



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

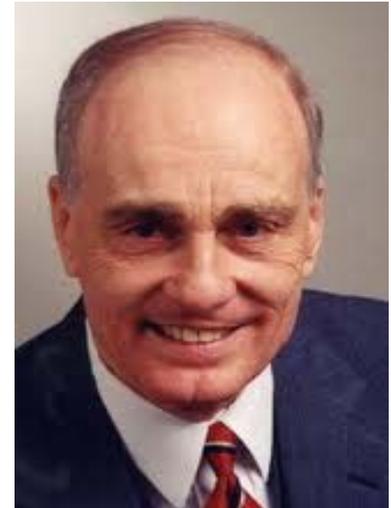
Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

SEPTEMBER 2011

September Program: Prosecuting God Speaker: Vincent Bugliosi

Vincent Bugliosi, whom many view as the nation's foremost prosecutor, has successfully taken on, in court or on the pages of his books, the most notorious murderers of the last half century - Charles Manson, O.J. Simpson, and Lee Harvey Oswald. But in our September program, Bugliosi takes on his most notorious suspect: God. Real or imaginary? Knowable or unknowable? You decide.



Bugliosi will be speaking about his book, *Divinity of Doubt*, which attacks the all-important Christian argument of intelligent design, argues that Jesus was not born of a virgin, and hence was not the son of God, that scripture in reality supports the notion of no free will, and that the immortality of the soul was a pure invention of Plato, and even more.

Bugliosi has a well-earned reputation as a criminal prosecutor in the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office. His renown first arose out of his successful prosecution of the Charles Manson case, which was the basis for his book "Helter Skelter". But he has made a name for himself in cases too numerous to mention. Alan Dershowitz says, "Bugliosi is as good a prosecutor as there ever was." His web site is at: <http://www.divinityofdoubt.com/>

Bugliosi will be interviewed on the "Talking With America" radio show at 8:30 am on September 17th, the morning of his appearance at our meeting. Tune into KTMS, 990 am to hear his interview with Nick Beeson.

NOTE: Meeting is at the **Faulkner Gallery** at the Main Branch of the Santa Barbara Public Library

When: Saturday, September 17th

Time: Doors open 2:30 pm for socializing; meeting starts 3 pm

Fee: Optional: members and students, \$2; non-members, \$5 general donation

For more information: Call 769-HSSB

Humanist Society Website: santabarbarahumanists.org/

Dinner following the meeting will be at Mulligan's Cafe & Bar, at the Santa Barbara Golf Course off of Las Positas. There will be the following choice of entrees: ranch steak; grilled Mahi Mahi; grilled chicken and vegetables; chile relleno plate with rice and beans. Dinners include Caesar salad; hot bread; baked potato, and a non-alcoholic drink. Price: \$22 per person, includes tax and tip. Please bring cash or check for the exact amount. RSVP by September 14, to Activities@santabarbarahumanists.org.

Welcome, New Members!

Roland & Joyce Bryan, Santa Barbara
Marika Davidek, Santa Barbara
Ignatio Alarcon, Goleta

HSSB Book Club by Marty Shapiro

The HSSB Book Club will be meeting Wednesday, September 21, at 1:30 p.m., to discuss an especially timely topic - the sexual abuse of children in the Mormon Church.

The brand new book (published this June) is titled *Secrets and Wives* - I think that's a take-off from Mike Leigh's powerful film *Secrets and Lies*. And the charming author (I've seen a video) is Sanjiv Bhattacharya, a Brit in L.A., "a foreign atheist and liberal, a stranger in a strange land", and our November speaker.

Hosts for this meeting will be **Hugh and Helen Smart**, 7842 Day Road, in Goleta, 961-8191.

From the President by Ron Kronenberg

I am deeply troubled; as I am sure you are, by the race to theocracy by some of the presidential contenders in our 2012 primary season. Instead of dealing with the consequences of global warming and drought, one of the candidates designated prayer days. They have been as successful as prayers often are; the Texas drought continues. Instead of legislating reductions of carbon admissions, or other legislation and try to alleviate the causes and the effects of the drought, Texas is stuck with reliance on prayer days.

