



# THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

JULY 2013

## Steve Allen's *Meeting of Minds*

HSSB will present its third production of Steve Allen's "Meeting of Minds", the ultimate talk show. The following figures from history appear in this episode:

- **Adam Smith** 18th Century Scottish philosopher and political economy pioneer, played by **William York Hyde**;
- **Margaret Sanger** American birth control activist, and founder of Planned Parenthood, played by **Meredith McMinn**;
- **Mahatma Gandhi** Leader of Indian nationalism, played by **Paul Nay**;
- **Steve Allen**, played by **John Pagano**

directed by **Meredith McMinn**  
produced by **Ray Stone**

**When:** Saturday, July 20, 2013  
**Where:** Fe Bland Forum, SB City College West Campus.  
**Time:** Doors open **2:00pm**. Show starts promptly at **2:30pm**.  
 Seats available on a first come, first served basis.

**Estimated performance time:** Two hours. Includes 10 min. intermission.

**For More Information, call:** 769-HSSB



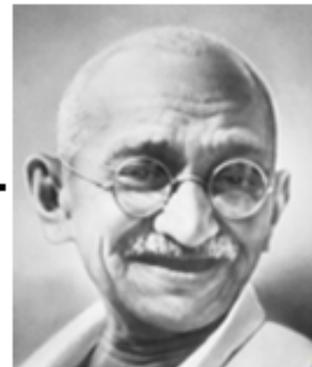
**Adam Smith**  
(1723-1790)



**Margaret Sanger**  
(1879-1966)



**Steve Allen**



**Mahatma Gandhi**  
(1869-1948)

## New Board of Directors

### Roger Schlueter

Our Society Fiscal Year runs from July 1st to June 30th of the next calendar year. At the end of each FY new Officers and At-Large Board members are voted on by all members in good standing. For those who use email, this is the first year that we have used electronic voting and it appears to have worked well, with a few minor glitches. Thank you for participating.

The Board for FY2013-14 includes:

President: **Richard Martin**  
 Secretary: **Suzanne Spillman**  
 Treasurer: **Colin Gordon**

At-Large: **Wayne Beckman, David Echols, Judy Fontana, Mary Wilk.**

I have no doubt that this Board will, with your help, continue to make our Society a vibrant, successful Humanist community.

## HSSB Committees:

Activities: **Judy Fontana**  
 Audio-Visual: TBD  
 House: **Richard Kennelly**  
 Membership: **Mary Wilk**  
 Newsletter Editor: **Diane Krohn**  
 Program: **Dick Cousineau, Jean Olsen, Roger Schlueter, Ray Stone**  
 Publicity: **David Echols**  
 Webmaster: **Wayne Beckman**

## Full Disclosure

Starting with this issue, the Secular Circular editor will be **Diane Krohn**. However, since Diane will be "on leave" until the Fall, in her absence this and the next two issues will be prepared by **Ray Stone** and **Roger Schlueter**.

## Welcome New Members!

**Wayne Harris**, Lompoc  
**Ingrid Stromberg**, Lompoc  
**Kathryn Henry**, Carpinteria

## Activities

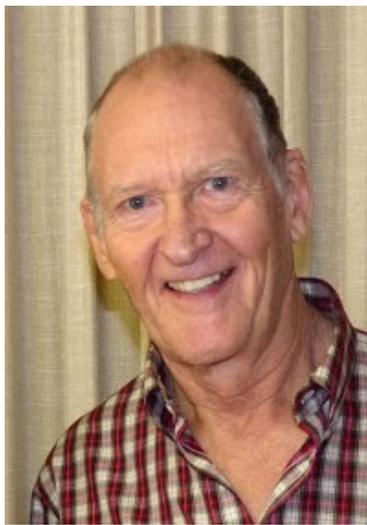
### Judy Fontana

Dinner following *Meeting of Minds* on July 20 will be at the Santa Barbara Yacht Club at the Breakwater. Diners may chose from the following entrees: Traditional Cobb Salad (Julienne Romaine, Roasted Chicken, Tomato, Avocado, Bacon, Egg, Bleu Cheese Crumbles); Caprese and Olive Tapenade Sandwich (Fresh Mozzarella, Basil, Tomato, Roasted Peppers, Greens, Sun-Dried Tomato Aioli); Char-Broiled Flat Iron Steak, served with market vegetables; Grilled Fish and Shrimp Tacos (Cabbage, Avocado, Cilantro, Tomato, Queso, Spicy Crema).

