



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

FEBRUARY 2013

February Program:

A Blueprint for Taking Atheism to the General Public

For centuries, there has been the false promise that atheism will take its rightful place to counter religious dogma. In every age, just when it appears that modern scientific thought will dislodge the stranglehold that religion has on society, that hope is dashed as religion preserves its powerful and undeserved dominance.



Eddie Tabash, a well known advocate for atheism, will present a blueprint on how to finally begin a decades-long process to break through society's resistance to the natural, versus supernatural, view of the universe.

Mr. Tabash is a constitutional lawyer in the Los Angeles area. He graduated magna cum laude from UCLA in 1973 and from Loyola Law School in 1976. He chairs the board of directors of the Center for Inquiry, the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, and the Council for Secular Humanism. He has filed amicus briefs arguing for the separation of church and state with the California and United States Supreme Courts. He has also debated some of the world's foremost religious philosophers on the question of the existence of a supernatural being.

Eddie Tabash's appearance is sponsored by **Ken Tucker**.

When: Saturday, February 16, 2013

Where: Patio Room at 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. See Judy Fontana's article below for further information, including about making reservations.

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

Re: Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church

Richard Cousineau

As an altar boy from Los Angeles, who in the 1940s and 50s served the church in my youth, I was justly interested in the fall of the arrogant and supposedly morally superior leaders of the Roman Catholic Church who represent that area now. Their hypocrisy and false witness easily shows through their priestly garments and empty holy words. How, through the years, they derided us secular humanists for having no moral system, yet they are the ones who have committed unspeakable crimes of protecting pedophiles in their midst and perjury to their constituents.

Truth will out. Honesty and openness continues, and will continue, to trump religiosity and dogma. The reputation of their priestly brotherhood was more important to them than their titular head-god's admonitions to do no evil lest it come back to haunt them. Their former houses of power are no more and their legacy is one of fear and humiliation, and their words are but dust in the wind. Finis.

Jonathan Young on Supernatural Tales of Chosen People: Mythic Perspectives on Religious Traditions

Jim Balter

Jonathan Young is a psychologist, a member of HSSB, a humanist celebrant, the founding curator of the Joseph Campbell Archives and Library at the Pacifica Graduate Institute, an expert on myths and stories, and a storyteller himself. He told us, at our January meeting, he was thinking of writing a zombie novel where the zombie is the good guy, but realized it had already been written: the Bible.

Jonathan comes from a fundamentalist background and went to a good church college; he is thrice born, the third time to humanism. Many atheists and humanists have some wounds and a

lot of it has to do with old Bible stories ... but the stories themselves are pretty good yarns if you don't take them too literally, as required by the five principles of Christian Fundamentalism: the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, Christ's virgin birth, Christ's death being the atonement for sin, Christ's bodily resurrection, and the historical reality of Christ's miracles.



Jonathan Young

photo: Robert Bernstein

As a visitor from India told Joseph Campbell upon reading the Bible, there doesn't seem to be any religion in it ... it presents itself as a quasi-history book, and the literalists take it as history rather than as legend, leaving nothing mythic, metaphorical, or figurative to the stories.

Mythology is fiction ...

it tells a tale that gets at something, not by simply recounting facts or offering rational argument but by using metaphor. Joseph Campbell enumerated four functions of mythology: the metaphysical that overtly talks of gods, the cosmological that presents a world view, the sociological and political that presents us with rules for how to behave -- that part tends to go out of date quickly -- and the psychological, that is Jonathan's focus.

Jonathan sees the legends from scripture as dream-like stories. Dreams are real in the sense that we do experience them, and they have emotional truth, but they're fantasies. (Or are they? A good exercise is to do dream analysis of your day as if it were a dream.)

Sociologist Peter Berger has an idea (or fantasy) of how lore becomes a religion, a consensual reality. Once upon a time, children asked their parents how things work and the parents lovingly came up with stories a child might enjoy, about storks

bringing babies or a jolly fat man bringing gifts or any number of other random tales. And the children grew up and repeated the stories to their children and so on. In Berger's view, it takes about three generations for these stories to become "the way things are". With the authority of time the narrative is set, and is very hard to challenge. Jonathan teaches psychotherapists to use stories in their clinical work, but the problem arises that a client who might benefit from a psychological study of a fairy tale has already heard the Disney version and is convinced that it is the "real" story. This is the central problem of fundamentalism: having the final true answer.

