



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

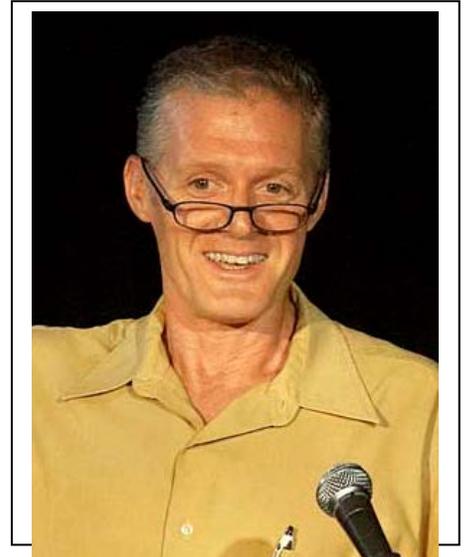
JULY 2016

July Program:

Tom Mates:

Campaign 2016: Faith, Bias, and the Wish for Kings

Religion is playing a smaller role in politics than in years past. One would think that reasoned debate and substantive argument would be ascendant. But if journalists do a poor enough job of pushing candidates beyond their talking points and slogans, those talking points and slogans can harden into something like a religious doctrine of their own. Donald Trump's campaign has attracted a lot of "true believers" in this sense, including a large number of self-described Evangelicals. These voters have little appetite for substance, but a "huge" hunger for a larger-than-life Savior: a leader who will act with unrestrained authority to restore a golden age. We'll discuss the campaign, and the media and their role in it. Also, some specific campaign topics such as abortion and terrorism, and underlying issues such as multiculturalism and anti-intellectualism will be discussed.



Thomas Mates, Ph.D., is an analytical chemist at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *A Judeo-Islamic Nation*, an analysis of the evolution of American politics, religion, and anti-intellectualism. *Free Inquiry* magazine called it "a lucid and sagacious book that offers a coherent alternative interpretation of America's religio-political history."

When: Saturday, July 16th, 2016

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

Donation: \$2 members/\$5 non-members. Students with ID are free.

Optional Buffet Dinner: Dinner buffet at Vista del Monte. \$25 includes tax and tip. RSVP to Nan Cisney by 12 noon on Thursday, July 14th: cisneynan@gmail.com

For More Info: Call 805-769-4772 (769-HSSB)

Activities

Many thanks to Anne Rojas and her helpers for the wonderful Summer Solstice picnic! We had fun and challenging games, including the infamous “duck-off” (missing for several years), good food and a gorgeous day at Stow Grove Park. Pictures of the picnic are on Page 4 of this newsletter.

Don't forget to sign up for the buffet dinner following Saturday's (July 16th) program. The menu is mixed green salad with assorted dressings, herbed bread sticks, pork chops with mushroom sauce, chef's fresh catch, rosemary potatoes, wild rice blend, seasonal vegetable blend, and to top it off, apple dumplings with vanilla sauce. Cost is \$25 per person, which includes tax, tip and wine. RSVP to cisneynan@gmail.com no later than 12 noon, Thursday, July 14th. You can submit your payment to Nan before 3 p.m. on Saturday, before the program begins. **Please note:** It is very important to RSVP for the dinner and then attend it if you have signed up for it; otherwise, HSSB has to pay for no-shows.

Welcome to New Members!

Sherry Blair, Santa Barbara

President's Column: Our Society Roger Schlueter

The results of the election are in. Congratulations to newly elected Board members Neal Faught, Treasurer, and Nan Cisney, at-large Board member. Many thanks to retiring members Ron Kronenberg and Anne Rojas. Additional thanks to Ron for stepping in as interim Treasurer when he was sorely needed. I'll be stepping into the role of President, replacing Colin Gordon who will remain an at-large member. Thanks to Colin for his two years of stewardship of the Society. I'm

looking forward to an exciting and rewarding year!

For almost all of you, voting and hearing the results of the vote are the sum and substance of your involvement in the process. At this time of transition, I'd like to illuminate the process a little bit more so that you are better informed about the Society and that - maybe - you will want to get more involved.

