



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

FEBRUARY 2018

Join us for our February Speaker Meeting at Valle Verde

A New Possibility for the Middle East

Speaker: Nancy Black, The Israel-Palestine Project

The Israel-Palestine Project (TIPP) supports the assertions of key leaders in both Israel and Palestine that the source of the conflict lies in mutually-contradictory national histories which have developed over time, promoting ideologies that profoundly influence the actions taken by both sides.



Nancy Black, TIPP Publication and Media Director and website manager. Photo by Isaac Hernandez.

What's called for is a common history to powerfully alter the *status quo*.

With international collaboration, TIPP has now completed **A Common Historical Narrative**, a history of the last 150 years in Israel and Palestine. Nancy will speak on the process of pulling together experts from Israel, Palestine, U.S., Canada, & Germany to document historical facts they all can support as “true” to be used as a foundation for moving forward. The U.S. State Department has contacted TIPP about using this in the peace process. Come to the talk to hear more!



When: Saturday, February 17, 2018. Doors open at 2:30 p.m. Meeting begins promptly at 3:00 p.m.

Where: Valle Verde, 900 Calle De Los Amigos, Santa Barbara.

Parking: First Baptist Church, 949 Veronica Springs Rd. *Free Shuttle Service 2:00-3:30 pm, returning 5:00 - 6:00 pm. No parking at Valle Verde.*

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

Optional Buffet Dinner: Gourmet dinner buffet at Valle Verde after the show. \$25.00 per person payable in advance or at the door. *Parking shuttle also available after dinner.*

RSVP to Suzanne Spillman (urbanfollies@gmail.com or 805 681-0736) by noon, Wednesday February 14 if attending buffet dinner.

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

Summary of Our January Speaker: **Rick Wayman: A Turning Point for Nuclear Disarmament**

By Robert Bernstein

This is the 35th year of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF). On January 20, 2018, NAPF Director of Peace Operations, Rick Wayman, filled the Val Verde Theater with people eager for an update on what is happening with nuclear weapons.



HSSB Attendees at January speaker meeting. *Photo by Robert Bernstein.*

The NAPF operates locally, nationally and internationally. For peace in general as well as for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Wayman assured us that there are good things happening. Not all is gloom and doom. But he started with the **2017 Lowlights**.

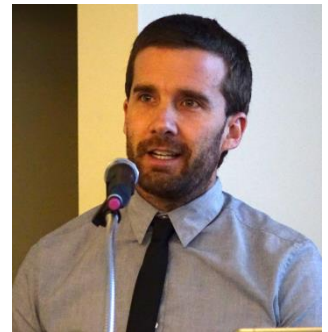
- North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un moved forward with missile tests and an underground hydrogen bomb test.
- U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, has tried to undermine the so-called "Iran deal" which was negotiated among seven countries: U.S., Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, Germany and Iran.
- British Prime Minister, Theresa May, has indicated she is prepared to make use of nuclear weapons. Past prime ministers have avoided saying this explicitly.
- Five countries have nuclear weapons under the Non-Proliferation Treaty:

United States, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, France and China.

- India, Pakistan, and North Korea have declared they possess nuclear weapons. And Israel is believed to possess nuclear weapons even though there has been no open admission.
- All nine of these countries are involved in "modernizing" their nuclear arsenals.

Wayman went on to the **2017 Highlights**.

- Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bombing, accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). She is a member of the NAPF Advisory Council.
- The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, was formally adopted by the United Nations. It was negotiated by Elayne G. Whyte Gómez, Costa Rica's ambassador to the United Nations. It would ban even the threat of use of nuclear weapons.
- Pope Francis has spoken out on a range of peace issues.



Rick Wayman speaks at HSSB Meeting. *Photo by Robert Bernstein.*



Rick Wayman greets Pope Francis. *Photo provided by Rick Wayman.*

- Finally, Norges Bank has \$1 trillion in investments. They implemented a policy to divest from companies involved in the

production of nuclear weapons. This has led to other banks following their lead.

