

THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

November, 2005

A *Secular Circular* Special Edition Edelen Live!

Welcome

by Roger Schlueter, Editor

If you are reading this in the comfort of the Garvin Theater, welcome to this special event featuring Bill Edelen as our headline speaker.

This event is co-sponsored by the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara (HSSB) and by the Center for Philosophical Education (CPE) at Santa Barbara City College. The HSSB would like to thank Joe White, Chair of the CPE, and the many other members of the SBCC staff who have contributed to making this event a success.

The *Secular Circular* is the monthly newsletter of the HSSB. It is distributed to all of our membership, to other interested members [in the community, and is available on our web site at \[www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org\]\(http://www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org\)](#).

If you are reading this from the comfort of your own home, you may be surprised to see that this edition has only half the normal number of pages and is missing several of our normal features. We decided on this format so that we could distribute a copy of the newsletter to every attendee of the Edelen talk so they could get a quick snapshot of who a Humanist is and what the HSSB does as an organization.

Why are we making a special effort to bring Bill Edelen to Santa Barbara? There are a number of reasons but probably the most important is that he provokes thought. His columns in the *Santa Barbara News-Press* often draw outrage...and praise. Derision and support. Demands to remove him and demands for more of him.

Another reason to bring Bill to Santa Barbara is that he is a fun, interesting guy. The last time we hosted him here, we had a standing-room-only crowd that thoroughly enjoyed his presentation. This return visit promises to be every much as rewarding.

So, without further ado, "...Here's Bill."



The Affirmations of Humanism: *A Statement of Principles and Values*

- **We are committed** to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems.
- **We deplore** efforts to denigrate human intelligence, to seek to explain the world in supernatural terms, and to look outside nature for salvation.
- **We believe** that scientific discovery and technology can contribute to the betterment of human life.
- **We believe** in an open and pluralistic society and that democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.
- **We are committed** to the principle of the separation of church and state.
- **We cultivate** the art of negotiation and compromise as a means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding.
- **We are concerned** with securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance.
- **We believe** in supporting the disadvantaged and the handicapped so that they will be able to help themselves.
- **We attempt** to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, and string to work together for the common good of humanity.
- **We want to protect** and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species.
- **We believe** in enjoying life here and now and in developing our creative talents to their fullest.
- **We believe** in the cultivation of moral excellence.
- **We respect** the right to privacy. Mature adults should be allowed to fulfill their aspirations, to express their sexual preferences, to exercise reproductive freedom, to have access to comprehensive and informed health-care, and to die with dignity.
- **We believe** in the common moral decencies; altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, and responsibility. Humanist ethics are amenable to critical, rational guidance. There are normative standards that we discover together. Moral principles are tested by their consequences.
- **We are concerned** with the moral education of our children. We want to nourish reason and compassion.
- **We are engaged** by the arts no less than by the sciences.
- **We are citizens** of the universe and are excited by discoveries still to be made in the cosmos.
- **We are skeptical** of untested claims to knowledge, and we are open to novel ideas and seek new departures to our thinking.
- **We affirm Humanism** as a realistic alternative to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence and as a source of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in the service to others.
- **We believe** in optimism rather than pessimism, hope rather than despair, learning in the place of dogma, truth instead of ignorance, joy rather than guilt or sin, tolerance in the place of fear, love instead of hatred, compassion over selfishness, beauty instead of ugliness, and reason rather than blind faith or irrationality.
- **We believe** in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.

Humanist Society of Santa Barbara
P.O. Box 30232
Santa Barbara, California 93130

Chairman's Chat by Dick Cousineau

Just what is this Separation of Church and State anyway? We hear about it more and more, not just from our Humanists friends but also from the strident Religionists in our midst. Prior to the founding of our country all nations had an official religion, one that all citizens supported whether they agreed or not with its dogma. This had been a fact of life for thousands of years. Along came the "Sons of the Enlightenment" in the late 19th Century; personified by Paine, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison – among many others. For some years the individual States still retained the previous privileges of State support for the dominant religion.

