

THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

May, 2005

It's a CELEBRATION!

Saturday, May 21st at 3:00 pm.
Holiday Inn - 5650 Calle Real, Goleta

Two top names in the field of Humanism will address:

The Future of Humanism

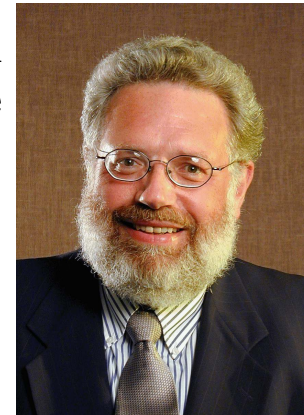
Tom Flynn
Editor, Free Inquiry magazine

"Will Reason Finally Prevail"

and

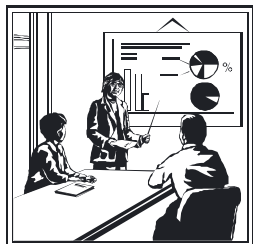
Eddie Tabash
Honorary Chairman, Center for Inquiry - West

"A Humanist Blueprint for Political
Action"



Join us for a 3-course dinner including dessert and wine!

Tickets for speakers and dinner are \$30 each and reservations must be received by May 15th
Contact Dick (687-2371) to make reservations or for further information.

Humanist Society of Santa Barbara**Board Members****2004-2005**

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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 usually 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.

(See **Membership**, Page 3)

(Membership, continued from Page 2)

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

Joan Hebert & Erik Thomassen
5455 8th St., #66
Carpinteria, CA 93013
684-0580
hebert5455@earthlink.com

Lillian Carson Hurst
1125 High Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
969-4229
drlcarson@aol.com

Sam T. Hurst
1125 High Rd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93108
969-0499

Social Scene

By Anne H. Rojas

We had quite a turnout for the dining out after the April meeting at the museum with over 30



diners participating. I have gotten feedback from only one unhappy person who state, "the food was awful and they didn't adequately handle the group." I would like comments from others of you who participated.

One of the major problems for me is that no

one wants to commit to making a dinner reservation with me for the dining out after the regular Saturday meetings. Naturally this severely limits the restaurants available to work with on a Saturday in the afternoon. Your suggestions are solicited.

There is no dining out in May, nor is there a Solstice party due to the 10th anniversary celebration at the Holiday Inn. *[Ed. Note: See Page 1]* We still have tickets left and welcome member participation. It will be a great event and we should celebrate the success and growth of our group.

The last Sunday of the Month Brunch seems to have found a home at Crocodile. It is centrally located for most of us, has easy parking, and offers separate checks and nice food and service. I still plan to investigate other places, however.

The next dining out will be at Rusty's Pizza on upper State between Las Positas and La Cumbre. The last time we went to Rusty's we had a private room, nice service and good attendance. Please give me your feedback on this and any other social matters. Unfortunately, I have not gotten much response to the ideas of a Singles and New Member Reception.

And the day will come, when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the Supreme Being as His Father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva, in the brain of Jupiter.

— Thomas Jefferson

Chairman's Chat by Dick Cousineau

Yes, at times, I have become pessimistic about the impact of Humanism in this Republic, and I do hope our featured speakers on May 21st, can boost my "spirits". Every month, every week, every day it seems that the national magazines, weekly newspapers, and even our local news paper all feature articles regarding the comings and goings of Christian leaders, political Christians, and especially the rise in



Fundamentalism in the country. National weekly magazines lately have given prominence to Ministers, Popes, Virgins who Conceive, right-wing spokesmen, born-again "Intelligentsia" and the apparent invulnerability of certain politicians who have been "ordained" to lead the masses. Yet the religious leaders still decry their victimhood because some of their past undeserved privileges have been curtailed. Although over 90% of the students at the US Air Force Academy profess Christianity, ministers such as Mr. Dodson of FoF in Colorado Springs, complain of discrimination when the Air Force declines to allow special on-site requests from his organization.

In the face of such developments we secularists carry on with the message of rationality, fairness, and separation of Church and State, among others. We can be proud of our colleagues such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Barry Lynn of AU,

Michael Newdow, Eugenie Scott of NCSE, Tom Flynn of Free Inquiry and others for standing up and speaking Truth to Power. We have made giant strides during the last generation to help our civilization achieve partial civil rights for many, gender equality for many, the teaching of critical thinking to some elementary school students, major efforts to oppose anti-scientific inroads to the secondary curriculum, and our own First Amendment Defense Fund, recently renamed the Dudley Duncan Memorial Fund. In our small way we have helped the on-going struggle against the forces of totalitarianism. Some of these strides are eroding in the tenor of the nation at this time. "Liberal", "freethinker", "agnostic", "unpatriotic" and, of course, "atheist" are the new opprobrious labels now being hurled at us from those making governmental policy at this time.