Philosophy is like being in a dark room and looking for a black cat.

Metaphysics is like being in a dark room and looking for a black cat that isn't there.

Theology is like being in a dark room and looking for a black cat that isn't there, and shouting "I found it!"

Science is like being in a dark room and looking for a black cat using a **** flashlight.

Wayman went on to discuss the *Nuclear Posture Review* of the Trump Administration which was recently leaked. It defines what constitutes a threat to the U.S. and its allies. Conventional attacks or even cyber-attacks on our infrastructure could be cause for nuclear retaliation.

It calls for new nuclear weapons with new capabilities. These weapons would be smaller than the Hiroshima weapon. This is meant as a way to make it easier to use nuclear weapons--which is just what we have tried to avoid since 1945.

It's possible that Trump wants these new weapons as a bargaining chip for a "tremendous deal." He has reportedly welcomed a new arms race with Russia that he is convinced the U.S. will win.

According to Wayman, much of the current policy is just a continuation of Obama-era policies. Obama devised a plan to spend \$1.25

trillion over 30 years for modernizing our nuclear arsenal.

"We must look reality in the eye and see the world as it is, not as we wish it to be," according to the *Nuclear Posture Review*.

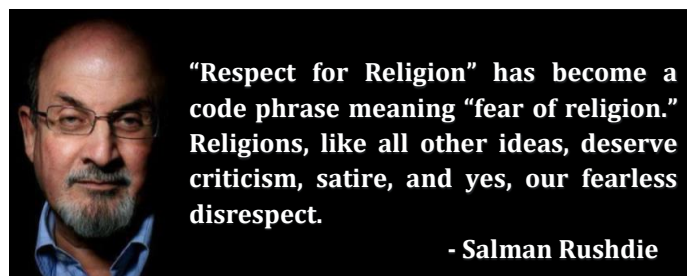
An "Olympic Truce" was established in Greece in the 9th century B.C.E. The International Olympic Committee has talked of reviving this in recent decades. The U.N. General Assembly has introduced a resolution for this to happen for the upcoming Olympics in South Korea.

Joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises are seen as threatening to North Korea. The U.S. has agreed to pause them for the Olympics.

There is bipartisan concern about Trump's mental stability, specifically with regard to military action and nuclear weapons. HR 4837 would prohibit the president from taking any military action on North Korea without Congressional approval. Our representative, Salud Carbajal, is a co-sponsor of this bill, although he is not a signer on the letter.

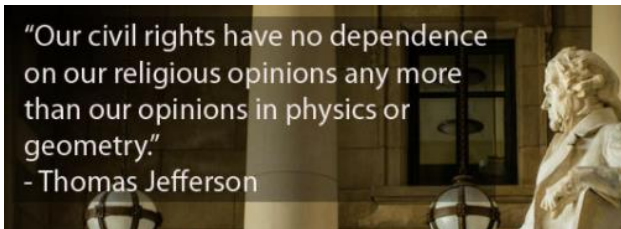
Christine Ahn is the founder of Women Cross DMZ. A courageous group who crossed from North to South Korea for peace in the region. She will deliver the NAPF's Frank Kelly Lecture at the Karpeles Library on March 7.

Wayman passed out postcards to send to Senator Kamala Harris to support Senate Bill 200 which would prohibit U.S. first use of nuclear weapons. Senator Feinstein has already signed. NAPF would like all nuclear weapons abolished. Wayman asserts that this bill and HR



669 in the House of Representatives are our best chances at this time to block nuclear disaster.

