



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

OCTOBER 2011

October Program

Speaker: Professor Joe White "Ignorance & Stupidity"

This month, one of our Society's most popular speakers, SBCC Professor Joe White is back with a new, provocative topic: "A Primer on Ignorance & Stupidity."

Based on his forthcoming book with the same title, Professor White will examine, in his words, the "Too Often Overlooked Utility, Virtue, Morality and Aesthetic Value of Ignorance & Stupidity."

In addition to chairing the Department of Philosophy at City College, Professor White is Executive Director of the Center for Philosophical Education, which publishes the only international undergraduate journal of philosophy. It has published papers from four continents.

He is the author of the Philosophy textbook, *Adventures on the Frontier of Ignorance*, now in its 5th edition. A prolific writer for various newspapers and magazines, Professor White also contributed to the 24-part PBS series on Philosophy called *The Examined Life*.



We also note that he was recently appointed Ambassador for Flying Goat Wines of the Lompoc Wine Ghetto.

When: Saturday, October 15, 2011

Where: Social Room, Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Road, Santa Barbara

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

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

Dinner following: At the Elephant Bar, 521 Firestone Road, Goleta, in the Serengeti Room. There will be a Global Buffet. \$24 per person, including non-alcoholic drinks, tax and tip. Please bring cash or a check for that amount. RSVP to: Activities@santabarbarahumanists.org by October 11.

For more information: Call 769-HSSB

Humanist Society Website: santabarbarahumanists.org

Please park only in spaces behind the church marked "VDM"

Welcome, New Members!

Bill Edgar, a returning member from Santa Barbara

HSSB Book Club Marty Shapiro

Our October selection is Thomas Friedman's "That Used to Be Us". We'll be discussing this new, big bestseller Wednesday, October 19, at 1:30 P.M., at the home of Dick Cousineau, 505 Alegria (off Las Positas).

I'd also like to ask for your input into a new project for us: compiling a list of selections for future months. If you have any book suggestions to go into our new, expanded lists, please let me know at martinshapiro@cox.net. Thanks!

Humanists' Support Group Claudia Solé

We were sorry to see that a member requested help to attend our monthly meeting but did not wait for the ride as arranged. We are here to help but appreciate being taken seriously.

Also, we will be working with Cottage Hospital who has requested a non-believing celebrant for the support of those who may be atheists or otherwise vague about beliefs. We have relevant experience with ill and terminally ill non-believers and look forward to being of help in the wider community beyond own circle.

A View from the Road Andrew Hankin

[In place of vacationing President Ron Kronenberg's monthly message, here are some observations from Andrew Hankin reporting on his current travels.]

While traveling through northern California and southern Idaho, I have noticed the success of the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: many large, modern and immaculate church buildings; the Book of Mormon (alongside the Gideon Bible) in hotel rooms; two viable candidates for the Presidency of the United States. They even persuaded (with Catholic and Republican assistance) more than half of California voters to approve Proposition 8, taking away the rights of a much larger LGBT population to marry the person they love. This particular political activism is especially egregious noting the Church's unwillingness or inability to rein-in Mormon sects or distance themselves from a steady stream of criminal polygamy cases in the news recently.

I have tried to lead by example and would like to see more action by the Secular Humanist community.

- A copy of the Humanist Manifesto placed and constantly replaced in every hotel room, public library and bookstore until it is as ubiquitous as those religious books.
- Voluntary tithing of 10% of income, inheritance or legacy to local, national, or global secular organizations. This could be spread amongst lobbyists such as the Secular Coalition for America; litigators such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation; or activist groups like Americans United for Separation of Church & State.
- Acknowledging economic difficulties, tithing 10% of one's free time instead of money would be appropriate for activism such as: writing letters to newspapers; distributing Humanist Manifestos; or volunteering to help a local organization like HSSB.

We can either sit home and grumble about how religionists are legislating their agenda from the corridors of power, or get up and work to shape our communities towards what we would like!

