



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

MARCH 2014

March Program:

Roy Speckhardt

Executive Director of the American Humanist Association: "We Are In It to Win"

Our speaker on March 15th is Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director of the American Humanist Association (AHA). Roy has served as the Executive Director of AHA since 2005, and he is a frequent media commentator who has appeared on *Good Morning America*, CNN, Fox News and NPR. Roy also serves on the boards of The Institute for Humanist Studies, the United Coalition of Reason, The Humanist Institute, and the Secular Coalition for America Education Fund. He writes a regular column for *The Huffington Post* and *Patheos*.

Roy holds an M.B.A. from George Mason University and a B.A. in sociology from Mary Washington College. He currently lives in Washington, D.C.

Roy will address HSSB on the topic of "We are in it to win," which is in reference to the stance of the AHA in defending the Separation of Church and State in the courts of the land with vigor and more exposure.



Accompanying Roy, and also speaking with us, will be his wife, Maggie Ardiente, who is the Director of Outreach and Communication of AHA. Maggie is a former board member of the Secular Student Alliance and is a current board member of The Humanist Institute.

When: Saturday, March 15th, 2014

Where: Patio Room, Vista Del Monte (**Park ONLY** in spaces marked "VDM".)

Time: Doors open at 2:30pm. Program begins at 3:00 pm

Cost: \$2 members/\$5 non-members

Dinner: Vista Del Monte. \$22 includes tax and tip. RSVP judithannfontana@yahoo.com or 967-7911.

For More Info: Activities@SantaBarbaraHumanists.org or call 769-HSSB

Activities

Judy Fontana

It just keeps getting better and better. We had a large after-program crowd at the Gourmet Dining Room at Santa Barbara City College following the Darwin presentation in February and lots of lively conversation. This month please join us on March 15th (oh, beware the ides of March) at Vista Del Monte following the program for another great buffet. This month's menu is tossed green salad, quinoa salad, sourdough rolls, chicken with honey mango sauce, chef's fresh catch, rice pilaf, mashed potatoes, steamed asparagus, vegetable blend, assorted desserts, beverages and wine and all for the unbelievable price of \$22 per person, tax and tip included.

RSVP to judithannfontana@yahoo.com or call 967-7911. Look forward to seeing you there.

President's Column:

The Global Tragedy of the Commons

Richard Martin

In 1968, UCSB professor Garrett Hardin published an essay "The Tragedy of the Commons" in the journal *Science*, which became a call to action for the environmental movement of the 1970's. The "tragedy" is that depletion or pollution of a shared resource by individuals, each acting independently and rationally according to their own self interest, acts contrary to the group's long-term best interests.

Today we are faced with the ultimate tragedy of the commons - pollution of the atmosphere with "greenhouse gases", mainly carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, which absorb heat radiation escaping into space from the earth, causing global warming. This is unlike any threat ever experienced by humanity, other than possibly the threat of a global nuclear war. However nuclear weapons

are controlled by governments and their use is suicidal, whereas global warming is caused by our modern way of life, by civilization itself.

Serious scientific concern about climate change due to atmospheric pollution began in the 60's and 70's, and the scientific consensus about global warming began forming in the 80's. To address the issue on a global basis, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by member governments of the United Nations, and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1988. Thousands of climate scientists and other experts contribute on a voluntary basis, without payment from the IPCC, to writing and reviewing reports. These are reviewed by representatives from all the governments, who produce a "Summary for Policy Makers." Finally, this summary is subjected to line-by-line approval by all participating governments. This involves the governments of more than 120 countries. Never before has there been such an ongoing international scientific evaluation on a crucial problem for civilization.

The IPCC has published four comprehensive assessment reports (1990, 1995, 2001, and 2007) reviewing the latest climate science, as well as a number of special reports on particular topics. Drafts of these reports are made available for comment in open review processes to which anyone may contribute. People from over 130 countries contributed to the Fourth Assessment Report. The contributors included more than 450 lead authors, 800 contributing authors, and 2500 scientific expert reviewers.

As in the past, the Fifth Assessment Report will consist of four separate reports issued by four different Working Groups: "Physical Science Basis"; "Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability"; "Mitigation"; and "Synthesis." The reports are published at different times depending on when they are finished by the

different groups. The fifth "Physical Science Basis" report was published in September 2013, and the other three Fifth Assessment Reports are due to be published this year. When "the IPCC report" is cited in the media, it usually refers to the "Physical Science Basis" report, which is the key report covering the basic science of climate change.