Religious Freedom Day – 1/16/2018 National Day of Prayer – 5/3/2018



Religious Freedom Day: On January 16, 1786, the *Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom* was enacted by the Virginia General Assembly. This document guaranteed all Virginians the freedom of, and from, religion — and became the precursor to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The Virginia Statute issues a powerful call for religious freedom. It reads in part:

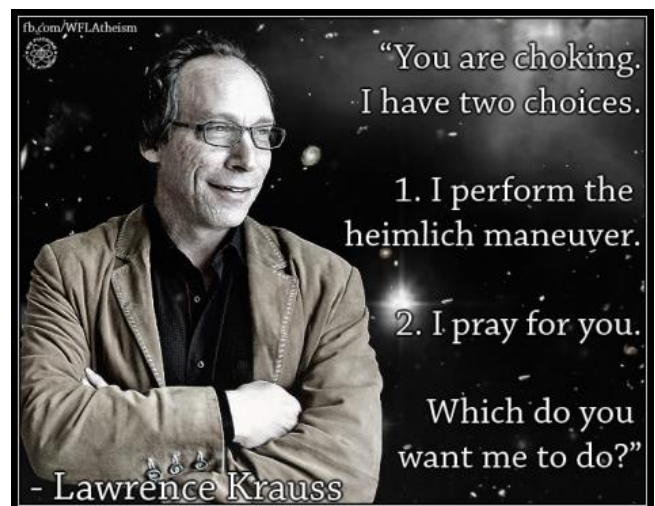
“That our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions any more than our opinions in physics or geometry... Be it enacted by General Assembly that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of Religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities.”

Since Truman’s first proclamation in 1952 it is customary each year that the President issue a “Religious Freedom Day” proclamation, affirming the importance of religious freedom in the United States. This year, President Trump’s proclamation excluded any mention of nontheistic Americans. The President’s proclamation included this section:

“Unfortunately, not all have recognized the importance of religious freedom, whether by threatening tax consequences for particular forms of religious speech, or forcing people to comply with laws that violate their core religious beliefs without sufficient justification... I addressed these issues in an Executive Order that helps ensure Americans are able to follow their consciences without undue Government interference and the Department of Justice has issued guidance to Federal agencies regarding their compliance with laws that protect religious freedom. No American — whether a nun, nurse, baker, or business owner — should be forced to choose between the tenets of faith or adherence to the law.”

The Secular Coalition for America sees this more as a proclamation of religious *privilege* vs. religious *freedom* and not in line with the intention of the First Amendment or of its predecessor, *The Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom*.

There is also a **National Day of Prayer**, designated by Congress, which is held on the first Thursday of May. The annual Presidential Proclamation asks Americans “to turn to God in prayer and meditation”.



The constitutionality of the National Day of Prayer was unsuccessfully challenged in court by the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF).

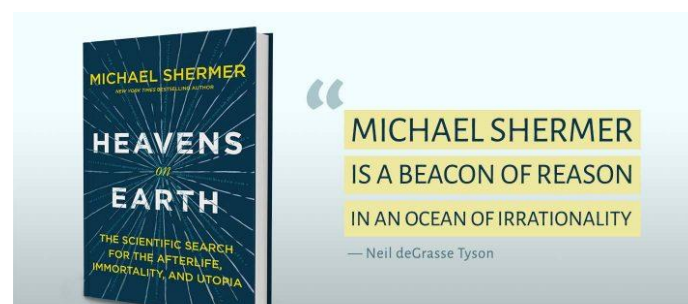
- In October 2008, FFRF filed suit in a federal court in Madison, Wisconsin against President George W. Bush; White House press secretary Dana Perino; Wisconsin governor Jim Doyle; and Shirley Dobson (James Dobson's wife), in her capacity as chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. Government lawyers asked U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb to dismiss the case, arguing principally that the group has no legal standing to sue.
- In March 2010 U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb stated that FFRF's lawsuit *could* proceed because the plaintiffs had shown that they suffered "concrete injury" that can potentially be remedied by judicial action. Judge Crabb stated that, "adopting [the] defendants' view of standing would allow the government to have unrestrained authority to demean members of any religious group without legal consequence. The federal government could declare the 'National Day of Anti-Semitism' or even declare Christianity the official religion of the United States, but no one would have standing to sue because no one would have to 'pass by' those declarations."
- In April 2010, Judge Crabb ruled that the statute establishing the National Day of Prayer was unconstitutional as it is *"an inherently religious exercise that serves no secular function."* However, Crabb stayed her ruling pending the completion of appeals.
- The U.S. Department of Justice filed a notice to appeal the ruling in April 2010, and in April 2011 a three judge panel of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals **unanimously overturned**