Jonathan used Muhammad Ali's "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" as an example of metaphor. Is Ali a liar? After all, he is not a butterfly or bee, nor did he actually float or sting. But it's something fictional that gets at a truth. He's not a liar, he's a poet. And, Jonathan says, some great poets wrote the stories that come down to us through the scriptures -- borrowed mostly but written beautifully, and the poets that worked for King James polished them up again and made them sing. It is beautiful language and beautiful poetry, if you can take them lightly -- which is hard to do if one has been wounded.

You can hear Jonathan Young's own fine language as he discusses such stories as Jonah and the Whale and his treatment of their underlying message and psychology by listening to his whole talk at our website: go to SantaBarbaraHumanists.org, click Calendar, then click the January audio link. And you can learn more about Jonathan's work on myth and storytelling at his website, www.folkstory.com

HSSB Activities

Judy Fontana

Don't forget to sign up for the dinner following the February 16 meeting at Vista del Monte. The menu this month is tossed green salad, garlic bread, roasted tri-tip, catch of the day, Fiesta rice, mashed potatoes, banana squash, vegetable blend, assorted desserts, beverages and wine. Cost is \$22 per

person which includes tax and tip. Please join us and spend some time meeting other humanists. The price is right! Please contact judithannfontana@yahoo.com or call 967-7911 to leave a message. Look forward to seeing you there!

Welcome New Member!

John Elliott, Goleta

The Santa Barbara Secular Meetup Group

Richard Martin

The Santa Barbara Secular Meetup Group (SMG) was started in December. Meetup is an online site that makes it easy to organize local group events. Meetup says it is "using the internet to get people off the internet", helping people to get together with others of similar interests, and in that way supporting communities. Meetup has 11 million members and 105,000 local groups in 45,000 cities worldwide.

The HSSB is sponsoring the SMG, which will post all HSSB events on its website in return. HSSB members are welcome to join the SMG, and take part in meetup events, or other events posted on the site. HSSB members can also use the site as a resource to form interest groups of their own. For example, if you wanted to form a Bridge game group, you could start that on the SMG site, and use the site to set the date, time, and place of the next Bridge game. You can also have conversations on the site, so for example the Bridge players could work out a time that works for everyone. Basically, a meetup group's activities are based on whatever its members want to do, and members are free to choose to attend or not attend any event, depending on their interests.

To see the SMG website, go to www.meetup.com/SB-Secular-Meetup-Group/

From the Social Justice Committee Jean Olsen, Chair

In the January newsletter, I mentioned the excellent resource paper that **Helen Gordon**, committee member, has written under the direction of the Social Justice Committee.

The project came about when we noted that many of us receive unsolicited forwards and emails on a variety of subjects, often untrue or with numerous errors. Although it did not appear at first that this was a social justice issue, our discussion made us realize that it was.

Social Justice has been described by one source as a fair and proper administration of laws confirming the natural law that all persons, irrespective of ethnic origins, gender, possessions, race, religion (or no religion--Olsen), be treated equally without prejudice. Information or misinformation is a powerful tool. It is important to check facts before making a judgment or passing on the information.

Helen's paper, which can assist each of us in deciphering emails or articles as truth, partial truth, opinion or fiction, can be accessed at:
<http://santabarbarahumanists.org/Position%20Paper%202%20on%20FactCheck.pdf>

At our January meeting the Committee put gun control, health care (one payer system, mental health , etc) and immigration at the top of our list of social justice concerns to explore in the next 6 months of 2013.

A pro gun-control article by Joan Chittister was distributed to all members. It can be viewed at:
<http://santabarbarahumanists.org/Pro%20Gun%20Control.pdf>.

A paper by **Wayne Beckman** opposing her views can be found at:
<http://santabarbarahumanists.org/Some%20Comments%20on%20the%20Gun%20Control%20Debate.pdf>.

Ingersoll Play

Robert Green Ingersoll was one of the most famous American public figures in the last quarter of the 19th century. A great orator, he spoke to more people throughout the country than did presidents of his time. A successful attorney, Ingersoll (1833-1899) was also known as "the Great Agnostic".

The HSSB Production of "Speak of the Devil", a play about Ingersoll by the late American playwright Richard Stockton will be presented at 8pm, Friday, March 8 at the Santa Barbara Unitarian Church, 1535 Santa Barbara Street.

