



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

JULY 2010

www.SBHumanists.org

JULY PROGRAM

"Goodness of Godlessness", with Professor Phil Zuckerman.

Phil Zuckerman, Ph.D. is Professor of Sociology at Pitzer College in Claremont, CA. He graduated with B.A. cum laude, M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Oregon.

Classes he teaches include Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theories; Sociology of Religion; Sociology of Secularity; Atheism, Secularism and Society; and Sociology Through Film.

Prof. Zuckerman was Guest Professor at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, teaching and researching Religion in the United States, in contrast with Secularization in Scandinavia. He has published and edited many books and articles, on such topics as:

- Atheism, Secularity, Morality, Well-Being (2009 and 2010)
- Why Are Danes And Swedes So Irreligious? (2009)
- Who Would Jesus Torture? (2009)
- The Virtues of Godlessness - The Least Religious Nations Are Also The Most Healthy And Successful (2009)
- Society Without God (2008)
- Sex and Religion (1999 and 2005)
- Jews and the Christian Right (1996)



He has also written about W.E.B. DuBois and is working on a book, *Faith No More - How And Why People Reject Religion*. Prof. Zuckerman's talk will be followed by a Q+A session.

When: Saturday, July 17th

Where: Patio Room, Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Road (Las Positas exit off Hwy.101)

Time: 2:30pm for socializing; 3pm meeting starts.

Join us for dinner at 5pm - phone 805-845-6510 or e-mail Activities@SantaBarbaraHumanists.org to reserve your seats. Dinner will be held in the Patio Room following the meeting.

Notes of Interest

A new Board and Officers were elected during May. The eleven-member 2010-2011 Board will consist of: **Jim Balter, Wayne Beckman, Sandy Garcia, Andrew Hankins, Pat Hiles, Diane Krohn, Ron Kronenberg, Joe Navarro, Neal Rosenthal, Ray Stone, Mary Wilk.** Officers to be installed at the July 13 Board meeting are Ron Kronenberg, President, Diane Krohn, Secretary, and Neal Rosenthal, Treasurer.

New Secular Circular Distribution

policy. HSSB has initiated a new policy on the distribution of its newsletter. Starting with this issue, the Secular Circular will be sent as an attached pdf file to all members with an email account. With this mode of delivery, members will receive their issue up to three days earlier than before; they may read their issue directly on the computer and keep it filed there if they are so inclined; or they may print it if they prefer hard copy, and in color if they have a color printer. The advantage to the club is in cost savings. HSSB hopes to significantly reduce the expense of printing and mailing the newsletter which last year amounted to over \$2,000.

Members without email will continue to receive the newsletter by regular mail. Members with email who wish to receive their issues by regular mail as before should send an email to that effect to Editor@santabarbarahumanists.org.

Secular Brunch for humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, singles, couples and families without religion is held once a month. There is no cover charge, you pay only for your food and drink. Bring your friends and visitors from out-of-town; membership and reservations aren't necessary.

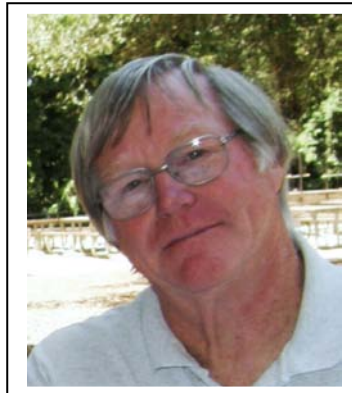
Time: 10am, the last Sunday of every month
Place: Cody's Cafe, 4898 Hollister Ave. in the Turnpike Center, Goleta (in the room to the right as you enter the restaurant.)

For further information: Call Board member Mary Wilk, 805-967-3045.

Secular Periodicals. This is a reminder for all who subscribe to one or more of the many secular periodicals such as **Free Inquiry, Skeptic Magazine, American Atheist** and the like. Don't throw your issues away but rather donate them to your local library branch or leave them in the waiting room of your doctor or dentist or lawyer or other professional. Or pass them on to a friend. Spread the word!

Change by Roger Schlueter

Recently there have been a number of important changes in the circumstances of prominent secular leaders that are worthy of comment.



