



# THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

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

JULY 2011

## July Program

# Meeting of Minds

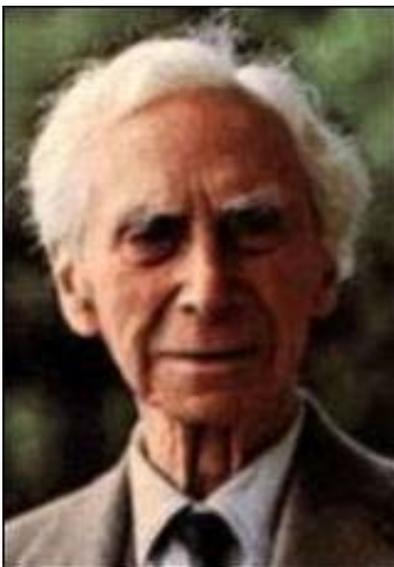


**Steve Allen**

Steve Allen, the originator of the Tonight show, created for the PBS network from 1977 to 1981 what one critic called "the ultimate talk show": the "Meeting of Minds" series. Shows were constructed in a chat-show format featuring guests who played important roles in the drama of history. Steve himself moderated each show. Our July meeting will present the Meeting of Minds episode in which the following figures from history appear:

- **Bertrand Russell** (British scholar of peace, mathematics and philosophy, who won a Nobel Prize for Literature), played by Andrew Hankin;
- **Saint Augustine** (Bishop of Hippo, philosopher and theologian), played by Ray Stone;
- **Thomas Jefferson** (Third President of the United States), played by Roger Schlueter;
- **Empress Theodora** of the Byzantine Empire, played by Meredith McMinn, who also directed the show.

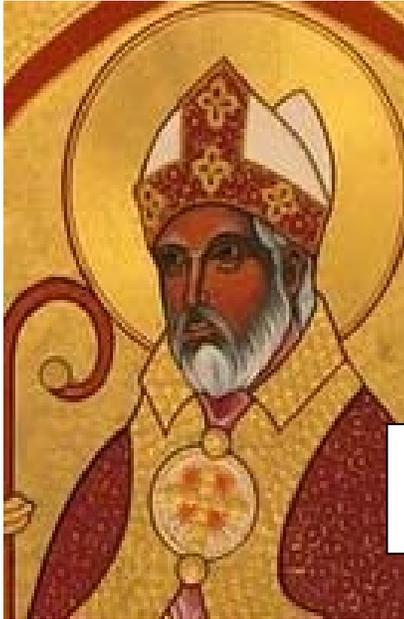
**Steve Allen** himself will be played by Richard Cousineau;



**Bertrand Russell**

Allen wrote about his show: "The idea is that every syllable will be part of an actual quotation. The degree of the exact quotation varies from character to character. In the case of some people who played important roles in the drama of history there is no record of anything they ever said or wrote. Two examples that come to mind are Cleopatra and Attila the Hun. Nevertheless, they were both fascinating characters for our show. And there's nothing difficult in creating dialog for them. You bring factual information into conversational form -- and commit no offense in doing so. The more scholars know about the people we're dealing with, the more impressed they are with how accurate our renderings are. It's remarkable how little negative criticism we've received."

Meeting of Minds encourages viewers and readers, who may be historically illiterate, to become more familiar with the great thinkers and doers of the



**St. Augustine**

past and to whet their appetites for more research and study. It has proved to be an exciting classroom tool (through audio recordings, videos and books) for students of history and philosophy.

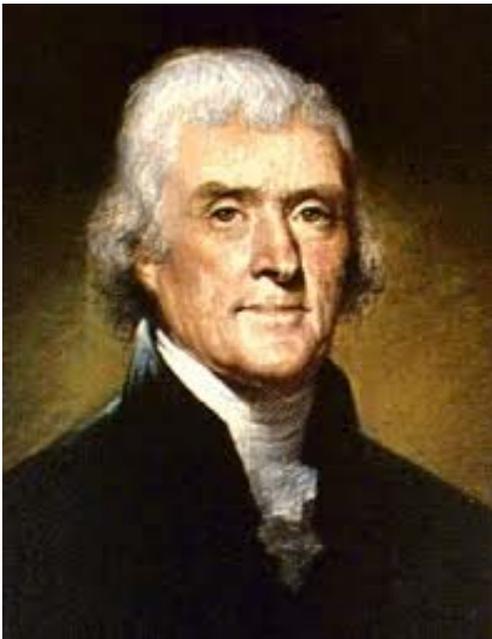
It took Allen some 18 years to bring the project to fruition. When it finally reached the national marketplace, it was honored with a multitude of awards, among them the Peabody Award, one national Emmy, three national Emmy nominations, a TV Critics Circle Award, the Encyclopedia Britannica Award, and the Film Advisory Board Award. Contemporary audiences are amazed to find how pertinent the shows remain today.