This lively full-length comedy-drama presents an account of Ingersoll's young and middle years that captures the wit, insight, and singular courage of the man who dared to challenge America during its Gilded Age by being its most public agnostic. Characters in the play beside Bob are his brother Ebon, his father Reverend John Ingersoll, his wife Eva and a few nefarious characters.

The play has been performed on New York stages, most recently in January, 2011. Directing our production is **Meredith McMinn; James Kimberly** plays Robert Ingersoll. Tickets are \$10 per person and will be available at the door.

New Robert Ingersoll Biography

[This review, by Tom Flynn, appearing in the February/March 2013 issue of *Free Inquiry*, is of *The Great Agnostic: Robert Ingersoll and American Freethought*, by Susan Jacoby (Yale University Press, 2013.) \$25.00.

The life of nineteenth-century freethought orator Robert Green Ingersoll has been chronicled by five previous biographers, the most recent being Frank Smith, whose *Robert G. Ingersoll: A Life* appeared in 1990. Unfortunately for Ingersoll's memory, each biographer was too fond of his subject, and each book was less an authoritative biography than a hagiography marred by the scent of "look-how-wonderful-he-was" special pleading. Ingersoll

admirers have long wished for a more comprehensive, scholarly, and objective biography.

Susan Jacoby, author of the commanding 2004 history *Freethinkers*, could surely have written such a book. But Yale University Press commissioned *The Great Agnostic* as part of its "American Icons" series with a strict forty-thousand-word limit. It is not the sprawling, definitive life story one might have hoped for, but Jacoby has written something equally significant and far more accessible: an incisive appreciation of Ingersoll that seeks to justify the Great Agnostic's ways to a new generation too likely to imagine that atheism began *ex nihilo* with Harris, Dennett, Dawkins, and Hitchens.

"You 'New' atheists should consider it your special duty and privilege to work tenaciously for the restoration of the memory of this old American freethinker. You owe him," Jacoby declares in her Afterword. "So does every American, religious or nonreligious, who enjoys and takes for granted that liberty of conscience is meant for thee as well as for me—the greatest secular idea of all." The mission of this relatively short book is to demonstrate why that is so, and Jacoby fulfills it deftly.

Ingersoll embodies a conundrum of history—how can a figure whose name every American recognized, like him or hate him, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century be almost universally forgotten today? Surely the hostility of generations of Christian believers played a role. So did Ingersoll's failure to establish an institution to perpetuate his ideas and his sometimes-turbulent relations with the national freethought organizations of his day. So too did the fact that many of Ingersoll's ideas—about racial and gender equality, fair treatment of labor, and the distastefulness of a religion centered on a cruel promise of eternal punishment, to name only a few—stopped being controversial as succeeding generations moved them to the mainstream. Jacoby examines these and related issues with sharp insight, making clear the debt that both the freethought community and contemporary culture as a whole owe to Ingersoll and the ideas he championed.

Her narrative skillfully weaves Gilded-Age episodes with contemporary interpretation. Historical nuggets abound: for example, I hadn't known that Ingersoll had publicly declared his agnosticism as early as 1875, when he addressed a literary club in Terre Haute, Indiana, at the invitation of the socialist activist Eugene V. Debs. But the historical vignettes are always in service of the author's larger mission: restoring Ingersoll's memory as the towering and influential freethinker between Thomas Paine and today's growing roster of nontheistic public intellectuals.

At Robert Ingersoll's birthplace museum, which the Council for Secular for Secular Humanism has operated since 1993, we introduce Ingersoll to visitors as "the most remarkable American most people never heard of." Jacoby's book is a clarion call to correct that injustice—most of all, it is a call for atheists, secular humanists, and other freethinkers to recognize that their movement enjoys a rich history in which Ingersoll was an indispensable figure. Along the way, it delivers hugely rewarding, informative, and enjoyable reading. Who knows, this book may accomplish what the five biographies never could: restoring Ingersoll to the social and historical prominence he deserves. Highly recommended.

HSSB Book Club **Marty Shapiro**

The Book Club is currently reviewing its options for the new year, and will return shortly in a new format. Keep watching this space!

