



# THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

[www.SBHumanists.org](http://www.SBHumanists.org)

DECEMBER 2012

HSSB

## *2012 Winter Solstice Party!*

**When:** Sunday, December 16, 2012, 4PM.

**Where:** Valle Verde Auditorium, 900 Calle de Los Amigos, Santa Barbara

**What:** Food, drink, entertainment

**Who:** HSSB members and guests

**Cost:** \$25 per person. Reservations are required! We must have an accurate count no later than December 10. RSVP [judithannfontana@yahoo.com](mailto:judithannfontana@yahoo.com) or call 967-7911.

**Entertainment:** You will most certainly recognize the tunes to be sung at the Solstice party, but you've not heard these words before. They were written by Michael Newdow, one of our speakers this year, who was kind enough to let us sing them. You may even be inspired to join in! Don't miss this party!



## Election Results

### Christian Right Failed to Sway Voters on Issues

Laurie Goodstein

[This is the first part of a New York Times article of 11/9/2012.

Christian conservatives, for more than two decades a pivotal force in American politics, are grappling with Election Day results that repudiated their influence and suggested that the cultural tide — especially on gay issues — has shifted against them.

They are reeling not only from the loss of the presidency, but from what many of them see as a rejection of their agenda. They lost fights against same-sex marriage in all four states where it was on the ballot, and saw anti-abortion-rights Senate candidates defeated and two states vote to legalize marijuana for recreational use.

It is not as though they did not put up a fight; they went all out as never before: The Rev. Billy Graham dropped any pretense of nonpartisanship and all but endorsed Mitt Romney for president. Roman Catholic bishops denounced President Obama's policies as a threat to life, religious liberty and the traditional nuclear family. Ralph Reed's Faith and Freedom Coalition distributed more voter guides in churches and contacted more homes by mail and phone than ever before.

"Millions of American evangelicals are absolutely shocked by not just the presidential election, but by the entire avalanche of results that came in," R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Louisville, Ky., said in an interview. "It's not that our message — we think abortion is wrong, we think same-sex marriage is wrong — didn't get out. It did get out.

"It's that the entire moral landscape has changed," he said. "An increasingly secularized America understands our positions, and has rejected them."

The entire article can be found at:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/10/us/politics/christian-conservatives-failed-to-sway-voters.html?nl=todaysheadlines&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/10/us/politics/christian-conservatives-failed-to-sway-voters.html?nl=todaysheadlines&_r=1&)

## More Election Results

[Excerpted from Secular Coalition of America Press Release, 11/7/2012.]

Election Day wasn't without its share of disappointments but for the nontheistic community it was overwhelmingly a very good night!

### The Good

- In Florida, Amendment 8, which would have allowed for taxpayer funding of religion was voted down.
- Voters in Washington state, Maryland and Maine approved same-sex marriage. "We've lost at the ballot box 32 times," Paul Guequierre of Human Rights Campaign told CNN. "History was made tonight."
- In Minnesota voters rejected a measure that would have banned same-sex marriage.
- President Obama was reelected. Obama received a "C" grade on the Secular Coalition's Presidential Candidate Scorecard, coming in behind Libertarian Gary Johnson, who received a "B." However, of the two major party candidates, Obama came in well above Mitt Romney, who received an "F".
- Missouri's U.S. Representative, Todd Akin, lost his seat. Akin, who sits on the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, has repeatedly denied scientific evidence in many areas, including regarding climate change, and making explosive claims that the female reproductive system is able to block conception from an unwanted pregnancy. He also objected to removing "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Kyrsten Sinema, won her Arizona Congressional race, she is the first bisexual member of Congress and is supportive of a strong separation of church and state.

## The Bad

- Sadly, longtime California U.S. Representative, Pete Stark, lost his reelection bid. Stark was the only open nontheist in Congress. [See below.]
- Minnesota U.S. Rep, Michelle Bachman, who received an "F" in every category on the Secular Coalition's Presidential Primary Candidate Scorecard and an "F" on our Congressional Report Card, was reelected.
- Massachusetts voted down a "Death With Dignity" initiative that would have permitted terminally-ill patients to request physician-assisted suicide medications. The initiative was narrowly defeated by a 51-49 margin.
- Roy Moore, the so-called '10 Commandments judge' won his old job back—he was re-elected chief justice of Alabama's Supreme Court.

