



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



April 2007

[www.humanists.net/nm/](http://www.humanists.net/nm/) [fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com](mailto:fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com)

## Spring Potluck

Our quarterly social event for the Spring will be a potluck at the home of Ron Herman and Margaret Nahas, 8110 Cutler Ave. NE. This will be on Saturday, March 24, at 5:30 PM, which is probably about the time you will read this! Sorry for the last minute notice, but we decided the weather is warming, and we want to celebrate the kickoff for our classes on science and religion. The School Subcommittee will serve as hosts. For directions see Map Quest or call Ron at 292-4375. Drinks and utensils will be provided. An Early-Summer picnic is being planned for May, so watch for info on that in the next Newsletter.

## School Subcom Selects Teachers!

The School Subcommittee interviewed several good candidates for part-time teaching positions during February and chose two to begin work. These teachers will serve as moderators and facilitators in our classes on the history of science and religion. Jefferson Voorhees was selected to prepare a curriculum outline and lesson plans from the many resources gathered by the Subcommittee. Phil Smith is also well qualified and was selected to a second teaching position with responsibilities to be determined at a later date.

Jefferson has an MA degree with doctoral studies and has worked as a teacher, writer, musician, and massage therapist. He has studied comparative religion, history, anthropology, and science. Jefferson was preparing his own course on "The History of Thought" before he met us.

Phil recently joined HSNM and is an analyst and graphic designer in the aerospace industry. He earned a BS in Political Science and an MS in Space Studies before serving four years in the US Air Force. Phil ran for city councilman in Omaha Nebraska, which proved to be an eye-opening experience. Both Phil and Jefferson have read extensively and know Humanist authors, although

## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings run from 10:00 to noon and are free and open to the public.

**Saturday, April 14, 2007**

### Informal Meeting

*General Discussion*

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

**Saturday, April 21, 2007**

### Topical Discussion

*Humanist Education*

Note: No Food or Drink

Meet at Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE  
(NW corner Edith and Central - parking on the street.)

**Saturday, April 28, 2007**

### Topic to be Announced

*State Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino*

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

### HSNM Book Club

**Sunday, April 1**

*Because They Hate: A Survivor of Islamic  
Terror Warns America*

by Brigitte Gabriel

**Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank, 2-4PM**

### Santa Fe Humanists

**Saturday, April 10, 10:30 am**

*Generosity*

Community Room, LaFarge Branch of the Santa  
Fe Public Library, 1730 Llano St.

**H**umanism is an ethical philosophy that derives its principles from science and reason rather than theology. It asserts the worth and dignity of every person, advocates personal liberty tempered by social and environmental responsibility, and promotes democracy, compassion, and justice. It sees human beings as natural organisms, whose values arise from culture and experience, and holds humanity responsible for its own affairs.

neither knew much about our organizations until recently.

We have also asked a third candidate, Lynda Hayes, as well as several members of HSNM, to consider supporting our school efforts as teachers, perhaps with one lecture in the curriculum. Lynda is an architectural designer, teacher, and activist with a BA in Art History, currently doing graduate work in Organizational Learning and Instructional Technology. After her interview with us she was motivated to conduct a class

at UNM on the connection between religion and oppression of women.

We have committed to hire Jefferson on a limited basis, but even that will draw down our School funds considerably. So, if you appreciate our progress to date and want to be part of this effort to reach into the Albuquerque community with an educational program, now it the time to make a donation to the School Fund. Please make your generous check out to HSNM and send it to HSNM School Fund, PO Box 13675, Albuquerque, NM 87192, or hand it personally to Treasurer Ed Root.

*Ron Herman*

## **The Humanist Society of New Mexico (HSNM)**

A Membership chapter of the American Humanist Association.

The purpose of HSNM is to promote ethical, naturalistic, democratic Humanism among its members and within its community.