Our Society's support for the separation of church and state is very relevant in today's political climate. At our August Board meeting we decided to establish a committee to find speakers and or arrange debates to educate the public on the

importance of church-state separation. The committee chair is Dick Cousineau who is also our program chair. Our entire Board understands the important role we can play in this debate and would like member input in developing programs. I know that our members have many useful connections and ideas to contribute. Contact Dick or any board member with your insights. As the election gets closer we expect the debate to get even more irrational and we plan to have some of our meetings dealing directly with these church-state issues.

Archbishop Charles Chaput, newly appointed in Philadelphia, wants Catholic politicians to account for their anti-Catholic positions, especially, but not only, abortion issues. They would not offer Holy Communion to an offender. To our membership this is not too big a deal but to a practicing Catholic it is cruel. In a previous letter I wrote how Kennedy responded that the separation of church and state is absolute. Archbishop Chaput says Kennedy was wrong. Would a Catholic politician vote against his own convictions to avoid problems with his church? I would hope that Catholic politicians will disregard their Archbishop and vote their conscience as most Catholics do regarding birth control. But some may adhere to their Archbishops' demands and vote as their church requires, even against their own conscience. I can't understand how the Catholic Church in Philadelphia can claim tax exempt status. We should do our best to see they lose it for their blatant political involvement.

We in HSSB have an important role to play in changing attitudes about church and state relations. The courts may not be the protectors they once were on this issue. Conservative positions on our courts are now widespread. Our best hope is to educate the voters to demand this absolute separation as the correct position for our democratic government. There is too much theocratic language in our political landscape. We must play our part in educating the public. Our core value of church-state separation is under fierce attack.

Renegade Historian: Thaddeus Russell by Robert Bernstein

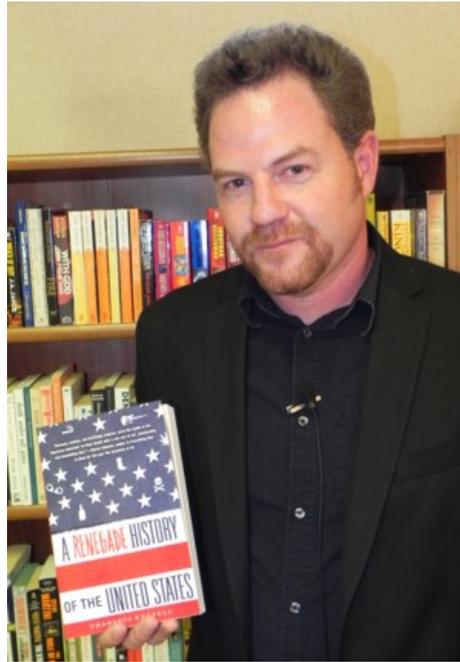
History is usually presented as the story of the big movers and shakers who shaped the future through their vision and actions. This view of history was broadened in the 1960s and beyond by including previously forgotten groups like women, people of color and LGBTs. But Thaddeus Russell, our August meeting speaker, offers us a new US history that includes a much broader forgotten group: worse than ordinary people, they are the slackers, drunks, prostitutes and, often shiftless, slaves.

Humanists are painfully aware of the Puritan thread of US history. But how did we get the non-Puritan parts of our culture that we enjoy so much: the idea of the weekend, vacations, freedom for women to dress as they wish and to own property? Russell tells us we got these from people who either rebelled against or just ignored the Puritan value of constant hard work with no time for joy. Puritans saw work as a virtue in itself, not as a means to an end.

But slackers work as little as possible. They pay no attention to schedules. They show up for work when they want and leave when they want. And if they are forced to show up for work when they don't want, they will drink on the job and get little work done. Russell explained that these slackers gave us our weekends. They even forced employers to provide free beer and grog or lose their employees!

Prostitutes simply ignored the rules of the day. They dressed as they pleased; they worked for high pay at their own hours, and on their own terms.

They saved their money, spent it as they saw fit, and ultimately, as property owners, achieved great political power. They forged the way for other women to gain these same rights, according to Russell.



Thaddeus Russell

Photo by Robert Bernstein

And then there were the minorities, all detested in the universal term of distaste: they were "non-white". The Irish, the Jews and the Italians were cursed with the "n" word. The Census provided a separate category from "White" as we still do for "Hispanic".