A Book Recommendation **Bill Berry**

A few years ago I read *The Closing of the Western Mind: The Rise of Faith and the Decline of Reason*, by Charles Freeman, published by Alfred Knopf, 2003. It covers many of the same topics as does *The Swerve*, a review of which appeared recently in the Secular Circular.

The jacket explains "A turning point in Western Civilization is the first alliance between church and state in the aftermath of Constantine's conversion to Christianity, which set the stage for the triumph of faith over reason. Freeman shows how imperial power began to stifle freedom of thought and the tradition of Greek rationalism intrinsic to it. Churches were bound into the structure of the state and supported the Emperor's drive toward an increasingly narrow religious orthodoxy".

The book begins and ends with Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274. He was famously painted by Filippo Lippi—*The Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas*—in which he crushes an old man under his feet. The old man personifies evil, and holds a banner "Wisdom Conquers Evil". Aquinas holds a text from Saint Paul: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise".

Much of the earlier portions of the book examine various Greek schools of philosophy, among them Epicurianism, which we see as the centrepiece of *The Swerve*, describing the discovery in 1417 by Poggio Bracchiolini of Lucretius' poem *On the Nature of Things*, which helped set the stage for the Renaissance.

There is much written about the vicious rivalries and even battles between various factions, ideologies and sects of early Christianity and their supporting bishops. It often seems impossible that this religion survived its destructive beginnings.

The book ends with Aquinas, who, shortly before his death began to attempt a reconciliation of faith and reason. He was severely censured by the religious authorities, but his reasoning eventually did win over enough church leaders that he was canonized in 1316 and became a saint in 1323.

His attempts at reconciliation apparently lost much of their force, as others who came after him, Jan Hus, Jerome of Prague, and Brother Bruni, among many were burned at the stake in the early 1400s for expressing similar views. John Wycliffe in England, of the same school of religious thought

had the good sense not to go near Rome, and survived.

[If you've read a book you think our members would enjoy or should read, write it up, 500 words or less, and send it in. We hope to have a continuing series recommending books of interest to Humanists.]

What's Going on There? Andrew de los Hankini

[Memphis, TN] In a frank disregard for the separation of church and state, this replica of the Statue of Liberty—a.k.a. the "Lord's Lady Liberty," erected in 2006 by the World Overcomers megachurch—holds the Ten Commandments under one arm and instead of a torch, she holds a cross high above her head, while the pedestal commands, "America Return to Christ." While many locals find the 72-foot-tall statue ridiculous (and a waste of \$260,000), many accept it as part of living in the Bible Belt.



The Number of Lawmakers who Don't Identify With a Religion is on the Rise

Daniel Politi

Posted on Slate, Jan. 5, 2013

The number is hardly huge but it still marks quite the change from three decades ago. In the early 1980s, not a single member of Congress publicly said he or she didn't belong to a particular religious affiliation or refused to disclose their religion. In the 113th Congress, that number has increased to 10, according to an analysis by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Even though around one-in-five U.S. adults describe themselves as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular," only one member of the new Congress has publicly taken on that label. But 10 other members of the 113th Congress, or around 2 percent, "do not specify a religious affiliation," marking an increase from six members from the previous Congress.

"The numbers here caught my eye," writes Politico's Charles Mahtesian, "not because of the disparity between non-believers in the general population and in Congress, but because I was surprised so many members actually admitted to it." Religious affiliation for politicians without a religion is a very sensitive issue but the Pew poll seems to show that "the taboo about religious identification is being broken and members of Congress are increasingly comfortable admitting they don't adhere to any particular faith," writes Mahtesian.

Is Atheism a Religion? In Britain, where the Church of England is a laughing stock lately, the percentage of Britons professing no faith has nearly doubled in the last decade — which might explain the rise of an atheist church.

In the U.S., Susan Jacoby recently wrote, moments of tragedy can be a reminder "of what atheism has to offer." The philosopher Gary Gutting adds that atheists, like religious people, ought to articulate reasons for their beliefs (or lack thereof).

Can atheism replace religion? Is it a religion? Read the debate online:

www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/01/22/is-atheism-a-religion

2020, A Year Without War: An Update

Professor Joe White

Chair Dept. of Philosophy - SBCC

Greetings, members of the Santa Barbara Humanist Society. I am honored to be asked to give you an update on the *2020 A Year Without War* project that I spoke to you about nearly a year ago.