### **Officers**

*President: Frederic March*

*Vice President/Programs: Harry Willson*

*Treasurer: Ed Root*

*Secretary: John Waldrop*

*Membership: Frederic March*

*Public Information: Phil Smith*

*Special Projects: Ron Herman*

*Social Activities:xxxxxxxxxx*

*Newsletter Editor: Randall Wall*

*Website: David & Beverly Wesner*

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM membership or can be obtained by nonmembers for \$12 annually. Send subscription and membership request to: Humanist Society of New Mexico, P.O. Box 13675, Albuquerque, NM 87192. Send Newsletter submissions to: Editor, Randall Wall at Email [paragon2012@comcast.net](mailto:paragon2012@comcast.net)

The deadline for Newsletter submissions is the third Saturday of each month.

## **Messing with the Myths**

It came clear in the preparation for, the discussion after, my recent lecture to the Humanist Society of New Mexico – “The Uses of Myth.” Much of the wasted adrenalin which is flying around these days is let loose because someone keeps messing with someone else’s myths. It cuts both ways – our myths and their myths.

A. “We mess with their myths, and they’re riled.”

We insist on evidence, and regard evolution as a given when we look at life forms. “They” depend on myths and regard our understanding of things as an attack on them. Myths, remember, are stories, stories which we all use to explain who we are and what is important to us. Our belief attacks their myth, they think, and it makes them irrationally angry.

“I am not a monkey!”

“No one said you were. But you and I and the monkeys have a common ancestor.”

“That’s absurd, and wicked.”

“Well, it seems extremely likely, nevertheless.”

But all our calm rational retorts make the creationist more and more furious. “Reason is not good enough! We must have faith,” he insists. Evidence does not interest him at all.

We are undermining what he thinks of as bedrock: God, the image of God, the will of God. We think the world can be understood without those elements, and he can’t imagine such a thing. And he won’t like my explanation of “messing with his myth,” either, because

he denies that there's any myth to it.

Another aspect of this same notion, of how we mess with their myth: we believe in peace, goodwill and human solidarity. Our periodic demonstrations to that effect make some people furious. So much so that they've come to disapprove of the traditional American right and duty to dissent. This is because our peace posture contradicts a myth which is very important to them – the myth of redemptive violence. The whole idea of punishment, the notion of redemption through violent sacrifice [including Jesus Christ dying for men's sins on the cross], the violent savior-gunslinger in all the classic westerns, Rambo in Vietnam – all that and the accompanying stories are brought into question when peaceniks, and peace-makers, and peaceful protesters get out into the street and demonstrate non-violent resistance.

Our disapproval of the colossal waste of money and ingenuity on additional firepower also undermines that myth of redemptive violence. Logic may be on our side – “What could possibly be the use of additional atomic weapons?” – but the fury and disgust are rampant, because we're messing with their myth, as well as their jobs, jobs, jobs...

B. “They mess with our myths, and we're riled.”

More and more of us are saying publicly, in response to polls, even, that the country is going in the wrong direction. What do we mean by that? Part of it may be that one section of our myth about our country and its meaning and purpose has to do with truthfulness. We are brought up believing that George Washington, our first president, could not tell a lie. It took some doing, I remember in my own case, to come to realize that the president could and did lie. It was when Ike lied about Francis Gary Powers' U-2 spy-flight over the Soviet Union. Ike denied that such flights took place. So Khrushchev shot Powers down and then offered to turn him over to Ike. Ike lied.

The dream dies hard. The Acting President lies all the time. We know it. The voters in general now know it. The world has been aware of it for a long time. Falsehood, deception, bald-faced lies – they think that's what our country stands for now. And we're getting cross about it. He's messing with our myth about our country.

And here's another one. We have long thought that our people are can-do people. We can get the job done, and done right. We have more know-how than most, we've been thinking, and more will-power to stick to it until it's done. Remember World War II [“We did it before and we can do it again"], The Air Lift, The man on the moon.

What happened? Just look at the mess – the reconstruction of Iraq, the clean-up after Hurricane Katrina, the filth at Walter Reed Hospital. These people who preach that the government can't do anything right and then take over the government in order to illustrate and prove their point are messing with our myth! We are a capable and competent people! It will take a great deal of effort to prove that now, to ourselves and to the world. It's enough to make a body cross.

*Harry Willson*

#### NEED A RIDE?

We would love to see you at HSNM events! Call any of the following, whoever seems closest, and she or he will arrange a ride for you.