The main conclusions of the fifth "Physical Science Basis" report (205 pages) are summarized below:

- Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950's, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia.
- Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide have increased to levels unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years.
- Human influence on the climate system is clear. It is extremely likely (95-100% probability) that human influence was the dominant cause of global warming between 1951-2010.
- Continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further global warming and changes in all components of the climate system. Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Most aspects of climate change will persist for many centuries even if emissions of CO₂ are stopped.

In his 1968 essay and after, Garrett Hardin discussed problems such as population growth and depletion of natural resources that cannot be solved by science and technology alone, but which require a change in human values. That is the case with global warming. It is clear that there are no known technical fixes that can save us from global warming. Alternative energy sources such wind, wave, solar, biofuel, geothermal, hydroelectric, and nuclear power can help, but all have their own problems and

limitations, and they cannot reasonably be expected to replace more than a fraction of the energy produced by fossil fuels. On the other hand, energy conservation has the potential to reduce greenhouse emissions as much as all alternative energy sources combined. It is clear that "substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions" will require major changes in global civilization.

Global warming is an existential problem. It has emerged as a result of activities that have been essential in producing our global civilization, such as exploration and exploitation of natural resources, scientific advancement and technological innovation, and unlimited growth of the world population and the world economy. We all contribute to global warming every day, some much more than others. In the words of Pogo in Walt Kelly's comic strip, "We have met the enemy and he is us." However, we cannot expect people to altruistically and radically change their life style and lower their standard of living unless they believe that global warming is a very serious and immediate threat to civilization, and that everyone will share in the deprivation that will be required to limit it.

Today there is rampant science denialism about global warming in the US. We need much more education to teach people how science works as a system, and why it works. Science is the only subject I can think of that is truly universal. There are no distinctions between the principles and practice of American science, Chinese science, Icelandic science, *et cetera*. International scientific conventions attract scientists from all over the globe and they all speak the same scientific "language" and follow the same scientific methods for finding the truth. That is why it is possible for thousands of climate scientists from more than 120 countries to reach a "95-100%" consensus that human activities are the dominant cause of global warming.

For my February column, I ran the essay by Sam Harris on "Our Narrow Definition of Science." He concludes that "We must abandon the idea that science is distinct from the rest of human rationality. When you are adhering to the highest standards of logic and evidence, you are thinking scientifically. And when you're not, you're not." The problem is that most people have not learned how to find information that adheres to the highest standards of evidence and logic, and to form their opinions based on that information. We need more educational programs to teach people how to do that, and to instill the values of critical thinking.

I got a new ankle joint four years ago, and when I am asked how my ankle is doing, I reply "Not as good as I hoped, or as bad as I feared." With global warming, I hope that there soon will be a major coordinated worldwide movement to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and I fear that already it may be too little too late for my grandchildren.

Bill Nye vs. Ken Ham



A Rare Opportunity!

Not often are there openings on HSSB's Program Committee, but there is one now! If you've ever had thoughts on how our programs could be improved, here is your chance to put them into effect. Just notify Dick Cousineau at dkcgeo@cox.net of your interest. You just may be the chosen one!

Help Wanted!

The HSSB Publicity Committee, David Echols chairman, is looking for members to assist in preparing and distributing announcements of HSSB activities, primarily our monthly meetings. Notices, typically containing meeting details and a photograph and brief biography of our speaker, are sent to members, some non-members, and are posted online and on public notice boards around town. Moderate computer literacy is a must. Committee members communicate with each other and with online sources by email. The ability to write convincing advertising material and/or prepare attractive flyers is a plus! We estimate up to five hours per month would be required. Please contact David at personaltoursltd@gmail.com if you are interested.

What's Going On Here? Andrew Hankin, somewhere in New Zealand

By most overt measures, one gathering in New York City two weeks ago was just another meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, one of its multitude of meetings worldwide. At the session's end an hour later, however, as the participants clasped hands, instead of reciting the Lord's Prayer in usual AA fashion, they said together, "Live and let live."

This meeting, as the parting phrase suggests, is one of a growing number within AA that appeal

to nonreligious people in recovery, who might variously describe themselves as agnostics, atheists, humanists or freethinkers. While such groups were rare even a decade ago, now they number about 150 nationally. A first-ever convention will be held in November in Santa Monica, Calif.

The boom in nonreligious AA represents another manifestation of a more visible and confident humanist movement in the United States... Yet this recent trend within AA also marks a departure from the organization's traditional emphasis on religion.