2020 AYWW is still growing and maturing. For those of you on Facebook who LIKED AYWW or those of you who JOINED the website FOR FREE, you will be aware of most of this growth. AYWW, as of December 2012, had visitors from over 83 countries. AYWW is spreading throughout North and South American as well as Europe. We have also been visited from over a dozen countries in Africa and Asia. AYWW is also visited by someone from every state in the United States, except, as of this past December, North and South Dakota. There must be Humanists somewhere in the Dakotas. During the semester, AYWW has about 15-20 student volunteers actively involved.

If you have not been to the website lately, check out the new music video AYWW received from 12 year old Makena. Makena wrote and performed a song specifically for AYWW. There are also a variety of other videos available on the front page making the argument for the viability of 2020 A Year Without War. www.ayearwithoutwar.org

We now have 7 years to get at least 800 million members. In our first nine months we are nearing 2,000 members. Please continue RECRUITING. JOINING IS FREE. We are also now in need of bloggers, if you want to contribute. Donations are always needed to keep the electricity flowing. AYWW is a 501-C3. Any relevant articles, photos, films, poems you might come across, please send them all to content@ayww.org.

In four weeks, AYWW hopes to launch its Resolutions site. At the site, you will be able to forward a formal Resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the United States, as well as your Senators, House Representative requesting that the year 2020 be formally recognized and supported as a year without war globally. There will also be customizable Resolutions for any and all organizations you may belong to. So, on that note, *2020 A Year Without War*, started in Santa Barbara by SBCC students hopes that the Santa Barbara Humanists Society will partner with them in taking a step forward in making 2020 a year without war.

Denis Diderot, Humanist **Andrew S. Curran**

(Andrew S. Curran is dean of the arts and humanities and a professor of French at Wesleyan University). Published in the New York Times, January 24, 2013.

The Enlightenment polymath Denis Diderot turns 300 this year, and his October birthday is shaping up to be special. President François Hollande has indicated that he plans to honor the philosopher and novelist with what may be France's highest tribute: a symbolic reburial in the Panthéon. In the roughly two centuries since this massive neo-Classical church was converted into a secular mausoleum, fewer than 80 people have been admitted into its gravestone club. If inducted, Diderot will arguably be the first member to be celebrated as much for his attacks on reigning orthodoxies as for his literary stature.

Like many Enlightenment writers, Diderot preached the right of the individual to determine the course of his or her life. But the type of liberty that underpins Diderot's body of work differs markedly from today's hackneyed understanding of freedom. His message was of intellectual emancipation from received authorities — be they religious, political or societal — and always in the interest of the common good. More so than the deists Voltaire and Rousseau, Diderot embodied the most

progressive wing of Enlightenment thought, a position that stemmed from his belief that skepticism in all matters was “the first step toward truth.” He was, in fact, the precise type of secular Enlightenment thinker that some members of the Texas State Board of Education have attempted to write out of their high school curriculum.

Rare are the writers whose legacy has shifted as dramatically as Diderot's. When he died in 1784, at age 70, the vast majority of his short stories, novels and philosophical works lay hidden away in trunks. He was remembered primarily for two things: coediting the world's first comprehensive encyclopedia, a project to which he contributed an astonishing 10,000 articles, and being a scandalous freethinker and atheist.

Articles in the “Encyclopédie” tweaked Christian dogma. A famous example was the cross-references provided for the word “anthropophagy,” or cannibalism: they directed readers to the entries for “Eucharist,” “communion” and “altar.” Small wonder that the publication of the “Encyclopédie” was twice banned and that the work was eventually driven underground.

The few works Diderot had published before becoming fully engaged in this project did not help his popularity. In 1748, he penned “The Indiscreet Jewels,” a forerunner to “The Vagina Monologues,” in which women's “jewels” engaged in a frank discussion of their erotic adventures. The following year, he waded into deeper water when he challenged arguments supporting the existence of God in “Letter on the Blind” — a book that earned him three months in prison.

Armed with both hindsight and access to his unpublished writings, we now know a different Diderot. By the 19th century, the writer's “discovered” texts began inspiring the likes of Goethe, Hegel and Nietzsche. Marx cited him as his favorite writer — twice. Freud, too, was a great fan. It was Diderot who had said that if you allowed a child to grow up totally without education, “he would in time combine the reasoning of the infant with the passions of the grown man, and would

strangle his father and sleep with his mother." Ring a bell?