Please join us on May 21 for our tenth anniversary celebration to stand and be counted for those issues we know are right and just. Be a visible part of the on-going opposition to narrow-mindedness, to self-centered righteousness, to misguided parochial value systems and to government handouts to religious organizations. We are gathering to re-commit ourselves to a Philosophy of Fairness, of Separation of Church and State, to honor freethinking individuals and groups that continue to speak up for ethical human values.

See you there.

When I was a kid I used to pray every night for a new bicycle. Then I realized that the Lord doesn't work that way so I stole one and asked Him to forgive me.

— Emo Philips, stand-up comedian

Letters to the Editor

[Ed. Note: Chairman Cousineau's editorial in the April newsletter has drawn a strong reaction from one reader who responded with the following letter to the editor. I am aware that Ron's perspective is shared by other members so his thoughts should be given some credence. That said, I have not received any letters in support of Cousineau's position, possibly because nobody was aware that there might be a controversy to be debated. Thus, I have written a response to Ron to ensure that both sides are heard.]

What is your opinion? Many HSSB members express themselves on the pages of the Santa Barbara News-Press, which I applaud. But remember, you also have a voice in this "paper" of your own organization.]

Humanism is about respect for humans and the rest of that nature stuff. I was shocked when I read an article in the April Secular Circular that was very disrespectful of human beings. I understand that there are many ideas that are not worthy of respect, but people are different. A religious fanatic like any fanatic is human. It is proper I believe to attack the idea, not the person. People have the right to be stupid and express themselves. Even Rodney Dangerfield wanted respect. So in my opinion the following statement should not have been in our newsletter.

"Do people still give their minds away to arrogant, self-important, fossilized priests spouting 14 century rhetoric? Who, besides the fearful and the ignorant, give a dry burp to these frozen gargoyles of times past?"

I have to admit it is very colorful language, but let's show respect for people, not

necessarily for their ideas. I know that all religious people are not fearful and ignorant, and so does the writer of the article in question.

Ron Kronenberg

(... to which I replied ...)

I disagree with Ron's opening statement - on two counts. First, I don't think the word "respect" is appropriate in this context. Second, I think the focus should not be on "humans" but rather should be on "ideas" held by humans. Let me explore these objections in turn.

The word "respect" in my vocabulary is a powerful word. It denotes an attitude that must be earned by another by hard work, critical thinking or the like. It is most certainly not an attitude that is accorded to someone else simply because they have a world view different from my own. My attitude is that I should entertain any idea that is presented to me. But, if that idea has no merit, in my opinion, then I have no obligation to accord it any "respect."

Take, for example, Scientology - a topic of our September meeting. In my view, any proponent of Scientology deserves a fair hearing. But once it is shown that this "religion" is nothing more than a money-making scam, it certainly does not deserve my "respect." Ideas must earn "respect" on their own merits, not simply because they are espoused by someone else - and this is especially so for religious ideas.

Which leads directly to my other disagreement with Ron - namely that Humanism "is about

*(See **Letters**, Page 6)*

respect for humans...” No, it is not. I don’t respect Pol Pot. Or Muhammad Atta. Or Augusto Pinochet. Humanists should respect the ideas and, more importantly, the actions of those individuals that lead to the betterment of mankind. Others, such as the above, who harm mankind merit no respect from Humanists, no matter the fact that they are humans just like you and me.

Did Dick use inflammatory language to express these ideas? Maybe. Should he avoid such language? Maybe not.

Roger Schlueter

(... and Ron gets the last word ...)

A major component of democracy is dialog. This dialog needs to take place with those with whom we disagree. Obviously, if one's existence is directly threatened, dialog may not be sufficient; but short of that, let's dialog. We cannot expect communication to take place without mutual respect. It would shake my Humanist beliefs, if I felt there was nothing to be learned from someone, just because they are religious. I would like the religious folk, to share that attitude toward atheists.

Ron Kronenberg

[Ed.. Note: This letter was originally submitted to the LA Times]

Enough already!

Are you changing your format from being a news magazine to being a religious publication?

How many more covers and articles can we expect that glorify mythical beings and stories?

Please stick to objectively reporting the news and leave all this religious writing to those who make a living from propagating these superstitions.