"Divinity of Doubt" by Vincent Bugliosi Robert Bernstein

At our September meeting, famed lawyer Vincent Bugliosi set the bar high by saying his book "Divinity of Doubt" discusses virtually every

important issue on God and religion. And that he had fresh, provocative insights on all of them. He admitted this sounds presumptuous after 2000 years of discussion, but he thinks it to be true. Some in the audience may have disagreed with this self-assessment. Personally, I worried at the start when he made a confused reference to research that showed the human brain seems to have an area devoted to awareness of God. What worried me was his wondering about the word "neuron" as if it were exotic to him.

There was a repeated pattern: whenever talk strayed into the world of science, he fumbled. And yet some of the substance of his argument is scientific at its core. Many in the audience gasped that he was "not overly sold on evolution" and thought "the evidence for evolution is flimsy". Likewise when he was asked about cosmological issues, he sneered at the idea that quantum mechanics allowed for something to appear out of a vacuum.

The good news: he did indeed have some new insights, starting with his take on free will in the Bible.

God is often taken to be omniscient, omnipotent and all-good. This combination raises the "problem of evil". If God knows all and has the power to change what is wrong, how can there be evil in the world? The usual answer offered is that God gave people free will and that evil results from free choices of individual people.

Bugliosi says that of the hundreds of books of Bible scholarship he looked at, only one percent had "free will" in their index. And that these references were negative, that the Bible actually denies free will! Only the obscure Book of Sirach in the Old Testament affirms free will. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 803 pages in all, makes no mention of free will.

He referenced Isaiah 63:17 where God is asked, "Why have you allowed us to turn from your path?" And Exodus 4:21 where God hardens the heart of the Pharaoh so that he will not let the Jews go free.

Martin Luther's book "The Bondage of the Will" is clear on this point: Man has free will only to the extent of doing God's will.

Bugliosi says that even if God did give us free will, he is not absolved of evil. He asks us to imagine 17-year old Eddie who is robbing and raping and so far is not caught. And his parents know of his behavior. We would not accept his parents' claim that "Eddie has free will" as an excuse for their inaction.

Bugliosi next discussed the immortality of the soul as crucial to Christianity. Without it there is no heaven or hell. Yet 1 Timothy 6:16 says only God is immortal. According to Bugliosi, the idea of an immortal soul comes from Plato who made it up with no evidence.

Bugliosi challenges the idea of Jesus being born to a virgin. He went back to the original Hebrew and found the prophesy in the Old Testament (Isaiah 7:14) was that he be born to a "young woman". He consulted with a rabbi Dershowitz who affirmed that the Bible uses a different word for "virgin". Isaiah 7:14 also says the child would be named Immanuel (meaning God is with us) not Jesus. And that the kings of Syria and Israel would die in his time. But that happened in 730 BC.

But Bugliosi saved severe barbs for atheists, in particular New Atheists: Dawkins, Hitchens and Harris. He says atheists cannot prove there is no God. And he thinks the cosmological problem of the origin of the universe is a real problem for atheists. As noted, he even thinks the evolution of life is a problem for atheists. He claims that Darwin himself was an agnostic, not an atheist. And he puts Einstein on the agnostic team as well.

He quotes Clarence Darrow, "I do not pretend to know, where many ignorant men are sure." And Gertrude Stein, "There ain't no answer. There ain't gonna be any answer. There never has been an answer. That's the answer."

Bugliosi says that Sam Harris and John Loftus wrote books that correctly challenge religion. But

they fall flat in claiming to support atheism. He says a Pew poll showed that 30 percent of Americans who are not associated with a religion still believe in God.

Until he sees a refutation his legal mind finds complete, Bugliosi will remain an agnostic.

Another View: The Agnostic Cop-out **Joseph Navarro**

I am inspired to write this article for *The Secular Circular* after listening to Vincent Bugliosi's talk on September 17. I haven't read the book he was promoting at this event so my comments are directed toward what I heard during the presentation and subsequent Q&A. Mr. Bugliosi claims he's an agnostic because he hasn't yet heard a good argument disproving the existence of god. He also appears to accept the popular defense of agnosticism that claims you cannot disprove the existence of anything because it just might exist somewhere in the universe. This position is a cop-out. Let me explain why I believe it is so.

