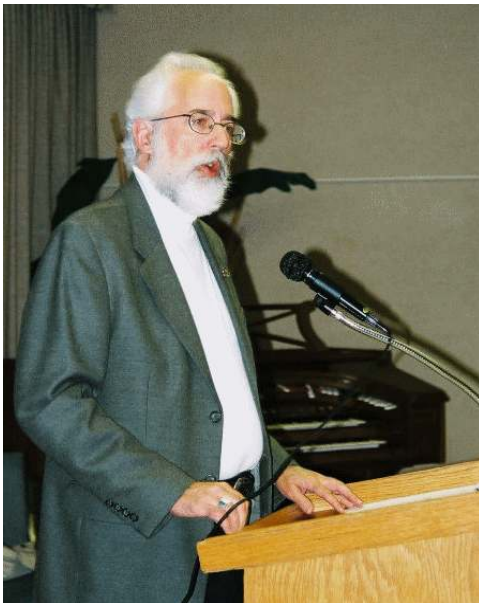


The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara
March, 2004

Humanism and Unitarianism

At our February 21st meeting, Ken Collier, Minister of the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara spoke on "Unitarianism and Humanism: An Intimate History." His talk was based on the history of Unitarianism going back to the earliest skeptics regarding the Trinity (e.g. Newton), and moving forward to today, when UU faith has no creed and comes close to a secular congregation, though with more emphasis on spirituality than on science.



Ken discussing Humanism and Unitarianism

He observed that Humanism and Unitarianism have a long and closely shared history. He opined that the distinguishing characteristic of Humanism is "...our rationality, our minds,

our ability to think about the world and to know it beyond our sensory impressions."

One particularly interesting aspect of his talk regarded the relative emphasis on faith and reason over the course of history. In the 13th century, Aquinas saw the value of both but made faith the final arbiter of truth. By the 16th century, European Humanism had reversed this order and established reason as the primary source of truth.

As usual, the most interesting part of the meeting was the lively give and take session with Ken tackling a wide range of questions.

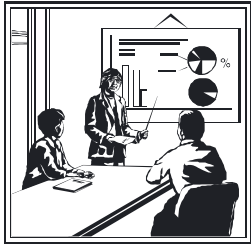


Ken and some of his Humanist Friends

March Meeting

Our March 20th regular meeting will feature a panel of varied expertise that will take up issues raised by Mel Gibson's film "Passion of the Christ."

Go see the film before the meeting. The more who have seen it the better the discussion.

Humanist Society of Santa Barbara**Members of the Board****2003 - 2004**

Chairman: Richard Cousineau
687-2371 dkcgeo@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: 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

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 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

If 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 have 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 complementary basis. For more information contact Mary Wilk or any member of our Society.

Chairman's Chat

by Dick Cousineau

For the first time in our country's history, an amendment has been proposed to our Constitution that would limit and restrict civil rights.



The present 27 amendments relax restrictions and/or eliminate discrimination in one form or another. Our President, who has his hands full with an illegal and unprovoked war that is killing thousands, with a staggering debt that will impact generations to come, with a hemorrhage of middle-class jobs, and with America's prestige a smoldering ruin, presents us with his intention to tell some of our fellow citizens that they cannot profess their loving commitment to each other in a civil ceremony. What impudence! What effrontery! What baseless nerve to propose such a hateful proposition onto one segment of the population with whom he disagrees theologically. An ancient theology based on the traditions of a bloodthirsty tribe of nomads that lived over 2500 years ago! I can't believe it! I am livid at what this theologically primitive and intolerant American ayatollah is proposing for our secular nation. The marriage of two loving homosexuals is not the business of Mr. Bush, nor his primitive religious belief system, and especially not our country. I abhor this neo-McCarthyism of the present regime.

On another topic, I want to inform you that our friend Don Young has felt it necessary to resign from the Board of this Society effective just now. We will miss Don's determined optimism, progressive thinking, and quiet strength. In his place, I have nominated Hope

Smith to fill out Don's term until June, the end of this fiscal year. This will be discussed at our regular Board meeting to be held at Anne Rojas' and Russ Boggie's home, at 5PM on March 15th. (Any member of this society is welcome at our Board meetings. Just call the hostess to tell her that you are coming.) In conversation with Don last week we discussed the late Carl Sagan's marvelous book, *The Demon Haunted World*. On re-reading parts of it again after a few years I came across some wonderful pearls of wisdom and insights into our current conditions, namely:" An ancient Chinese proverb advises 'Better to be too credulous than be too skeptical' but this is from an extremely conservative society in which safety and security were more prized than freedom and curiosity, and where the rulers had a powerful vested interest in not being challenged. We critical thinkers, skeptics, searchers and scientists, would say, "Better to be too skeptical (without cynicism) than too credulous". Be not afraid to challenge and question the leaders. Hey, this is where I started this column.