Christopher Hitchens, an internationally known author and critic, has announced that he has esophageal cancer and must return to England for chemotherapy. Hitchens may well be the best known "New Atheist" author and raconteur who speaks for the secular perspective. Whether or not you agree

with his outspoken advocacy and "take no prisoners" approach, his absence will be sorely felt. I wish him well in his treatment program.

Paul Kurtz is no longer the head of the Center for Inquiry and its affiliated organizations. Kurtz has been a giant in the

Humanist movement for decades and consequently his departure will create a vacuum that will be difficult to fill. His departure is filled with controversy and significant loss of funding for CFI. I hope the organization finds the resources to continue their efforts on behalf of Humanism.

As you may remember, Kurtz spoke to our Society at one of our special events at the Sizzler restaurant in Goleta. He was an ardent spokesman for CFI but his major failing, in my view, was his unwillingness to cooperate with other secular groups. Hopefully with a change in CFI leadership there will be more cooperative efforts on behalf of the principles we all share.

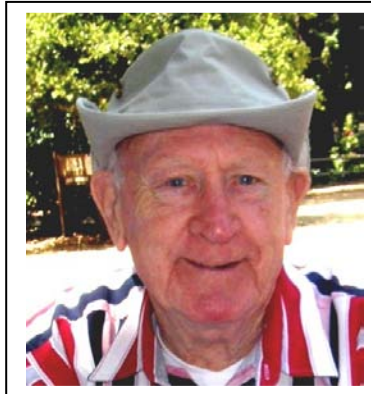
Ed Buckner has just resigned as President of American Atheists. Buckner took that position in a period of turmoil following the departure of his predecessor, Ellen Johnson. Both Johnson and Buckner have spoken to our Society and I found them to be both credible and committed secularists. AA has also seen the departure of a number of other key personnel; I hope that they are able to continue as a voice for secularism in the USA.

It is significant that these, and many other secular leaders have spoken to the HSSB. Nationally, we are seen as a vibrant secular community worthy of attention.

Finally, we are experiencing our own leadership transition. Ours, in contrast, is one of routine business manifest by the recent election of a new Board of Directors. As of July 1st a new Board of Directors is in place and I hope they will pursue new initiatives to keep the HSSB as a vital member of the secular community both locally and nationally. Departing members **Dick Cousineau, Adrian Wenner** and **Nancy Wahl** deserve a hat tip for their service to the Society.

Report of the American Humanist Association (AHA) Annual Conference by Dick Cousineau

I recently spent three days at the AHA Conference in San Jose and attended as



many of the lectures and workshops as I could. The conference went from 9AM to 10PM each day with numerous sessions for the discriminating Humanist to choose from. Below are reports of some of the more interesting ones, in my opinion.

1. Josh Rosenau and Steve Newton of The National Center for Science Education discussed two important topics; "Creationism in public schools after the Dover decision of Judge John Jones III", and stated that Fundamentalist Christians have not slowed their efforts to get their message into the Public Schools but have altered their words to eliminate Creationism. The other issue raised was the need for every Humanist Society to develop a "Letters to the Editor Corps" to immediately respond to and correct junk science articles and letters in local newspapers.

2. Fred Edwords spoke of seizing opportunities for Humanist groups located near major Universities to assist and promote "Scientist Day" at local public schools for groups.

3. Brant Abrahamson's topic was "Where is Critical Thinking by teachers in our Public schools?" He recommended that Humanist groups promote teacher workshops about this important issue.

4. Greg Epstein, the Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University, encouraged local groups to develop “Humanist Communities” to celebrate life’s passages and build closer knit groups. Somewhat implied by Epstein was the need to have a permanent home for such a Community.

5. Lyle Simpson, former Chairman of the AHA, author, lawyer, philosopher of Humanism, brilliant speaker and a true renaissance man, delivered a talk entitled “Why was I born?”. His answer was for individuals to achieve Authenticity and be Actualized in the manner described by Abraham Maslow.

6. Michael Werner, a representative from SMART, Self Motivation and Recovery Therapy, a non-theistic, Four Step approach to recovery from addictions. Marvelous program as described by Werner.

