inscribed with the ten commandments.

The group that wanted to display a non-Christian religious monument was the [Summum](#). This religion was founded in 1975 by Claude “Corky” Nowell after his encounter with “advanced beings.” The basis of its philosophy is the “Grand Principle of Creation” that states, “Nothing and Possibility come in and out of bond infinite times in a finite moment.” That is, in my opinion, the very definition of “word salad.” Nowell claims to remember when he was a tree. Finally, Summum embraces mummification as a means to guide one's essence to a greater destination following the death of the body.



This picture shows Corky with his mummified dog.

Summums believe that the essence of its philosophy is contained within its “Seven Aphorisms” which were given to Moses by god along with the lesser ten commandments. In 2003, the Summum proposed that a monument presenting their aphorisms be erected next to the existing ten commandments monument in a city park. When the city rejected the proposal, the Summums went to court and lost, then won on appeal then, as stated at the outset, lost unanimously at the Supreme Court.

This case entails tension between the Establishment Clause and the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment. As you know, the First Amendment begins with these 16 words, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;...” Over the years, the Supreme Court has tried to put these two broad principles into established law but has not, in my view, been successful. For example, in two 2005 cases involving the display of the ten commandments on public property, they ruled for the display in Texas and against the display in Kentucky.

(See *Schlueter*, page 5)

(Schleuter, continued from page 4)

As usual, how this case is viewed depends on the perspective you adopt. If it is a “public forum” case, then Summum must be given equal access to the park. If you view it as a “government speech” case, then the government may be allowed to say what it wants to say and, more to the point, not say what it does not want to say.

Justice Alito, writing the opinion of the court, took the latter view. He opined that, “The Free Speech Clause restricts government regulation of private speech; it does not regulate government speech.” I find his argument disingenuous; first he argues that the monuments can convey a variety of messages, but later argues that government can, in fact, convey a specific message. Which is it?

But here is the phrase that particularly caught my eye, “If government entities must maintain viewpoint neutrality in their selection of donated monuments, they must either ‘brace themselves for an influx of clutter’ or face the pressure to remove longstanding and cherished monuments.” Why is something that is “longstanding” to be accepted simply because of its longevity? Should we embrace slavery, as the founding fathers did, because it was longstanding? And the fact that Justice Alito finds a ten commandment monument to be “cherished” leads me to question who “cherishes” it and why they have particular standing over those who do not. Like me.

But I do like Alito’s concern about the “influx of clutter” and want to focus on that aspect of his reasoning because it raises an important question; namely, what is religion? I want to argue that Summunism is not a religion and that the whole case should have been thrown out on that basis before First Amendment issues even came into play.

The foundational basis for Summum, namely Nowell’s encounter with alien beings, has no verifiable basis. “The Grand Principle of Creation” mentioned above has no useful meaning. One of the seven principles is psychokinesis (also known as telekinesis), which has been shown to be nonextant from a scientific perspective. Another principle is “Gender” which, while undeniable, cannot reasonably be viewed as a guiding world view. The only basis that I can find for considering Summum a religion is that the IRS gave them a religious exemption for their mummification services.

Now you might argue that Scientology, for example, has just as flimsy a basis for being considered a religion and I would not argue at all. In fact, the same line of reasoning could be applied to all recently founded religions such as Mormonism and Christian Science. But that just reinforces my point. Alito worried about the “influx of clutter” into our public square. I would like to define his “clutter” to be more broadly defined to include nonsense such as Summunism. Sadly, I cannot see this happening.

Upcoming Events

By Dick Cousineau

For our August 15th program, we have as our speaker Kate McCurdy, Director of the Sedgwick Preserve in the Santa Ynez Valley. Kate will be accompanied and introduced by our own member Nick DiCroce, a docent at the preserve.

September 19th will bring “Head Blogger” Craig Smith. Come prepared with questions, gossip, facts, and memories of Santa Barbara.

We will meet at Vista del Monte for both August and September meetings.

Summer Solstice Party!

Photos by Robert Bernstein
Captions by Diane Krohn



Jim Balter, probably coming up with some difficult quotes for the "Who Said What?" game.



Helen Smart and Roger Schlueter.