Crabb's decision. The panel ruled that FFRF did not have standing to sue because the National Day of Prayer had not caused them harm and stated that **"a feeling of alienation cannot suffice as injury."** The court further stated that "the President is free to make appeals to the public based on many kinds of grounds, including political and religious, and that such requests do not obligate citizens to comply and do not encroach on citizens' rights." The federal appeals court also cited Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address, which referenced God seven times and prayer three times.

You can view and respond to the [The Presidential Proclamations of the National Day of Prayer](#) at this website as well as monitor its Countdown Clock.

[Excerpted from a Secular Coalition for America "Religious Freedom Day" email, a [Wikipedia article on National Day of Prayer](#) and the [National Day of Prayer Task Force](#) website.]

Recommended Reading



Heavens on Earth: The Scientific Search for the Afterlife, Immortality, and Utopia

Skeptic Michael Shermer sets out to discover what drives humans' belief in life after death, focusing on recent scientific attempts to achieve immortality along with utopian attempts to create heaven on earth. It is described as a

scientific exploration into humanity's obsession with the afterlife and quest for immortality.

HSSB Members at the Women's Rally

Several HSSB members were spotted at the Women's Rally in De la Guerra Plaza on January 20th.



About 1/3 of the crowd at De la Guerra Plaza, 1/20/18.
(Photo by Marian Shapiro)

According to the *Santa Barbara Independent*, "The second annual Santa Barbara Women's March — part of an international movement composed of millions of protesters across the globe — will once again bring people of varying races, genders, ages, cultures, and political affiliations together to empower those who



HSSB Member, regular SC Contributor, and photographer, Robert Bernstein with dancer/artist Joan Melendez at the Women's Rally. (Photo by Marian Shapiro)

support women's rights, civil liberties, and social justice," goals well-aligned with Secular Humanism.



Wilma Seelye & HSSB Past President, Ron Kronenberg sporting their "Pink Pussy Hats" at the Santa Barbara Women's Rally January 20. (Photo by Marian Shapiro.)

Democracy is Not a Spectator Sport

HSSB member, contributor and part-time photographer, Marian Shapiro, was profiled in a recent article entitled "Democracy is Not a Spectator Sport."

The article (on page 5 of the [Winter 2017/2018 Issue of Successful Aging](#))

describes how



Marian came to be an activist in her youth and what continues to motivate her to inspire others to activism.

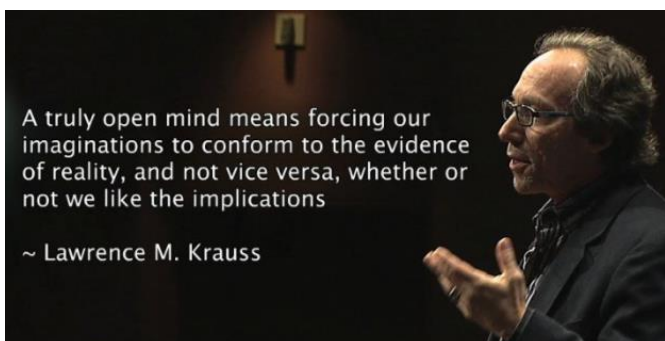
Congratulations, Marian! HSSB both appreciates and benefits from your boundless energy and enthusiasm.