All meals include choice of salad, vegetable, fruit or fries and bread, non-alcoholic beverages. Price of \$22 includes tax and tip. Alcoholic beverages may be purchased at the bar using a credit card only. Cash or checks should be made out to me. Parking is available in the public lots nearby. RSVP to [judithannfontana@yahoo.com](mailto:judithannfontana@yahoo.com) or call Judy at 967-7911.

## American Humanist Conference, San Diego Diane Krohn

With an American Humanist Association annual conference so conveniently located in San Diego, this was a good opportunity to attend a national meeting of humanists. HSSB members who attended were **Wayne Beckman, Diane Krohn, Judy Fontana, Dick Cousineau, and Roger Schlueter**. There were multiple sessions on each day of the conference, so there was the usual problem deciding which session to attend. A few of the sessions that were really good:

**Richard Martin****Suzanne Spillman****Colin Gordon**

**Amanda Knief:** *The Golden Calf: Why the Faith-Based Initiative Needs to be Sacrificed.* Amanda Knief is the in-house counsel for American Atheists and also serves on the AHA board. The faith-based initiatives (FBI) allow churches and other organizations to receive federal funds with very little accountability. These groups do not need to comply with anti-discrimination laws despite receiving federal funding, and because FBI is directed by the Executive branch of our government, there is no legal recourse against these discriminatory practices (yes, some groups tried to sue and SCOTUS ruled that ordinary taxpayers lack legal standing to sue executive branch expenditures). Amanda's advice for her audience: the lack of accountability and discriminatory practices needs to be more publicized, so that everyone knows that his or her tax dollars are being used under these conditions. Amanda also pointed out that AHA and the Secular Coalition of America have listings of secular charity groups.

**Luis Granados:** *Twenty Rebels Who Bucked the God Experts.* Luis Granados is an attorney and a student of scandals of religious history. He is also a director of Humanist Press, an arm of AHA. This talk focused on two men both raised Catholic, Manuel Azaña, in Spain; and Benito Mussolini, in Italy. Azaña had found the Catholic Church to be contrary to the general welfare of the population and reduced its influence. He became the prime minister of Spain in 1931 and his election temporarily ended the church's stranglehold on politics. Meanwhile, back in Italy, although Mussolini had earlier railed against religion and Catholicism, the Catholic church backed the coup by Mussolini and his fascist party. After he had won the election, he increased religious authority over all aspects of Italian life. In Spain, Azaña headed a weak coalition in the government, but with the Church as a powerful enemy backing Francisco Franco's forces, Spain descended into civil war. The Republican forces of Azaña were helped by Russia, but the western democracies did not provide any help to them. Franco's Nationalists were backed by Mussolini, Hitler, and the Catholic church. After Franco's victory, the Church had

enormous control in Spain. In summary, this was a very interesting talk showing the powerful political influence of religion.

#### **Dr. Sean Carroll: Purpose and the Universe.**

Sean Carroll is a theoretical physicist at Caltech in Pasadena. This talk was the best explanation of modern physics that I have ever heard. The standard model of physics and general relativity explains all that we see on earth. If there are any undiscovered fields or particles either they do not interact with matter or their effect is too weak or too short in duration to see in any experiments. The implications of current physics: electric charge is conserved; astrology is wrong; and there is no life after death.

Science does not provide a purpose but defines the world. Finding meaning in life is a creative act. "The universe is made of stories, not of atoms" -- a quote from Muriel Rukeyser, American poet and political activist.

Many of the talks can be viewed and listened to here, including Sean Carroll's and Amanda Knief's presentations:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/HumanistVision/videos>

### **More About the AHA Conference Dick Cousineau**

I was most impressed by the numbers and ages of the youth attending the San Diego AHA conference. I am glad to say a younger American Humanism is aborning before our eyes. This all by intelligent word of mouth and not by teaching in the schools. Our movement is finally taking hold, and into good hands as well.