You first might ask why we even bother having elections; there's always a suggested list of candidates and they always “win.” Practically speaking, that's correct and makes the election process somewhat moot. However, it does give everyone a formal way of interacting with the organization and to express your views in the Comments section of the ballot. And now that we conduct nearly all the voting by email, it really is both easy to hold the election and for you to participate.

Under By-Laws of the corporation, we are incorporated as a educational organization in the state of California and have 501(c)(3) non-profit status with the IRS. The By-Laws also specify that elections be held annually for the three Officers of the Board of the Corporation (the President, Secretary and Treasurer) and up to eight At-Large members. However, the real work of the Society is done by the various Chairs and volunteers who may, or may not, also be Board members. While the full complement of Board members are in place, we do have need for more volunteers to fill specific roles.

We are seeking someone to replace **Diane Krohn** as Editor of the *Secular Circular*, our monthly newsletter. The Secular Circular is the primary means of communicating Society activities to all the members as well as providing information about other Humanist-related activities at the state and national level. I have seen newsletters from numerous other freethought organizations and I do think ours is

one of the best and Diane has kept it at that level for several years. Her fingertips deserve a rest so if you are at all interested in helping and/or replacing Diane, please let her know.

I'd also like to put in place a House Committee that takes care of all the non-speaker arrangements for our monthly meetings. The roles that need to be filled are all relatively easy to do and only require attendance at our general meetings. First, **Louis** and **Josette Barsky** have been admirably greeting members and guests and collecting meeting donations for a number of years. Volunteering for this role is a great opportunity to meet other members and prospective new humanists.

Similarly, we need some additional help setting up and taking down the sound system. When we are using the system wired in place in the Patio Room, this is an even easier task. Right now only **Wayne Beckman** and I know how to set up either system so we need more people who know how to work with the systems so we can ensure the sound systems are available at each meeting. Again, this only involves just about an hour a month so not a large time commitment is required.

In summary, our Society has an experienced Board to oversee our activities over the next year but we would like to have more people involved in our month-to-month activities. It's a fun group to work with, so why not jump in? To do so, connect with any Board member by phone or email or at one of our meetings. You'll be glad you did!

Storage Space Wanted

Storage and/or personal office space in a spare room, garage or shed. Requirements: at least 100 square feet, private entrance, and electric power. Will pay \$150--\$250 per month, depending. Please call David Echols at 805-

685-0552 and leave a message, or email: personaltoursltd@gmail.com

Mississippi Judge Blocks “Religious Freedom” Law Defending Discrimination Against LGBT Citizens Camille Beredjick

(Excerpted from The Friendly Atheist.com, July 1, 2016)

U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves has ruled against Mississippi's HB 1523, a law that would have protected those who discriminate against LGBT people for religious reasons. Also called the “Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act,” the bill supposedly protected religious freedom. In reality, it only protected certain beliefs, clearly violating the First Amendment...

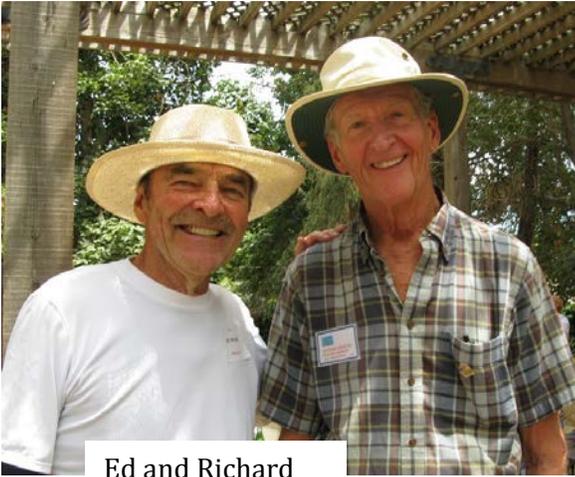
The bill specifically protected those with anti-LGBT beliefs. Anybody who cited one of these beliefs as a reason for discriminating — say, firing a gay employee, kicking out a lesbian customer, or refusing medical services to a transgender person — would be off the hook from government punishment.

