



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

APRIL 2014

April Program:

Katie Davis: Climate Reality-- Causes and Impacts of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It

The latest reports from the IPCC and the Federal Climate Assessment detail the impacts we're already seeing from global warming and what lies in store for us in a rapidly warming world.

This presentation will be led by Katie Davis, a Santa Barbara county resident and Santa Barbara Sierra Club Global Warming Chair who trained with Vice President Al Gore as part of his grassroots Climate Leaders program.

Come learn more about the local ramifications of climate change and how we can work together to meet what may be the biggest challenge we face.



Ms. Davis is on the OCTOS Advisory Board for ocean science education and outreach at UCSB and the Community Environmental Council Advisory Board. In addition to giving "Climate Reality" presentations in the Santa Barbara area, her 2010 video on climate change has been the top result on YouTube for "climate change video" for two years, and she won 2nd place in the 2012 Cox Conservation Hero awards.

When: Saturday, April 19th, 2014

Where: Patio Room, Vista Del Monte (**Park ONLY in spaces marked "VDM".**)

Time: Doors open at 2:30pm. Program begins at 3:00 pm

Cost: \$2 members/\$5 non-members

Dinner: Vista Del Monte. \$22 includes tax and tip. RSVP judithannfontana@yahoo.com or 967-7911.

For More Info: Activities@SantaBarbaraHumanists.org or call 769-HSSB

Activities

Judy Fontana

Don't forget to join us for the meal following our April 19th meeting at Vista Del Monte. The menu this month is garden salad, parmesan rolls, country-style ribs, fresh catch of the day, roasted potatoes, steamed rice, fresh vegetable blend, assorted beverages, dessert and wine. And once again to remind you that this is the bargain of the month at \$22 which includes, tax, tip and wine. In addition, the food is delicious and the company outstanding. Please make your reservation soon. RSVP to judithannfontana@yahoo.com or call Judy Fontana at 967-7911.

President's Column:

"Kate"

Richard Martin

My grandfather, Fletcher Homan, was a Methodist minister, and I naturally assumed that my grandmother, Kate Wilson Homan (1869-1945), shared his Christian worldview. I remember Grandma Kate, who died when I was nine, as a kind, loving, calm and modest woman. Some years ago I found her thirty-six page autobiography, and it was quite a revelation. Her manuscript is partly biographical and partly a description of her worldview, especially about religion, which became unintentionally an extremely important part of her life.

Fletcher was a bank clerk when they were married in Iowa in 1890. In the fourth year of their marriage, after the births of their boys Ralph and Paul, he decided to become a Methodist minister - something Kate had never imagined when she married him. Thereafter followed six years of college, seminary, and hardship, during which time their third boy, Earl, was born. In the years after that, Kate gave birth to two girls, Merrill and Ruth, who died in

childhood, and then my mother Kathryn who was born when Kate was 39.

The first thing to note is that Fletcher never knew about Kate's manuscript. He was a conservative Methodist preacher with a strong personality, and Kate makes clear that her role as a minister's wife was often very difficult for her. Especially because she was not a Christian. Because of her position and her love of Fletcher, she kept her beliefs about religion a secret her entire life. She also says she "might have been tried as a heretic" by the church if she had confessed her disbelief. Kate gave her manuscript to my mother, and it came to me when she died.

As a little girl, Kate was taught to say her prayers to "this terrible all-seeing God" before bedtime, and she was afraid not to do it lest "I should die before I wake."

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the lord my soul to take.

Then her two little sisters died of scarlet fever within a week. Kate had scarlet fever too, but after a long and serious illness, she recovered. She was told that God had taken her sisters to live with Him in Heaven, and she "bitterly resented this action of the Almighty God." In Sunday school she was taught about "this policeman God" and she began "my first battles against doubt." When she was taught the doctrine of the trinity "I became a real skeptic. It didn't make sense." She decided as a girl that "I would never marry a minister. It was bad enough to have God always watching me, without having a minister's eye always upon me too." She kept that vow, but ended up married to a minister in spite of it.

