

The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

June, 2004

A March for Women's Lives

[Ed. Note: On Sunday, April 25th, the above-referenced march took place in Washington, DC with at least three HSSB members participating in the march. Loretta Redd wrote of her experiences in the April 29th issue of the Santa Barbara Independent. The following articles give voice to additional Humanist participants.]

A March for Women's Lives By Marian Shapiro

It was an unforgettable experience to march with my daughter along with 1.15 million women and men in Washington on Sunday April 25 on the Mall and in front of the White House. There is something indescribable about being with that many people who feel so strongly about the right of all people to control their own fertility. At this time especially, feminists (and there were quite a few male feminists there) have a lot to be scared and angry about.

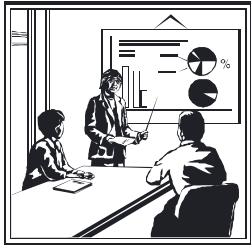
People carried signs protesting what this administration has done to erode our rights to make very personal and private decisions in our lives, to deny our kids sex education and to discriminate against our friends and family members who are gay. The National Abortion Rights Action League distributed signs asking, "Who Decides? It's YOUR CHOICE, not theirs!" Planned Parenthood signs proclaimed, "Stand Up for CHOICE!" The ACLU signs said "No Trespassing! My body is not public property."

Marchers (and many Humanists) are outraged

that President Bush has made judicial appointments and executive orders based on his religious convictions which he is thereby imposing on all Americans regardless of whether they share his religious beliefs. At the march there were signs which protested that the Bush administration has poured millions of our tax dollars into "Abstinence Only" programs (which don't work) in high schools and middle schools, while taking money away from comprehensive sexuality education... which works and is SO needed!

I think there were 6 big organizations which sponsored this very impressive and successful demonstration of support for reproductive rights. But there were hundreds of smaller groups which organized their members to participate. Everywhere you went on the streets and in the subways, you could see 20 or 30 or 40 people all with matching T-shirts from some local group saying Wesleyan students for Choice, or Presbyterian women of Hartford for CHOICE, etc. My favorite protest sign of the march was a full size cardboard cut-out of George Bush with a sign around his neck which said, "I'd be Pro-CHOICE too... if I only had a brain!"

(See Shapiro on Page 3)

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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. All HSSB members are welcome at these meetings - contact any Board member for more information.

Membership Memo

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 site 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 join 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 \$2.00 from members and \$5.00 from non-members is appreciated. First or second-time visitors are welcome on a complementary basis. For more information contact Mary Wilk or any member of our Society.

(Continued from Page 1)

The celebrity factor was also very inspiring. One of the most impassioned speeches was given by feminist actress, Camryn Mannheim of the TV drama, *The Practice*. Hillary Clinton spoke eloquently, as did Madelyn Albright, actress Julianne Moore, statesman Julian Bond, and so many more. I was happy that Congresswoman Lois Capps marched with the Planned Parenthood delegation and wore a PP T-shirt. I knew I wasn't in Kansas anymore!



Humanists Marian Shapiro and Loretta Redd surround Congresswoman Lois Capps

I am grateful to have a daughter who works in the field of public health and shares my political activism. In fact it was through her political work for the Dean campaign that I happened to be in the right place with her delegation to meet the man I had hoped would drastically change the White House in November. Howard Dean came to march with his supporters, and it was a thrill to meet him.

This march has hopefully energized a million

people to go home and work like hell to elect a more intelligent, respectful, truthful and statesman-like president in November, one who will respect the separation of church and state. I welcome anyone to call me if you'd like to know how to help make this happen.

(See Page 6 for additional commentary)

Membership Memo by Mary Wilk

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

Andrew Hankin
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Important reminder: If you do not want your name, address or telephone number listed in our forthcoming membership directory, please notify me. E-mail addresses will not be printed in order to prevent misuse.

The way to see by faith is to shut the eye of reason.

