



THE SECULAR CIRCULAR

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

APRIL 2010

www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org

APRIL Program

***A RATIONAL LOOK AT NUCLEAR POWER* with Don Margerum**

Nuclear power comes with a long history of problems that should be examined rationally.

- The US Navy has operated 254 reactors for decades without a single accident.
- The French get the preponderance of their electrical power from nuclear reactors.
- The United States has 104 reactors operating for decades without a fatality from a nuclear accident.

Has nuclear power had a bad rap?

Rationally reviewing nuclear power issues can be done like an investigative reporter would do it, plowing through books on the subject, searching for information in magazines, newspapers, the Internet, and having dialogs with those of different persuasions. It does not have to be done by a nuclear scientist, and Don Margerum is not a nuclear scientist. He is a retired electronic systems engineer who has been exploring this subject in a two-year effort to structure this presentation for the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara, and other interested groups. Among the subjects examined are:

- Reactor Safety Design
- Three-Mile Island & Chernobyl Accidents
- Transportation and Disposal of Radioactive Waste
- Terrorist Attack Vulnerability
- Uranium Enrichment Concerns
- Plutonium Proliferation

He will compare Nuclear Power with Coal, Domestic Oil, Natural Gas, Bio-fuels, Wind, and Solar systems, regarding Safe Design, Waste Disposal, Waste Transport, Pollution Control, Terrorism Control, and Proliferation Control.



He asks a hypothetical question: "What would it cost the US to build a new nuclear power system big enough to completely replace imported oil?" The same question is asked for a wind system, and solar systems. And how long would it take to pay for the investments?

Don Margerum has Engineering degrees from Missouri and Northwestern Universities. He was an electronic systems engineer for a number of leading aerospace companies, including Stanford Research Institute, The Aerospace Corporation, and Northrop Aviation. He retired from his last 13 years at Raytheon in 1992, and continued as a consulting engineer until 1994. He is a long-time member of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara and will generously share his insights and experience with us on Saturday, April 17th.

Saturday, April 17th in the Patio Room at Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Road (Las Positas exit off Hwy. 101, midway between UCSB & SBCC) in Santa Barbara. Information phone 805-259-6432.

Doors open at 2:30 p.m. for socializing.

Program starts promptly @ 3:00 p.m.

Contact Information

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Membership Notes

by Mary Wilk

Humanist Society meetings are usually held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at 3 pm in the Patio Room of Vista del Monte, 3775 Modoc Rd., Santa Barbara, CA. More information is available at our web site:

www.SantaBarbaraHumanists.org

or by contacting any of the board members listed in the left-hand column of this page.

If you would like a copy of this newsletter mailed to a friend or someone who might be interested in our Society, please send their contact information to: PO Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, or call Mary Wilk. Alternatively, all of our newsletters are available at the web address shown above.

If you are not already a member, we encourage you to join our Society. Annual membership dues are \$36 for a single person, \$60 for a couple, and \$100 (or more) for a sponsor. Members receive the monthly newsletter and have the option of attending meetings, outings and special events sponsored by the Society.

Those unable to attend our monthly meetings may subscribe to our newsletter for an annual fee of \$20, but are not entitled to other membership privileges. When attending our meetings, a donation of \$2 from members and \$5 from non-members is appreciated. First or second-time visitors are welcome on a complimentary basis. For more information, please contact Mary Wilk (967-3045 mwilk@cox.net or any member of our Society.



News About Members

by Mary Wilk

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to our Society:

Linda Kennedy – Ventura
 Timothy Mullins – Santa Barbara
 Jamie Rosenthal – Santa Barbara
 Thomas Scheff – Santa Barbara
 Diana Wilk – Santa Barbara



On Friday afternoon, March 19th, HSSB members Andrew Hankin and Robert Bernstein joined about 60 concerned community members at the intersection of West Carrillo and Chapala Streets in downtown Santa Barbara, to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the 2003 attack on Iraq. Robert's photos of the gathering can be viewed or downloaded from the web: <http://swt.org/act/iraq/iraq2010-0319>



John Coppejans has recently had letters published in *Free Inquiry* and the *Santa Barbara News-Press* promoting tolerance for atheism. These have elicited positive responses from Paul Kurtz and local residents.