Had I thought of it at the time, I'd have asked Mr. Bugliosi if he would still believe there was the possibility for the existence of gods if there were no intelligent beings anywhere in the universe capable of contemplating the existence of these deities. If he had said no, then I think it would be clear that he would have to accept that gods exist only because humans are able to conceive of them; i.e., gods are a fiction of the intelligent imagination. If he had said in response to this that gods could have planted the idea of their existence in the human mind and are not invented fictions, then I'd have to say he wasn't really an agnostic because he's already assumed god's existence in order for this "planting" to have occurred.

But I think counsel might have avoided this trap and said yes, it's possible for gods to exist even if there were no intelligent beings anywhere in the universe capable of comprehending such entities. This statement reflects the tired argument that anything is possible under the (billions of) sun(s) (in the universe). Of course I agree that there are many

things in the universe we don't know, but must that set of unknowables include things we just make up? Like unicorns? God?

Bugliosi took exception to a guest in the audience who likened god to unicorns because god, unlike unicorns, is the alleged omnipotent creator of the universe. So what? Humans can ponder things that are real--science, things they make up like horses (goats?) with horns--mythology, or even omnipotent gods--religion. The issue, I believe, boils down to what's real (or potentially real) and what's totally made up. The logical, historical, psychological, biological, astrophysical evidence accumulated over the centuries leads unequivocally to the conclusion that we made up the gods "out of whole cloth." This may be circumstantial evidence in Mr. Bugliosi's court but it convinces me beyond a reasonable doubt.

To include made up stuff in the category of "all things are possible in the universe" is not the basis for a reasoned argument. It's a superficially clever sleight-of-hand and obfuscation that plays into the hands of religionists everywhere and we have to stop taking it seriously, even if it may be argued by such an accomplished attorney as Mr. Bugliosi.

Humanism, in Brief

You're in an elevator and someone you've just met asks you, "What is secular humanism?" You have about fifteen seconds before you reach your floor. What do you say? Here's John Rafferty's response. John is President of the Secular Humanist Society of New York, and editor of their fine newsletter, *Pique*.

Secular humanism is an ethical philosophy based on reason and science. It's a way of life for modern humans who want to live ethical, meaningful and happy lives without superstition, religious dogma, or guilt.

If you have your own response, or a comment on John's, let us know.

Campfire Talk

Birds don't need opinions
because they have pinions,
What is the opinion of the piñon pine
on whether Christianity is
for or against homosexuality?
A flower doesn't need a savior
to be able to bloom.
A waterfall doesn't need a guru
in order to gush.
A caterpillar doesn't need a Bible
to become a butterfly.
A lake doesn't need a Ph.D
to become a cloud.
A rainbow doesn't need a fresh coat of paint
every year.
Worms don't need to study existentialism
to exist.
Mountains don't need to kneel
and ask forgiveness for their sins.
Capitalism and Communism mean nothing
to every tree that alchemizes light.
No whale will ever know who Christ is.
No chipmunk will ever follow Buddha.
No owl gives a hoot about Mohammed.
No grizzly will ever consult a priest.
No seagull will ever become a Mormon.
No dolphin has to learn computers
if it wants to get along
in the modern world.
No sparrow needs insurance.
No gorilla needs a God.

~Antler

Antler is the author of *Factory, Last Words, Ever-Expanding Wilderness*, and *Selected Poems*. He is a winner of the Walt Whitman Award, a Pushcart Prize and the Witter Bynner Prize from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. His poems have appeared in many recent anthologies including *Wild Song: Poems from Wilderness; Stubborn Light: The Best of The Sun; Reclaiming the Heartland: Lesbian & Gay Voices from the Midwest* and *American Poets Say*

Goodbye to the 20th Century. In 2002 Antler was chosen as the poet laureate of Milwaukee. "Campfire Talk" was published in *Above Us Only Sky, Atheist Poetry, Volume One*, Incarnate Muse Press, 2003.