## Pete Stark Loses

Representative Pete Stark, D-Calif., the only openly atheist member of Congress, lost his race for another term on November 6. "We are sad to see Pete Stark go," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, which gave Stark its Humanist of the Year award in 2008. "He was a pioneer for us, and by being open about his lack of a belief in God we hope that he has opened the door for people like Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and others that will come after her."

Stark, who turns 80 this year, is the dean of the California congressional delegation and has served Fremont, a religiously diverse community near San Jose, since 1972. He "came out" as a nonbeliever in 2007, and went on to win two re-election bids. But this time he faced recent redistricting and a fellow Democratic challenger, Eric Salwell, almost 50 years his junior.

"I don't think his lack of belief in a god had anything to do with the results of this election," Speckhardt said. "The numbers were close."

But during the campaign, Salwell raised Stark's 2011 vote against reaffirming "In God We Trust" as

the national motto, a vote in which he was joined by just eight other lawmakers. The outspoken Stark accused Salwell of taking bribes, an accusation which he eventually had to apologize for.

Still, Speckhardt said Stark's achievements for nontheists include his opposition to the war in Iraq and his support of health care reform and civil rights. He also worked for congressional recognition of Darwin Day and the National Day of Reason, which nontheists observe to promote science education and critical thinking.

"Humanism is not just a lack of belief in God, it is a positive, progressive philosophy," Speckhardt said. "So for us, he has done things every day."

[Excerpted from

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/08/kyrsten-sinema-arizona-democrat-atheist-in-congress\\_n\\_2091164.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/08/kyrsten-sinema-arizona-democrat-atheist-in-congress_n_2091164.html)]

## Broun vs. Darwin

November's Secular Circular reported on Dr. Paul Broun, running unopposed for another term as US representative from Georgia, who while believing "God's word is true" and that the earth's age was "about 9,000 years", served on the House Science Committee. In the balloting, about 4,000 write-in votes for **Charles Darwin** were cast. For the full story, click here:

<http://onlineathens.com/election/2012-11-08/charles-darwin-gets-nearly-4000-write-votes-athens-against-rep-broun#.UJ0YZ4KBOLw.email>

## Pat Robertson Changes his Mind David Edwards

Televangelist Pat Robertson says that radiocarbon dating proves that the Earth is older than 6,000 years — and he's telling Christians not to "cover it up."

On a recent broadcast of the 700 Club, a viewer wrote Robertson that her "biggest fear is to not have my children and husband next to me in God's

Kingdom” because they question why the Bible could not explain the existence of dinosaurs.

“Look, I know that people will probably try to lynch me when I say this, but Bishop [James] Ussher wasn’t inspired by the Lord when he said that it all took 6,000 years,” the TV preacher explained. “It just didn’t. You go back in time, you’ve got radiocarbon dating. You got all these things and you’ve got the carcasses of dinosaurs frozen in time out in the Dakotas.”

“They’re out there,” he continued. “So, there was a time when these giant reptiles were on the Earth and it was before the time of the Bible. So, don’t try and cover it up and make like everything was 6,000 years. That’s not the Bible.”

“If you fight science, you’re going to lose your children, and I believe in telling it the way it was.”

In his 1650 publication *The Annals of the World*, Archbishop of Ireland James Ussher estimated that the Earth had been created on October 23, 4004 BC. Ussher’s work continues to be cited by many creationists as proof that the Earth is 6,000 years old.

In fact, "Answer in Genesis" — the group behind the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky — has claimed that “dinosaurs (land vertebrates) were represented on the Ark.”

Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network promoted the Creation Museum in a 2007 report and seemed to buy in to the notion that the Earth was thousands — not billions — of years old.