These detested groups reveled in being lumped in with black people. Russell explained that what we know today as jazz was co-created by Italians and Jews as much as by African Americans. Jazz is all about freedom and improvisation. But over time, these groups sought assimilation by following the Puritan rules. They in turn became racist against other

groups. They started showing up on time for work and working long hours. The Irish sought respectability by becoming police. Italians and Jews disproportionately volunteered to serve in WWII.

Frederick Winslow Taylor invented the idea of the assembly line from time and motion studies. But the assembly line would not work unless the culture changed. People had to see themselves as machines in order to serve as machines. And this did happen.

Russell noted that the Old Testament God was considered an external being, whereas the Christian God is "inside all of us". This allowed the internalization of authority, which makes Russell dislike Christianity more than other religions.

These ideas do not come naturally. They did not exist in West Africa or Eastern Europe. They were

invented by specific people from Northern Europe for specific reasons. Why there and not elsewhere, Russell could not say. Some have suggested that climate is a factor: people in harsher climates have to be more disciplined in planning their work. But Russell dismissed any one factor as an explanation.

Puritans dress in somber ways. They have no "bling" as it were. Blacks have worn bling even as slaves; bright colors were a clothing tradition in Africa.

Russell ended with a surprising point for many: democracy requires a Puritan mindset, people who will take the time to run society in a responsible way, to learn the facts, to show up for meetings, and to work to make things better.

His ending point is really the starting point in his book "A Renegade History of the United States": we need both the Puritans and the slackers for a society that both gets things done and provides a reason for living. As Humanists I think we can appreciate what Russell is telling us!

What's an "Ignostic?"

Ignosticism is the theological position that other theological positions assume too much about the concept of God and other theological concepts, and that before we can have a meaningful conversation about God, we have to adequately define "God". The ignostic says: "I don't know what you're talking about when you talk about God, since most descriptors of "God" are muddled and self-contradictory".

The word "ignosticism" was coined by Sherwin Wine, a founding figure of Humanistic Judaism. (Read on.)

Sherwin Wine - Famous Humanist (1928 - 2007) by Dick Cousineau

To get personal in these essays of past and existing Humanists, I must admit my highest admiration of

one who epitomizes, to me, the finest qualities of imagination, intellectualism and courage: Sherwin Wine. Brought up as a Conservative Jew in a kosher home, he made his personal journey to become a Reform rabbi, an independent thinker, a Humanistic Jew, and to total secularity without diminishing his respect and honor for his cultural heritage. (I made a similar, but much more humble journey; from a strict Roman Catholic home, to various liberal Protestant churches, to Unitarianism, to help found the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara).



Sherwin Wine

Born in 1928 to parents of middle European extraction who had moved to the Detroit area, Wine attended University of Michigan where he received his undergraduate and Masters Degrees in Philosophy, and where he came under the influence of the Logical Positivism of Auguste Comte and William James and the Humanistic bent of his professors. Rather than becoming an academic he enrolled at the Hebrew Union College and decided he would be a Reform Judaism rabbi serving the Detroit congregation. In 1959 he helped found Temple Beth El in Windsor, Ontario as a new Humanistic Congregation. From there he went back across the river to Detroit to begin, with a few (8) friends, a new Secular Jewish movement in Farmington Hills. With a new liturgical language that reflected their true beliefs, such as eliminating the words "god", "chosen", etc. from the services,

they placed the Torah in the library rather than the sanctuary.

The Windsor congregation was outraged when it became public that the Farmington Hills temple did not recognize God. When pressed to describe his beliefs, Wine stated that it was impossible to empirically prove or disprove the existence of God, therefore the term was “meaningless”. From then on he referred to himself as an “agnostic” [see above]. During his 50 years at Farmington Hills he helped found 30 other Secular Humanistic-Jewish congregations throughout the US and Canada. In addition, he also founded several organizations that were not especially Jewish such as the Voice of Reason, in 1981, to respond to the political activism of Jerry Farwell and his ilk. Soon it merged with the Ethical Culture’s Center for Religious Liberty. In 1982 he founded the North American Committee for Humanism, the Humanist Institute, a graduate school for the training of Humanist leaders, and Citizens United in 1995.