Michelle Rhea and her teenage son, Aidan, each have two photos on exhibit at the SB Museum of Natural History, as part of a photo contest focusing on the Museum's mission: "inspiring a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world."

The group photo exhibit will be on display at Luria Hall at the Museum, April 2 – May 2, 2010. Info here:

<http://www.sbnature.org/exhibitions/552.html>

To see more of Michelle's work, including poetry, film and humanist activism, visit:

www.MichelleRhea.com

HSSB Book Club

by Marty Shapiro

Greetings, all. If you're one of those folks who likes to think and be challenged, our April book may be your cup of tea. It's Hank Davis' very popular *Caveman Logic*, an exploration into why we think the way we think, and how we can try to avoid antiquated (Stone Age) thought patterns.

The date is **Wednesday April 21, at 1:30 p.m.** Our Hostess is Carol Pattillo Weingartner, at **157 Santa Elena Lane in Montecito** (near Olive Mill Road and North Jameson Lane). For directions please call Carol at 969-1558.

Amazon.com Review:



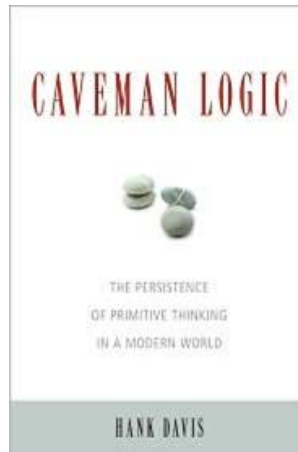
Caveman Logic, February 5, 2010

By SacramentoBookReview.com

Human beings evolved as pack or band animals, deferring to and beseeching a dominant member. That makes us vulnerable to the fallacy of a superior being. (A similar trait in wolves is probably why we were able to make them into dogs.) Priests and charlatans exploit that kink in our thinking, though without the reciprocity we have with canines. We survived, ancestrally, by using heuristic or shortcut thinking, particularly in pattern recognition for hunting/gathering and predator evasion. So we see patterns in the natural world, filtering our perceptions, unremarkably, in an anthropomorphic way. Seeing faces in clouds is fun . . . for kids. Because those untrained in scientific skepticism are vastly out-

numbered by those who are not, there is always ample social reinforcement for irrationalities like astrology, religion, belief in ESP, "signs" and strings of coincidences being interpreted as hostility on the part of something "out there". *Caveman Logic* is cogent, lucid, very easy to read, and despite the esoteric mass of information it has to convey, never bogs down. In fact, for a few pages I feared Professor Davis would be talking down. I soon stopped worrying.

This is an essential read for the rational.



March Program: Dr. Ray and *The God Virus* by Robert Bernstein

Dr. Darrel Ray gave us a full revival session to experience the feeling of *The God Virus* first hand. As the son and grandson of missionaries and ministers, he was well prepared. And he gave us the benefit of his hypnotherapy skills as well.

Dawkins introduced the “meme” meme in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. Memes, like computer and biological viruses, are sets of instructions that are able to direct reproducing themselves.

As a psychologist, Dr. Ray wanted to study these ideas from a psychological perspective, which he lays out in his *God Virus* book. He wants people to understand the manipulations that are used by religions to get people to spread them.

One parallel: The microorganism *Toxoplasma gondii* gets into the brain of a rat and makes it cozy up to a cat, which eats it. The parasite alters the rat’s brain so it can develop in the cat. It is of no benefit to the rat or cat.

Dr. Ray distinguished between horizontal and vertical virus transmission. New religions are like colds, HIV and influenza. They spread person to person. People evangelize, knocking on doors. But old religions spread vertically, like an inherited disease, from parents to children.

Infection channels for the god virus include hypnosis, stress, guilt, social needs, sex, childhood stimulation and music.

