



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

JULY 2014

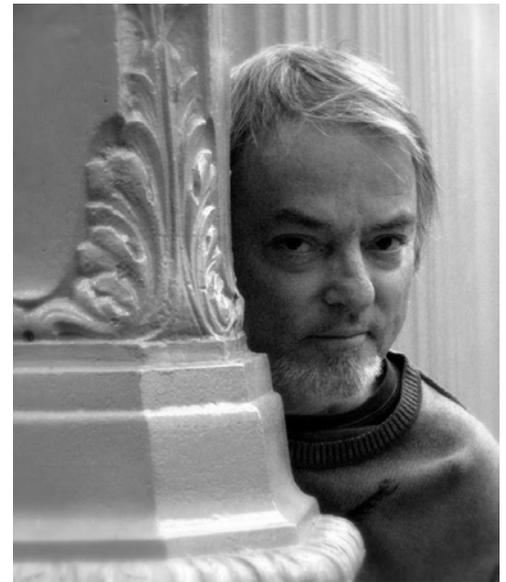
July Program

Mark Edward:

Psychic Blues and How I Got Them

Mark Edward is a psychic entertainer and mentalist, and author of books on mentalism, séance theory, and production. He is also a steering member of the Center for Inquiry's Independent Investigations Group (IIG) West and a noted critic of pseudoscience. Currently he teaches magic to both private students and Adult School classes.

For years Mark posed as a "professional psychic", infiltrating notorious psychic telephone advice lines and observing spiritualist church groups. In addition, for over 15 years he performed fake séances at Hollywood's famed Magic Castle, and has perfected the role of spirit medium and psychic entertainer.



Mark has written a tell-all book on truth about the psychic business: *Psychic Blues*, and will talk about his book and what drove him to write it. For this one meeting only, Mark will demonstrate his skills, and reveal the truth about psychic powers. He will also have copies of his book for sale at the lecture.

When: Saturday, July 19th, 2014

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

Time: Meet at 2:30pm for socializing and light refreshments provided by HSSB. Program begins at 3:00 pm

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

Dinner: Vista Del Monte. \$22 includes tax and tip. RSVP by Wednesday, May 14th to Judy Fontana, 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 at Vista Del Monte for dinner following the meeting on July 19th. This month's menu is tossed salad, sourdough rolls, tri tip steak, fresh catch of the day, rice pilaf/mashed potatoes, steamed asparagus/vegetable blend, assorted beverages and desserts. The cost is \$22 per person, which includes tax, tip and wine. The meal following the meeting is a wonderful opportunity to meet the speakers, discuss the program and enjoy the camaraderie of other humanists. Don't miss out. RSVP to judithannfontana@yahoo.com or call 967-7911. Reservations are required.

News About Members

New Member: Bill Blair, Santa Barbara

Dick and Judy Cousineau: As many of you may know, Dick Cousineau and Judy Cousineau are both unfortunately having health issues. Dick has a brain condition which is not yet completely diagnosed. He is now living in a care facility in Rancho Cucamonga that is close to his daughter Stephanie's home. They welcome cards and letters. Send to:
Richard Cousineau c/o
Stephanie Holding
14031 Champlain Court
Fontana, CA 92336.

If you would like to visit Dick, please check with Stephanie first to see if he can have company:
Cell (909) 743-9677.

Judy is under hospice care but is still living at her home for a while longer. She is planning to go stay with her daughter near San Diego. If you want to contact Judy, call her at home (mornings only) or email her to say "hello."
Phone: 687-2371 or email: gjudyq@cox.net

Even More American Atheists National Convention Diane Krohn

Jeremiah Camara was one of the many outstanding speakers at the American Atheists National Convention in Salt Lake City. Camara is the writer, producer and director of the documentary film *Contradiction*. This film explores the role of churches in the black community. The church is insidious in the black community, taking both time and money. The amount of money collected by black churches in donations and tithes has been estimated at more than \$420 billion since 1980; and yet, what has the black community have to show for this amount of money? The church has played a big role in Civil Rights, but it was the only institution for blacks to come from. It was important to introduce Jesus and hope and heaven to slaves – optimism and hope is essential to human survival. Blacks are not entitled in this society and culture, but they are entitled in their religion (status within the church as a pastor, deacon, etc.).