7. Bill Nye-The Science Guy, received the Humanist Of The Year Award. His talk was humorous, knowledgeable, personable, humble, and interesting . His message: Depend upon Critical Thinking in a gentle form when in discussions with theists. Allow them to define just what they think their god is, then go from there. There are probably millions of definitions because most humans create their own personal god.

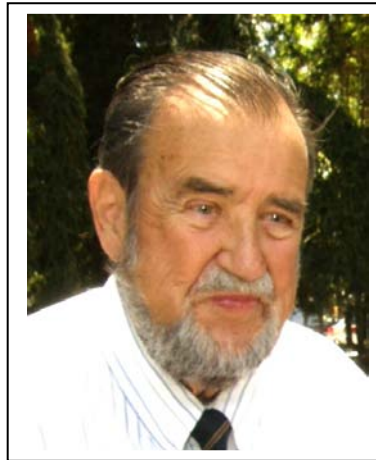
In my opinion the most significant observations of the conference were:

- the presence of many, many youthful participants (under 35) not only just at the conference but in leadership roles. Demographics are changing in the AHA.
- Another strong message from the meeting was “Get involved in the local volunteer and charitable scene”. It is not just enough to be good, but, also to be seen doing good.

- Be a part of the National Secular Service Day, October 3, 2010. It is important that we select an activity to participate in this effort and start to plan on how to do it. Any volunteers, or ideas? Please let me know.

Unitarians Honor Humanist Homecoming by Charlie Archibald

As a special recognition that the American Unitarian Association had been liberally converted from “One God at Most” theism to “Godless Humanist” by one man, the Rev. Dr. John H. Dietrich, minister of the First



Unitarian Church of Minneapolis, a Homecoming day was set aside at that church during the 49th UUA General Assembly gathered there June 23-28th. The Unitarian Universalist Association identifies Humanists as HUUmanists, and while their percentage may have gone from 75% when the two faiths

combined in 1961 to no less than 50% today, that’s over 100,000, the majority faith of the denomination. Without imposing ANY creed or doctrine, UUs simply accept each person with their unique beliefs. And, yes, as they seem to have to add when stating this single American Constitutional principle of the freedom of belief and the diversity of religion this honors, they don’t require a belief in a god. Featured speakers like Greg M. Epstein, the Harvard Humanist Chaplain from whose new book “Good Without God” has been called “the most outspoken voice for Humanism in the United States” was joined by Sean Faircloth, the Executive Director of the Secular

Solstice Picnic Photos



Photos by **Robert Bernstein**.

For larger versions of these and other picnic photos visit:

<http://www.swt.org/temp/hssb/solstice2010/>

Coalition for America, whom we enjoyed at our recent Anniversary Banquet. He seems the right man to lobby for us in Washington, to counter the intrusion of the Christian religion being funded with our taxes. Outgoing HCUmanist President, David Schafer, incoming President John Hooper of the UU Religious Humanists, Stefan Jonasson and immediate Past President of the HCUmanists, were joined by ten other inspiring speakers in the day long, breakfast through dinner event, following UUA President Peter Morales' opening assurance that the dominant place of Humanism would always be honored by his administration, finding it in keeping with the UUA's goal to work with other religious groups through interfaith efforts for social betterment worldwide. The \$100 per attendee was well spent for this long overdue recognition that the multi-faith UUA has the largest concentration of avowed Humanists that we can draw from.

Prayer Can Be Dangerous, For Yourself And Others: **News commentary by Andrew Hankin.**

In 2001, Van Chester Thompkins was arrested as a suspect for a 2000 shooting in Michigan, after which a man had died. During interrogation, police read Thompkins his Miranda rights to have a lawyer and to remain silent. Thompkins affirmed that he understood, then said very little else.



After almost three hours of questioning, a police detective asked Thompkins if he believed in God, to which he responded "Yes". The next question was, "Do you pray to God to forgive you for shooting that boy down?" and Thompkins again said, "Yes." This monosyllabic 'confession' was a major reason that Thompkins was convicted of

murder and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

The US 6th Circuit Court of Appeals later overturned the conviction, on the basis that Thompkins had asserted his right to remain silent by doing so, and that his statements should not have been used during the trial.