U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves ruled that the law, instead of protecting religious freedom, violated the First Amendment by essentially endorsing specific religious beliefs over others. Some of the plaintiffs in the case were religious leaders from denominations that do not object to gay marriage...

Read the entire article here:

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2016/07/01/mississippi-judge-blocks-religious-freedom-law-defending-discrimination-against-lgbt-citizens/>

**Summer Solstice Picnic!
Photos by Marian Shapiro**



Ed and Richard



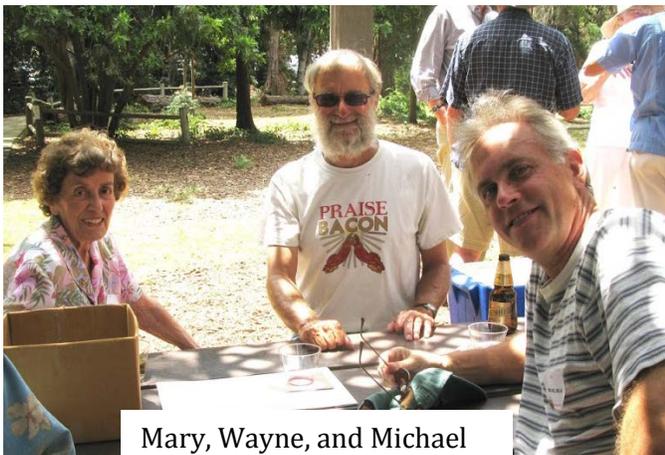
Madeline and Anne



Marty and Louise



David, Mary and Suzanne



Mary, Wayne, and Michael



Sylvelin and Lloyd

The Madness of King Don Tom Mates

Even by the Olympian standards of Washington D.C., Donald Trump is an exceptionally dishonest man. Among other things we now know that, well into his forties, he masqueraded as his own publicist in order to brag about himself over the phone to reporters. But it's what he has said without cover of an alias that's most concerning, for at times his statements have transcended dishonesty to demonstrate a wholesale detachment from reality.

Trump was a birther, for example, and that is only the first of several distinctions disqualifying him from any office of trust. We know, and always knew, that Barack Obama was born in Hawaii, because two newspapers there reported it at the time. Besides, it always looked more likely than not that his mother's citizenship rendered the question of his birthplace moot.

So why would Trump go on record as a birther? And why would he have said that the investigators he sent to Hawaii "can't believe what they're finding," when they couldn't have been finding anything? The claims brought him no money, and no attention that any serious person would want. Why would a sane person, even if — especially if — he were an egotist, want his name to be associated with dirt and stupidity? If the motive was racism, why not just suggestively question the Americanness of Obama's upbringing or "heritage"? Why pursue the hopeless topic of citizenship? To gain the support of large numbers of the simple-minded, in a bid to jump-start a broader coalition? One wouldn't expect things to work that way, and in fact they didn't: Trump began his run last year polling at one to two percent.

No, it appears the answer is a simpler one: Trump latched onto birtherism because he's a

guy who never met a crackpot theory he doesn't like. In other words, he's a little nuts. This is a man who believes that autism is caused by vaccines, who waved a National Enquirer article linking Ted Cruz's father to the JFK assassination, who found instantly credible rumors that Antonin Scalia was assassinated. When I have the misfortune of finding myself next to such a person on a bus or elevator, I assume, in all seriousness, that he needs mental health care. Doubly so if he shows signs of megalomania and encourages those around him to commit acts of violence.

Trump's craziest and most frightening fantasy involves the killing of the non-combatant wives of terrorists. The idea is to transform the U.S. military into an instrument of state-sponsored terror, heedless of legal or military objections. This is madness of a more dangerous kind, and one that should not be forgotten by the press as we pass into the summer and fall. Even if Trump has backed away from this position recently, he maintained it for four months, and that is not something a sane person would do; even his supporters didn't like it.