The movie, *Contradiction*, is a documentary that asks the various questions of what has religion, mainly Christianity, done to help blacks? The churches take up time and money, but give nothing material in return. Filmmaker Jeremiah Camara asks churchgoers what they learned at church today: one woman answers, "Learned how to pray." Some others couldn't think of anything. Camara points out that churches outnumber all other businesses (except for liquor stores) in black communities, and they greatly outnumber churches in non-black communities. Blacks have been praying for help and improvement in their lives since slavery times, but they are still one of the worst-off socio-economic groups in the U.S.

According to Camara, while the church may peddle hope it really teaches obedience to order and serves as a form of intellectual slavery. Its message has been that it is fine to

live in slavery and to expect the reward for suffering in the next life.

In the film, Camara interviews Dan Barker of the Freedom from Religion Foundation, Rev. Martin Luther King III, Dr. Ray Hagins, Norm Allen Jr., and Lawrence Krauss.

I personally found Jeremiah Camara and the film to be very interesting because the topic of African-Americans and the bad effects of religion on their community is rarely a topic of discussion. Camara, being a black atheist, is truly a minority within a minority!

You can watch a trailer for *Contradiction* here: <http://www.contradictionthefilm.com/contradiction/>

What's Going On Here? Andrew Hankin, still in Italy

Christianity's faith-based freakout: Why atheism makes believers so uncomfortable
by Greta Christina, who spoke to HSSB in April 2012.

"...Believers are always telling atheists that we need religion for morality; that we have to believe because without religion, people would have no reason not to murder and steal and lie. And yet, all too often, they ask us to lie. When atheists come out of the closet and tell the people in our lives that we don't believe in God, all too often the reaction is to try to shove us back in.

In some cases, they simply want us to keep our mouths shut: when the topic of religion comes up, they want us to tell the lie of omission. But much of the time, they actually ask us to lie outright. They ask us to lie to other family members. They ask us to attend church or other religious services. They sometimes even ask us to perform important religious rituals,

like funerals or confirmations, where we're not just lying to the people around us, but to the god they supposedly believe in. Why would they do this?"

"...Lauren, who came out as atheist to her Lutheran family and church at age 12, told both her mother and her pastor that she didn't want to be confirmed. When she told her pastor, "I can't get up there and say stuff I don't believe," he replied, "Please stop disrupting class with your questions. This is a special time in everyone's life — don't ruin it." The upshot was that she was forced to go through with the ceremony, and to lie, in public, about her atheism. Now, here's the thing: Confirmation is one of the most serious rituals in religion. It's the ritual in which children accept adult responsibility for their purported soul, and declare their adult commitment to their religion. The whole point is that they're finally making a free choice about participating in religion, instead of just going along with their family. Yet parents and clergy still pressure kids into this ritual, or even force them into it. Even when they know it's a lie."

"...in her famous performance piece *Letting Go of God*, actor and comedian Julia Sweeney says that her mom's response to her atheism was, "This doesn't mean that you've stopped going to church, does it?"

Full article here:

http://www.salon.com/2014/04/28/christianitys_faith_based_freakouts_why_atheism_makes_believers_lose_their_minds_partner/

Tell people there's an invisible man in the sky who created the universe, and the vast majority will believe you. Tell them the paint is wet, and they have to touch it to be sure.

--George Carlin

Scenes from a Summer Solstice Picnic

We had a very nice Summer Solstice picnic on June 22nd. The weather was perfect and the food was yummy. Thanks to Judy Fontana for organizing the picnic, and thanks to Anne Rojas for the fun and challenging games! All photos are by Robert Bernstein (except as noted).



Trying to remember all the objects in the memory game! L to R: Judy, Robin, Madeline, Diane, Meredith, and Josette.

It looks like we are drying pieces of paper, but it's actually a picture ID game. L to R: Jim, Robin, Lloyd, Marty, Meredith, Robert, and Ray. Photo by Wayne Beckman.



L to R: Marty, Adrian, Lloyd, Colin, and Roger.



L to R: Penny, John, Pat, Helen, and Wayne.