“[M]aterial has been found in dinosaur remains that could last at the most thousands of years,” according to the report. “Now, with all the resources available in such places as the Creation Museum in Kentucky and the 7 Wonders Creation Museum in Washington state, Christian kids can head back into the public schools with their heads held high, knowing that what’s in their Bible and what science says don’t have to contradict each other. ”

[From "The Raw Story", November 27, 2012. <http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2012/11/27/robertson-tells-christians-radiocarbon-dating-proves-no-dinosaurs-on-noahs-ark/>]

## Welcome New Member!

**Colin Gordon**, returning member

### HSSB Book Club Marty Shapiro

In keeping with the Holiday Spirit, your Book Club will be celebrating the Winter Solstice by not meeting in December. Instead, we’ll be using our time efficiently by delving into a challenging best seller, Michael Shermer’s impressive epic, *The Believing Brain*. This is a book of great wit and substance that just may provide you with some new insights as to why you think (and thought) the way you do!

We’ll be discussing *The Believing Brain* on Wednesday, January 16, 2013 (Happy New Year!) at 1:30 p.m. at an inviting new location: the home of **Jean Olsen**, 5328 Traci Drive, in Sunrise Village (near Cathedral Oaks and Patterson). Call 967-1745 for directions.

## Social Justice Committee Report Jean Olsen, Chair

What is the Social Justice Committee and how is it defined? That is the question that the committee has been asking since we joined together as a new group in September. We are looking for **your input regarding this important question.**

Social work is defined as helping people address their problems and matching them with the resources they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

How do Humanists fit in to this concept? How does the Social Justice Committee support this need? Humanism is defined as a progressive philosophy of life, without supernaturalism, affirming our

commitment to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspires to the greater good of humanity. We are informed by science and motivated by human hope and compassion. It is not enough to just believe in rationalism but to care about the health of our society and to work toward social justice for all.

The question that the committee is asking ... how do we carry out this belief? Do we, the members of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara, just want information re different social justice issues delivered via email or handouts at meetings, with members making their own individual decisions regarding any involvement? Do we want programs on social justice issues, so that we have more in-depth information regarding the social justice issues in our community? Do we want our Society to issue a "CALL to ACTION" involving a commitment to act or support a specific social justice issue, as individuals and as a group? If the committee issued a "call to action", would you, as a member, be willing to step up and support our action? The end result of any such action would be equality for all.

The committee is interested in your response. Please reply to [jeanolsen@cox.net](mailto:jeanolsen@cox.net). Your replies will be confidential. I will compile all the responses into one report without names and bring them before our committee and the board. Thank you for your time and attention to our request.

### **Information about Misinformation** **Helen Gordon**

The Social Justice Committee is compiling a list of resources that we can trust, in order to fact-check some of the rumors, distortions, and lies circulating on the Internet, radio talk shows, and other mass media. We are all familiar with Snopes and About.com, but other suggestions are welcome (contact me at [helenhgordon@gmail.com](mailto:helenhgordon@gmail.com)). Also, we'd like to know how you handle unwelcome proselytizing messages forwarded by friends and family to save your soul.

Two of the newer organizations recommended by Journalist Bill Moyers on his PBS program "Moyers and Company" are called FactCheck.org and FlackCheck.org, sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation for Public Policy. FactCheck.org rates statements sent to them according to whether they are true, partly true, or false, giving full explanations for their conclusions. Their sister site, FlackCheck.org, aims to identify strongly biased or slanted statements, especially those that are deceptive or intentionally misleading. Bill Moyers' programs are often posted on YouTube for those who missed the Sunday evening PBS broadcast.

### **Caring Committee**

'Tis the season to be ... generous. Are there no humane humanists willing to have a shot at volunteering at Cottage Hospital, Spiritual Care division? I'm still looking for a replacement and I can assure you that it is a very much appreciated task. Do please contact me at (805)682 8292 or at [solemio@verizon.net](mailto:solemio@verizon.net).

Warm wishes, **Claudia Solé**

### **Hurricane Sandy Donations**

At the November 13 board meeting, **Jean Olsen**, Chair of Social Justice committee, suggested the board should send a donation to support Hurricane Sandy victims or ask members to support groups who were assisting in the response to victims of the hurricane. Considerable discussion followed. The board approved the following: ask HSSB members to send contributions to Humanist Organizations who were providing first responder relief or other services to those in need.

After much research, however, it was found that there are very few "humanist organizations that provide disaster assistance". Those who do are very small groups, who may or may not have a "501 c3" rating. Time did not allow for thorough research.