Readers today never fail to be amazed by Diderot's willingness to confront both the unconscionable and the uncomfortable, often embracing subject matter that his contemporaries fled. He vehemently condemned the enslavement of Africans (and gave a philosophical voice to the slave); he challenged his era's views on religious celibacy and forced vocations (in a tear-jerking pseudo-memoir of a sexually abused nun); and he entertained the possibility that his cherished materialism denied us free will (in his novel "Jacques the Fatalist").

An ardent empiricist, Diderot also took pride in questioning his own beliefs. In "Rameau's Nephew," Diderot gave life to a character who assailed the author's deep-rooted humanism. One of the most memorable eccentrics in all of literature, the hedonistic protagonist preached the beauty of evil, the joys of social parasitism and the right to be a self-seeking individual. This same ability to think beyond his own perspective also generated Diderot's most prophetic work of fiction, "D'Alembert's Dream," a text that conjures up a godless world of speculative "genetic" manipulation and proto-evolutionary theory, 90 years before Darwin.

After rejecting Diderot for panthéonisation 100 years ago because of his atheism, the French now seem ready to bestow upon their countryman the high honor he has long deserved. No doubt Diderot himself would have been pleased. "Posterity is for the philosopher what the next world is for the man of religion," he once wrote. But we all might take pride as well — because if Diderot is, at long last, welcomed into the Panthéon, it will be a collective acknowledgment that part of what makes an artist great is having the courage to provoke and challenge.

The message ought to resonate on this side of the Atlantic, too. While it's sometimes easy for Americans to forget, thumbing one's nose at the establishment has been central to our own cultural and political traditions since, well, Diderot's time.

After all, that's how we became Americans in the first place.

Rep. Alters Pledge of Allegiance **Jeff Mapes**

Reprinted from: The Oregonian, January 15, 2013.

When Rep. Carolyn Tomei, D-Milwaukie, led the Oregon House in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance on Monday, she substituted the word "love" for "God."

Tomei's "nation under love" line started attracting attention on the internet after it was picked up by Oregon Catalyst, a conservative political blog. Some online commenters were quick to decry what they said was another attempt to sideline God in America.

Tomei said she didn't realize anybody would notice. On most days during the legislative session, legislators asked to lead the pledge lean in to their microphone for just the first few words before they step back and become just one voice of many.

However, the House was holding its organizational meeting on Monday and Tomei led the pledge from the podium, where her full rendition was picked up the microphone.

"That's what I typically say," said Tomei. "It's just comfortable to me."

Tomei added that she didn't expect anyone to follow her lead in how to recite the pledge. The 77-year-old legislator said that when she first learned the pledge, it didn't include "under God." That phrase was officially added by Congress in 1954.

Tomei's modified pledge did attract some criticism from Republicans. "To me, it's a little disrespectful to do that," said Rep. Jim Weidner, R-Yamhill.

Jared Mason-Gere, spokesman for House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said no one knew beforehand that Tomei would change the wording of the pledge. But he said the speaker has more significant issues to focus on.

"My hope is that when I get off the phone with you this is the last time I talk about it," he said.

Coppejans Wins Essay Contest

In the Santa Barbara Center for Successful Aging's essay contest, "Describe an event growing up that left a lasting impression in your life", **John Coppejans** won the sixth in the series with his essay: "Surprised to Survive the War" You can read his winning essay at: <http://www.csasb.org/SuccessfulAging/Issues/V2/CSA-V2-4.pdf> . **Dick Cousineau** was a previous winner.

Position Open

A rare opening will soon be available on the Secular Circular staff: Editor. If you are interested in carrying out some or all of the tasks of preparing a monthly newsletter, please contact [Roger Schlueter](mailto:Roger.Schlueter), or editor@santabarbarahumanists.org.

Letter To Editor, Santa Barbara NewsPress

Conspiracy 101. In his January 17th editorial, Andy Caldwell tried, yet utterly failed, to address global warming. Instead, Caldwell gave us a lesson on how to construct a conspiracy theory (CT) that has no basis in reality.

First, a good CT needs a vague, secret, all-powerful cabal capable of formulating and executing grand, global scale, nefarious plots. Caldwell provides us with one: "... the elites of the West." While the word "elites" is used four times, never do we learn who these people might be nor how they operate. No, just take Caldwell's warning that they are looking to undermine the entire West and ruin your personal life style.