"AA starts at its core with honesty, and how can you be honest in recovery if you're not honest in your own beliefs? If you don't believe in the God they're praying to, that's not honest practice," said Dorothy, 39, who heads the steering committee for the Convention.

Seven of AA's famous 12 steps refer either to a deity — "God," "Him" or "a Power greater than ourselves" — or to religious practices such as prayer. The ultimate goal of sobriety, as the final step states, is to achieve a "spiritual awakening." Besides the Lord's Prayer, the Serenity Prayer is a staple of AA meetings. Many of their foundational documents do simultaneously emphasize an open, inclusive, nonjudgmental attitude toward anyone seeking sobriety. The group's basic text, "Alcoholics Anonymous," notes that membership "should be an entirely personal affair which each one decides for himself in the light of past associations or his present choice." In practice, though, a religious tone became the norm within AA. Full story here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/22/us/alcoholics-anonymous-without-the-religion.html>

Secular Organizations for Sobriety / Save Our Selves:

<http://www.cfiwest.org/sos/index.htm#What%20is%20SOS>

February Speaker: Floyd Sandford as Charles Darwin in *Darwin Remembers* Robert Bernstein

Floyd Sandford was Darwin for us for over an hour. Darwin in old age, reflecting back on his life. In his old age he cares more about truth than social conventions.

He notes that the *New York Times* of March 1860 gave his *Origin of Species* a favorable review. Even though he never visited the US.

His mother died when he was 8 and he was sent to traditional schooling in Latin and Greek. But his real education was going outside and collecting. Once he had a beetle in each hand and saw a third one he wanted. He took one in his mouth and was surprised by a bitter taste it gave.

At age 16 he was sent to university in Edinburgh. He found it dull and left after two years. He went to London and found it smoky and unpleasant. His Uncle Josiah Wedgewood took him to Paris, which was his only trip to the continent. (Wedgewood's father was founder of the famous Wedgewood pottery industry.)



Floyd Sandford as Charles Darwin. Photo by Robert Bernstein.

Darwin's father sent him to Christ College, Cambridge to study theology. He loved it, but not the idea of being a country parson.

Darwin was friends with botany professor John Henslow. Henslow recommended Darwin to serve as "gentleman companion" to the young captain of the research vessel *HMS Beagle*. Darwin's father was against it, but his Uncle Wedgewood convinced his father to let him go.

So, at age 23, Darwin was off on a 3-year voyage of the *Beagle* which stretched to 5 years. Darwin was delighted that in just one day in Brazil he collected 68 different beetles. He saw frogs, parrots, insects and colossal trees.

The *Beagle* was to make a short stop in the Galapagos Islands for water and provisions, but they ended up staying a month. Darwin slept alone on shore. He was fascinated by the giant tortoises and how there was a different variety of shell type on each island. Where did they come from on these remote volcanic islands?

And the birds -- 13 different finches, related yet different species with a unique beak size and shape.

All through the *Beagle's* travels, Darwin collected specimens and sent them back to England with his careful documentation, which meant that when he returned to England, he was already becoming well known and respected for his discoveries and observations.

He moved to London and read an essay by Malthus on population. He noted how nature created huge numbers of offspring that would explode until checked. Darwin noted that man could breed dogs shaped like sausages. What could nature do?

Darwin felt lonely and considered marriage... by making a list of gains and losses! Perhaps his biggest concern was a loss of time and freedom

for his research and writing. But the gains won out and in 1838 he was engaged to his cousin Emma Wedgwood.

Emma was deeply religious, but Darwin claimed there was no friction due to their differences. They were married 43 years and had ten children. One of the saddest parts of Darwin's life was losing his young daughter Annie, who seemed to share his interests, passions and love of life and nature.

He had become less and less a believer in God and religion, and losing Annie solidified his disbelief. At age 30, he had mostly formed his ideas of natural selection and by 1844, he had written 244 pages in ink. He gave it to Emma to publish if he died.

Joseph Hooker urged him to publish his ideas, but he resisted. Darwin wanted to be absolutely sure he was right. But in June 1858, he was sent an essay by Alfred Russel Wallace, who had been working on the same ideas in Indonesia.

Darwin felt ethically obligated to forward Wallace's essay for publication. Both Darwin's 1844 paper and Wallace's essay were read together at a meeting of the London Linnean Society -- with little reaction!

Darwin hurriedly worked on his book while plagued by episodes of intense gastro-intestinal discomfort and other medical ailments. At the same time an epidemic of scarlet fever broke out in Downe village and Darwin's 2-year-old son Charles died from the disease.