HSSB President Richard Martin



Letters to the Editor

June 18, 2014: I just watched the first World Cup game, and noted there are sky-pointers on both sides. Whenever someone does something good, he points to the sky in thanks. What I don't understand is why whoever is in charge up there keeps changing his/her mind about who to support.

--Ray Stone, in a letter he sent to the *Santa Barbara News Press*

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From the HSSB Secular Circular I just received there was this amusing item.

When I told the people of Northern Ireland that I was an atheist, a woman in the audience stood up and said, "Yes, but is it the God of the Catholics or the God of the Protestants in whom you don't believe?" — Quentin Crisp

It sounds strangely similar to this quote from Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*. Here Yossarian is shacking up with the Lieutenant's wife. They are both atheists, but are arguing as they see things differently:

Chapter 18: The Soldier Who Saw Everything Twice

...What the hell are you getting so upset about?" he asked her bewilderedly in a tone of contrite amusement. "I thought you didn't believe in God."

"I don't," she sobbed, bursting violently into tears. "But the God I don't believe in is a good God, a just God, a merciful God. He's not the mean and stupid God you make Him out to be."

Yossarian laughed and turned her arms loose. "Let's have a little more religious freedom

between us," he proposed obligingly. "You don't believe in the God you want to, and I won't believe in the God I want to. Is that a deal?"

--Timothy L. Rodgers

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As some may recall, I wrote a letter objecting to gay marriage, which appeared in the Secular Circular. Now that I have seen this excellent documentary, *The Case Against 8*, I have changed my opinion. I am now convinced that gay marriage deserves support and is a good thing. There are numerous reasons why I have changed my opinion, as shown in the film. I am also amazed by the terrible botch in defense of Proposition 8 by its supporters. At least I am willing to admit that I was wrong. Still, I have a close friend who would be apoplectic if he read this letter. Such is the way of the world.

--Merle Betz

HSSB Website

Have you visited the HSSB website lately? It's been recently re-vamped and has a new look. Our webmaster, Wayne Beckman, and alternate webmaster, Colin Gordon, have been working with a local company to update the website. Thanks to Wayne and Colin for getting the website its new and improved look! This new website will also work better on smartphones and tablets than our previous one.

A few things may not be where you expect to find them, so look around and explore the new site for a bit:

<http://www.santabarbarahumanists.org/>

Poem
John Coppejans

I think it's criminal to tell
Little kids that they'll go to hell
If they don't believe these bible stories
That will fill their minds with all these worries
about some deity in the sky
who will watch them til the day they die.
And when they stray from this religious path
just be assured of his terrible wrath.

We should encourage them to read
books that show the foolishness of this creed.
What proof is there they should ask.
I know it's not an easy task
to let go of what they are taught
and escape from this religious thought.
But science and common sense will tell
that there is no heaven and no hell.

Life would be better on this planet
if we get rid of religious tenet
that puts us all in different sects
and makes a difference how it affects
the way we live with our fellow men,
each in his own superstitious clan.
The history of this belief
is filled with violence and grief.

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A Big Win for the Prayer Lobby
Katherine Stewart

If you listened to Justice Anthony M. Kennedy of the Supreme Court and his fellow conservatives on the bench this week, you might think the court's 5-4 decision in the case of *Town of Greece v. Galloway* was no big deal. So what if a town in upstate New York typically opens its council meetings with prayers that acknowledge "the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross"?

If you listened to the people who shepherded the case as it ascended the judicial hierarchy,

however, the decision represents one of their biggest victories to date. It "wasn't just an answer on prayer — it was an answer *to* prayer!" read a statement by the Family Research Council. The council is one of a host of organizations guided by the religious liberty advocacy group the Alliance Defending Freedom that backed the defendants with legal resources.

To understand why the case's backers were so cock-a-hoop, you must first know something about the long game being played by the religious right. The goal is to get back to a "soft" establishment of religion in America — that is, a system in which formal guarantees of religious freedom and the official separation of church and state remain in place, but one religion is informally or implicitly acknowledged as the "approved" religion of the majority and a legitimate basis for public policy.