(Photo Credits: Marian Shapiro)

Johnson Amendment Update

The House version of the recent Tax Cuts & Jobs Act included language to essentially repeal the Johnson amendment. The final version of the bill did not include this provision. The Johnson amendment is a provision in federal law that seeks to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process by prohibiting nonprofit organizations, including universities and houses of worship, from endorsing or opposing political candidates. The Program for Public Consultation (PPC) at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy released findings in November showing the majority of respondents support the Johnson Amendment: 88% of Democrats and 71% of Republicans do not want this amendment repealed with 55% of people reporting that keeping it in place is "very important." President Trump, in contrast, has repeatedly vowed to "get rid of and totally destroy the Johnson Amendment." [Excerpt from *Church & State*, Vol. 71, No. 1, Jan 2018, pp 15, 19]



Another Interesting *Fantasyland* Excerpt: Did You Know?

By Judy Flattery

I have been slowly reading (savoring, really) the recently published book, *Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire*, reviewed in the November 2017 *Secular Circular*.

I was born near the end of the Eisenhower administration. In my Catholic childhood I heard much more about Kennedy than I did about Eisenhower. Many friends and relatives had photos of Kennedy hanging proudly on their living room walls.

I recall hearing Eisenhower was a great general, someone who warned us about the threat of a growing military-industrial complex and someone who had something to do with the creation of the interstate highway system. Eisenhower's religious impact on America was news to me. According to author Kurt Anderson:



"In his first year as president, at age sixty-three, Eisenhower was baptized. He appeared at the first National Prayer Breakfast, an event organized by a fundamentalist group, which became annual. The following

year Congress and the president stuck "under God" into the eighty-seven year old Pledge of Allegiance, then gave America its first official motto "In God We Trust," to be printed on currency. Eisenhower made prayer a regular part of cabinet meetings, the first one led by his agriculture secretary, a leader of the Mormon Church."



[Excerpt from *Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire* by Kurt Anderson. Eisenhower portrait photo credit: theroadtocharacter.com]

A Millennial Humanist Perspective

By Jocelyn Flattery, our newest HSSB member

For years I have been hearing that the HSSB is looking for more young adult members. Since my mother became editor of this newsletter I started having conversations I had not had since high school because that was the last time I was around people with whom I could argue about religion. I was reminded of all the reasons I am so passionate about the topic, so I asked my Mom if I could attend an HSSB Board Meeting to see what goes on. I was welcomed with a surprising amount of excitement and curiosity, so I offered to write an article about my experience as a humanist millennial.

When my mother became editor of the newsletter, she asked me to read the article she wrote about her journey from Catholicism to secularism. It was a story I had heard before, but reading it again I actually found myself feeling slightly jealous: I wished I had a story of overcoming theistic indoctrination through my own rebellion of rational and critical thought.

The truth is, I am grateful for the way I was raised. My parents never explicitly told me their belief system. Even when my sister asked if Santa Claus was real my mom responded with "Well, what do you think? Do you think he's real? Does it make sense?" Not having been raised to blindly believe in a particular truth, I still thought there was a God for the sole reason that "everyone" said so.

When I was around 10-years-old I remember my sister asking me "You don't really believe in God, do you?" To which I responded, "I just think there are things in the universe that can't be explained by anything other than God." About a month later I was watching a show about how the Earth and organic life began and I realized that everything could be explained, at least in time, and the only reason I thought otherwise was that people had invented the one "easy, no-

fuss and no thought required" answer: God. During that show I realized I was an atheist, so I told my family. From then on we were often in conversation about religion and/or our lack thereof. A few years later I was under the firm belief that as soon as you are old enough to get the slightest grasp of the concept of evolution you have no excuse for believing in religion anymore. In science if one part of your theory is proven false, you have to rethink the whole thing. So, too, it should be with the Bible and other "holy texts."