Holding fast to journalistic norms in this most abnormal season, the press continues to ask banal questions about whether Donald Trump can pivot towards more presidential behavior as November nears. In his case of course this is exactly the wrong question, for we would expect a marginal lunatic to be able to feign normalcy when needed. The point is that it doesn't work the other way: no entirely sane candidate would feign the bursts of insanity we've heard from Mr. Trump.

Trump's damn-the-Geneva-Conventions approach has an obvious antecedent in the Bush-Cheney regime, and the popular appeal, or at least grudging acceptance, of such approaches reminds us how far down the 9/11 attacks, combined with demographic shifts and a tough economic climate, have knocked the American people, in particular the GOP

electorate. Mad regimes require the support of mad crowds, and we've had bumper crops of those lately.

Large numbers of these voters simply want to be saved. They want a messiah: a two-fisted extra-legal superhero, untrammled by Congress or international agreements, to work some magic and make them safe. They want a king. They want one so badly they're ready to put someone in the White House who consults primarily with himself on foreign policy "because I have a very good brain and I've said a lot of things."

Hillary Clinton is a calculatingly dishonest adult. Donald Trump is a wildly dishonest sub-adolescent who behaves as though he's deranged. It's an unprecedentedly dreary choice we've given ourselves this November, but an important one nevertheless.

HSSB Election

The election results for the HSSB Board for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017) are as follows:

President: Roger Schlueter

Secretary: Suzanne Spillman

Treasurer: Neal Faught

At Large: Wayne Beckman, Nan Cisney, David Echols, Colin Gordon, Diane Krohn, Pat Ward, and Mary Wilk.

Thank you to everyone who voted in the election. Remember, Board meetings are open to all HSSB members! Meetings are once a month on the Tuesday just prior to our regular Saturday meetings.

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"Some people don't try bacon for religious reasons. I won't try religion for bacon reasons."

---Comedian Michael Che

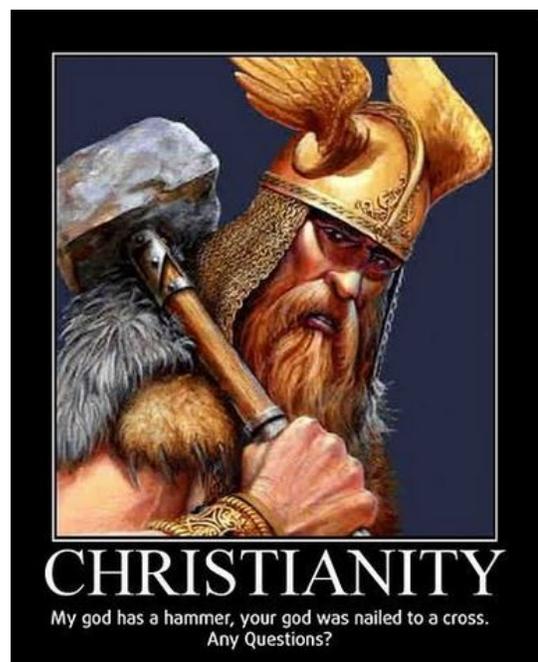
TV Worth Watching: *The Armor of Light* Diane Krohn

The Armor of Light is a documentary film that was shown recently on PBS as part of the Independent Lens film series. The film focuses on Rob Schenk, an evangelical minister who has participated in pro-life activism for many years. After the shooting at the Washington Navy Yard, he starts questioning whether one can be "pro-life" and "pro-gun." The film follows Schenk's journey as he attends a National Rifle Association convention, meets with Lucia McBath (whose son, Jordan Davis, was shot at a Florida gas station), and finds he is at-odds with his fellow abortion protestors and pastors.

One quote from the film: "Brothers and sisters, Fox News and the NRA are not spiritual authorities."