Next, those who are knowledgeable about the conspiracy need to be a much maligned, suppressed minority who are prevented from getting their voice heard because the mainstream

media supports the cabal. Caldwell claims that he has to go to Pravda to get the real story about global warming "... that is not forthcoming here in America". One can only surmise that he doesn't know of the extensive coverage of the global warming skeptical point of view by the Heartland Institute, the Wall Street Journal, the US Chamber of Commerce as well as many, many others.

As this suggests, it is also necessary to ignore well known, incontrovertible facts in order to sustain the CT. Caldwell illustrates this by claiming that the hack of the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit (CRU) revealed "... widespread data fraud ..." THAT IS FALSE. The CRU was subjected to eight independent investigations by UK and international teams that stated, "... we find that their rigour and honesty as scientists are not in doubt." A UK paper summarized the controversy this way: "There is no evidence of any worldwide conspiracy, no mention of George Soros nefariously funding climate research, no admission that global warming is a hoax, no evidence of the falsifying of data, and no 'marching orders' from our socialist/communist/vegetarian overlords".

Global warming is real and Caldwell's CT is not. Those are the facts.

Roger Schlueter

Non-HSSB Events of Interest Diane Krohn

Upcoming Events in California:

- February 10: Dr. Craig Stanford: *Planet Without Apes? What it Means to be Human in the 21st Century*. CFI West, Hollywood. <http://www.cfivest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#darwinday1>
- 4February 17: Special presentation of the documentary film *The Revisionaries*, in celebration of Darwin Day. CFI West, Costa Mesa.

<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#revisionaries>

- March 3: Dr. Sean Carroll: *The Particle at the End of the Universe: How the Hunt for the Higgs Boson Leads Us to the Edge of a New World*. CFI West, Los Angeles.
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#carroll>
- May 30-June 2: American Humanist Association 72nd Annual Conference. Speakers include Katherine Stewart, Eddie Tabash, Sean Faircloth, Phil Zuckerman, among others. San Diego.
<http://conference.americanhumanist.org/>

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- March 8-10: Freethought Festival 2. Speakers include Amanda Knief, Dan Barker, Darrel Ray, Greta Christina, Katherine Stewart, Eugenie Scott, and many others. Madison, WI.
<http://freethoughtfestival.org/>
- March 28-31: 2013 American Atheists National Convention. Featuring Katherine Stewart, Dave Silverman, Richard Carrier, Hector Avalos, plus lots more. Austin, TX.
<http://www.cvent.com/events/2013-american-atheists-national-convention/event-summary-fd39ce1320da4d0989c10cb348433a43.aspx>
- May 17-19: *Imagine No Religion 3*, sponsored by CFI Canada, the James Randi Foundation, and the Kamloops Centre for Inquiry. Speakers include Daniel Dennett, Victor Stegner, Christina Rad, Taslima Nasreen, others, plus a skeptics magic show! Kamloops, Canada.
<http://imaginenoreligion.ca/>
- May 17-19: *Women in Secularism 2: A Center for Inquiry Conference*. Speakers include Jennifer Michael Hecht, Greta Christina, Amanda Marcotte, Teresa McBain, Jamila Bey, and many others. Washington, D. C.
<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 or by contacting any board member. At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis.

To send a copy of this newsletter to someone interested in our Society, please send their contact information to: PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, or contact Mary Wilk at 967-3045, or mwilk@cox.net. Newsletters are also available at the above web address.

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.

Link to HSSB Photos:

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

HSSB Phone: 769-HSSB



HSSB Calendar

Tuesday, February 12. Board Meeting, 5:30pm. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday, February 16. Eddie Tabash, "A Blueprint for Taking Atheism to the General Public"

Sunday, February 24. (and the last Sunday of every month), 10am, **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.

Friday, March 8. "Speak of the Devil". A play about Robert Green Ingersoll, produced by HSSB. 8:00pm. Unitarian Church, 1535 Santa Barbara St.

Saturday, March 16. Monthly meeting. Dr. Nancy Segal, speaker. Subject: "Twins Reared Apart and Together".

Saturday, April 20. Monthly Meeting. Dr. Indre Viskontas. "The Reconstructive Nature of Memory".



Humanist Society of
Santa Barbara
PO Box 30232
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