Therefore the board urges HSSB members to send donations to **Direct Relief International**. Direct Relief provides medical supplies and equipment to

disaster areas. They have a long history of excellent support to disaster areas and have a long-standing highest rating as a non-profit "501 c3". Shipments were on the way to New Jersey and New York almost immediately. Now their supplies need to be replenished by new donations.

**We urge members to send donations to Direct Relief International, 27 S. La Patera Lane, Santa Barbara 93117.** Please state that your gift is given in honor of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara, who suggested that members support their work in Hurricane Sandy. We believe this will make a positive statement for our society in the Santa Barbara/Goleta area.

Thank you for the contributions in our name.

### **What's Going on Back There? Andrew Hankin, somewhere**

It happens every week at meetings in towns, counties and cities nationwide in the US. A lawmaker or religious leader leads a prayer before officials begin the business of zoning changes, contract approvals and trash pickup. But **citizens are increasingly taking issue with these prayers**, some of which have been in place for decades. At least five lawsuits around the country — in California, Florida, Missouri, New York, and Tennessee — are actively challenging pre-meeting prayers. Full story: <http://news.msn.com/us/citizens-take-issue-with-prayer-at-public-meetings>

Also, the Freedom From Religion Foundation <http://www.ffrf.org> and Americans United for Separation of Church and State <http://www.au.org> need Humanists support to continue their work!. Best wishes from Italy!

### **Review: Book of Mormon Helen Gordon**

I really enjoyed the play "The Book of Mormon" in Los Angeles recently. I'm sure that the bad language would appall my two Mormon sons, but the overall message was uplifting. The humor

ranges from vulgar jokes about dysentery in Uganda to some finely-tuned inside jokes, such as the picture of Hell in a Mormon missionary's dream, being populated not only by dancing devils but also by Starbucks coffee cups. The awesome choreography and the clever songs alone are well worth the price.

Two very lovable Mormon youths, Elder Price and Elder Cunningham, are an odd couple paired with each other contrary to their secret wishes. They are sent on a mission to Uganda, where their idealism comes up against some hard reality and some culture shocks. Their character development gives the story its narrative arc, as each comes to terms with his own faults and makes amends.

The Uganda Mission is being threatened with closure because no baptisms have taken place there. Elder Price wants to be the hero who makes the first baptism, but it is the shy Elder Cunningham, who never before had any close friends, who saves the day. Cunningham, who is known to make things up, persuades a Ugandan chief that some of his practices, such as female circumcision, are considered sin.

He convinces the chief that such immoral behavior is forbidden, by thumbing through the pages of his Book of Mormon and making up a moral code that resonates with the sensibilities of the civilized world, in these latter days. So the chief consents to become a "Latter Day Saint" and is able to stand up to an old enemy of his tribe, a big bully.

The play does poke fun at some of the more fantastic beliefs of both the Ugandans and the missionaries, but primarily it pokes fun at human foibles, such as hubris and snobbery and self-centeredness. The very rousing song "I believe" at the end of the play seems to invite all human beings to believe what they will, as long as what they believe is wholesome and results in doing good for the world.

### **Judeo-Islamic, Indeed**

[This review by Tom Flynn of HSSB member **Tom Mates'** book appeared in the October/November

2012 issue of FREE INQUIRY. It is reprinted here with permission from FREE INQUIRY, the magazine of the Council for Secular Humanism.]

Now and then a self-published book demands inclusion in FREE INQUIRY'S review section, even though we can't find space to consider all the deserving works from mainstream publishers. With *A Judeo-Islamic Nation*, materials scientist and occasional FI contributor Thomas Mates offers an elegantly written account of America's fevered religious history and the state of faith on today's political scene. Drawing from a variety of academic sources, he assembles a compelling narrative that brings clarity to such questions as: Why did the First Great Awakening fizzle, while the Second enduringly changed the nation? Whatever happened to the once-zealously held (and indubitably biblical) Christian doctrine of predestination? How have conservatives convinced themselves that America is a Christian nation, when the religion Jesus preached was an ethereal creed for dwellers in the last days that made a virtue of political powerlessness?