Left to right: Arlene Carlisle, Louise Stone, Judy Cousineau, and Marian Shapiro



Lou and Josette Barsky, our greeters and name-tag-suppliers par excellence.



Ray Stone and the jelly bean jar for "Guess the number of jelly beans." The correct number was somewhere between 1 and 10000.



The chow line. We had delicious tri-tip, chicken, beans, and many great appetizers and desserts. If you visit the HSSB website and click on "Solstice Photos," you can see the rest of the photos from our party.

Alliance for Science Contest Winner

By Ray Stone

Last fall, HSSB became a co-sponsor of the Alliance for Science's essay contest for high school students. Two of the local contestants, Carryn Barker and Jessica Richardson, had their entries published in *The Secular Circular*. The winning entry was Regina Parker, a ninth grade student at East Chapel Hill High School, Chapel Hill, NC. The winning essay can be found at:

<http://www.allianceforscience.org/files/active/0/First%20Place%20Essay%20-%20Parker.pdf>

More information on the contest can be found at: <http://www.allianceforscience.org/>

HSSB Book Club

By Marty Shapiro

Greetings, amigos. Our Humanist Book Club will be meeting on Wednesday, July 15th at my home, Casa Shapiro. The book we'll be discussing is *The American Future, a History* by Simon Schama, an accomplished British art historian as well as an award-winning all-things-considered historian. He teaches both Art and History at Columbia University, and has published numerous prize-winning books in both fields. *The American Future* is a very readable study that (somewhat paradoxically) attempts to better anticipate our nation's future by better understanding its past - the good, the bad, and the ugly.

When: Wednesday, July 15th, 1:30 p.m.

Where: Casa Shapiro, 249 Savona Ave., Goleta; 805-968-0478 (call for driving directions)

Getting to Know You: Neal Rosenthal

By Ellie Lambrou

If you see an attractive man in his late forties, it could be Neal Rosenthal. Neal has been an HSSB member for six years, since moving to Santa Barbara with his wife Linda Davis, to trade the nine-months-out-of-twelve Seattle gloom for all-year-long sun and warmth.

Neal's origins are from Massachusetts. When he was 10 years old, his parents gave him a Kodak Instamatic camera. Photography became his passion. "I love to document life, especially landscapes, architecture and people. Human made things are interesting. Natural things are art," he explains. To Neal, photography is both an intellectual as well as an artistic endeavor. In the reality of earning a living, Neal works in software support and implementation.

What I found remarkable about Neal was the age he began to question dogma, specifically biblical teachings at the Synagogue to which his parents took him. "I was 7," he said, "And the things being taught didn't make sense to me." I asked him why he joined HSSB and embraced Humanism. "I appreciate the shared learning and interesting topics discussed with other intelligent and rational folks. I also appreciate the message of Humanism/Non-Theism as represented in a political forum." Neal has helped out with the Newsletter many times, and is currently contributing articles and website information of interest to our readers. We thank him for that!

Published on Wednesday, April 3, 2002 by Common Dreams

What the American Flag Stands For

By Charlotte Aldebron

The American flag stands for the fact that cloth can be very important. It is against the law to let the flag touch the ground or to leave the flag flying when the weather is bad. The flag has to be treated with respect. You can tell just how important this cloth is because when you compare it to people, it gets much better treatment. Nobody cares if a homeless person touches the ground. A homeless person can lie all over the ground all night long without anyone picking him up, folding him neatly and sheltering him from the rain.

School children have to pledge loyalty to this piece of cloth every morning. No one has to pledge loyalty to justice and equality and human decency. No one has to promise that people will get a fair wage, or enough food to eat, or affordable medicine, or clean water, or air free of harmful chemicals. But we all have to promise to love a rectangle of red, white, and blue cloth.

Betsy Ross would be quite surprised to see how successful her creation has become. But Thomas Jefferson would be disappointed to see how little of the flag's real meaning remains.

Charlotte Aldebron, 12, wrote this essay for a competition in her 6th grade English class. She attends Cunningham Middle School in Presque Isle, Maine. Comments may be sent to her mom, Jillian Aldebron: aldebron@ainop.com



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