In November 1859, *The Origin of Species* was finally published. He received support from Hooker, Asa Gray and Thomas Huxley. But he received hateful letters as well, including from two good friends.

His book refers to "descent with modification" rather than "evolution" which already had

other meanings. Evolution was tied to progress. There is adaptation, not progress in nature. There is as much adaptation to marvel at in a barnacle or a blind cave fish as in a primate or a human.

The book was debated at Oxford, but Darwin was too ill to attend. Debaters included Thomas Huxley, Joseph Hooker, Robert FitzRoy and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.

It is sometimes known as the Huxley-Wilberforce debate because of a heated exchange where Wilberforce asked if Huxley was descended from a monkey on his grandmother's or on his grandfather's side. Wilberforce evidently had not even read the book. Huxley said he was not ashamed to be descended from a monkey, but Wilberforce should be ashamed to obscure the truth with his talents.

Darwin went on to write on other subjects, including one on vegetable mold formation through the action of worms. He laid chalk and measured 7 inches of mold after 28 years. Worms bring 8 tons/acre to the surface each year. He wanted each of us to marvel at nature.



Left to right: Floyd Sandford and HSSB members (and sponsors for our February program) Josette and Louis Barsky. Photo by Robert Bernstein.

Floyd Sandford as Darwin urged us to read *The Origin of Species*. I also urge you to read it.

Perhaps most interesting and compelling was Darwin's agonizing over each and every possible objection. Those arguments are as valid today as they were when he wrote them.

Thanks!

Thanks and acknowledgment for their hard work to the HSSB members for the very successful *Darwin Remembers* presentation: Ray Stone, Jean Olsen, and Dick Cousineau (all on the HSSB Program Committee), and Judy Fontana.

Movies for Humanists

After seeing Floyd Sandford's terrific performance as Charles Darwin in *Darwin Remembers*, all of you should watch the movie *Creation*.

Creation (2009) is a British biographical film about Charles Darwin, his work and his family, focusing on his eldest daughter, Annie. The movie takes place about 15 years after Darwin has returned from the Galapagos Islands and is still working on finishing his manuscript about his discoveries. His daughter, Annie, died in 1851, and the film shows Darwin interacting with Annie in flashbacks and hallucinations. Both Darwin and his wife Emma feel the pain of Annie's death, but it strains their relationship between one another, which is especially acute due to Emma's strong religious feelings and Darwin's ideas about evolution.

Meanwhile, Darwin has received a letter from Alfred Russel Wallace, another British naturalist, who has come to the same conclusions as Darwin about evolution. Darwin's friends urge him to continue with his book, though, as it is more comprehensive than Wallace's work. Darwin makes a trip to the location where Annie had died, and, following his trip, he and Emma are able to speak and grieve together over Annie's death. The

renewed bond between Darwin and Emma allows him to finish his book, with Emma's blessing, although she understands the repercussions of his book.

An interesting point about *Creation* is that, according to the producer Jeremy Thomas, the United States was one of the last countries to find a distributor due to the prominence of the controversy about evolution and creation. Thomas said: "It is unbelievable to us that this is still a really hot potato in America. There's still a great belief that He [God] made the world in six days. It's quite difficult for we in the UK to imagine religion in America. We live in a country which is no longer so religious. But in the US, outside of New York and Los Angeles, religion rules."

Cosmos Returns! With Neil deGrasse Tyson

Many of you probably watched and enjoyed the PBS series *Cosmos* in the 1980's, hosted by Carl Sagan. Well, *Cosmos* returns in March with host astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson. Tyson worked with Ann Druyan, Carl Sagan's widow, in developing the new program. The show will debut on March 9th and 10th on Fox and the National Geographic channels.

If you are one of those people who don't like thinking about astronomy because it makes you feel small, Tyson suggests looking at it a different way: "Our molecules are traceable to stars that exploded and spread these elements across the galaxy," he explains. If you "see the universe as something you participate in — as this great unfolding of a cosmic story — that, I think should make you feel large, not small. ... Any astrophysicist does not feel small looking up in the universe; we feel large."

The good thing about science is that it's true whether you believe in it or not.