**When:** Saturday, July 16, 2011

**Where: Please note the different venue from our usual meetings!**

The Fe Bland Forum, S.B. City College West Campus, 967 Cliff Drive, Santa Barbara. There is plenty of free parking.

**Time:** Doors open 2:30pm. this show will start promptly at 2:55pm. **No late seating!**



**Thomas Jefferson**



**Empress Theodora**

**Dinner Following:** 5pm at the nearby Mesa Cafe, 1972 Cliff Drive in Santa Barbara. Please e-mail your seating reservations to [Activities@SantaBarbaraHumanists.org](mailto:Activities@SantaBarbaraHumanists.org) or phone 805-687-2371.

**For More Information, call:** 687-2371 or check our website: [www.santabarbarahumanists.org](http://www.santabarbarahumanists.org).

## Summer Solstice Picnic by Dick Cousineau

The Summer Solstice Party at Stow Park was great fun to the 50 or so who attended. Food catered by Red Lopez and his crew was wonderful and special thanks go to people who helped set up and take down the picnic area decorations, the game producers, the book sellers and the ticket takers: **Diane Krohn, Ray Stone, Wayne Beckman, Josette and Lou Barsky, John and Pat Coppejans, and President Ron Kronenberg.** You folks are all appreciated!

## HSSB Book Club by Marty Shapiro

This month's Book Club selection is not only off the beaten path, it's almost totally Out Of The Box! It's "A Renegade History of the United States", by Thaddeus Russell, and it's like a drive across the U.S. on the byways, not the highways. Readers have absolutely loved this book, and you may too.

We'll be meeting on Wednesday, July 20, at 1:30 - at my home - Casa Marty Shapiro, 249 Savona Ave, in Goleta, where Costco meets Dos Pueblos H.S. 968-0478. Call for driving instructions.

Some future selections: "The Divinity of Doubt", by famed lawyer Vincent Bugliosi, and "The Believing Brain", by Michael Shermer. Bugliosi is a scheduled guest speaker at the Society this Summer.

## Humanists' Support Group by Claudia Solé

Somehow when ill, there never are quite enough visits to while away the time. We are a community and want to act as such, so should you need support, a ride to a procedure or any other service for which you'd like the company and help of a like minded person, remember there are other Humanists willing to be there for you.

Committee members:

**Claudia Solé** (chair) 682-8292  
e-mail: [solemio@verizon.net](mailto:solemio@verizon.net)  
**Patricia Hiles** 687-5321  
**Roger Schlueter** 962-6316

## Club Roster Now Available to Members

A roster of HSSB members is now available to club members by email. To receive yours, in pdf file format, simply email your request to Mary Wilk at [mwilk@cox.net](mailto:mwilk@cox.net). It will be sent to you as an attachment by return email.

## From the President by Ron Kronenberg

Remember the good old days when Kennedy ran for president and many people were worried about the influence of the Pope on American politics? To set the record straight Kennedy put out a statement that became the gold standard for the separation of church and state in our country.

"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute; where no Catholic prelate would tell the president — should he be Catholic — how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference, and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him, or the people who might elect him.... I believe in a president whose views on religion are his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the nation, nor imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office."

Our country has moved away from this ideal enshrined in the Constitution by our forefathers and so well articulated by Kennedy. Instead, much of the political class espouses the premise that ours is a Christian nation founded by and for Christians, embracing the theocratic position of the religious right. These views permeate the public discussion,

not only of religious matters, but all areas of society. Most economists agree that stimulus creates jobs, yet some politicians call for Americans to get down on their knees and pray because only god can solve our problems. If that fails, would the logical next step be to sacrifice a virgin to appease an angry god, as some religions have professed? A good deal of the rhetoric of this primary season is dedicated to a state-imposed Christianity that, among other things, demands an end to abortion and gay rights because of religious doctrine. This conservative Christian position is strengthened by the fact that Iowa, the first caucus state, is much more socially conservative than the rest of the nation. In Iowa we get ethanol and religion in one package.