I am certain that being encouraged to think freely and critically was the right way to be raised. I have heard that many atheists are scared to admit this for fear of being ostracized. This was never my experience. I was outspoken and proud of my atheism, and found that there were many other atheists my age who loved to engage in conversation about it. As I grew into my teens, whenever I felt someone was forcing their religion on me I would immediately tell them all of the reasons I don't believe what they believe and all of the reasons I thought religion brought more evil than goodness and had long outlived its purpose. There was a tight-knit community of Mormons at my high school that all agreed I was going to Hell, as well as many Christians who liked to remind me of the same fate, which I found amusing. Whereas most people had collages decorating their school notebooks, mine were covered with atheist quotes. I expressed myself so frequently that I was voted "Most Opinionated" in my senior class Hall of Fame, a title I am proud to hold.

I think it's ludicrous for any American millennial to believe in any god. With all of the information in the world available to us on the Internet the excuses should run out.

Finally, here is one of my favorite quotes. Stephen F. Roberts said, "I contend we are both atheists.... When you understand why you dismiss all other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours."

Non-HSSB Events of Interest

Upcoming Events in California:

- February 9-11: LogiCAL – LA, Los Angeles. This event includes a Friday night Magic and Mentalism show and a geological field trip to the La Brea Tar Pits on Darwin Day (February 12). Dr. Lawrence Krauss will be the featured Sunday speaker; other speakers TBA. <http://logicalla.com/blog1/>
- February 18: Dr. Kip Thorne: *Gravitational Waves, Black Holes, Time Travel and Hollywood*. Skeptics Society Salon #17. **Note:** Sold Out. Watch the live stream of the event for free online. <https://www.skeptic.com/upcoming-lectures/>
- Wednesday March 7, 7pm: Christine Ahn, the founder of Women Cross DMZ, a global movement of women mobilizing to end the Korean War, reunite families, and ensure women's leadership in peace building. [Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Frank Kelly Lecture on Humanity's Future](#). Karpeles Manuscript Library, 21 West Anapamu, Santa Barbara. Free and open to the public.

Upcoming Events Outside of California:

- March 29-April 1: American Atheists 2018 National Convention, Oklahoma City, OK. <https://www.atheists.org/convention2018/>
- May 17-20: American Humanists Association 77th Annual Conference, at the Flamingo Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas. Speakers and schedule to be announced. Las Vegas, NV. <https://americanhumanist.org/events/ahas-77th-annual-conference/>

HSSB Contact Information

Officers:

President: Roger Schlueter, drogers@cox.net

Secretary: Suzanne Spillman,

urbanfollies@gmail.com

Treasurer: Neal Faught, nfaught@verizon.net

Board Members at Large:

Wayne Beckman Diane Krohn

David Echols Judy Flattery

Mary Wilk Pat Ward

Clover Brodhead Gowing

Newsletter Editor & Submission Deadline

Judy Flattery FLATTEJL@cox.net

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 3:00 pm, (doors open at 2:30pm) usually in the Theater Room at Valle Verde, 900 Calle De Los Amigos, Santa Barbara.

Note: Parking (with shuttle service) is at the First Baptist Church, 949 Veronica Springs Rd., Santa Barbara. No parking at Valle Verde.

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, P.O. Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130, Attn: Mary Wilk. For membership information contact Mary Wilk at mwilk@cox.net.

For any information about HSSB, call 805-769-4772. Copies of this and past newsletter are posted on the HSSB website.

Like us on Facebook





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

HSSB Calendar

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

Saturday February 17: Monthly Meeting 3:00 pm. Speaker: Nancy Black. *A Common Historical Narrative: The Israel Palestine Project.* Location: Valle Verde Theater, 900 Calle De Los Amigos, Santa Barbara

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

Saturday March 17: Monthly Meeting 3:00 pm. Speaker: Aliona Konvai, *Life in Ukraine.* Location: Valle Verde Theater, 900 Calle De Los Amigos, Santa Barbara.

Tuesday April 17 Board Meeting. 5:30 p.m. Home of **Mary Wilk.** Members are invited to attend.

Saturday April 21: Monthly Meeting 3:00 pm. Speaker: TBD Location: Valle Verde Theater, 900 Calle De Los Amigos, Santa Barbara