Famous Humanists: Issac Asimov Dick Cousineau

One of the greatest and most prolific writer of all time was born January 2, 1920 (exactly 15 years before me) in a Russian village near the Belarus border and was brought to Brooklyn at age three where his parents opened a series of candy shops. He taught himself to read at five and never looked back. He attended New York City schools and Columbia University, where he received a PhD in biochemistry. After a short stint in the Navy, in 1948 he joined Boston University School of Medicine where he taught biochemistry and began to write. If all of his books were lined up on one shelf they would occupy over 120 feet, and while the majority of his books would be classified Science Fiction, he also wrote on Popular Science, Religion, Education, Physics, philosophy and Humanism. His works are listed among all ten of the Dewey Decimal System categories. In his lifetime he was awarded 14 honorary Doctorate Degrees from various Universities.

In 1984 he was named Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association. Later he served as President for many years until his death in 1992. He was succeeded by his close friend Kurt Vonnegut and it is where he met and became science adviser to Gene Roddenberry, the author of Star Trek. He died of AIDS contracted from a blood transfusion during heart surgery, identical to Arther Ashe.

His most notable works were Science Fiction and his most famous was The Foundation Trilogy, which recounts the collapse and rebirth of a vast interstellar universe of the future. His non-fiction works were all well received as he was known as "The Great Explainer" of science and "The Intelligent Man's Guide to Science". He also had deep interests in Shakespeare, Mystery, Humor,

and Puns which elicited numerous books and papers.

As to his religious beliefs, Asimov was an Atheist, Humanist, and Rationalist, and he railed his entire life against superstition and pseudoscience that tried to pass off beliefs as real.

Some of his famous quotes:

"Don't you believe in flying saucers? They ask me. Don't you believe in telepathy with ancient astronauts? in the Bermuda Triangle? in life after death? I reply , NO ,NO, NO, NO, and again NO!"

"Many people who know nothing about science will dismiss the Theory of Evolution because "it is just a theory". No less a deep brain as Ronald Reagan, in the course of his 1980 campaign, when addressing a group of fundamentalists, dismissed evolution as "just a theory".

"Those of us who willingly describe ourselves as Humanists are few, I suspect that large numbers of people of Western tradition are humanists as far as the way they shape their lives is concerned, but that childhood conditioning and social pressures force them to pay lip service to religion".

"I wish women to be free, free, free -because I hate it when they charge."

"If I were not an atheist I would create a god who would choose to save people on the basis of the totality of their lives, not on the pattern of their words."

Founding Fathers' Views on Religion: John Adams Ron Holzwarth

John Adams was the son of a Massachusetts farmer-deacon who sent John to Harvard College and pressured him to become a clergyman. But Adams chose law. He told a friend that he respected lawyers, but saw in the clergy the "pretended sanctity of some absolute dunces."

Adams vociferously opposed doctrines of supernaturalism and of eternal damnation. The Treaty of Tripoli was unanimously passed by Congress during Adams's presidency and he signed it. (See below.)

Some Adams' Quotes:

"The government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion." <Treaty with Tripoli, passed unanimously by the U. S. Senate and signed by President Adams on June 10, 1797>

"As I understand the Christian religion, it was, and is, a revelation. But how has it happened that millions of fables, tales, legends, have been blended with both Jewish and Christian revelation that have made them the most bloody religion that ever existed."

"This would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it."

"I almost shudder at the thought of alluding to the most fatal example of the abuses of grief which the history of mankind has preserved – the Cross. Consider what calamities that engine of grief has produced."

"The question before the human race is, whether the God of nature shall govern the world by his own laws, or whether priests and kings shall rule it by fictitious miracles?"

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.

Quote of the Month

Never let your sense of morals get in the way of doing what's right. -Isaac Asimov, scientist and writer (1920-1992)

Letters to the Editor, Santa Barbara NewsPress

■ Troy Davis was convicted of killing a police officer in Georgia. He is scheduled to be put to death in a few days.

The problem with this case is that all but two of the original witnesses now say in legal affidavits that they were pressured to say that Troy did it, but that they really didn't know that. They now say another man has admitted killing the officer. No weapon was found and no proof that Mr. Davis was connected to this killing.

Courts can make mistakes, and sometimes innocent people are freed after years of wrongful imprisonment. But you can't undo a punishment of death.