Within Humanistic Judaism Wine emphasized intellectual integrity and keeping words consistent with beliefs especially in the “agnostic” meanings and non-theistic liturgical writings and views. His goal was to provide members with a sense of Community and with services consistent with its secular basis. These views are currently being implemented by the Chaplain at Harvard College, Greg Epstein, but with no Jewish foundations. Wine has been closely affiliated with the exploding non-Jewish Humanist movement within the US and Europe. He has been a member of numerous boards that espouse Secular Humanistic values, and has written numerous books for use at various Holidays and Life Passages in which he explains how reason can help mankind live a meaningful and fulfilling life without any supernatural help.

Sherwin Wine and his driver were killed, and his life-partner Richard McMains severely injured, in an automobile accident in Morocco in 2007, but we still look to him as an example of Goodness without God, showing how to lead a life of joy, compassion,

and integrity. Perhaps in the not too distant future Humanistic Societies and Congregations will be established throughout the world to supply the secular Communities that humans appear to need and want for themselves and their children, without theistic baggage and in accordance with Sherwin Wine’s vision.

Founding Fathers’ Views on Religion: George Washington by Ron Holzwarth

George Washington was a staunch defender of individual religious rights, and of the separation of religion from government. In May 1789, he wrote to



Ron Holzwarth

the United Baptist Churches in Virginia that everyone “ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience.” He initiated the Treaty of Tripoli which states, “the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion.” He firmly espoused a secular nation, embracing citizens

who worshipped different faiths or those who believed in none. When Christian chaplains in the army urged Washington to expel a Universalist chaplain who denied the existence of hell, Washington refused.

Washington’s practice of Christianity was limited and superficial because he was not himself a Christian. He repeatedly declined the church’s sacraments. Never did he take communion, and when his wife Martha did, he waited for her outside the sanctuary. Even on his deathbed, Washington asked for no ritual, uttered no prayer to Christ, and expressed no wish to be attended by a clergyman. He was publicly criticized for spending Sundays “in secular pursuits” and when he rarely attended church, he stood during prayers while others knelt, and always left before communion. Washington’s

famous deathbed scene at Mount Vernon in 1799 was attended by three doctors and several servants but not one clergyman. There is no mention of Jesus Christ anywhere in his extensive correspondence.

Some of Washington's Quotes:

"Religious controversies are always productive of more acrimony and irreconcilable hatreds than those which spring from any other cause."

"Of all the animosities which have existed among mankind, those which are caused by difference of sentiments in religion appear to be the most inveterate and distressing, and ought most to be deprecated. I was in hopes that the enlightened and liberal policy, which has marked the present age, would at least have reconciled Christians of every denomination so far that we should never again see the religious disputes carried to such a pitch as to endanger the peace of society."

"The path of true piety is so plain as to require but little political direction." (Responding to clergy complaints that the Constitution lacked mention of Jesus Christ.)

"I beg you be persuaded that no one would be more zealous than myself to establish effectual barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny, and every species of religious persecution." (To United Baptists Churches of Virginia.)

References:

1. *Fighting Words: A Toolkit for Combating the Religious Right*, by Robin Morgan. 2006.
2. *2000 Years of Disbelief*, by James A. Haught, 1996.

Texas School Board vs. Evolution

(Reprinted from "Church & State" September 2011.)

In a move that surprised many observers, the Texas State Board of Education recently voted unanimously to accept science materials for public

school biology courses that do not promote creationism.

Voting 14-0, the board chose to approve supplemental classroom materials that include information about evolution. It rejected materials put forth by religiously motivated organizations that seek to undermine evolution.

Texas is not buying new science books this year but did allocate \$60 million to purchase supplemental materials, some of which are delivered online. Americans United and other groups feared that Religious Right allies on the board would attempt to use the process to win support for instructional literature promoting creationism.

Sarah Weis, president of Atheists United, Austin Chapter, submitted written testimony urging the board to disregard entreaties from the Discovery Institute and International Databases. Both of these groups proposed materials that questioned evolution and raised common Religious Right objections to it.

"Placing materials that include numerous factual errors and unsound science in Texas classrooms not only undermines science education, creates constitutional problems, and threatens the religious liberty of students and their families, but such materials deprive the students of our state from receiving a proper science education," Weis' statement read.