See ya soon,
Dick



Reprinted with permission. L. Lau of the Freedom from Religion Foundation

Social Scene

by Anne Rojas

Summer Solstice Party

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!! This year's Summer Solstice Party will be at the home of Anne and Russ. It will be a potluck/pool party (the latter optional). The usual zany games and contests and of course, the fabled "Duck Off." Participate or just "kick back" and enjoy the view. This time we can play unmolested by Park Rangers! I am working on musical entertainment. Date will be the 3rd Saturday of June (the 19th) in lieu of the normal meeting. (The Solstice Parade and Father's Day is the following weekend.) Details later.

2004 American Atheist Convention

The 2004 Atheist Convention in San Diego promises to be interesting and fun. So far, about six of us are going. Should you care to join us, reserve space (business class) on Amtrak for Thursday, April 8th on the 9:21 AM train (arrive in San Diego at 3:10 PM).

The hotel van will meet us and transport us at no charge. The return trip is on Sunday, April 11th with a 4:00 PM departure (arrive Santa Barbara at 9:38 PM). This schedule means we will spend three nights in the convention hotel. Please let me know if you plan on going by train. I have made many trips to visit family in San Diego and the trains have been great – on time, clean, comfortable, and uncrowded. Business class is well worth the very minor cost upgrade.

Board Meeting

The next Board Meeting will be at home of Anne and Russ on Monday, March 15th at 5 pm. All regular HSSB members are welcome. Light supper will be served. Come and give us your input! Call Anne or Russ at 564-6086

if you are not a Board member and would like to attend.

Dining Out

After March 20th meeting we will dine at Ming Dynasty in the K-Mart Shopping Center in Goleta. I will reserve the 2 round tables in the back room. The Ming Dynasty features a very nice buffet, attractive surroundings, and great prices.

Please note: If you would like more variety in choice of places to dine, you must be willing to reserve one week ahead with a firm commitment to attend. "Walk-ins" for a Saturday dinner are not acceptable at any restaurant I have researched.

Sunday Brunch

Our Sunday Brunches have been temporarily suspended. Please let me know if you would like it resurrected! Again, as with the dinner locales, we are very limited in places if you do not care to make a reservation ahead.

Refreshments

Please contact Parkie or Diane if you are willing to bring cookies or drinks to our regular meeting. Your time should be once every two years!! The same people keep bringing the goodies, but everyone eats!! Please do your fair share!!!

Your input, suggestions, help, etc. are always welcome!

Biltmore Dinner

The March buffet dinner will be on Thursday, March 18th. We "do" this buffet every other month at 6:30 pm. There are no separate checks, so call Pat or John Coppejeans if you want to come. Reservations mandatory!! We usually have around ten Humanists..