You won't necessarily agree with everything in this movie, but I found it to be thought-provoking and timely.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4506722/>



Checking the Privilege of Religious Groups in American Politics

Rob Boston

(From TheHumanist.com, June 28, 2016)

Now that Donald Trump has nailed down the Republican Party's nomination for president and Hillary Clinton is the presumptive Democratic nominee, we can look forward to certain things: attack ads on television 24/7, constant polling by news organizations, a parade of self-identified political pundits analyzing every development to death and a long slog to November.

Ah, American politics! What could be better?

We'll also hear about the role of the religious community in the election. Despite what many conservatives would have you believe, religious voices are in no way stifled by the political process. In many ways, their voices are loud, and the position they occupy is one of privilege.

It's true there's a federal law dating back to the 1950's that prohibits nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations holding 501(c)(3) status, a category which includes houses of worship, from intervening in elections by endorsing or opposing candidates for public office. However, as I and others have noted before, it's rarely enforced when it comes to religious groups.

Why is that the case? For starters, it can be hard to enforce this provision because Congress has passed special laws to protect houses of worship from "interference"—even when they may be acting unlawfully.

The Internal Revenue Service can audit secular non-profits if the tax agency has evidence of wrongdoing, such as information showing engagement in partisan political activity on behalf of candidates or a pattern of misusing donor funds. But audits of houses of worship

are treated differently. Under federal law, churches can only be audited under extreme circumstances, and all such audits must be personally approved by a "high-ranking" IRS official.

So who exactly qualifies as high-ranking at the IRS? Remarkably, even the tax agency doesn't know. The IRS reorganized some years back, and it remains unclear which official holds the awesome power to sign off on a church audit. The result is that there are no church audits, even in the face of blatant abuses.

Every now and then the media will get riled up about this. Perhaps you've seen an exposé on television about some big-haired TV preacher raking in millions from impoverished folks while he flies coast to coast in a private jet, lives in a palatial estate, and vacations on his private island. You may wonder how he gets away with it. After all, if a secular nonprofit enriched its CEO like that, its top officials would be in prison. When it comes to religious groups, government officials who hold power are paralyzed and often don't act.

You might also wonder how much money some of these large churches have. Estimates are thrown around, but no one really knows. They aren't required to tell anyone. Most secular nonprofits must by law file a detailed financial statement every year called a Form 990. It must be made available for public inspection. Houses of worship are free from this requirement.

How much are religious denominations spending on lobbying in the U.S. Congress and in the state legislatures in an attempt to influence legislation or sway the results in ballot referenda? Again, all we can do is estimate because—you guessed it—religious groups aren't required to report it except in a handful of states.

At the federal level, strict rules govern how much money and time secular 501(c)(3) groups

can spend lobbying. Meticulous record-keeping is required to make certain that these limits aren't exceeded. Here again, religious groups don't have to worry about it. They're exempt.

I don't cite all of these examples to insist that they be changed. In some cases, the separation of church and state does require that the government not unduly meddle in the internal affairs of religious groups. But when those groups face outward and attempt to affect the course of elections or change the laws that all of us must live under, it doesn't seem unreasonable to expect some accountability to the public. Alas, there is little.

California is one of the few states that requires religious groups to report the money they spend on ballot initiatives. The process isn't perfect, but at least it exists—which is more than you can say for most states.

Yet loopholes remain. In 2008 voters narrowly approved Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage in the state. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was involved in the effort and later had to pay a small fine for not reporting all of its expenditures in a timely manner.

But how much did the church spend? No one seems to know. According to some reports, \$22 million in Mormon money flowed into California during the Prop. 8 vote. LDS officials insisted this was just individual church members who were motivated to give because they favor "traditional marriage." Critics believed the campaign was organized by the church's hierarchy who leaned on members to donate and funnel money into the state.

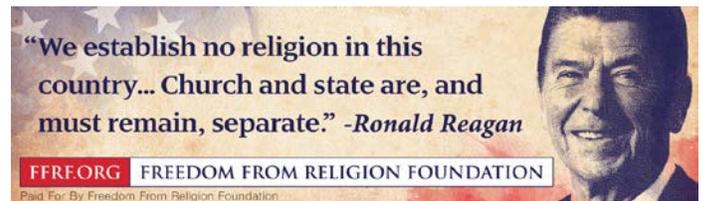
In either case, voters might find this information relevant as they judge a ballot initiative. A church and its members are spending a lot of time, effort, and possibly money to get you to vote a certain way. Why?