We hope the Georgia Board of Pardons and Parole will do the right thing and stop this execution until the doubt of Mr. Davis' guilt has been seriously reconsidered by judge and jury.

If Mr. Davis is wrongly executed, it can never be undone. This is not justice. Please grant clemency and commute the Davis death sentence.

Marian and Martin Shapiro, Goleta

■ I had to laugh when I saw the photo and the article about the blessing of the grapes. Do people really think that this will turn these fruits into a better wine? What if we ever get public lavatories installed downtown will we get a blessing of the urinals? Come on, grow up!

John L. Coppejans, Santa Barbara.

Web Sites of The Month

Roger Schlueter

The Obama Administration has created a new web site designed to give citizens a means of petitioning the federal government regarding any topic that they are interested in and, if enough

people support them, get a formal response from the Administration. The site is called [We the People](#). As the home page says it, "provides you with a new way to petition the Obama Administration to take action on a range of important issues facing our country. If a petition gets enough support, White House staff will review it, ensure it's sent to the appropriate policy experts, and issue an official response."

Now, the cynic might see this as merely an election year ploy. I'm agnostic. But the promised response criteria are really quite amazing. They promise that any petition that gets 5,000 signatures within 30 days will receive a review by the administration and a formal response will be posted. Five thousand is a tiny number! I suspect this will increase as they get flooded with qualifying petitions.

You can review existing petitions and, of course, sign any of them that you support.

Some of the petitions are fascinating. Let's start with the most popular one with 44,600 signatures as I write this: "Legalize and Regulate Marijuana in a Manner Similar to Alcohol". In fact, the petitions that rank first, sixth and seventh all deal with this issue. Amazing!

The one with the fourth most signatures is, "Call an Investigation into Allegations of Prosecutorial & Judicial Misconduct in the Case of Sholom Rubashkin". I have absolutely no idea who Sholom Rubashkin but this indicates to me that just about *any* issue that gets a bit of organizing, twitter and facebook exposure and word-of-mouth can pass the 5,000 signature threshold..

The one in fifth place will please you: "Edit the Pledge of Allegiance to remove the phrase "Under God". It already has well over 5,000 signatures but go there and sign it anyway. This is one case where piling on is a good thing.

Last month a new web site called [Freethought Blogs](#) was featured here as the web site of the month. It is really a collection of blogs which at the time included six authors. New authors were

promised and that has happened in a big way. This update includes a complete current listing of blogs available under the Freethought Blog umbrella.

[Alethian Worldview](#) by Deacon Duncan. His tagline is, "If it isn't reality, it isn't the truth"

[Almost Diamonds](#) by Stephanie Zvan. In addition to science and sex and the science of sex, you'll find quite a bit of politics here, some economics, a regular short fiction feature, and the occasional bit of concentrated weird. Oh, and arguments.

[Assassin Actual](#) by a Cavalry Officer in the U.S. Army deployed to Iraq. The views of an actual atheist in a foxhole.

[Blag Hag](#) by Jen McCreight. A liberal, geeky, nerdy, scientific, perverted feminist atheist speaks her mind about ... everything.

[Blue Collar Atheist](#) by Hank Fox. A happily godless author blogs on atheism, religion and culture.

[Butterflies and Wheels](#) by Ophelia Benson. This long-standing and popular blog is written by a columnist for Free Inquiry so you may recognize her name and interests.

[Camels With Hammers](#) by Daniel Fincke. A professional philosopher engages in philosophizing (primarily about religion and ethics), atheist activism, educating non-academic audiences on philosophical issues, and for drafting and receiving feedback on his nascent ideas before they are ready for scholarly formulations worthy of peer review.

[Comradde PhysioProffe](#) I don't know who writes this blog and I don't know what his/her focus is but there is the occasional interesting recipe.

[Dispatches from the Culture Wars](#) by Ed Brayton. The title is self-explanatory... a must read.

[Greta Christina's Blog](#) by Greta Christina (duh!). Greta is a widely published author whose

blog covers atheism, sexuality and sex-positivity, LGBT issues, politics, culture, and whatever crosses her mind.