As a hypnotherapist he noticed that ministers use hypnotic techniques without even knowing it. They put people in a receptive state with tone, with repetition, with movements. And they provide a trigger to invoke the trance faster next time. And what religious service is complete without rousing music?

Observe a person talking about their children or

hobbies or other passions. Then observe them talking about their religion. It is different. Their reasoning drops back to the level of a 5-7 year old child. The age of infection with the god virus. Infection happens before the rational immune system is mature.

Like any good marketer, a preacher has to create a need where none existed before. The ideal religion virus creates a need during everyday activities like eating and having sex. It does this through creating a guilt cycle. It creates guilt from normal, universal activities like masturbation. And it offers the remedy as well. The dissonance is only resolved by seeking forgiveness. The goal of forgiveness is dependency, not healing.



Dr. Darrel Ray

Songs like *Amazing Grace* infect the brain with feelings of low self-esteem and guilt. The slave-owning writer sought forgiveness, but kept his slaves.

It is notable that forgiveness has to be sought in the same religion. A Muslim who eats

pork does not seek forgiveness at a Catholic confession.

How to deal with a person who is infected? The same as for any other infection. “That is a stupid virus you are carrying,” does not make sense to say to a person with influenza. Likewise for a god virus. Talk to the person, not to the virus.

Example: A person says he will pray for his sick daughter rather than seek medical care. Start by saying, “I can see you are concerned about your daughter.”

A show of hands indicated almost everyone has argued with a religious person, yet almost none resulted in conversion. Seek influence, not conversion, Dr. Ray says.

It was a packed house with nearly one hundred attendees. It is clear that people want to know about the god virus and want to help cure it.

Upcoming Events

HSSB Social Brunch...

is a secular gathering for humanists, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers, singles, couples and families without religion, on the last Sunday morning of every month. No cover charge – pay only for your food + drink. Bring your friends, because membership and reservations aren't necessary.

10 a.m. April 25th and the last Sunday of every month, at **Cody's Cafe**, 4898 Hollister Ave. in the Turnpike Center, Goleta, in the room to the right as you enter the restaurant. For information call 805-967-3045. (Membership Chair, Mary Wilk, is a regular attendee: e-mail Membership@SantaBarbaraHumanists.org).

Dining Out

Dear HSSB Members and Guests-

Please join us for dinner (approximately 5:00 PM) after the **April 17, 2010** meeting at

RUSTY'S PIZZA!

**3731 State St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93105**

Click here for menu: <http://www.rustyspizza.com/menu.html>

Please let me know if you plan to attend by responding to activities@santabarbarahumanists.org or by calling 963-2128 and leaving a message.

Hope to see you there!



Joe Navarro
Social Activities Guy
(Tuxedos are always optional at our dinners)

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held **Tuesday, April 13th**, 5:30pm in Santa Barbara. Andrew Hankin will host. If you'd like to attend please contact Publicity@SantaBarbaraHumanists.org for further info.

Non-HSSB Events of Interest

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

Local Events

HSSB Board member Andrew Hankin will be hosting a documentary film screening beginning **7:30pm Friday, April 16th (the day after "Tax Day") in the Goleta Public Library**, 500 North Fairview Ave. Goleta. ***You've Paid Your Taxes, Now Follow The Money*** will take a non-partisan look at rapidly-growing national debt, ever-expanding government and military, and over-extended entitlement programs.

Information web page:

<http://www.meetup.com/SantaBarbaraActivists/calendar/12234759>

Y.E.S! (Youth Empowerment for Safety) Fair – a FREE event

When: Saturday, April 17, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Where: Teen Center and adjacent area,
1235 Chapala Street, Santa Barbara

An afternoon of multi-media, art, music, dance performances and celebrating “no to violence, drugs and alcohol” by our youth. High school jazz combos and well as many other great performers take the stage during this free celebration. Many youth organizations will table, sharing their wonderful teen programs. Join us in celebrating many of the wonderful alternatives to violence and substance abuse Santa Barbara offers! Free prizes!