This was more or less the situation in the United States during the first half of the 19th century. In 1811, the New York Supreme Court upheld a conviction for blasphemy (the archetypal union of church and state) on the grounds that the state had an interest in punishing offenses to the religious sensibilities of the Protestant majority. Back then, nativist Protestants imposed their version of the Bible in public schools, while Catholics rioted in protest and placed their children in parochial schools.

Through the 19th and 20th centuries, however, the judicial thinking on church-state issues evolved, and the "soft" establishment became much harder to justify. The United States Supreme Court introduced the "Lemon test," for example. Named for a 1971 case the court heard, this required that legislation concerning religion should not result in "excessive government entanglement" with religious affairs. The Supreme Court also increasingly took the view that government should abstain

from any activity wherein a reasonable observer might perceive it to be endorsing religion.

Today, groups like the A.D.F. — which also represents Conestoga Wood Specialties Corporation in its challenge to the contraception mandate in the Affordable Care Act — are deeply unhappy with the reigning jurisprudence on church-state separation. It would seem that they wish to undermine the Lemon test, which they consider “burdensome,” as a staging post to restoring a soft establishment of Christianity in the United States. This is where *Greece v. Galloway* comes in.

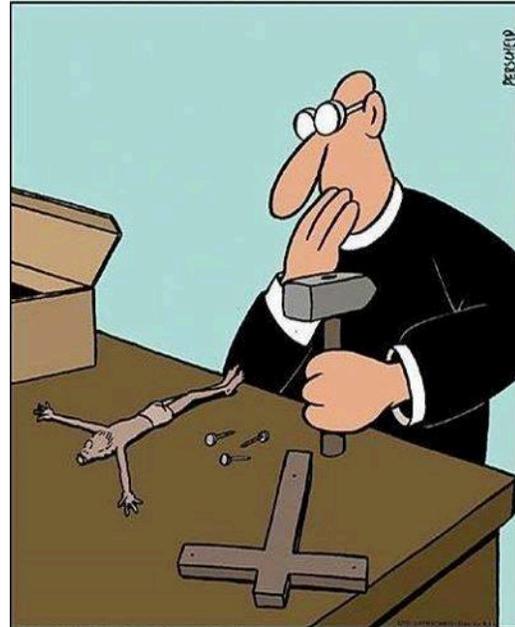
The first order of business is to remove objections by swiping aside the idea that soft forms of establishment exist at all. Here, the *Greece* decision delivers, substantially...

A second element of the plan for undermining concerns based on the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause is to reinterpret public acts as personal expressions of speech by private individuals...

The assault by the religious right on the Establishment Clause has been unfolding for two decades, in a number of landmark cases. Under cover of pursuing “religious freedom,” it has already succeeded in inserting fundamentalist religion into parts of America’s public education system. With *Greece v. Galloway*, it has now expanded the reach of this novel and destructive interpretation of the Establishment Clause. It is part of a project to “restore” a version of America that never was, and never can be.

Read the entire article here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/08/opinion/a-big-win-for-the-prayer-lobby.html>



Suddenly, Father Schober was not sure whether he really should have bought the new crucifix at Ikea.

Hobby Lobby Reactions Diane Krohn

Burwell v. Hobby Lobby and *Conestoga Wood Specialties v. Burwell* was a closely watched Supreme Court decision which, unfortunately, was decided as I thought it would be; that is, finding for the plaintiffs. The following excerpts are comments about the decision.

Nonbelievers Denounce Supreme Court Decision Allowing Special Religious Privileges for Hobby Lobby

The American Humanist Association strongly criticized today’s U.S. Supreme Court ruling on *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* and *Conestoga Wood Specialties v. Burwell*, which granted closely held, for-profit corporations a special religious exemption from covering certain forms of birth control mandated by the Affordable Care Act...

By privileging the religious views of corporate owners, the ruling places a substantial burden on women who wish to obtain birth control methods, such as the IUD or morning after pill, the costs of which can be as high as \$1,000

annually. The ruling may also spur other for-profit corporations to deny employees access to certain medical procedures, based on their owners' personal creeds...

--Merrill Miller, *The Humanist.com*

Birth Control Battle: The Right Wing's Long-Running Attack On Contraceptives

American writer Theodore Dreiser's 1925 novel *An American Tragedy* deals with the story of a socially ambitious young man who, dismayed because he has impregnated his working-class girlfriend, engineers her death.