As a minister's wife "I was never a great bible student. I loved some of the Psalms, but much of the Old Testament was repulsive to me. The God of War was revolting to my Quaker

background.” She says the Old Testament was “written by men picturing a God to meet the needs and customs of their time.” She dismissed the doctrine of Revelation, saying that mankind had “never heard the voice of God.” She was “skeptical of the supernatural. I doubted that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Could not God create a perfect man, without doing it in a miraculous way?” She did not believe in miracles, saying that “all of God’s creation and laws of nature are orderly. Why should He brush aside a natural law, in order to reveal His power?” Regarding “miracles” she thought that “sometime there might be scientific explanations forthcoming.”

Kate expresses the idea that “immortality may only be in the form of each generation passing its genes, thought, word and deed, on to the next generation.” She rejects the Christian idea of heaven, and says she has no fear of death. She ends her biography with a poem by the Greek philosopher Zeno of Citium (336-265 BC), founder of Stoicism. This is fitting, as Kate needed to be a stoic all her adult life.

DEATH

Be not afraid of death
 For it may be a long wandering beauty
 Strange beauty, that catches one’s
 breath
 Cool beauty like that of the dawn
 Or white beauty like that of the stars
 And looking back at life from some far
 place
 It may be we shall say
 “What fools we were
 To dread this loveliness.”

Fletcher served as Minister at many different Methodist churches, and was president of Willamette University in Salem, Oregon from 1908 to 1914. During their marriage of 55 years, they lived in ten states and 33 houses. Kate never had the opportunity to go to college. She greatly regretted her lack of education, and

said this was “why I carried through life the inferiority complex started in childhood.” But what shines through her narrative is a freethinker with an independent mind and analytical intelligence that enabled her to transcend the authoritarian religious indoctrination of her culture. My mother, Uncle Paul, and Uncle Earl were nonreligious freethinkers, suggesting that Kate was able in her own discrete way to pass her intellectual values on to her children.

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This Church Sign is More Correct Than Christians Know!



Humanist Minister/Clebrant

Members have inquired about a local humanist minister/celebrant. He is **Jonathan Young**, and he can be reached at 805-687-7171 or by email at young@folkstory.com Jonathan will also be listed on our HSSB website as a humanist minister/celebrant.

The Humanist Society.org also has listings for humanist celebrants within California. See the website: <http://humanist-society.org/humanist-celebrant-state-listing/#California>

What's Going On Here?

Andrew Hankin, back in Italy after visiting New Zealand

The US is paying the cost of supporting the House of Saud as cracks begin to appear: President Obama flew to Saudi Arabia to patch up relations with King Abdullah in his first visit in five years. The alliance had been strained by Saudi anger over US negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program and Obama's refusal to go to war in Syria to overthrow Bashar al-Assad last year. For its part, the US is upset by Saudi Arabia covertly supporting al-Qa'ida-type movements in Syria and elsewhere.

The US-Saudi relationship is a peculiar one in that it is between a reactionary theocratic monarchy – it is **the only place in the world where women are not allowed to drive** – and a republic that claims to be the chief exponent of secular democracy. The linkage is so solid that it was scarcely affected by 9/11, even though al-Qa'ida and the hijackers had demonstrably close connections to Saudi Arabia...

Wahhabism, a puritanical and intolerant variant of Islam, is the ideology of the Saudi state which regards Shia and Sufi Muslims as heretics little different from Christians and Jews...

American, British and other foreign visitors to Saudi Arabia usually behave with **fawning respect** towards their hosts in the belief that it is in their national interest to do so. In the case of President Obama, there are \$87 billion in proposed US defense sales... But the Obama visit has brought together a strange alliance in Congress of conservative Christian Republicans and liberal Democrats, 52 of whom signed a letter asking Obama to raise with King Abdullah and other officials the fact that "Saudi Arabian authorities have harassed, intimidated, and imprisoned almost all the country's leading

independent human rights activists."