As Mates unfolds the tale, America is far less a Christian nation than it is a Judeo-Islamic one. Of the Abrahamic religions, it is Judaism and Islam, not the passive and pacifistic Christianity, whose teachings offer blueprints for governing. (Though the Massachusetts Puritans considered themselves the truest Christians in all history, they patterned their theocratic community almost entirely after Old Testament Israel.) Indeed, Mates suggests, one reason American society secularized as it did was that Christianity was so ill-fitted to the challenge of wielding worldly power. Others have told this story, but Mates expounds it with extraordinary clarity and vigor.

In the early days of the Republic, church membership was low. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark documented this, but Mates sets it into a narrative. The biblical doctrine of predestination—which most churches of the Revolutionary era still embraced—was ill-suited to the young nation. A God who arbitrarily determined from the beginning of the world who would be saved and who would

burn was far too kingly for a people who had done away with kings. And a nation with a frontier to conquer valorized grovelers before God less than hardy citizens who reshaped their surroundings with their own hands. With the Second Great Awakening, new sects arose that discarded predestination and taught the profoundly unChristian doctrine of salvation through one's own efforts. They grew so precipitously that by the mid-nineteenth century, church membership had for the first time become part of the American norm. Mates makes the irony inescapably clear: Christianity attained its dominant social position only by jettisoning most of the teachings that had made it recognizably Christian.

Space permits me to quote just one brief summary that captures how many threads of American history Mates succeeds in tying together. "Protestantism made itself popular ... two centuries ago by stripping God of His biblical freedom to decide our futures, and ... became anti-intellectual in the process. Finally ... our frontier heritage helped to make our religion especially political, moralistic, and anti-socialistic. These are understandable uses of religion but they remain gross misconstructions of Christianity" (138).

Mates is a moderate humanist, more interested in helping believers and nonbelievers live together than in atheist victories over faith. He closes with thoughtful recommendations. A few of them may have little shelf life after the 2012 presidential campaign, but most reflect real wisdom. However, I find Mates far too sanguine regarding American Muslims. He hopes that "politicized Christians" might come to see Muslim militants as "people just like themselves, save for their possession of scriptures that actually support their theocratic leanings" (214). But that's exactly the problem: unlike Christianity, Islam is built on the expectation of temporal power. Its scriptures and traditions overflow with harsh but unquestionably pragmatic guidance for autocratic rulers. I think it's still an open question whether truly zealous Muslims can live comfortably and peaceably in Western-style democracies.

That caveat aside, *A Judeo-Islamic Nation* is a lucid and sagacious book that offers a coherent alternative interpretation of America's religio-political history. Highly recommended.

### **Rediscovering a Lost Treasure, a Book Review: *Swerve* James A. Haught**

[This book review appears in the December 2012/January 2013 issue of FREE INQUIRY, the magazine of the Council for Secular Humanism.]

Distinguished Harvard University professor Stephen Greenblatt contends that rediscovery of the lost Lucretius poem, *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things), helped trigger the Renaissance, the Age of Reason, the Enlightenment, and the six-century upsurge of science and democracy that catapulted the West into today's advanced civilization. His book, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*, won a 2012 Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. A New York Times reviewer wrote:

"*On the Nature of Things* was filled with, to Christian eyes, scandalous ideas. It argues eloquently, Mr. Greenblatt writes, that 'there is no master plan, no divine architect, no intelligent design.' Religious fear, Lucretius thought, long before there was a Christopher Hitchens, warps human life."

Ancient Greece, birthplace of Western civilization, was contradictory. It produced the first known thinkers who tried to understand the world through logic and observation instead of supernatural explanations. Yet Greeks also sacrificed thousands of animals to imaginary gods on Mount Olympus and gave gold to mystical "oracles" who babbled in trances. Greeks even fought the Sacred Wars over treasure stolen from the Oracle at Delphi.

Surrounded by so much religion, one of the foremost logical thinkers was Epicurus (341-270 BCE), who taught that there is no actual evidence for gods, devils, heavens, hells, miracles, prophecies, and the like—so people simply should

lead rewarding lives here and now. He also speculated that all matter consists of invisible atoms swerving endlessly and that creatures change through evolution. His scientific hunches later proved amazingly valid. [More about Epicurus can be found in the September, 2012 issue of the Secular Circular. Ed.]