The Exercised Editor

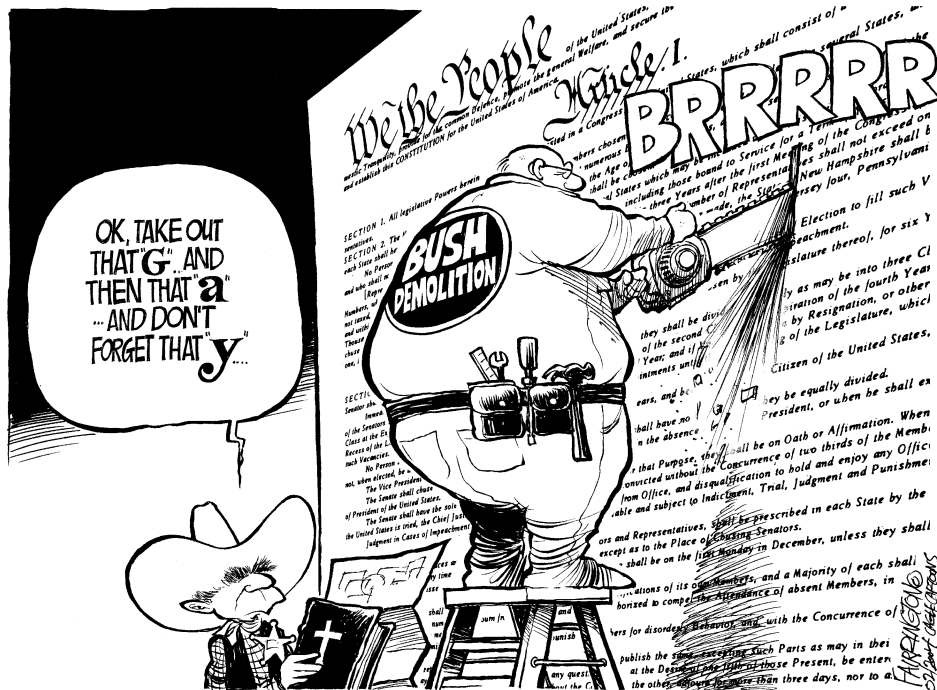
by Roger Schlueter

While there is (as usual) much to be exercised about in the world at large, this month I want to focus on the positive, creative news regarding the HSSB newsletter.

First and foremost, you will have noticed the new name of our newsletter. Personally speaking, it won my own vote, although close behind for me was "Bailey's Bulletin" in honor of our lead founder and first newsletter editor, Keith Bailey. I would like to find some way to keep Keith's name and legacy alive beyond, of course, keeping the HSSB itself a vibrant Humanist organization, which is the ultimate tribute. Any ideas?

"supersize" their order at our next McDonald's after-meeting dining extravaganza at no cost! Jes' kidding! Thanks, Barbara and Don, for your creative entry. Our newsletter will be all the better for your clever contribution.

But there is even more good news. Hope Smith has made an excellent suggestion for a new, regular newsletter column entitled, "Our Favorite Passages" which will contain a phrase, sentence, paragraph or selection from any literary source (most likely a book, but it could be from a film, newsletter editorial, on-line source, or whatever) that has particular relevance to the principles of Humanism. But it must be one of "Our" favorites. That is, it must be an entry that captured the imagination of one of us and that we thought worthwhile sharing with the whole membership.



Hope has started this tradition with her submission on the next page. It may be that the HSSB Book Group will have a contribution to make now and then. Most importantly, what "passage" do you particularly like that you would like to share with the membership?

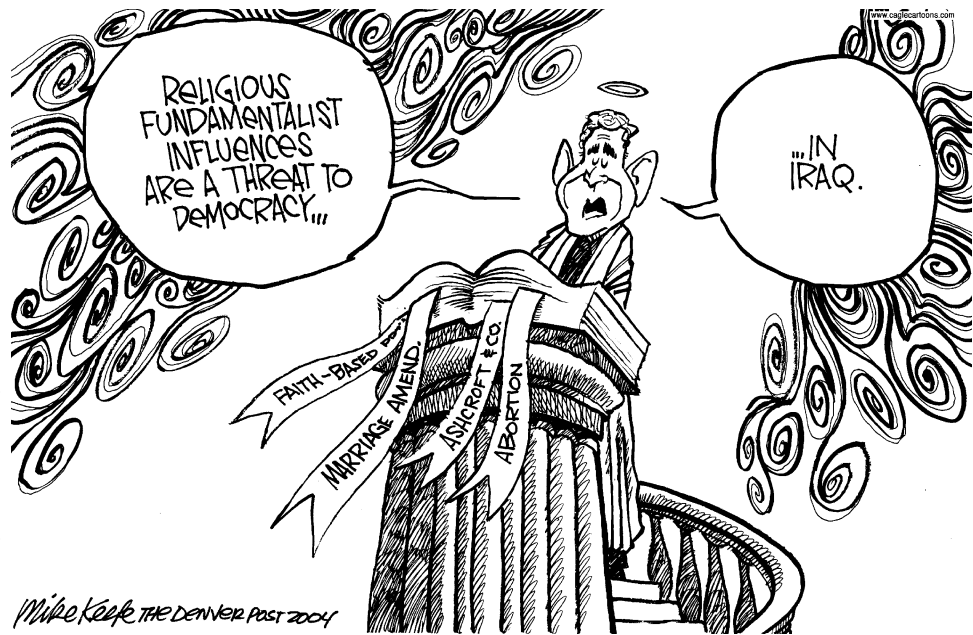
Another newsletter tradition that was highly popular in the past was the "Getting to Know You" column that featured

biographical information about one of our members each month. It provided a nice vehicle for, well, "getting to know" our members, both new and old. Lottie Berg

The winning entry was submitted by Don and Barbara Margerum. Congratulations! This means the Margerums will be able to

White was our last regular “Getting to Know You” contributor and she did an outstanding job. But Lottie was not able to continue her regular contributions and, unfortunately, the column has fallen by the wayside. It needs to be resurrected (can I use that word?) as a vital element of our newsletter. If you would like to be the “Getting to Know You” columnist, please contact me.