### **Atheist Monument in Florida**

A small city in heavily Christian northern Florida is about to become home to the first public monument in the United States dedicated to atheism.

Florida members of American Atheists, a national advocacy group, plan to erect a 1,500-pound granite display in front of the Bradford County Courthouse in Starke, Fla., next month, opposite a controversial year-old display of the Ten Commandments outside the same courthouse.



"We'd rather there be no monuments at all, but if they are allowed to have the Ten Commandments, we will have our own," said Ken Loukinen, the director of regional operations for American Atheists who designed the monument.

The new structure will feature quotes related to secularism from Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and American Atheists founder Madalyn Murray O'Hair on a 4-foot-high panel, alongside a bench. It will stand in a small square in front of the courthouse, opposite the 5-foot, 6-ton Ten Commandments monument sponsored by a Christian group.

[The Inscription shown above reads: "An atheist believes that a hospital should be built instead of a church. An atheist believes that a deed must be done instead of a prayer said. An atheist strives for involvement in life and not escape into death. He wants disease conquered, poverty banished, war eliminated." – Madalyn Murray O'Hair

The entire article can be found [here](#).]

### **A Spiritual Home for Atheists in the Bible Belt** Dave Thier

[Reprinted from the New York Times, June 23, 2013 issue.]

BATON ROUGE, La. — It would have been easy to mistake what was happening in a hotel ballroom here for a religious service. All the things that might be associated with one were present Sunday: 80 people drawn by a common conviction. Exhortations to service. Singing and light swaying. An impassioned sermon. There was just no mention of God.

Billed as Louisiana's first atheist service and titled "Joie de Vivre: To Delight in Being Alive," it was presided over by Jerry DeWitt, a small, charismatic man dressed all in black with slick, shiny hair.

"Oh, it's going to be so hard to not say, 'Can I get an amen?'" he said with a smile, warning people that this was going to be more like church than they might expect. "I want you to feel comfortable singing. And I want you to feel comfortable clapping your hands. I'm going to ask you to silence your cellphones, but I'm not going to ask you to turn them off. Because I want you to post."

As Mr. DeWitt paced back and forth, speaking with a thick Southern accent, his breathy yet powerful voice occasionally cracked with emotion. The term may be a contradiction, but he is impossible to describe as anything but an atheist preacher. Mr. DeWitt acts so much like a clergyman because he was one.

He was raised Pentecostal in DeRidder, La., a small town near the Texas border. In 2011, after 25 years as a preacher, he realized he had lost all connection to the religious point of view that had defined most of his life. He left the church and found himself ostracized in his hometown and from his family. Since then, Mr. DeWitt, 43, has become a prominent advocate of atheism, giving lectures around the region and providing an emotional counterpoint to more academic atheist exponents like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens.

With Sunday's service — marking the start of Community Mission Chapel in Lake Charles, which Mr. DeWitt called a full-fledged atheist "church" — he wanted to bring some of the things that he had learned from his years as a religious leader to atheists in southern Louisiana.

The percentage of religiously unaffiliated Americans appears to be on the rise. A 2012 Pew Research Center study found that while only about 6 percent identified as atheist or agnostic, they were among nearly 20 percent classified as religiously unaffiliated. That was up from 15 percent in 2007, a greater increase than for any traditional faith.

Mr. DeWitt counts himself among the hard-line atheists, but he believes that something may be lost when someone leaves the church — not just the

parts about God, but also a sense of community and a connection to emotion.

“There are many people that even though they come to this realization, they miss the way the church works in a way that very few other communities can duplicate,” he said in a phone interview. “The secular can learn that just because we value critical thinking and the scientific method, that doesn’t mean we suddenly become disembodied and we can no longer benefit from our emotional lives.”

Some in the audience had a difficult time coming to atheism. Joshua Hammers, a member of an atheist organization in Lake Charles, said he had been completely separated from his community and social life when he left the Pentecostal church in which he was raised. For him, there was something comfortable, a reminder of childhood, about hearing Mr. DeWitt preach.

“We were at the Reason on the Bayou conference, and everything else was just like a lecture,” Mr. Hammers said, referring to a secular rally held in April at Louisiana State University. “Then Jerry got up, and he was just, you know, preaching the message. Most other atheist leaders are academics and intellectuals, and Jerry’s not like that. He’s just talking to your heart.”