[Lousy Canuck](#) by Jason Thibeault. The views of a Canadian with emphasis on the space sciences.

[Pharyngula](#) by PZ Myers. A firebrand atheist and biologist looks at evolution, atheism and whatever else may cross his mind. Freethought Blogs most popular blogger.

[Reasonable Doubts](#) This is a bit unusual. It is based on links to a radio show and podcast that investigates the claims of religion from a fair-minded yet critical perspective.

[The Digital Cuttlefish](#) The author is anonymous but is renowned for his rhyming commentary. An excellent read.

[The X Blog](#) by Greg Laden. Greg is an anthropologist and science communicator who appears on many venues covering a wide variety of topics.

[The Zingularity](#) The author is anonymous and writes mostly on the intersection of science and culture.

[This Week in Christian Nationalism](#) by Chris Rodda. Chris, an amateur historian, dissects and dismantles the nuttury of the far right Christian Nationalism movements.

What's Going on Here? Andrew Hankin, Roving Reporter

- Christian conservatives condemned New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's decision to bar clergy-led prayer at the 9/11 anniversary event. The Mayor's office said the annual ceremony at Ground Zero focuses on families and has never included clergy invocations. The critics, however, said the Mayor is discriminating against religious people. Among the protesters were the Catholic League, the Family Research Council and the

Southern Baptist Convention. Full story:
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/09/02/ap/business/main20101090.shtml>

■ As the US Congress looks for ways to cut billions of dollars from the federal budget, a *Wall Street Journal* article on August 23rd shed light on a special tax privilege that makes it possible for any minister of the Gospel to "buy or live in multiple homes tax free."

In one example, the US Tax Court ruled that a millionaire minister did not owe federal income taxes on \$408,638 provided to him by his ministry to buy a second home on a lake in Tennessee.

Experts say that the parsonage allowance was originally devised to assist low-income clergy members. However, as the *Journal* notes, there is "no restriction on the value of the home that can be claimed under the exemption". As a result, there have been several high-profile cases of clergy paying no taxes on high-priced real estate:

- In 2010 the *Orange County Register* reported that eight members of Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral Ministries in California, including five members of Schuller's family, received the special clergy housing allowance totaling more than \$832,000 annually – all of it subsidized by taxpayers.
- In 2006, the *New York Times* reported, "Current Congressional budget records show that the exemption has cost the government as much as \$500 million in tax revenue a year, shifting that much of the national tax burden onto other taxpayers."

"At a time when the American people are facing grave fiscal challenges, it is simply outrageous to continue forcing taxpayers to pay for the housing of clergy members across the country," said Sean Faircloth, Executive Director of the Secular Coalition for America, the national lobby for secular and nontheistic Americans. "Our Constitution protects citizens from having religion forced upon

them, meaning no individual should have to subsidize anyone else's religious organization through their tax dollars. As federal lawmakers consider ways to reduce our country's deficit, these costly tax privileges for ministers should be among the first programs put on the chopping block." Full Press Release from the Secular Coalition for America: <http://secular.org/content/wall-street-journal-exposes-egregious-tax-free-housing-privileges-clergy>

■ "As I watch the Republican debates, I realize that we are on the brink of a crazy person running our nation. I sit in front of the television and shudder at the thought of one of these creationism-loving, global-warming-denying, immigration-bashing, Social-Security-cutting, clean-air-hating, mortality-fascinated, Wall-Street-protecting Republicans running my country.

"The course we are on is not working. The hour is late, and the need is great. Fire. Indict. Fight."

From an Opinion by CNN contributor James Carville, criticizing the Republican candidates for President AND leaders of the incumbent Democrat administration. The full article is on web page <http://www.cnn.com/2011/09/14/opinion/carville-white-house-advice>

■ [Oregon City, OR] Dale and Shannon Hickman, whose premature baby, David, died just nine hours after being born at home, testified in their own defense Tuesday 9/27/2011. They are accused of manslaughter and prosecutors say the Hickmans should have called a doctor. The Hickmans are members of The Followers of Christ Church which shuns medical treatment in favor of prayer.