Texas has often been a trouble spot for scientists and civil liberties activists. In 2009, the state school board adopted a science curriculum that left open the door for approval of creationist materials. Earlier this year, Texas Gov. Rick Perry appointed Barbara Cargill (R-Woodlands) to serve as chair of the board. Cargill, a former teacher, believes that the debate over science education is a "spiritual battle" and says she favors teaching the "strengths and weaknesses of evolution."

Pro-evolution groups organized people on the ground, and it paid off. The National Center for Science Education (NCSE) reported that four times

as many people testified in favor of sound science than those who wanted supplements undercutting evolution.

“That these supplements were adopted unanimously reflects a long overdue change in the board,” observed Eugenie Scott, NCSE’s executive director. “I commend the board for its refusal to politicize science education.”

To Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, et al

If you should see the face of God,
do not speak of it.
Whatever God might tell you,
do not breathe a word,
for any voice commanding “prophesy”
cries doom upon us all.

Leave no written scriptures to freeze
our consciousness in place a million years.
Utter no cryptic verses that establish
privileged opinion,
no calls to action that separate
the faithful from the infidel.

Let mortals rape and kill
without the consolation of jihad.
Let the pillage be mere greed
unexcused by missionary zeal.
Let hatred blossom unobscured
by subterfuge and guilt.

Keep for yourself the secret truths
revealed by God’s transparency.
Whatever you think we need to know,
spare us.

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.

To Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, et al was published in *Above Us Only Sky, Atheist Poetry*, Volume Two, Incarnate Muse Press, 2008.

Michelle Rhea, Poetry Editor, can be reached at <mailto:michellerhea@cox.net>.

Web Site of the Month by Roger Schlueter

A new [blog site](#) on the web introduces a different concept in blogging: multi-blogs. *Freethought blogs* features not just one writer but seven different authors all of whom explore various aspects of free thought. The most prominent is PZ Myers, recently named International Humanist of 2011 and an outspoken atheist and debunker of creationism in his blog *Pharyngula*. Ed Brayton writes *Dispatches from the Culture Wars*, a self-explanatory title.

This new site promises to add more voices under the banner of “free thought” thereby ensuring that you will have a rich vein of voices to follow and - if you chose to dive into the comments sections - debate, challenge and distract. In fact, as is true with many open blogs, the comments sections can be even more enlightening, humorous and frustrating than the original blog post. Joining in the conversation is not for the faint of heart. If you do read the comments, keep an eye out for poster “SezMe”, a prominent Santa Barbara Humanist.

More about David McAfee

In January of this year, David McAfee, our guest speaker and author of *Disproving Christianity: Refuting the World’s Most Followed Religion* told us of the discrimination he faced applying for the UCSB Graduate program in religious studies. Later, he wrote an article for his website <http://davidgmcafee.wordpress.com/2011/04/19/an-atheist-activist-with-an-axe-to-grind/> describing this experience. The responses he received were many and varied, and many were also sent to the UCSB Department of Religious Studies.

Soon thereafter, McAfee received a letter from the head of the UCSB Religious Studies departments, Jose Cabezon, as follows:

"I am writing on behalf of the Religious Studies department to apologize for any comments that may have been made by Professor Ann Taves during a conversation you had with her on November 23, 2010, about your interest in UCSB's graduate program in Religious Studies. While I was not present during that conversation, I want to assure you that it is the firm policy of the Religious Studies department not to discriminate against applicants on the basis of religious beliefs or lack thereof. If Professor Taves implied otherwise, then this was inappropriate. Issues of religious beliefs, activism, or activities unrelated to one's own academic work should not be considerations in the admissions process."

What's Going on Here?

by Andrew Hankin, Reporter en Route

□ The Campbell County Board of Supervisors holds sessions on the first Tuesday of each month in the basement of the Haberer Building in Rustburg, Virginia. According to the board's website, all meetings are open to the public, but don't expect to feel welcome if you happen to hold the wrong views about religion.

At the August 2nd session, supervisors discussed a recent court decision against persistently sectarian prayers at local governmental meetings. Staff attorney Kristin B. Wright sent the board a memo advising them that the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled against the regular use of sectarian invocations in a North Carolina case. She advised the county officials to avoid terms from one faith tradition such as "In Jesus name we pray."