You will notice the inclusion of some editorial cartoons in this issue. I hope to continue this practice on a regular basis. Such cartoons usually offer a highly biased, acerbic view of the issues of the day. Whether you agree or disagree with the proffered view is unimportant; that you think and rethink your own perspective is.



As an aside, the major source of these cartoons is a web site created by Daryl Cagle, the son of Bernadene Cagle, one of our earliest members who died in 1999. Bernadene was a very special lady who is missed to this day by those who knew her. It is especially rewarding to bring her back to these pages through her son Daryl.

Finally, I am delighted to welcome Diane Krohn as the Assistant Newsletter Editor. Although they may not be obvious, Diane’s contributions are evident in this edition and I expect to see her ‘byline’ and contributions ever more evident with each issue. Thanks, Diane, for pitching in!

Our Favorite Passages

by Hope Smith

George Bernard Shaw wrote the slim book *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God* in 1932, but as its theme is a somewhat caustic history of the changing concepts of God shown in the Bible, it’s as fresh today as then. As with his

stage plays, he added at the end an explanatory commentary, from which I quote the excerpts below.

"In all these instances the Bible means the translation authorized by King James the First of the best examples in ancient Jewish literature of natural and political history, of poetry, morality, theology, and rhapsody. The translation was extraordinarily well done because to the translators what they were translating was not merely a curious collection of ancient books written by different authors in different stages of culture, but the Word of God divinely revealed through his chosen and expressly inspired scribes.... In this state of exaltation they

made a translation so magnificent that to this day the common human Britisher or citizen of the United States of North America accepts and worships it as a single book by a single author, the book being the Book of Books and the author being God. Its charm, its promise of salvation, its pathos, and its majesty have been raised to transcendence by Handel, who can still make atheists cry and give materialists the thrill of the sublime with his Messiah. Even the ignorant, to whom religion is crude fetishism and magic, prize it as a paper talisman that will exorcize ghosts, prevent witnesses from lying, and, if carried devoutly in a soldier's pocket, stop bullets."

"As to Bible science, it has over the nineteenth-century materialistic fashion in biology the advantage of being a science of life and not an attempt to substitute physics and chemistry for it; but it is hopelessly pre-evolutionary; its descriptions of the origin of life and morals are obviously fairy tales; its astronomy is terra centric; its notions of the starry universe are childish; its history is epical and legendary: in short, people whose education in these departments is derived from the Bible are so absurdly misinformed as to be unfit for public employment, parental responsibility, or the franchise. As an encyclopedia, therefore, the Bible must be shelved with the first edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica as a record of what men once believed, and a measure of how far they have left their obsolete beliefs behind."

The premise of Government Information Awareness is that individual citizens have the right to know details about government.

Web Site of the Month

by Colin Gordon

This site, opines Roger Schlueter, "oughta be in everyone's Favorites." It is:

<http://www.opengov.us/>

and its mission is "To empower citizens by providing a single, comprehensive, easy-to-use repository of information on individuals, organizations, and corporations related to the government of the United States of America."

They suggest that the best way to get started is simply by clicking around. Try looking for your elected representatives, judges in your area, or even your employer. You'll see some of the types of information available. And we are asked to check back often, as the system grows quickly. It does seem to have some serious growing to do with several pages still under construction, but even in its infancy is well worth a visit.

The premise of GIA (Government Information Awareness, the site banner) is that individual citizens have the right to know details about government. The goal is to develop a technology which empowers citizens to form a sort of intelligence agency; gathering, sorting, and acting on information they gather about the government. Only by employing such technologies can we hope to have a government "by the people, and for the people."

Book Club Update

by Dick Cousineau

The Humanist Book Club will be reading “Two Old Women” by Velma Wallis for the March 10th meeting at Art Brody’s home. Please call Art at 692-8898 before attending.

“Reading Lolita in Tehran” by Azar Nafisi will be the selection for the April 14th discussion to be held at the Margerums. Please call ahead at 969-5149.

Domestic Solutions Update

by Josette Barskey

Are you into wood-working? Would you like to help some young, budding artists reach their full potential. If so, our principle non-profit charitable organization, Domestic Violence Solutions, needs easels for their kids who want to explore their artistic talents. For more information, contact Josette at 962-4009.