**Ron Kronenberg**

It is the view of our Humanist Society that to preserve our union, the separation of church and state must be better understood by all in this country. We live in the United States of America, not the United Arab Emirates. The preamble to our constitution begins "We the people..." not "We the Christians."

We have our work cut out for us. Our Board will work to spread the word, but accomplishing this requires the help of our whole membership. Theocracy is not an American ideal, it is the separation of church and state and we can, and must, inform and educate others. Our country is in crisis; let us return to the ideals of Jefferson's statute of religious freedom that says "that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such endeavoring to

impose them on others, hath established and maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world and through all time;" It would be inspiring if politicians today could be as relevant as Kennedy and Jefferson. We must spread the word that church state separation has deep roots in American history.

### **Secular Charity of the Month: Freedom From Religion Foundation by Diane Krohn**

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, FFRF, is an organization dedicated to promotion of the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, and to educate the public on matters relating to non-theism. The Foundation publishes a newspaper, Freethought Today, broadcasts Freethought Radio, conducts annual conventions, and can provide speakers for events and debates. Foundation co-founder Dan Barker has been a speaker for HSSB events; most recently, at our 15th anniversary party in 2010. Their website is: <http://www.ffrf.org/>

### **"Heaven is for Real"**

Board member **Claudia Solé** brings to our attention the book "Heaven is for Real", now sitting atop the New York Times non-fiction book list.

According to a Times [review of the book](#), it tells the story of a four-year old boy who, during emergency surgery for a burst appendix, "died and went to heaven" where he met, among others, his deceased great-grandfather, a baby sister who had died during a miscarriage, John the Baptist and Jesus himself. The book, authored by the boy's father, a Pastor from Imperial, Nebraska, along with Lynn Vincent, who collaborated with Sarah Palin on "Going Rogue", has sold over 1.5 million copies.

Susan Jacoby, author of "The Spirited Atheist" column in the Washington Post [writes](#): "There really is such a thing as American exceptionalism: we are more gullible than the public in the rest of the

developed world. .... Only in America could a book like this be classified as non-fiction."

**Empress Theodora of  
Constantinople  
(c 500 - 548)  
by Richard Cousineau**

*[This is the fourth and final article about the participants in the "Meeting of Minds" session to be presented at our July 16th meeting. Earlier articles recounted the lives of Lord Bertrand Russell, Thomas Jefferson, and St. Augustine. Ed.]*

Born to humble parents in Constantinople, Theodora was forced to fend for herself from age 12, due to the death of her father and the subsequent poverty of her mother. She was gainfully employed as a prostitute at the very Hippodrome where her father was killed. She was referred to as "Theodora the Strumpet" by the preacher John of Ephesus. She began life as not quite a Lady but ended as every inch a Queen. At 18 this acclaimed World Beauty married Justinian I, The Law Giver, and Emperor of the Roman Empire, at Constantinople.

While Empress she slept much, indulged heartily in good food and wine, loved luxury, and jewelry, and spent many months of the year at her palace at the seashore. She actually loved her husband and kept him enamored not only with her beauty, but with much more: her intelligence. She was active in diplomacy, made and unmade Popes and Patriarchs and disposed of her enemies in quick fashion, as was the method of the time.

The Catholic Church considered her a heretic because she espoused a single nature of Christ: divine alone and not human too. As Empress of the Roman-Byzantine Empire she was the most powerful woman of her time and she used her power well. She demonstrated tolerance, protected heretics, challenged the Papacy, and counseled the Emperor. She died at 48, with a reputation of strength and independence.

Theodora has agreed to participate in our Meeting of Minds production, July 16. Come see her! You won't have many chances like this one.

**Secular Leaders Descend on  
Capitol Hill**

Ignoring rapture forecasts, more than 100 secular and nontheistic leaders met in Washington D.C. last May for the first-ever Secular Coalition for America strategic summit. They developed new ideas for a "Secular Decade" Strategic Plan and lobbied more than 40 Congressional offices.