Asking that question doesn't make you a "bigot"—despite what some religious leaders claim.

As the election proceeds, religious voices will be heard. There's no attempt to stifle them. Yes, in our often boisterous democracy, they will have to compete with other voices clamoring to gain the public's attention. But their right to participate is secure. In many ways, it's more than secure. It's absolutely privileged.

<http://thehumanist.com/magazine/july-august-2016/church-state/checking-privilege-religious-groups-american-politics>

Billboard Outside GOP Convention Will Quote Ronald Reagan Advocating for Church/State Separation



The Freedom From Religion Foundation and its Cleveland chapter are mounting an impressive 14-by-48-foot message to the Republican National Convention: Keep church and state separate.

That message on a highway billboard comes from an unexpected source: President Ronald Reagan. "We establish no religion in this country . . . Church and state are, and must remain, separate," he said in the quote featured on the billboard...

FFRF, a nonpartisan nonprofit, will also be taking a message to the Democratic National Convention...

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/26994-ffrf-quotes-reagan-in-cleveland-message-to-gop-convention>

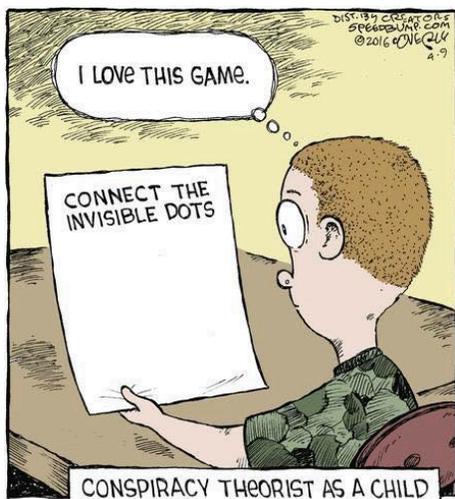
Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- July 17: Ian Ruskin: *To Begin the World Over Again: The Life of Thomas Paine*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/to-begin-the-world-over-again-the-life-of-thomas-paine/>
- August 7: Sean Carroll: *The Big Picture: On the Origins of Life, Meaning, and the Universe Itself*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. <http://www.centerforinquiry.net/la/events/the-big-picture-on-the-origins-of-life-meaning-and-the-universe-itself/>

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- October 7-9: 39th Annual Freedom From Religion National Convention. Speakers include Daniel Dennett, Susan Jacoby, Lawrence Krauss, Jerry Coyne, and many more. Pittsburgh, PA. <http://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>
- October 27-30: CSIcon Las Vegas. Speakers include Richard Dawkins, Jim Underdown, Harriet Hall, James Randi, Eugenie Scott, Susan Gerbic, and lots more! Las Vegas, NV. <http://www.csiconference.org/>



HSSB Contact Information

Officers:

President: Roger Schlueter
drrogers@cox.net
Secretary: Suzanne Spillman
urbanfollies@gmail.com
Treasurer: Neil Faught
nfaught@verizon.net

Board Members at Large:

Wayne Beckman	Diane Krohn
Nan Cisney	Pat Ward
David Echols	Mary Wilk
Colin Gordon	

Newsletter Editor:

Diane Krohn
djkrohn@cox.net

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. Students are free with a Student ID.

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 805-967-3045 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





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

HSSB Calendar

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

Saturday July 16: Monthly Meeting: HSSB member Tom Mates speaking on his book *A Judeo-Islamic Nation*; 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. Optional buffet dinner after the talk at Vista del Monte.

Sunday July 31: (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 16: Board Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk**. Members invited to attend.

Sunday August 20: Monthly Meeting: Richard Solomon will speak on 1st amendment and religious issues; 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. Optional buffet dinner after the talk at Vista del Monte.