– Benjamin Franklin

Chairman's Chat by Dick Cousineau

Having spent the last few weeks in the southwest and honoring my penchant for reading the local papers' editorial pages, I have developed an admittedly generalized tenor of local editorial political views. Arizona puts forth a conservative, secular, rugged individualism; New Mexico a liberal, religious paternalism; Colorado, a rightist, religious work-ethic, and Wyoming a centrist, secular Libertarianism. Colorado, where I spent most of my time, is in the midst of a Roman Catholic political battle that makes the Kerry-Massachusetts skirmish seem trivial. Here, the local bishops are expounding their dogma for not only all Catholic politicians but for the laity too. They are they refusing to allow elected politicians to take part in their "God Eating" ceremony (Communion) if they support pro-choice, gay rights, euthanasia, or stem cell research, and such politicians "are in serious risk of *eternal damnation*." Worse, anyone who votes for these politicians will also suffer the same eternal fate. WHEW! Sparks and flames are shooting heavenward in the local newspapers and TV over these "Pronouncements from on High" and much hand-wringing debate about the technicalities of Catholicism is occurring. Some apologists are coming to the defense of the beleaguered bishops, while others decry these very same bishops for ignoring the contraceptive usage by 75% of Catholics, sexual predation and cover-up by and for clerics, the death penalty, and the killing of innocents by our military forces in Iraq. Even the Methodists have chimed in by taking out ads stating that they do not refuse "Jesus's Table" to anyone, no matter how they vote. In my short visit to Colorado Springs, I saw numerous signs of their god's influence, such as a most staunchly conservative Roman Catholic bishop, the

headquarters of the Focus on the Family, religious billboards and TV commercials, and ubiquitous Christian Academies.

Amidst all these Christian influences, the Headquarters of the US Olympic Training Facility is located in Colorado Springs and occupies an 80-acre parcel of gyms, courts, fields, pools, tracks, and living and eating halls. Attached to this facility is a "Museum of Athletes" that included a new classification entitled "Warrior-Athlete" that included photographs and short biographies of Olympic Medal winners. To me this is blatantly militarist. I remember when the Olympics built a world view that embodied a tolerance for other cultures and peoples. To inject militarism into the Olympic equation demeans the Olympic Spirit and sets us farther away from "them". And who really cares if an athlete was also a warrior at one time except the other so-called warriors living in the militaristic and religiously fundamental community of Colorado Springs?

Why, I asked myself. Then it dawned on me; in the Colorado Springs area there are four large military bases and the US Air Force Academy. With all the Black or White, Good or Evil, Them or Us proponents in the area, what else would suffice but a conservative fundamental Christian outlook? I needed a hot shower after leaving this city with the appellation of "Hate City of America". It also dawned on me (duh) what these folks feared: Secular Democracy. Democracy does not paint the world in only two hues, but many. Democracy does not accept "Pronouncements from on High", no matter the source. Democracy does not stifle reasonable individual freedoms with threats of future punishments. Democracy is the only hope for a free republic, a humane nation, and joyous and tolerant citizenry.

Social Scene

by Anne Rojas

This is our month for the Summer Solstice Party! By now you should have received an individual mailing, with a stamped return address envelope. Please return it promptly, even if you don't plan to attend. We hope that we will have a great attendance as you already have the date set aside for the regular 3rd Saturday, (the 19th) don't you?

The party starts at 3 pm at the home of Anne and Russ. Please try to arrive no later than 3:30 as professional magician Mark Collier will begin his act at around that time. We think this is someone you won't want to miss.

If anyone wants to suggest some party activities, I would be pleased to hear from you. We will of course have the fabled "Duck Off" featuring an array of new and very exciting ducks contributed by Dick Cousineau.

Reservations and pot luck offerings must be pre-registered and the party fee paid by check. No last minute entries at the door!

Our last Dining Out at Sizzler drew just under 30 persons. The new seating of smaller tables is great and we are well taken care of at Sizzler. Our waiter, who received quite nice tips, was stunned to hear that we were a group of non-believers! I would like to hear from any or all of you regarding having most of the dinner meetings in the private back room at Sizzler.

The last Sunday Brunch, which was held on the next to the last Sunday due to the holiday, had about 8 in attendance at Cody's. A few ventured on to the new Farmers' Market at El Camino Marketplace.

I am working on an excursion to the Rubicon Theatre in Ventura. They have wonderful productions with name actors and very comfortable pew seating in an old church. We would car pool and dine first at Il Fiore, an exciting new downtown Italian hotspot. Those who are interested, please let me know. I will have information on the play shortly.

As always, your suggestions, help, criticisms, witticisms, etc. are most welcome.

Letters to the Editor

Humanism and Vulgarly

The following are my personal impressions of the talk by Clark Adams at our meeting of May 15.

The man is a good speaker and has a sense of humor. But his choice of radio and TV personalities who are admitted atheists would not be my choice of the people I would select as the right agents to espouse the values of Humanistic and Atheistic philosophies. The vulgarity that is rampant in their shows seems to be the norm of the present day comics, but to me, the excessive use of adjectives describing our basic biological needs does not make what is said more funny, and it will turn off many people when it is represented in an argument about the values of Humanism and Atheism.