You can read more about the summit, and watch a video summary of the proceedings at <https://www.secular.org/2011Summit>.

**Promoting Reason and Science in  
Washington**

June 25, 2011 marked the 70th anniversary of President Franklin D. Roosevelt signing Executive Order 8802—the first executive order to bar federal contractors from discriminating in employment based on "race, creed, or national origin." Several other presidents have expanded and strengthened these protections. One of the most important expansions is Executive Order 11246, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965, which grants the Department of Labor the authority to enforce these protections.

In 2002, however, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13279, which exempted religious organizations from Executive Order 11246, and allowed them to discriminate in hiring based on religion.

For over 60 years prior to the 2002 executive order, our government was strongly committed to the notion that no one would be discriminated against in federally funded jobs because of his or her religion. In a speech in Zanesville, Ohio, President Barack Obama affirmed his commitment to this

principle by saying “if you get a federal grant, you can’t use that grant money to proselytize to the people you help and you can’t discriminate against them—or against the people you hire—on the basis of their religion.”

Yet nearly three years into his presidency, this practice is still in place. Urge President Obama to honor this momentous anniversary by living up to his campaign promise to ensure this important civil rights protection extends to all government contracts, and to stop allowing religious organizations to discriminate against federally funded employees on the basis of religion.

TAKE ACTION

## Famous Freethinkers of the Past

### H.I. Mencken (1880-1956)

by Dick Cousineau

Henry Louis Mencken, (the Sage of Baltimore) was truly a man who was either hated or loved; there was no moderate position on Mencken. One was either gored or won the tail, nothing in between. He was not actually a humanist but rather a rationalist and libertarian and considered by many of his peers as “The greatest of all American journalists” of the first half of the 20 Century.

In addition to working for the *Baltimore Sun* for the majority of his life he authored 28 books and edited numerous magazines. No matter where he appeared his words were widely quoted and his pungently outspoken ideas debated hotly. Nobody else could make so many people (mostly Christians) so furiously angry or make so many others (mostly intellectuals) laugh so hard as did H. L. Mencken. He is regarded as one of the most influential writers of his time and his attacks were mostly directed to anti-intellectuals, bigots, creationists, hoaxers, temperance workers,

fundamental Christians, orthodox Jews, organized religions, osteopathic doctors, and chiropractors.

Born in 1880 to a family of German extraction in Baltimore, he lived his entire life (except for 5 years when he was married) in the same home and worked for the *Sun* from 1902 to 1948. He was a man of many ideas and became friends with the leading literary figures of his time: Theodore Dreiser, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ben Hecht, Sinclair Lewis, and Alfred Knopf. Those who influenced him the most were Friedrich Nietzsche and Joseph Conrad and his humor and satire owe much to Ambrose Bierce (*The Devil’s Dictionary*) and Mark Twain, whose *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* he considered the finest work of American literature. During the 1920s he rose to prominence as a result of his vivid and insightful reporting of the Scopes Monkey Trial (which he named). His caustic articles in the *Sun* were the lens through which America observed the Dayton, Tennessee courtroom and Mencken’s widespread disdain, undisguised disgust, and active antipathy for Christian fundamentalism. He became the inspiration of the E.K. Hornbeck character in the play and movie *Inherit the Wind*.



H. L. Mencken

The epithet of anti-Semitic was associated with Mencken by some writers due to his admiration of some features of the modern German State, but nonetheless he was extremely critical of Hitler and his rabid followers. His co-editor of a literary magazine, George Nathan, once replied to a question regarding Mencken’s beliefs saying “I guess it would be right to say he never wholly liked Jews. He respected them, was amused by them, and he was even at times afraid of them, but he didn’t like them. I

suppose that’s anti-Semitism”. He was one of the first national journalists to publicly denounce the persecution of Jews in Germany, at a time when the N.Y. Times was notoriously silent. Mencken

wrote "The only way to help the Jewish fugitives (from Hitler) is to find places in which they can really live. Why shouldn't the United States take hundreds of thousands of them, or even all of them?" Hardly an anti-Semitic view.