Epicurus was the first to articulate the philosophical quandary called "the problem of evil." If God is all-loving and all-powerful, he wrote, why does he allow horrible suffering and cruelty in the world? Either God cannot prevent the agony or he callously doesn't want to, Epicurus reasoned. There's no other possible conclusion. In all the centuries since, clergymen have been unable to refute this clear logic.

Epicurus called religion "irrational fancies" and "credulous belief in the reality of phantoms." Instead of wasting time on such nonsense, he said, people should seek the best possible lives while they have the ability to do so.

A couple of centuries later, Roman thinker Titus Lucretius Carus (99-55 BCE) wrote *De Rerum Natura*, a long tribute to Epicurus. His classic Latin poem was filled with sneers at supernaturalism:

- "Fear was the first thing on Earth to make gods."
- "The universe has not been made through divine power, seeing how great are the faults that mar it."
- "How many evils has religion caused." (a comment on King Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter to induce the gods to favor his attack on Troy)
- "Not they who reject the gods are profane, but those who accept them."
- "There is no murky pit of hell awaiting anyone .....When the body has perished, there is an end also of the spirit diffused through it."

Lucretius's great poem was cited by various other ancient writers, but for a time all copies of it were lost. Then, in 1417, nearly fifteen centuries after it was written, a scholarly papal clerk, Poggio

Bracciolini was visiting a German monastery and found a long-forgotten copy covered by dust on a remote shelf. Elated, he began distributing handwritten copies to European intellectuals, who discussed the Lucretius work in learned forums. It spurred a breakthrough for scientific thinking.

Of course, nobody thinks the rediscovery of one lost Latin poem single-handedly transformed international culture—but it obviously was a factor in the great mental shift that grew with the Renaissance. It was a milestone on the vast journey humanity has traveled—a journey away from magical thinking and toward scientific reality. As Western society steadily evolves to embrace values of secular humanism, it's intriguing to ponder how we got here.

Secular Humanism is a positive philosophy that encourages people to find wisdom, happiness and moral awareness without God, by improving life for oneself and others in the here and now. -Paul Kurtz, (1925-2012)

## December 25: Birth Date of the Gods

No one knows when Jesus was really born; there is no mention of that date in the Bible. It wasn't until 354 that the event was first celebrated on December 25. It seems that date happened to be a popular birth date for a whole list of deities. Here are some of them:

- Horus (c. 3000 BCE, Egyptian)
- Osiris (c. 3000 BCE, Greek)
- Attis of Phrygia (c. 1400 BCE, Greek)
- Krishna (c. 1400 BCE, Hindu)
- Zoroaster/Zarathustra (c. 1000 BCE.

Persian)

- Mithra (c. 600 BCE, Persian)
- Heracles (c. 800 BCE, Greek)
- Dionysus (c. 186 BCE, Greek)
- Tammuz (c. 400 BCE, Sumerian)
- Adonis (c. 200 BCE, Greek)
- Hermes (Greek)
- Prometheus (Greek)

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### St. Pious Catholic Church

I step inside where it  
wraps around me, dense  
and sheltering,  
its mythology like swaddling  
cloths close binding,  
warmly comforting.

It smells of time: the savor  
of incense sucked into the walls,  
the tang of wine lingering  
like a viney halo  
over the communion rail,  
a gray tinge of smoke  
that wavers in the ruby  
glow of candle cups.  
The dying Son still lies  
upon his mother's marble lap,  
while saints reach down  
from their painted paradise.

This was all true once  
before the apple tree  
bloomed in the Garden.  
I stand in the quiet  
chancel as an exile  
knowing I cannot return.

~ by Sharon Scholl

Sharon Scholl, PhD, is professor emeritus from Jacksonville University (FL). Three poetry collections published: *Unauthorized Biographies*, *All Points Bulletin*, *Message on a Branch*. She is a choral director, composer, and all around grandma. "St. Pious Catholic Church" was published in *Above Us Only Sky, Atheist Poetry, Volume Two*, Incarnate Muse Press, 2008.

### Michelle Rhea

**Michelle Rhea** who has provided the humanist poetry for these pages for many issues has resigned her position as Poetry Editor.