In-depth story by Patrick Cockburn in the UK *Independent*:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/the-us-is-paying-the-cost-of-supporting-the-house-of-saud-as-cracks-begin-to-appear-9223659.html>

"Some people think that there should be a single meaning of life, they think that the universe was created for a purpose and that human beings were part of some larger cosmic plan. They think our meaning comes from being part of this plan, and is written into the universe, waiting to be discovered. **The humanist view of the meaning of life** is different. Humanists do not see that there is any obvious purpose to the universe, but that it is a natural phenomenon with no design behind it. Meaning is not something out there, waiting to be discovered, but something we create in our own lives. And although this vast and incredibly old universe was not created for us, all of us are connected to something bigger than ourselves, whether it is family and community, a tradition stretching from the past, an idea or cause looking forward to the future, or the beautiful natural world on which we were born and our species evolved. This way of thinking means that there is not just one big meaning of life, but that every person will have many different meanings in their life... **The Time To Be Happy Is Now!**"

--Actor Stephen Fry, narrating a 3-minute animated video by the British Humanist Association. Link here:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/stephen-frys-humanist-secret-of-happiness-is-the-best-thing-youll-watch-today-9214536.html>

Letter to the Editor

In response to Andrew Hankin's thoughtful article re: Alcoholics Anonymous [March 2014 *Secular Circular*], I would like to alert members to the AA group, We Agnostics, sponsored by the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara.

They meet every Monday from 5:30 to 6:30 pm in the society's Blake Lounge. Confidentiality and anonymity are strictly maintained. For more information contact Megan Moyer 805-452-1957.

--Barbara Margerum

March Speakers: Roy Speckhardt and Maggie Ardiente Robert Bernstein

Maggie Ardiente is Development and Communications Director for the American Humanist Association (AHA). She brought good news in terms of expanding support for and popularity of Humanist views.

AHA now has over 200,000 Facebook followers. AHA has a Political Action Committee. And Lee Rogers is running for Congress in a conservative area of eastern California with the support of humanists.

But AHA Executive Director Roy Speckhardt brought some less rosy news: Secularists are losing First Amendment court battles.

The 1948 Vashti McCollum case ended the use of public school classrooms for religious instruction. And the 1963 *Ellery Schempp* case ended Bible readings in public schools.

But more recent cases have not gone our way. In large part because of a new breed of judges. Historically, judges were chosen by presidents

with American Bar Association advice. George W. Bush changed to using the conservative Federalist Society for advice. He stacked the federal bench by appointing only conservative Catholics and Christian evangelicals. And groups like the Eagle Forum and the American Center on Law and Justice are well funded legal think tanks that work to thwart our efforts.



Our March speakers, (left to right) Maggie Ardiente and Roy Speckhardt. Photo by Robert Bernstein.

Speckhardt talked about “cross cases” where a cross on public land was made legal simply by selling that tiny bit of land to a church or private entity. The courts have allowed this.

But a much bigger legal issue in First Amendment Establishment Clause cases is “standing”. Standing requires that: 1) You have been wronged or injured; 2) A remedy is possible; and 3) You are the right person or entity to bring the complaint. The 1968 case *Flast v Cohen* allowed “I am a taxpayer” to be sufficient standing. But recent cases have made this difficult or impossible.

Another strategy by the religious side is to call for government “accommodation” as established in *Cutter v Wilkinson* in 2005. Religion can be used to opt out of legal rules others have to follow. Examples include wearing a hat in a driver’s license photo or not

to be vaccinated. It is now up to the government to prove such accommodation causes a substantial problem for the state.

The Court also upheld vouchers for religious schools. It allowed public school teachers to be part of religious school teaching projects. And the federal courts ruled "In God We Trust" is okay on currency, buildings and as our national motto.

Groups like Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) are now reluctant to take on such First Amendment cases. They fear that losing them could set even worse precedents than currently exist.

Fortunately, AHA has a plan! Speckhardt invited us to remember how same-sex marriage rights were established: 1) It happened at a state level; and 2) It was based on "equal protection" clauses of state constitutions.

The new strategy can apply to rights of humanists, atheists and freethinkers. This approach does not require proof of injury. Unequal treatment is sufficient.

One argument used in First Amendment cases is that "In God We Trust" or "Under God" are okay because they are historically accepted. But in equal protection cases, such historic patterns of discrimination are considered especially egregious!

In the case of daily patriotic ceremonies for children invoking "under God": 1) This implies that non-believers are second-class citizens whose patriotism is suspect, creating prejudice against our "class" (non-believers); 2) It harms those non-theists who opt out of participating by denying them the right to the patriotic exercise; and 3) It harms those non-theists who do participate by having them validate religious language they disagree with.

This case is being pursued now in Massachusetts. It has made it through lower court hurdles and has been heard by the Massachusetts state Supreme Court. They have been extending the release of their decision, which is expected any time now.