If Mencken had any moral principle underlying his prickly prose it would be a form of Libertarianism, the Ayn Rand kind. Nothing mattered to him more than uncensored self expression. He did not always win friends nor did he set any standards for Political Correctness in journalism. But he remains a legend among American writers and his words are unlikely to be forgotten; words such as:

- Archbishop: A Christian ecclesiastic of a rank even unattained by Jesus.
- Theology: An effort to explain the unknowable by putting it in terms of the not worth knowing.
- It is now quite lawful for a Catholic woman to avoid pregnancy by resorting to mathematics, but she is still forbidden to resort to physics or chemistry.
- The cosmos is a giant flywheel making 10,000 revolutions a minute. Man is a sick fly taking a dizzy ride on it. Religion is the theory that the wheel was designed and set spinning to give him a ride.
- Puritanism: The haunting fear that someone, somewhere may be happy.
- People become civilized not in proportion to willingness to believe, but in proportion to their readiness to doubt.
- The most curious social convention of the age in which we live is the one to the effect that religious opinions should be respected.
- Religion is opposed to everything I hold in veneration-courage, clear thinking, honesty, fair dealing, and above all the love of truth.

- The chief contribution of Protestantism to human thought is its massive proof that God is a bore.
- If, after I depart, you ever remember me and have a thought to please my ghost, forgive a sinner, and wink your eye at a homely girl.

### Quote of the Month

If I have any beliefs about immortality, it is that certain dogs I have known will go to heaven, and very, very few persons. -James Thurber, writer and cartoonist (1894-1961)

## Become a Center for Inquiry (CFI) Secular Celebrant

### What is a CFI Secular Celebrant?

Secular Celebrants officiate at marriage and commitment ceremonies, funerals, memorials, and other celebrations of life's milestones. See "[Why a CFI Secular Celebrant Program?](#)"

### How can I become a CFI Secular Celebrant?

You can become a certified CFI Secular Celebrant by attending a training session and meeting other requirements. Read the complete list of requirements at "[CFI Secular Celebrant Certification](#)."

**When is the next training session?** September 16-17, 2011 in Indianapolis, IN.

**Workshop Fee:** \$75.00 per person (does not include meals)

**Certification Fee:** \$49.00 per year (to be paid later)

Training will be conducted by Reba Boyd Wooden, Co-Director, CFI Secular Celebrant Program.

For more information concerning the CFI Secular Celebrant Program and arrangements in Indianapolis, contact Reba Boyd Wooden at: <mailto:https://www.secular.org/2011Summit>.

## What's Going on Here?

by Andrew Hankin, Wandering Editor

☑ "Man means nothing, he means less to me  
than the lowliest cactus flower or the humblest  
yucca tree,  
he chases round this desert cause he thinks that's  
where I'll be,  
that's why I love mankind.

I recoil in horror from the foulness of thee  
from the squalor and the filth and the misery  
How we laugh up here in heaven at the prayers you  
offer me  
That's why I love mankind"

From God's Song by Randy Newman, full lyric  
<http://www.lyricsdepot.com/randy-newman/gods-song.html>

☑ *The Tennessee State Senate just passed a bill that would make it illegal to teach about homosexuality in public schools from kindergarten through 8th grade. No gay-marriage chatter. No gay-rights banter. No gay gayness of any gay sort. Dubbed the "Don't Say 'Gay' Bill" by opponents, the measure insists that any instruction or materials provided to students on the subject of sexuality must be "limited exclusively to natural reproductive science." Teachers who violate the rule could be fined up to \$50 and sentenced to as many as 30 days behind bars.*

So writes Santa Barbara writer Starshine Roshell in her June 2nd, 2011 column, also published in the *SB Independent*. This echoes much of what ACLU Attorney James Gilliam talked about at the HSSB meeting in March, 2011 and reported by Robert Bernstein in the April, 2011 Secular Circular. Starshine's full column can be found at:  
<http://www.starshineroshell.com/stories/20110602.html>

☑ "...what makes it virtually impossible for me (and about 1.6 million other Americans) to be elected President is something else that isn't in Article II of the Constitution, but might as well be,

right alongside the requirement for being at least 35 and a 'natural born citizen.' I'm an atheist...". Long-time Santa Barbara journalist Barney Brantingham, writing in the *SB Independent* on June 23rd, 2011. Full article:  
<http://www.independent.com/news/2011/jun/23/why-i-cant-be-president-and-never-could>

☑ "I was taught evolution in high school. I do believe in it. I'm a huge science geek... I like to believe in the big bang theory and... the evolution of humans throughout time."