In June 2010 the US Supreme Court reversed the Appeals Court in a 5-4 ruling and reinstated Thompkins' conviction. Now all Americans must - counterintuitively - speak unambiguously that they wish to remain silent. Simply remaining silent allows questioning to continue, with perhaps disastrous consequences if you become provoked into saying anything. Prevention of witnessing against oneself is what the Bill Of Rights Fifth Amendment is all about.

Can we Humanists take any reassurance that a non-believer would answer "No" to those specific questions, ending that line of inquiry? Perhaps it would head off into some sort of "immoral atheist without shame" argument? Should we feel angry at the guy who couldn't shut up about his religious faith, or acknowledge that the inappropriate question probably activated his God Virus infection (as described by our March speaker Dr. Darrell Ray)? It is this writer's view that any and all references to unprovable entities be eliminated from supposedly secular legal systems. Religious questions during investigations should be inadmissible as non-evidence; "So Help Me God"

should be replaced with "under penalty of perjury", for which enforceable human laws do exist.

Original story

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/judicial/2010-06-01-supreme-court-miranda-rights_N.htm

Revival Of Feelings: Changing Ourselves And Our Society

Tom Scheff, Professor Emeritus, Dept of Sociology, UCSB

When I was a Jewish child growing up in the South, I found temple services boring. But I once sneaked into a tent revival meeting. People were laughing, crying, shaking, dancing, and rolling around on the floor. I was delighted because I had never seen anything like it, especially not in my own family. Like many families, we seemed to have a no-emotion rule. My father's anger was the only exception. As suggested below, acting out anger usually turns out to be a way of hiding other emotions, such as grief, fear, and embarrassment. This note concerns the revival of those hidden feelings, even with respect to war and peace.



For the last six years I have been helping at an Iraq War Memorial that my group, Veterans for Peace, sets up on the beach of a Sunday. We install what looks like a cemetery, now 3000 crosses, in the morning and remove it in the evening, as per city ordinance. The pier is heavily traveled on Sundays, mostly by tourists. What happens between us vets and some of the visitors who stop is sometimes like a little revival meeting.

In my early days at the pier, I was puzzled that most of the strollers would go past the memorial with a sidelong glance, at most. How could they ignore a vast mock graveyard, especially since most didn't even know that it was there? After a few weeks, however, I realized that I had done the same thing. One of my friends who had worked at the memorial from its beginning, ignoring my excuses, had to invite me many times. What

could I learn? As it turned out, I had a lot to learn.

Finally, to stop the pestering, I went to the pier on a Sunday morning. To my surprise, I was overcome with feeling when I saw the memorial. I cried for long time. Now I understood why I had avoided the visit for so long: I didn't want to feel. The number of dead, or any other fact, for that matter, has little meaning until we discover the feeling that underlies it.

I have seen resistance to feeling repeated hundreds of times among the visitors to the pier. The ones who stop to talk are overcome with surprise and grief when they realize the emotional meaning of what before was "just a number" to them. The difference between me and the thousands who go right past the memorial is that they don't have a friend to cajole them into stopping.

Ancient wisdom has told us KNOW THYSELF. But we don't, especially our feelings. Perhaps most of us are asleep to our deepest feelings. Knowing feelings has meaning not only in our personal lives, but in the realm of politics as well. We are a nation asleep if we just think and act. We wake up when we find the feelings that we have been hiding.

Perhaps the main reason that there was support for the unnecessary Iraq war and the unwinnable Afghanistan war is that the public prefers to cover up their fear, grief and shame with self-righteous anger. We will probably need many years of mourning and atonement for the death and destruction that our silence allowed. Public rituals of forgiveness would allow us to feel our hidden emotions. Private rituals would also play a part. We need to acknowledge that we are afraid, angry, sad and ashamed in a way that

revives hidden feelings. Sharing these feelings openly with those that are dear or near is a way to become deeply connected with them and with our own true self.

In the ancient Hebrew tradition, there was encouragement to mourn the loss of parents for the rest of one's life (Kaddish). Now, as Iris Dement's song puts it, there is No Time to Cry.

Mantra for peace rather than war:

Let me know my own emotions. I want to cry bitter tears for all my own losses, and for the immense loss and destruction that has been going on in the world.

So that I will be less reckless, let me feel fear for the danger and death that we all face.