When the case is won there, it will be brought in three more states and three more after that until the 1954 "under God" cold war relic is ended.

Non-believers are also often non-joiners and haven't been used to seeing themselves as a group. But they in fact are a group that has been subject to discrimination.

Only about half of Americans surveyed said they would vote for a qualified atheist for elected office. This is less than any other identified ethnic, racial or religious group.

Seeing things in this way of equal rights and equal protection is working to bring long-overdue rights to many historically disenfranchised groups. And equal protection is a benefit to everyone.

Thanks to Roy, Maggie, AHA, Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), AU, ACLU and all the other groups working to make this happen!

TheHumanist.com Website

During her talk, Maggie Ardiente mentioned the website for the American Humanist Association, TheHumanist.com. This website changes daily with news and updates. It also has links with various commentators, including Marty Klein, Greta Christina, and Rob Boston. Go check it out! This link will also be on our HSSB website.

<http://thehumanist.com/>

Remembering HSSB Member Ron Holzwarth Jonathan Young

Many Humanists attended a memorial on March 15th for long-time member Ron Holzwarth. The service included thoughts from several HSSB members. Judy Fontana remembered lively conversations with Ron and said she would deeply miss him and all the intellectual stimulation he brought to meetings.



Barbara Holzwarth and Ron Holzwarth. Photo by Marian Shapiro.

Dick Cousineau commented, "This man who had an enlightened mind, was a true skeptic. Ron developed a reservoir of knowledge that put data above literature, science above superstition, warmth above anger, realism above guess, and truth above all else."

Ron's wife Barbara noted, "He looked forward to conversations at the Humanist Society and the Salon group, especially on religion and how to solve the world's problems. He always put effort into presenting some interesting information, and enjoyed hearing what others talked about. It suited his thirst for knowledge."

Ron's son David added, "He was a seeker of truth and knowledge. He was eager to learn and engage a new subject, or to discuss and examine the ways of the world. He believed you should think for yourself – and believe in

yourself. To find your way on your own, and to constantly challenge your beliefs."

Ron's daughter Donna shared family lore, "His nickname growing up was 'the brain.' I could never tell if he liked that, but I always thought that was so cool. I also respected that he was open-minded and accepting of others. He joined us for an equality rally several years ago and said he also would have liked to march in the MLK rally."

HSSB has lost a pillar. Ron was a kindly, thoughtful, optimistic humanist. I felt honored to lead his memorial service. We gathered to make tribute to a much-prized life. I know as a psychologist, that it takes us awhile to come to terms with such a sudden loss. Still, Ron's values remain with us. To paraphrase Santayana, "When the moment of a life is over, the truth of that life remains." It helps us deal with our sorrow – if we continue to appreciate his endearing qualities, and work to carry forward his ideals.

Here are excerpts from his obituary from the *Santa Barbara News-Press*:

Ronald Holzwarth, loving husband, father, grandfather and brother, passed away March 7, 2014 unexpectedly.

Born November 28, 1940 in Chicago, Ill, to Erna and Walter Holzwarth. He graduated from Illinois Institute of Technology with a degree in Electrical Engineering in 1962, followed with a Masters degree from Marquette University in Business Administration.

Ronald met his loving wife Barbara in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They married in 1963 and recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with their 2 children and grandchildren, where Ron surprised all by serenading Barbara with his guitar.

Ron worked for Delco for 38 years. Delco

transferred the family to Santa Barbara in 1972. He also enjoyed his time serving as a Borrowed Executive with United Way of Santa Barbara.

Ron was a passionate sports fan and enjoyed playing basketball in high school and continued to play through recreational leagues. He was an avid reader and had a love for learning and knowledge. Ron loved animals and enjoyed the family's many cats through the years. He and Barbara enjoyed traveling and spending time with their children and grandchildren.

Ron is survived by his wife of 50 years Barbara; daughter Donna Holzwarth and her partner Cathy Callaway; David Holzwarth his wife Mary and grandchildren Ryan and Kathleen.

In lieu of flowers the family would be grateful for remembrances in Ron's name to the Santa Barbara Humane Society, 5399 Overpass Road, Goleta, CA 93111

IF OUR FOUNDING FATHERS WERE CHRISTIAN, WHY DID THEY SAY THIS?