Thus spoke Alyssa Campanella, the current Miss California and new Miss USA. Out of 51 Miss USA contestants, only two unequivocally supported the teaching of evolution (the other being Miss Massachusetts, Alida D'Angona). Three contestants: Miss Kentucky, Miss Alaska, and Miss Alabama, denied the theory altogether. Full story by Hugh Kramer in the *LA Atheism Examiner*:  
<http://www.examiner.com/atheism-in-los-angeles/good-news-the-new-miss-usa-contest-winner-has-beauty-and-brains>

### Pews

Who designed these torturous slabs  
Curved counter to the human spine  
Seat hard against the butt  
Edge turned just high enough under the knees  
To cut circulation off  
Numb the legs  
Force the congregants upright, awake

And before that  
Who conceived a God demanding we sit for hours  
And listen as our deeds are damned  
The friends and lovers guilty of misleading us  
Condemned to eternal fire

Who wrote the hymns that sing of love  
Yet only when the service ends  
Let the captured spirit fly

The released worshippers  
Filled with a hunger they barely understand  
Wander beneath a cloud-blotched sky

R. Yurman

R. Yurman has been wrestling with the poetry gods for more than 50 years. They have not often been kind but on occasion have thrown him just enough of a treat to keep him going.

"Pews" was published in *Above Us Only Sky*, *Atheist Poetry*, Volume Two, Incarnate Muse Press, 2008.

(Michelle Rhea, Poetry Editor of the Secular Circular, can be reached at: [michellerhea@cox.net](mailto:michellerhea@cox.net))

### Non-HSSB Events of Interest by Diane Krohn

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

#### Upcoming Events Outside of California:

**July 14-17:** The Amazing Meeting 2011, Las Vegas, NV. An annual celebration of science, skepticism, and critical thinking, with James Randi, Richard Dawkins, Penn & Teller, Eugenie Scott, and many others. <http://www.amazingmeeting.com/>

**July 29-31:** Secular Student Alliance, Annual Conference 2011, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. Speakers include Dan Barker, Greta Christina, PZ Myers, David Silverman, and others. <http://www.secularstudents.org/2011con>

**August 7-14:** An Alaskan geology cruise! Glaciers and the Science of Climate Change. Sponsored by The Skeptics Society. Details can be found at the website: [http://www.skeptic.com/geology\\_tours/2011/Alaska-Cruise/](http://www.skeptic.com/geology_tours/2011/Alaska-Cruise/)

**October 7-9:** Freedom From Religion Foundation, Annual Conference 2011, Hartford, Connecticut. <http://www.ffrf.org/outreach/convention/>

**October 27-30:** CSI Conference 2011, New Orleans, LA. Speakers include Barbara Forrest, Benjamin Radford, James Randi, Jim Underdown, and Tom Flynn. <http://csiconference.org/accomodations>

### HSSB Contact Information

#### Officers:

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#### Board Members at Large:

|                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Wayne Beckman   | Claudia Solé |
| Dick Cousineau  | Nancy Wahl   |
| Patricia Hiles  | Mary Wilk    |
| Roger Schlueter | TBD          |

#### Newsletter Editor:

Ray Stone

<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 sponsor. 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 Calendar

**Saturday, July 16**, 2:30 pm. Monthly Meeting. "**Meeting of Minds**". Fe Bland auditorium, at SBCC. See above for details.

**Wednesday, July 20**, at 1:30pm, the **HSSB Book Club** meets at the home of Marty Shapiro, 249 Savona Ave, in Goleta, where Costco meets Dos Pueblos H.S. See details above.

**Sunday, July 31** (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 20**. Monthly Meeting. **Prof. Thaddeus Russell**. Author, "Renegade History of US".

**Saturday, September 17**. Monthly meeting. **Vincent Bugliosi**. Author "Agnosticism".

**Saturday, October 15**. Monthly meeting. **Prof. Joe White**. Primer on Ignorance and Stupidity.

**Saturday, November 19**. Monthly meeting. To be announced.

**Saturday, December 17**. Winter Solstice Party.



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Santa Barbara  
PO Box 30232  
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