In many discussions I have had with religious persons, their main accusation was that we are not ethical and have no morals to keep our behavior in check. If they have to judge our non-belief by the performance of these entertainers they might be more convinced they are right.

Believe me I am not a prude and have been known as a great teller of what are called "off color jokes" at private gatherings or parties. But I do not use vulgarity as a stand for my opinion about the myths of religion and the values of Humanism. There are better ways to get our ideas a more widely spread following.

John L. Coppejans

Humanism and Religion

I will not detail my initial thoughts about the May speaker's presentation. Suffice it to say that to me it represented a crude example of "religion bashing" that many of our members have told me they resent. There may have been some redeeming discussion during the question period, but for the first time I did not stay for that part of the program. I do take issue with Clark Adams' premise that the 'shock jocks' deserve credit for increases in free thought in the country, as this group seems to be more concerned with profane invective and ridicule than reasoned understanding. In short, Howard Stern may well claim to be an Atheist but, in my opinion, he lacks the credentials to be considered in the company of Steve Allen, Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov or Paul Kurtz. All Atheists are not, by definition and philosophy, Humanists.

Bob Perry

More March Musings by Carol Palladini

Yes, it really was exciting! The enormous number of people, the excellent speeches, and best of all - the reassurance that there are a lot of us thinking alike.

The major themes were that government does not and cannot have sovereignty over women's bodies; the election in November will have very serious consequences in many arenas; and that women must vote in greater numbers and must reject the Bush Administration.



Bill and Carol giving it their all

In short, it was a party atmosphere with a deadly serious message. As a Humanist, I saw validation for what we all know is important: absolute separation of church and state and a rejection of the imposition of a President's personal religious morality on the citizens of his country.

Whether it's by judicial or other appointments, deciding what kind of sex education is appropriate, or even whether a person on life support must remain so, it is not the right of government to be the moral compass of its individual citizens.

Perhaps my most meaningful experience was outside of the March itself. So many women who could not be there thanked me for being there for them. One mentioned being moved to tears just seeing the photo of the thousands on the Mall.

As wonderful as it was, I do hope there will never be the need to do it again!



But which fanatics?

[Ed. Note: I asked Carol whether the "fanatics" referred to in the this sign were resident in the White House or were those counter-protesters arrayed along Pennsylvania Avenue. She replied as follows:]

It never occurred to me that there were two ways to interpret it! I was certain it meant the White House fanatics, but in fact, most of the "baby-killer" accusers were along Pennsylvania Ave.

Web Site of the Month

by Colin Gordon

Its vacation time! – at least it is for me, so let us take a rest from the -isms like Humanism, Atheism, Theism and so on, and do some globetrotting. You can save of lot in air fares

by staying home and checking out sites like this one, suggested by Roger Schlueter.

<http://www.rtoddking.com>

R. Todd King takes us on his expeditions to several spots in the United States such as Alaska, Appalachia and Vermont, and to places in China including Hong Kong, Beijing, and the Great Wall in Winter. The photos are quite spectacular; they really capture the mood of the scene and each has a concise description that goes with it. The hutong, that used to be the grand homes of high government officials and military officers, are pictured very effectively in black and white - and we notice that one of the old buildings has a solar heater on the roof.

Have a good trip.

The Exercised Editor by Roger Schlueter

This week we were inundated with memories of President Reagan's personal and political beliefs, with commentary ranging from fawning to narrow-minded criticism. Much was made of his faith so I decided to note (without comment; what restraint!) the range of thought expressed by him on this matter:

"Without God, there is no virtue, because there's no prompting of the conscience. Without God, we're mired in the material, that flat world that tells us only what the senses perceive. Without God, there is a coarsening of the society. And without God, democracy will not and cannot long endure. If we ever forget that we're one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under."

– Remarks at an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast in Dallas, Texas, 23 August 1984.

"We in the United States, above all, must remember that lesson, for we were founded as a nation of openness to people of all beliefs. And so we must remain. Our very unity has been strengthened by our pluralism. We establish no religion in this country, we command no worship, we mandate no belief, nor will we ever. Church and state are, and must remain, separate. All are free to believe

or not believe, all are free to practice a faith or not, and those who believe are free, and should be free, to speak of and act on their belief.

– Remarks to Members of the Congregation of Temple Hillel and Jewish Community Leaders in Valley Stream, New York, 26 October 1984.