The book was banned in some cities – but not because of its depiction of murder. Rather, conservative religious leaders feared that a plot hinging on an unwanted pregnancy would spur young people to get curious about birth control.

Today's ruling by the Supreme Court in the Hobby Lobby case is an unpleasant reminder that some people haven't moved much beyond that point.

It can be hard for us in 2014 to grasp just how long and hard right-wing religious interests fought to block Americans' access to birth control. Laws in some states banned not only the sale of birth control but also the dissemination of *information* about contraceptives...

Many Americans assumed this was a long-dead issue. They were surprised when it suddenly came roaring back to life in the wake of the passage of the Affordable Care Act. Even more people were surprised that birth control opponents were basing their legal argument on the principle of religious freedom.

The use of birth control in the United States is ubiquitous. As it became affordable and easier to get, contraception pushed along a social revolution that was already under way – the

emancipation of women and the growing women's rights movement...

Don't for one minute believe the lie that cases like *Hobby Lobby* are about religious freedom. They are about one thing: Religious conservatives who have lost the power to meddle in our most intimate and private affairs and who are so eager to get it back that they're willing to use the noble principle of religious liberty as a cat's-paw in their theocratic schemes...

--Rob Boston

<https://au.org/blogs/wall-of-separation/birth-control-battle-the-right-wing-s-long-running-attack-on-contraceptives>

Atheists Decry Court's Grant of Religious Rights to Corporations in Hobby Lobby

American Atheists denounced the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Hobby Lobby on Monday that declared a closely-held corporation is a person with religious rights. Using the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the Court ruled that owners of closely held corporations may opt out of the so-called "birth control mandate" of the Affordable Care Act...

"This is a disgrace and an indignity to Americans' right to be protected from the abuses of other people's religions," said American Atheists President David Silverman. "Shame on the Supreme Court, which has effectively told Americans that if you can come up with a religious excuse, you are above the law. This is an injustice of the highest order for separation of religion and government, for equality, and for the constitutional protections guaranteed to all Americans."

<http://news.atheists.org/2014/06/30/atheists-decry-courts-grant-of-religious-rights-to-corporations-in-hobby-lobby/>

Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- July 20: Jennifer Ouellette: Me, Myself and Why: What Science Has to Say About Who We Are and How We Got That Way. Center for Inquiry West, Costa Mesa.
http://www.centerforinquiry.net/oc/event/feed_your_brain_lecture_series1/
- August 17: Greta Christina: *Coming Out Atheist*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles and Costa Mesa.
http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/coming_out_atheist/
- October 24-25: Freedom From Religion Foundation, 37th Annual National Convention. Los Angeles. More information to come!
<http://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- July 10-13: The Amazing Meeting 2014. Speakers include James Randi, Daniel Dennett, Karen Stollznow, Eugenie Scott, and lots of others! Las Vegas, NV.
<http://www.amazingmeeting.com/>
- July 18-20: Foundation Beyond Belief's First Annual Conference. Speakers include Greta Christina, Hemant Mehta, Alix Jules, David Smalley, and many others. This conference focuses on how non-theists can put compassionate humanism to work for a better world. Chicago, IL.
<http://humanismatwork.org/>

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Owners of dogs will have noticed that, if you provide them with food and water and shelter and affection, they will think you are god. Whereas owners of cats are compelled to realize that, if you provide them with food and water and shelter and affection, they draw the conclusion that *they* are gods.

--Christopher Hitchens

HSSB Contact Information

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Judy Fontana Mary Wilk

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Diane Krohn
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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, July 15: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday, July 19: Monthly Meeting : Mark Edward, "Psychic Blues and How I Got Them," the Patio Room at Vista Del Monte. Meet at 2:30 p.m. for socializing and light refreshments. Talk starts at 3:00 p.m. Dinner after the talk at Vista Del Monte.

Sunday, July 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, August 12: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Saturday August 16: Monthly Meeting: Scott Bowman: Supreme Court Decisions. **This meeting will be at the Faulkner Gallery**, Santa Barbara Public Library, 40 E. Anapamu St. Talk starts at 3:00 p.m. Dinner after the talk at a location TBD.



Humanist Society of
Santa Barbara
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