...Dale Hickman told jurors everything that happens is God's will...Full story:
<http://www.katu.com/news/local/130671478.html>

■ [Kumamoto, Japan] A teenage girl thought by her father to have been possessed by an 'evil

spirit' died from suffocation in an exorcism.

Tomomi Maishigi's father and a monk performed a 'waterfall service' on the 13-year-old where she was allegedly bound to a chair by a belt and placed face-up underneath a water pump for five minutes at a Buddhist church in Kumamoto, south Japan. The pair - 56-year-old monk Kazuaki Kinoshita and the girl's 50-year-old father Atsushi Maishigi - were arrested yesterday on charges of inflicting injury resulting in the death following the ritual.

According to the Mainichi Daily News, her father held her down under the falling water while the monk chanted sutras in the early hours of 27 August. When the victim fell unconscious, they called an ambulance but she was later pronounced dead.

The girl had undergone the ritual a hundred times before since March, police also said. Full, sad story <http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20110928p2a00m0na012000c.html>

■ [Fort Wayne, IN] A second woman has been sentenced in an "exorcism" that killed an Indiana toddler. Allen Superior Judge Fran Gull on Friday accepted the plea agreement reached with prosecutors and sentenced Natasha N. Hawkins to 30 years on the charge of aiding in a battery causing the death of a child.

Hawkins pleaded guilty last month to a Class A felony battery charge in the death of 2-year-old Jezaih King. In June, a jury found Jezaih's mother, Latisha Lawson, guilty of murder. The two women were roommates.

According to court documents and testimony during Lawson's trial, Hawkins held Jezaih's legs down while the child's mother forced him to drink olive oil and vinegar, an attempt to exorcise Jezaih of a demon. Full story <http://www.journalgazette.net/article/20110916/LOCAL03/110919674>

■ "On September 29th, 2011, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) was notified

by many of its now 341 Air Force Academy clients, that the Commandant of Cadets, Brigadier General Richard Clark, had sent out to all members of the Academy's Cadet Wing a cover letter emphasizing the import of Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton Schwartz's Sept. 1st, 2011 watershed directive of 'Religious Neutrality'. Academy Commandant Clark's cover letter had Gen. Schwartz's letter appended thereto. This mass distribution by the Air Force Academy Commandant is a true victory for the Constitution. It is also a sad lesson to contemplate in that, but for MRFF's plastering of Gen. Schwartz's edict on a giant billboard in a busy area of Colorado Springs just the day before, Commandant Clark's distribution of Gen. Schwartz's directive would NEVER have happened." Full statement by MRFF Founder and President Mikey Weinstein is on web page:

<http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/2011/09/a-triumph-for-the-constitution-at-the-us-air-force-academy/>

Non-HSSB Events of Interest Diane Krohn

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

- 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>
- October 23: Dr. Steven Pinker: *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. CalTech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>

- November 6: Dr. Daniel Kahneman: *Thinking*: <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- November 6: Dr. Brian Fagan: *Elixir: What the History of Water and Humans Tells Us About Fast and Slow*. CalTech, Pasadena. *California's Future Water Crisis*. CFI West – Los Angeles. <http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#linden>
- November 13: Dr. Robert Trivers: *The Folly of Fools: The Logic of Deceit and Self-Deception in Human Life*. CalTech, Pasadena. <http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- November 20: Sam Brower: *Prophet's Prey: An Inside Look at Warren Jeffs and the Fundamentalist Mormon Church*. CFI West – Los Angeles and Costa Mesa. <http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#linden>

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- 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: Skepticon IV, Springfield, MO. Speakers include Dan Barker, Hemant Mehta, Darrel Ray, David Silverman, PZ Myers, and many others. <http://skepticon.org/>

HSSB Contact Information

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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, October 15. Monthly Meeting. Professor Joe White of SBCC. "A Primer on Ignorance & Stupidity." **At Vista del Monte.**

Wednesday, October 19, at 1:30 p.m. **Book Club** at the home of Dick Cousineau, 505 Alegria (off Las Positas). The book is "That Used to Be Us" by Thomas Friedman.

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

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

Saturday, January 21. Monthly meeting. Barney Brantingham.



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