This sound advice didn't sit well with its recipients. According to the Brookneal Union-Star, the supervisors quickly came to consensus against the ruling. Addressing the citizens gathered in the room, Supervisor Steve Shockley said, "If you're offended by the name of Christ or Lord and Savior,

you are welcome to leave the room!"

Full story from Americans United for Separation of Church & State

<http://blog.au.org/2011/08/11/my-way-or-the-highway-in-campbell-county-va-it%E2%80%99s-pray-to-jesus-or-get-out>

□ Scholars at Hebrew University have been quietly at work for 53 years on one of the most ambitious projects attempted in biblical studies — publishing the authoritative edition of the Old Testament and tracking every single evolution of the text over centuries and millennia. And it has evolved, despite deeply held beliefs to the contrary. An ancient version of one book has an extra phrase. Another appears to have been revised to retroactively insert a prophecy after the events happened.

For many Jews and Christians, religion dictates that the words of the Bible in the original Hebrew are divine, unaltered and unalterable. For Orthodox Jews, the accuracy is considered so inviolable that if a synagogue's Torah scroll is found to have a minute error in a single letter, the entire scroll is unusable. But the ongoing work of the academic detectives of the Bible Project, as their undertaking is known, shows that this text at the root of Judaism, Christianity and Islam was somewhat fluid for long periods of its history, and that its transmission through the ages was messier and more human than most of us imagine.

Full story:

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44117239/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/?gt1=43001

□ At a recent live-televised town hall meeting in College Park, Maryland President Obama gave the first question opportunity to Amanda Knief of the Secular Coalition for America. She asked the president why he has still not fulfilled the campaign promise he made three years ago to end the Bush-era policies that allow federally funded religious organizations to discriminate in hiring and employment on the basis of belief?

Full story and video at:

<http://secular.org/content/secular-coalition-presses-obama-faith-based-policies-during-live-town-hall-meeting>

Highlights of survey results of 928 Americans by Public Policy Polling:

52% approved of "God's overall dealings", while only 9% disapproved. In contrast, both Democrat and Republican parties in Congress received only 33% approval rating. When asked to rate God on the creation of the universe, 71% of voters approved and only 5 percent disapproved. Younger respondents were more critical of God's handling of natural disasters: those aged 18-29 expressed a 26% disapproval rating, compared to 12% disapproval among those 65 and older.

Full story:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/27/god-congress-approval-rating_n_911220.html

At 22%, Americans' resistance to electing a Mormon president, even one nominated by their own party, is exceeded only by their opposition to electing someone who is either gay or lesbian (32%) or an atheist (49%). By contrast, less than half as many, 10%, say they would not vote for an Hispanic. Fewer than 10% would not vote for a nominee who is Jewish, Baptist, Catholic, female, or black. From a June 2011 Gallup poll:

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/148100/Hesitant-Support-Mormon-2012.aspx>

"America has a problem: It's filled with people who take the Bible seriously. America has a blessing: It's filled with people who take the Bible seriously. How does this blessing coexist with the curse derived from the same source: the Bible? The answer is that the Bible is a curse or a blessing depending on who is doing the interpreting. Sometimes belief in the Bible leads to building a hospital. Sometimes it leads to justifying perpetual war and empire building. Same book—different interpretation.

"If the history of Christianity proves one thing, it's

that you can make the Bible 'say' anything. When you hear words like 'We want to take back America for God!' the 21st-century expression of such theocratic ideas can be traced back to some of my old friends: the Reconstructionists. Most Americans have never heard of the Reconstructionists, but they have felt their impact through the Reconstructionists' profound (if indirect) influence over the wider (and vast) evangelical community."

Full story by Frank Schaeffer, author of "Crazy for God: How I Grew Up As One Of The Elect, Helped Found The Religious Right, And Lived To Take All (Or Almost All) Of It Back" is on web page:

<http://www.alternet.org/story/151960/?page=entire>

After his election in November 1938, California Governor Culbert Levy Olson did not take the full oath of office in 1939, refusing to utter the words, 'So help me God'. Asked how he managed to avoid the Oath, Olson patiently explained: "I just told the member of the Supreme Court [of California] who came to swear me in as Governor that there was no use to ask me to say 'So help me God' because God couldn't help me at all, and that there isn't any such person..."