Services are gaining traction as outlets for organized atheism in places like London, Houston, Sacramento and New York, as well as at universities with humanist chaplains. In a deeply conservative region like the Deep South, they can serve a vital purpose: providing a sense of camaraderie in what many have found to be a hostile environment for nonreligious people.

“Here, we have a very strong sense of community,” said Russell Rush, a former youth pastor from DeRidder. “When you go into an actual church, it’s almost like having a family reunion. When you leave that lifestyle, and leave that church life behind, a lot of times you can feel ostracized. Things like this let fellow atheists and agnostics know that they’re not alone.”

Mr. DeWitt sees services like his as giving a human shape to a broad intellectual movement that is in its infancy. He believes that he and the others in the room are building something meant to last.

“Though this movement has had starts and stops throughout world history, right now it’s important to remember that we are young,” he said after a singalong to a song of that name by the band Fun. “Someday, what you are doing will become normal. Isn’t that a feeling?”

Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies. -Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, philosopher (1844-1900)

## **What’s Going on Here? Andrew Hankins, Close to Home**

The Freedom From Religion Foundation and 19 other plaintiffs are suing the U.S. Treasury for stamping “In God We Trust” on currency in defiance of the godless and entirely secular U.S. Constitution.

FFRF Honorary Director Mike Newdow is acting as legal counsel in the lawsuit, which was filed Feb. 1 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. Plaintiffs include Rosalyn Newdow, Mike’s mother and a longtime FFRF member and numismatist who has stopped buying coins to collect because the godly phrase on them offends her.

The legal complaint, a tour de force of historical research, unequivocally shows that there was a purely religious purpose and intent behind placing “God” on U.S. coinage.

Newdow cites statements by members of Congress who expressed hope that the proselytizing message on U.S. currency would spread worldwide.

Press release at:

<http://ffrf.org/publications/freethought-today/item/17813-newdow-ffrf-challenge-in-god-we-trust>

## Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Diane Krohn

### Upcoming Events in California:

- July 7: *Apocalypse Later: Harold Camping vs. the End of the World*. A special screening of the film by filmmaker Zeke Piestrup. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.  
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#1>
- July 21: Ben Radford: *The Truth About Psychic Detectives*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles and Costa Mesa.  
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#1>
- July 27: *Skeptics at the Beach: Blue Whales, Landslides, and the Faulty Nuke*. A field trip with the Skeptics Society. Dana Point.  
[http://www.skeptic.com/geology\\_tours/2013/Skeptics-at-the-Beach/](http://www.skeptic.com/geology_tours/2013/Skeptics-at-the-Beach/)
- August 4: Melissa Rice: *Exploring the Red Planet: News from NASA's Mars Rovers and Plans for Future Journeys*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles.  
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#1>

### Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- July 11-14: The Amazing Meeting 2013: A conference focused on scientific skepticism with a variety of presentations, workshops, and speakers. Las Vegas, NV.  
<http://www.amazingmeeting.com/>
- September 27-28: Freedom from Religion Foundation's 36<sup>th</sup> Annual National Convention. Featuring Dan Barker, Zack Kopplin, Julia Sweeney, and many others. Madison, WI.  
<http://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>

## HSSB Contact Information

### Officers:

President: Richard Martin

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David Echols

Judy Fontana

Mary Wilk

### Newsletter Editor:

Diane Krohn

[Editor@santabarbarahumanists.org](mailto:Editor@santabarbarahumanists.org)

### 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](http://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](mailto: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:** 805-769-HSSB



## HSSB Calendar

**Tuesday, July 16. Board Meeting,** 5:30pm. Home of **Mary Wilk.** Members invited to attend.

**Saturday, July 20. Monthly meeting.** Steve Allen's *Meeting of Minds* featuring Margaret Sanger, Adam Smith and Mahatma Ghandi. Fe Bland Auditorium, at SBCC. 2:30pm.

**Sunday, July 28.** (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.

**Saturday, August 17. Monthly Meeting.**

**Saturday, September 21. Monthly Meeting.**

**Saturday, October 19. Monthly Meeting.**



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