Organized by the Coalition Against Gun Violence, as part of Free 4 the Weekend and the Santa Barbara Youth Council with the support of The Fund for Santa Barbara.

(Events of Interest continued on page 7)

Upcoming Programs

by Dick Cousineau

On **May 15th**, we will be at The Holiday Inn in Goleta celebrating **our 15th Anniversary**. This event will feature two nationally-recognized speakers, **Sean Faircloth** of the Secular Coalition of America; and **Dan Barker** of the Freedom from Religion Foundation. Tickets for the event, which includes dinner, will be only about \$30.00. Please see info about tickets in the insert within this newsletter.

Book Sale

by Ray Stone

Don't forget the book sale to be held at the Solstice Picnic. Already a number of good books have been contributed. Please bring books you wish to donate to any meeting prior to the picnic so that Pat Coppejans can properly arrange things for the sale. If it's convenient, you might even deliver books to her house near Magnolia Center in Goleta.

Election of HSSB Board

by Ray Stone

The election for next year's HSSB Board of Directors and officers will be held during the month of May. A nominating committee has put together the following slate for the eleven positions:

- Ron Kronenberg – President
- Diane Krohn – Secretary
- Ray Stone – Treasurer
- Jim Balter
- Wayne Beckman
- Andrew Hankin
- Patricia Hiles
- John Martinez
- Joe Navarro
- Neal Rosenthal
- Mary Wilk

If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else you think is qualified, and willing to serve, please notify Dick Cousineau at 687-2371, or by email at dkcgeo@cox.net.



I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own – a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty.

– Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Ah! what a divine religion might be found out if charity were really made the principle of it instead of faith.

– Percy Bysshe Shelley, poet (1792-1822)



(Events of Interest continued from page 5)

Upcoming events in California

- ♦ **April 4:** Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. John Suarez: *The Radical Religious Right and Public Education*
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#Lecture1>
- ♦ **April 11:** Skeptics Society, Cal Tech, Pasadena. Dr. David Goodstein: *On Fact and Fraud: Cautionary Tales on the Front Line of Science* www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures
- ♦ **April 18:** Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. John Nicols: *This is the Age of Paine*
<http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#Lecture1>
- ♦ **May 2:** Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. Rebecca Skloot: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* <http://www.cfiwest.org/calendar/FeedYourBrain.htm#Lecture1>



Be not too hasty to trust or admire the teachers of morality; they discourse like angels but they live like men.

– Samuel Johnson, Lexicographer (1709-1784)

Faith is a cop-out. If the only way you can accept an assertion is by faith, then you are conceding that it can't be taken on its own merits.

– Dan Barker, former preacher, musician (b.1949)

Fun Oxymorons

- jumbo shrimp
- 12 oz, pound cake
- boneless ribs
- natural makeup
- tight slacks
- baggy tights
- civil war
- just war
- a little big
- new classic
- accidentally on purpose
- accurate estimate
- anarchy rules!
- authentic replica
- bitter sweet
- whole half
- clearly ambiguous
- organized chaos
- easy problem
- half empty
- half naked
- liberal conservative
- live recording
- mandatory option
- non-working mother
- new tradition
- procrastinate now
- random order
- stripper's dressing room
- sharp curve
- vegetarian meatball
- virgin birth
- congressional accountability
- honest politician



Sorry, No Humanists Here

Submitted by Dick Cousineau

HSSB Calendar

Look inside the newsletter or visit our website for more exciting details!

April 13: HSSB Board meeting, 5:30 p.m. in Santa Barbara

April 17: April HSSB meeting at Vista del Monte, featuring *A RATIONAL LOOK AT NUCLEAR POWER*

April 21: HSSB Book Club. Book to be discussed is *Caveman Logic*, by Hank Davis

April 25: Brunch at Cody's Restaurant

May 15: Celebration of our 15th Anniversary, at the Holiday Inn in Goleta

Month of May: Election of the 2010 – 2011 HSSB Board of Directors

June 19: Summer Solstice celebration at Stow Grove Park in Goleta



The Humanist Society of
Santa Barbara
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