Other remarks attributed to Culbert Olson:

"Secularism is defined as, 'Supreme or exclusive attention to the affairs of this life; specifically an ethical system founded on natural morality which seeks the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point as the immediate duty apart from theism or religion and choosing as the method of procedure the promotion of human improvement by material means'."

"I don't see how anybody can read the Bible and believe it's the word of God, or believe that it is anything but a barbarous story of a barbaric people who were so ignorant that they lived terrible lives. The Bible itself is the most obscene book that was ever published." Biography from the American Atheists website:

http://www.atheists.org/The_Hon._Atheist_Governor_%3A_Culbert_L._Olson

Quote of the Month

The belief that there is only one truth and that oneself is in possession of it seems to me the deepest root of all evil that is in the world. Max Born, German-British Physicist, Educator. 1882-1970

Letter to Editor, Los Angeles Times

After reading the article by Charlotte Alan in the Sunday issue of the Times, I would like to make the following comments:

According to the author, there is no harm in the mixing of religion and politics. Well, I beg to disagree. It is a dangerous combination as we observe in countries where one particular religion becomes the law of the land. Here in the US there are major forces that would like to see this happen and enact laws that pay tribute to one particular religion.

During the Bush Administration this president claimed that God told him what to do when he invaded Iraq. WOW!

Now we have a president with a high I.Q. who tries to appease the religious right by having prayer sessions in the White House and gives financial support (our tax dollars) to religious organizations. About this prayer business, it always puzzled me what people expect from asking some deity to save them from some major natural disaster (called an act of God).

Does their God not know that people do not like these things to happen or just let it happen to make life more interesting or is this almighty deity unable to stop these things from happening? Then what is the use of praying?

Ours is the only country in the western world when being religious is a requirement when running for public office. This is absurd. People should look at

life with an open mind and not be blinded by dogmas that have no base for reality.

Wake up America!!

John L. Coppejans
Santa Barbara, California

Doormat of the Month



Non-HSSB Events of Interest by Diane Krohn

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

Upcoming Events in California:

- September 11: Dr. Nancy Segal: *Someone Else's Twin: The True Story of Babies Switched at Birth*. CalTech, Pasadena.
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- September 18: Janet Reitman: *Inside Scientology: The Story of America's Most Secretive Religion*. CFI West – Los Angeles and Costa Mesa.
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#reitman>

- October 2: Dr. Indre Viskontas: *Beyond Belief: How Memory Obscures the Truth*. CFI West – Los Angeles.
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#reitman>
- October 2: Annie Jacobsen: *Area 51: An Uncensored History of America's Top Secret Military Base*. CalTech, Pasadena.
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- October 10: Dr. Lisa Randall: *Knocking on Heaven's Door: How Physics and Scientific Thinking Illuminate the Universe and the Modern World*. CalTech, Pasadena.
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- October 16: Dr. David Linden: *Vice, Virtue, and the Brain's Pleasure Circuits*. CFI West – Los Angeles and Costa Mesa.
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#reitman>

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- 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>
- November 6: Carl Sagan Day, Davie, FL, Broward College Central Campus. A weekend of various activities that celebrates the work of astronomer and science advocate Carl Sagan.
<http://carlsaganday.com/>
- November 19-20: Scepticon IV, Springfield, MO. Speakers include Dan Barker, Hemant Mehta, Darrel Ray, David Silverman, PZ Myers, and many others.
<http://scepticon.org/>

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Newsletter Editor:

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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 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, September 17. Monthly Meeting. Vincent Bugliosi speaking on *Prosecuting God*. **At the Faulkner Gallery.**

Wednesday, September 21, at 1:30 p.m. **Book Club** at the home of Hugh and Helen Smart, 7842 Day Road, in Goleta, 961-8191. The book is "Secrets and Wives" by Sanjiv Bhattacharya.

Sunday, September 25 (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, October 15. Monthly meeting. **Prof. Joe White.** Primer on Ignorance and Stupidity.

Saturday, November 19. Monthly meeting. **Sanjiv Bhattacharya.** *Secrets of Wives-Mormon Polygamy.*

Saturday, December 17. Winter Solstice Party, at Valle Verde.



Humanist Society of
Santa Barbara
PO Box 30232
Santa Barbara, CA 93130