---Neil deGrasse Tyson

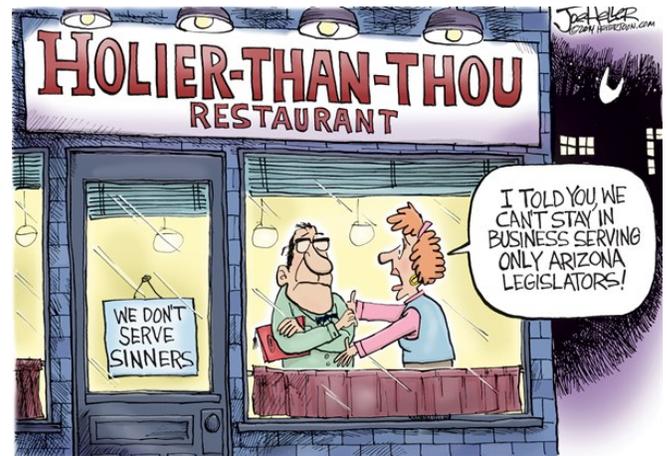
The New Untouchables Adam Lee

(Note: This is excerpted from Adam Lee's *Daylight Atheism Blog* -Ed.)

Last week in Kansas, one house of the state legislature passed [the most savagely anti-gay bill to appear in the U.S. in a long time](#). In the name of "religious liberty", it would have repealed all equal-protection laws as they apply to LGBT people, allowing any business owner to deny service to a gay customer on a whim: restaurants could turn them away, doctors could refuse to treat them, department stores could put up "No Gays Allowed" signs...

As I said, the sponsors of these right-to-discriminate laws claim they're about protecting religious liberty. But what gives the game away is that they're *only* proposing to cover unequal treatment of LGBT people. Why is this the only prejudice deemed worth protecting? Some religious sects disallow divorce; why can't they refuse service to people who've been divorced and remarried? Some religious people are against interracial marriage; why isn't *that* a valid reason to refuse service? ...Why is racist or sexist bigotry less worthy of protection than anti-gay bigotry, if they're all rooted in religious beliefs?...

Read the entire post at *Daylight Atheism*: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/daylightatheism/2014/02/the-new-untouchables/>



Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- March 2: Sam Singleton: *Cats, Sheep, and Goats: The Taxonomy of Atheists, Believers and Preachers*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. <http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#3>
- March 2: Dr. Svante Pääbo: *Neanderthal Man: In Search of Lost Genomes*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- March 16: Dr. Gregory Clark: *The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- March 16: Jeffrey Masson: *Beasts: What Animals Can Teach Us About the Origins of Good and Evil*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles and Costa Mesa. <http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm>
- April 13: Dr. Edward Slingerland: *Trying Not to Try: The Art and Science of Spontaneity*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- June 13-20: Grand Canyon, Zion and Bryce: Tour the wonders of the Colorado Plateau. A Skeptics Society Geology Tour. http://www.skeptic.com/geology_tours/2014/Grand-Canyon-Zion-Bryce/

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- April 17-20: American Atheists National 2014 Convention. Speakers include Chris Kluwe, Greta Christina, Brian Keith Dalton, Rev. Barry Lynn, PZ Myers, and many others. Salt Lake City, UT. <http://www.atheists.org/convention2014>
- May 16-18: Women in Secularism III conference, presented by the Center for Inquiry. Alexandria, VA. <http://www.womeninsecularism.org/>

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Newsletter Deadline:

Deadline for submissions to the Secular Circular is midnight, the last day of each month.

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. At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis.

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

To join HSSB, please send your contact information and a check for your membership dues to HSSB, PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, Attn: Mary Wilk. For membership information contact Mary Wilk at 967-3045, or mwilk@cox.net.

Copies of this newsletter are posted on the HSSB website. Photos are on the website and available via the link

<http://picasaweb.google.com/Humanist.Society.of.Santa.Barbara>



See us on Facebook::

HSSB Calendar

Tuesday, March 11: Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday, March 15: Monthly Meeting :, Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director of the American Humanists Association, the Patio Room at Vista Del Monte, 2:30 p.m. Dinner after the talk at Vista Del Monte.

Sunday, March 30: (and the last Sunday of every month), 10 a.m., **Secular Sunday Brunch** for humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, singles, couples and families without religion. No cover charge; membership not required. Pay only for your food, drink and tips. Cody's Cafe, 4898 Hollister Ave. in the Turnpike Center, Goleta in the room to the right as you enter the restaurant. For information phone Board member, Mary Wilk at 805-967-3045.

Tuesday, April 15: Board Meeting. 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday, April 19: Monthly Meeting: Katie Davis, the Santa Barbara Sierra Club Global Warming Chair, the Patio Room at Vista Del Monte, 2:30 p.m. Dinner after the talk at Vista Del Monte.



Humanist Society of
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