Michelle is a former fundamentalist Christian raised in Texas. She began composing poems before she could write and, as a young teen, had her own poetry column in the newsletter of her Pentecostal church. Her faith in God eventually dissipated, but her interest in poetry remained. She has been published in numerous literary magazines and has co-edited and self-published six poetry anthologies including a two-volume collection of biblical revisionist poems, *Other Testaments*, and two volumes of atheist anthologies, *Above Us Only Sky*. Michelle supports, promotes, and encourages the expression of atheism and Humanism via the arts.



**Michelle Rhea**

She has done a great job for us, and we'll miss her. Thank you, Michelle.

### Cousineau Wins Essay Contest

The Santa Barbara Center for Successful Aging sponsors an ongoing essay to "Describe an event growing up that left a lasting impression in your life." Our esteemed **Dick Cousineau** won the fifth in the series with his essay: "Hey, You Can't Go In There!" You can read his winning article on page 6 of:

<http://www.csasb.org/SuccessfulAging/Issues/V2/CSA-V2-3.pdf>

### "Great Courses" Viewing

**Helen Gordon** will be showing some Great Courses videos (from the Learning Company) to residents of Maravilla Retirement Community and their friends (you are all considered Helen's friends) on Sunday afternoons from 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm beginning December 9. Showings will be in the main building Theater, upstairs from the main reception room. Videos may take 1 or 2 hours,

followed by discussion if you wish to stay. Here is the schedule:

December 9: "Trails of Evidence – How Forensic Science Works"

December 16: "Greece and Rome – an Integrated History of the Ancient Mediterranean"

December 23: "Daily Life in the Ancient World"

We may continue some of these courses (or others) in January if enough people are interested.

### Letter to Editor

#### Editor, Secular Circular:

Good-bye, HSSB Members. I am moving to Rancho Bernardo. I have a son living in Escondido and another in San Diego and four grandchildren in LaJolla and San Diego. I will live in a retirement community La Casa de las Campanas; it is a non-profit. The Spanish Colonial buildings look down on Lake Hodges. It was started when a retired school teacher who had inherited 23 acres above Lake Hodges organized a retirement home teachers could afford. It's lovely and has an incredible number of activities. Farewell and best wishes to all Humanists. **Joy Knapp**

### Non-HSSB Events of Interest

**Diane Krohn**

Upcoming events that may be of interest to humanists, atheists, skeptics, and freethinkers:

#### Upcoming Events in California:

- December 2: Dr. Donald Yeomans: *Near-Earth Objects: Finding Them Before They Find Us*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- December 2: Jim Underdown: *A Date With Dr. Phil: Anatomy of a TV Appearance*. CFI West, Los Angeles.

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

- December 16: Dr. Paul Zak: *The Moral Molecule: The Source of Love and Prosperity*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- January 5, 2013: Dr. Jared Diamond: *The World Until Yesterday: What Can We Learn From Traditional Societies?* Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- January 19-21, 2013: Skeptics Society Geology Tour: Death Valley Redux. Join the Skeptics Society for a fun 3-day trip from Las Vegas to Death Valley to Red Rock Canyon. Tour package includes charter bus, meals, lectures, museums, park fees, and donation to the Skeptics Society.  
[http://www.skeptic.com/geology\\_tours/2013/Death-Valley-Redux/](http://www.skeptic.com/geology_tours/2013/Death-Valley-Redux/)
- January 20, 2013: Dr. W. Patrick McCray: *The Visioneers: How a Group of Elite Scientists Pursued Space Colonies, Nanotechnologies, and a Limitless Future*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena.  
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>

**Upcoming Events Outside of California:**

- March 28-31, 2013: 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>

**HSSB Contact Information**

**Officers:**

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**Board Members at Large:**

|               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Wayne Beckman | Roger Schlueter |
| Judy Fontana  | Claudia Solé    |
| Helen Gordon  | Nancy Wahl      |
| Jean Olsen    | Mary Wilk       |

**Newsletter Editor:**

Ray Stone  
[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: 769-HSSB



## HSSB Calendar

**Tuesday, December 11. Board Meeting**, 5:30pm. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

**Sunday, December 16. Winter Solstice Party**. 4PM, Valle Verde Auditorium

**Sunday, December 30.** (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, January 19, 2013.** Jonathan Young, "The Mythological Basis for Current Religions"



Humanist Society of  
Santa Barbara  
PO Box 30232  
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