**By Tolerant Libertarian
(Excerpted from *The Daily Kos*)**

Nobody can deny the fact that Christianity *has* played a huge role in our history. From the first Thanksgiving to the ideas of Jesus Christ that are embroidered in our culture today, Christianity and the Bible is responsible a big part of our heritage.

However, many conservatives will take this fact way out of context. They'll think that you *have* to be a Christian to be patriotic, which is simply not true. Following the more secular teachings of Jesus Christ (being charitable, loving one another, treating strangers with kindness) is what the men who founded this country were for.

I don't want to waste my time listing all these obscurant far-right arguments, so instead I'll list the facts straight from our forefathers.

"If I could conceive that the general government might ever be so administered as to render the liberty of conscience insecure, I beg you will 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."

- George Washington, letter to the United Baptist Chamber of Virginia (1789)

"Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear."

- Thomas Jefferson, letter to Peter Carr (1787)

"In regard to religion, mutual toleration in the different professions thereof is what all good and candid minds in all ages have ever practiced, and both by precept and example inculcated on mankind."

- Samuel Adams, *The Rights of the Colonists* (1771)

Read the entire column here:

<http://www.dailykos.com/blog/Tolerant%20Libertarian/>

You Can be Part of the 1%!!

Haven't you always wanted to be part of "the 1%" – if only for a short time? Well, now you have that opportunity! Yes, you can be part of the 1% of HSSB* by being a member of the HSSB Board. Elections for the board are coming up in June. If you are interested in serving on the board, please contact any of the board members (listed on Page 9 of this newsletter).

*The fine print: Actually, it's about 4-6%.

Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- April 13: Dr. Edward Slingerland: *Trying Not to Try: The Art and Science of Spontaneity*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena.
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- May 18: Dr. Chris Impey: *Humble Before the Void: Western Science Meets Tibetan Buddhism*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena.
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- June 8: Dr. Rebecca Newberger Goldstein: *Plato at the Googleplex: Why Philosophy Won't Go Away*. Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena.
<http://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- June 13-20: Grand Canyon, Zion and Bryce: Tour the wonders of the Colorado Plateau. A Skeptics Society Geology Tour.
http://www.skeptic.com/geology_tours/2014/Grand-Canyon-Zion-Bryce/

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- April 17-20: American Atheists National 2014 Convention. Speakers include Chris Kluwe, Greta Christina, Brian Keith Dalton, Rev. Barry Lynn, PZ Myers, and many others. Salt Lake City, UT.
<http://www.atheists.org/convention2014>
- May 16-18: Women in Secularism III Conference, presented by the Center for Inquiry. Alexandria, VA.
<http://www.womeninsecularism.org/>
- June 5-8: American Humanists Association 73rd Annual Conference. Speakers include Dr. Eugenie Scott, Barney Frank, Natalie Angier, many others. Philadelphia, PA.
<http://conference.americanhumanist.org/>
- July 10-13: The Amaz!ng Meeting 2014. Details to be announced. Las Vegas, NV.
<http://www.randi.org/site/index.php/jref-news/2324-save-the-date-the-amazing-meeting-2014.html>

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. At meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis.

Annual HSSB membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) to become a Society Supporter. One may subscribe to our newsletter only for an annual fee of \$20.

To join HSSB, please send your contact information and a check for your membership dues to HSSB, PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, Attn: Mary Wilk. For membership information contact Mary Wilk at 967-3045, or mwilk@cox.net.

Copies of this newsletter are posted on the HSSB website. Photos are on the website and available via the link

<http://picasaweb.google.com/Humanist.Society.of.Santa.Barbara>



See us on Facebook::

HSSB Calendar

Tuesday, April 15: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday, April 19: Monthly Meeting : Katie Davis, the Santa Barbara Sierra Club Global Warming Chair, the Patio Room at Vista Del Monte, 2:30 p.m. Dinner after the talk at Vista Del Monte.

Sunday, April 27: (and the last Sunday of every month), 10 a.m., **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.

Tuesday, May 13: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday, May 17: Monthly Meeting: Rick Roney, Community Chairperson, Santa Barbara Reentry Project, speaking on recidivism, the Patio Room at Vista Del Monte, 2:30 p.m. Dinner after the talk at Vista Del Monte.



Humanist Society of
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