While holding to the idea of separate domains for religion and government, the issue hadn't come to



Dick Cousineau

prominence until President Jefferson received a respectful yet clarion call to remove religious "Hierarchy and Tyranny" from the land. This call came from the Baptist Association of Connecticut who felt that their liberty was being curtailed by being forced to support the official Episcopal (Anglican) church.

Jefferson, in his warm and personable manner answers the Danbury Baptists as follows:

"Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which decided that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof' thus *building a wall of*

separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural rights in opposition to his social duties."

From these sentiments of Thomas Jefferson, the idea of distinct spheres of interest, Government and Religion, has grown to embody a social contract that encourages the individual belief (or non-belief) completely separate from the actions of the State.

It can be argued that this separation has been of particular benefit to religious practice in America in contrast to, for example, many European nations where there is an official state religion. In these countries, church attendance is relatively low, possibly because the church can simply rely on the state for its survival. Here, churches have to compete in the marketplace of ideas and must aggressively pursue congregants to survive. This "survival of the fittest" has ultimately lead to the prominent role that religion plays in our society.

Thus, I find it somewhat ironic that the most vociferous opponents to this eloquent doctrine comes from certain large Baptist and Evangelical congregations, primarily in the South and Midwest. Perhaps a history refresher course would be helpful there. I continue to urge all Humanists to stand and defend this doctrine of Separation whenever the opportunity arises.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

– First Amendment, Ratified December, 1791

Humanist Society Activities

[Ed. Note: The Humanist Society engages in a wide variety of activities, a sample of which is shown on this page. For a more complete listing and further details, visit our [web site at SantaBarbaraHumanists.org](http://SantaBarbaraHumanists.org). We'll start with our regular monthly meetings.]

Programs

by Nancy Wahl

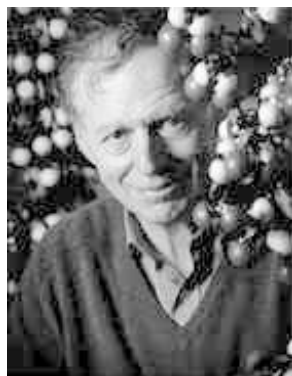
Saturday, January 21, 2006 California's Population Time Bomb



Diana Hull, Ph.D.,
President of [Californians
for Population Stabilization](#)

Dr. Hull is a behavioral scientist and retired Clinical Associate Professor. A former member of the Sierra Club's Population Committee, her research has been published in *Social Science and Medicine*, *Psychological Review* and many other journals. She was a founding member of the Media and Health Divisions of the American Psychological Association and is a member of UCSB's Foundation Board of Trustees (emeritus).

Saturday, February 18, 2006 If God Didn't Create Us, How Did Life Begin?



Robert Shapiro, Ph.D.,
Professor of Chemistry at
[New York University](#)

Dr. Shapiro's research in DNA chemistry has been supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Energy; the National

Science Foundation; and other organizations. He has written three books for the general public: *Life Beyond Earth*, with Gerald Feinberg, *Origins: A Skeptic's Guide to the Creation of Life on Earth*, and *The Human Blueprint*.

Book Club

by Martin Shapiro

The next meeting of the Humanist Society Book Group will take place on Wednesday, November 16th, at 1:30. (3rd Wednesday).

The book we'll be discussing is the humanist classic *The Age of Reason*, by Tom Paine (who also wrote *Common Sense*).

The Age of Reason is relatively short (200 pages) and relatively inexpensive (Dover Books has a reprint out for 7 bucks).

Social Scene

by Anne Rojas

We have had a busy October and look forward to several social events to finishing off 2005.

Our dining out after the meetings is always enjoyed by the members with 25 people coming to the Crocodile in October.

We are still having our last Sunday brunch of the month and it is regularly attended by about 12 persons. Apparently, we are in competition with the Sunday morning TV news shows. Non members are cordially invited to these events since it is a good way to get to know us in a smaller setting.

December features our annual winter Solstice party which this year will have the special dinner menu in the private back room at Sizzler. We will have a professional guitar duo coming from Los Angeles to sing and play during the evening. We will feature our wine social prior to the meal and have the raffle and door prizes.