- From far NE heights, Academy & San Mateo area: Jerry Wesner, 821-8614
- From NE, SE heights Tramway & Central area: Carolyn Glen Kaye 323-5288
- From SW, downtown: Harry Willson & Adela Amador: 877-4395

#### Several Giving to School

Generous donations to the HSNM School Fund have been received from Carolyn Glenn Kaye, Dawn Liberman, and Margaret Nahas. In addition to these contributions, which have already been added to our treasury, pledges were received from Ted Cloak and Margaret Nahas for monthly or quarterly donations and from Ron Herman for a single amount. We thank these loyal donors for their serious support for this effort, which is intended to strengthen our future membership.

If you would like to discuss how your donation would support this program, contact the Subcommittee Chair, Ron Herman, or our president Fred March. Ron, Fred, and our new teachers will gladly make presentations to any individual or community group interested in supporting greater awareness of Humanism. If you have connections to other potential donors outside our membership, would you consider bringing our program to their attention?

*Ron Herman*

#### MEMBER NEWS:

If you know of a member who is ill or going through a bad patch or who would like a visitor, please send information to the editor (with the member's permission.)



## First Open Nontheistic Member of Congress Identified

by Elaine Friedman  
HumanistNetworkNews.org  
Mar. 14, 2007

Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA) is the first member of Congress, and the highest-ranking elected official in the country, to state he is a nontheist.

The 18-term Fremont Democrat's beliefs became public as a result of a contest sponsored by the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) that offered a \$1,000 prize to the person who nominated the highest-ranking public official who does not believe in God.

The Institute for Humanist Studies is a founding member of the Secular Coalition for America, which includes the American Humanist Association, Atheist Alliance International, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, Secular Student Alliance, Internet Infidels, and the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

The SCA mailed the following questionnaire to Stark that asked him to fill in the blank:

"I am a nontheist\* and describe myself as:\_\_\_\_\_. I also agree to allow the Secular Coalition for America to release this information to the general public."

In the blank, he filled in "Unitarian."

The footnote from the asterisk read:

"\*the term nontheist includes atheists, humanists, agnostics and other freethinkers who do not believe in the existence of a supreme being or beings."

Of the 47 nominees, Stark was one of four to acknowledge that he was a nontheist.

The next highest-ranking elected official was a Berkeley school board president, said Lore Lipman Brown, the SCA's director.

We hope that this will help break stereotypes that one needs to believe in a supreme being to lead an ethical and exemplary life," she said.

The SCA's announcement has garnered significant press coverage. The coalition's home page contains a listing of all the news outlets that have covered the story, which include the *Los Angeles Times* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*. The American

Humanist Association has launched an advertising campaign congratulating Stark. The first of the ads appeared in Tuesday's *Washington Post*.

Will Stark's disclosure make other politicians more willing to admit their non-theism or make Americans more accepting of their representatives' lack of belief?

While about 10 percent of people in the United States are atheist or agnostic, politicians have nothing to gain by identifying with them, Brown stated. A Gallup poll published last month found that only 45 percent of Americans would support an atheist for president while 55 percent would support a gay candidate and 72 percent would support a Mormon candidate.

A recent *San Francisco Chronicle* questionnaire that asked readers "Would a candidate's atheism be a deal-breaker at the polls for you?" received a variety of responses. Opinions ranged from "Yes, because if you don't believe in anything, you will believe anything, and that's a scary way to govern" to "Not at all. I support church and state separation and am alarmed that the public has forgotten the lesson of history."

A sign of hope for humanists is that many readers stated that religion or lack thereof was not a factor they consider at the voting booth; readers do not care about a candidate's religious affiliation as long as he/she represents voters' views on issues such as healthcare and gay marriage.

### Friendly Philosophers

Monday, April 2, 2007

Open Forum

*Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion*

Monday, April 16, 2007

Jane Allen

*The Music of the Roma (Gypsy)*

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room. Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

### Atheists/Freethinkers Meetup Group

<http://atheists.meetup.com/75>

Business Meeting on first Sunday, 9am,  
Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202  
Harvard SE

Social Meeting on third Tuesday at 7pm at Mimi's  
Cafe, 4316 The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25