I often feel weak, helpless, inadequate, or humiliated. Let me feel and talk shame or embarrassment instead of ignoring them or hiding them behind anger and resentment.

Help me to express my anger verbally, rather than suppressing it or acting it out, and encourage others to do the same.

Help me to tolerate authentic expressions of emotion in my family and workplace, rather than encouraging the suppression of feeling.

Even if following this prayer leads to fits of crying, shivering, sweating, or laughing in myself or others, I am ready.

Public monuments like the Vietnam and Arlington West memorials are just a beginning.

Perhaps we could create everyday rituals in our families, offices, schools and churches so that we sleepers can awake.

Upcoming Programs by Dick Cousineau

The next few months will bring us excellent speakers, on varied and interesting topics. Beginning this month, on July 17th, **Professor Phil Zuckerman** of Pitzer College, will discuss the results of his extensive studies of the lack of religiosity in the Scandinavian countries, especially Denmark, where "Goodness of Godlessness" is the practical philosophy of the Danes.

On August 21st **Bill Garlington**, a highly popular and dynamic lecturer at Cal State Channel Islands (Camarillo) will talk on "The Future of Religion" and the "New Atheism", subjects which are expected to promote lively discussion in our group.

September 18th we will have the opportunity to hear and interact with **William Lobdell**, the former Religious Page Editor of the LA Times. We have been attempting for two years to have Mr. Lobdell speak here and we have finally made it. He comes highly recommended from a number of our members as well as from our LA affiliates. His topic will be "How I Lost My Faith by Reporting on it". Should be a kick! Don't miss it.

October 19th will be the **Ingersoll Lecture**. Two speakers selected by audition will deliver one of Robert Green Ingersoll's famous lectures. Applicants are still being solicited to participate in this event, or to serve as judges. For more details, check out www.santabarbarahumanists.org/ingersoll.

Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming events that may be of interest to humanists, atheists, skeptics, and freethinkers:

Upcoming Events in California:

- July 18: Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. Tom Quinn: *God Needs Therapy*
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm>
- August 1: Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. Mel Gordon: *Mondo-Judeo: A Special Presentation*
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm>
- August 15: Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. Edward J. Larson: *Scopes at 85: An Anniversary Look Back at the History and Folklore of America's Most Famous Trial*
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm>
- October 7-10: The 30th Anniversary Conference of Free Inquiry and the Council for Secular Humanism, Los Angeles. Scheduled to appear includes James Randi, Tom Flynn, Ed Buckner, Richard Dawkins, PZ Meyers, and many others.
http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=press&page=fi_anniversary_conference

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- July 8-11: The Amazing Meeting 2010, Las Vegas, NV. Scheduled to appear includes Richard Dawkins, James Randi, Adam Savage, Jennifer Michael Hecht, Sean Faircloth, Massimo Pigliucci, and many others!
<http://www.randi.org/site/index.php/tam-8-registration.html>

HSSB Book Club

The HSSB Book Club meets next at 1:30 PM, Wednesday, July 21 at the home of **Richard Martin**, 1400 Mission Canyon Road. This month's book is "**Superfreakonomics**" by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner. Since parking at the Martin home is limited, carpooling is strongly suggested. Call 687-3563 for driving directions.

The HSSB Book club meets on the third Wednesday of every month at the home of a different member. Marty Shapiro is the club leader.

Quote of the Month:

"I am not going to pretend a faith I don't feel. I am what I am and people will judge that. For people of faith, I think the greatest compliment I could pay to them is to respect their genuinely held beliefs and not to engage in some pretence about mine."

--Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia

HSSB Contact Information

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Wayne Beckman
Sandy Garcia
Andrew Hankin
Pat Hiles
Joe Navarro
Ray Stone
Mary Wilk

Newsletter Editor:

Ray Stone

Editor@santabarbarahumanists.org

HSSB meetings are held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 2:30 pm, usually in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Rd., Santa Barbara. More information is available at our web site:

www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org or by contacting any board member. When attending meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis.

To send a copy of this newsletter to someone interested in our Society, please send their contact information to: PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, or contact Mary Wilk at 967-3045, or mwilk@cox.net. Newsletters are also available at the web address shown above.

Annual membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) to become a sponsor. One may subscribe to our newsletter only for an annual fee of \$20.



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