John L. Coppejans
Santa Barbara CA

Evolution's Great Trial by Robert Bernstein

Ed Larson's Evolution talk drew a large audience at the Natural History Museum's large Fleischmann auditorium. The main focus was on the history of the Scopes "Monkey Trial".

Historian and Lawyer Larson outlined the background of the Scopes trial. In the 1920s, fundamentalist Christians began to lobby against the teaching of evolution in the schools. In 1925, the first anti-evolution law was passed.



Photo: Robert Bernstein

The ACLU offered to defend any Tennessee schoolteacher against this law. Dayton was eager to get on the map. Science teacher John Scopes was drafted to challenge Tennessee's new anti-evolution law in court.

*(See **Evolution**, Page 7)*

(Evolution, continued from page 6)

Two of the country's most famous attorneys faced off in the trial. William Jennings Bryan, a progressive and three-time Democratic presidential nominee, was the prosecuting attorney. His opposition to evolution was based primarily on his opposition to "social Darwinism." The most famous criminal defense attorney of the time, Clarence Darrow, a staunch agnostic, represented the defense. Darrow charged his clients millions, and this was a rare pro bono case for him.

The trial was marked by hoopla and a carnival-like atmosphere. Thousands of people swelled the small town of a thousand. For twelve days in July, 1925, 100 reporters covered the trial and sent dispatches back home. It was the first American trial to be broadcast over the radio, and the public heard far more of the 8-day trial than the jury, which only heard 2 hours of it. On the day the trial moved outdoors, Darrow took the unusual step of calling Bryan as an expert witness on the Bible.

Scopes was convicted and the conviction was upheld on appeal. In 1968, anti-evolution laws were finally struck down. But in recent years, the fundamentalists have tried new tactics. For example, the Institute for Creation Science, the Discovery Institute, and others have maintained that Biblical creation accounts should be given equal time because evolution is only a "theory." In 1981, the National Academy of Science tried to evade taking sides on the issue by declaring that science and religion can coexist in different domains. Today 94% of Americans believe in God, the same proportion of Americans who held such beliefs 100 years ago.

Getting to Know You: Ron Kronenberg

By Diane Krohn

Ron is the Treasurer of the HSSB, and he says that he hasn't lost any of the money yet!

Ron was born in Chicago to parents who were Jewish and from Poland and Russia. While he was in high school, Ron went to Israel for 6 months with a rather radical Zionist-Marxist Jewish youth group. He paid for the trip in a very capitalistic way –with money he'd saved from his paper route for the Chicago Sun-Times. Because Israel was a new country at this time, it didn't have an abundance of food. Ron remembers being impressed that there was a shortage of food, and it gave him a different outlook on the world.

When Ron returned to the US, he attended Wayne State University in Detroit. He was married at 19, and had 3 children by the time he was 25. All the time he was in college, he also worked full-time as a welfare investigator for the city of Detroit. He graduated from college and taught at a variety of schools, including a community college, and he also became the principal at a secular Jewish school. In 1967, he took a sabbatical and, with his family, lived on a kibbutz in Israel for a year. Ron feels that this was a great experience for his children. Ron and his family were involved with CORE and the civil rights movement in the 1960's and had marched with Martin Luther King. They were also in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention, but because of the children, left before things got rough.

(See Kronenberg, page 8)

(Kronenberg, continued from page 7)

Ron was divorced from his first wife in 1974, and he met Wilma the day his divorce became final. He was ice skating, knocked her down, and then helped her up. Wilma obviously enjoyed being picked up by strange men!

After Ron and Wilma retired, they enjoyed traveling and camping around the country, starting with a trip to the Florida Keys. Ron had two aunts living in Santa Barbara at around this time, so he and Wilma came to Santa Barbara to help his aunts, and ended up living here.

Ron's path to Humanism came from a Marxist-socialist view of the world, and his early travel experiences. He had attended a few HSSB meetings many years ago, but felt

that the atmosphere was too anti-religious. He became friends with Dick Cousineau and Judy Freeman through the Unitarian Society, and re-joined the HSSB because of his friendship with Dick and Judy. Ron likes the fact that the HSSB programs and speakers are becoming more expansive in a variety of topics. He would like to see the HSSB develop more into a community, because he feels that what people get from religion is the social interaction, rather than the theology.

Ron is an active hiker and traveler. He and Wilma have traveled to many places, including New Zealand, Australia, the Galapagos Islands, Israel, and Europe. They will be visiting Yosemite, a favorite place, during May; no doubt, enjoying the spectacular waterfalls this year.