



Humanist Society of New Mexico



December 2008

www.humanists.net/nm/ fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

President's Message

Our new-term board met for breakfast at Le Peep on November 15. I am delighted to welcome Bill Little as our new Vice President who has hit the ground running for our Law School library speaker series. John Waldrop has shifted from Secretary to Treasurer, Carolyn Kaye has become Secretary. Ron Herman, Randy Wall, Janet
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HSNM Family Co-op

Alternative Children's Sunday School

December 7th & 21st, 11:00 am

Regular Meetings

Ground Level, College of Santa Fe, Albuquerque
Campus, Pinetree Corporate Center
4501 Indian School Rd. NE

Santa Fe Humanists

Saturday, December 6th, 10:30am

Community Service

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

For more information contact Bill Weihofen
(505) 988- 1343

Grants Humanists

Discontinued

Upcoming HSNM Meetings

Meetings are free and run from 10:00 to noon
(except where noted)

HSNM Book Club

Discontinued until further notice

Saturday, December 13th

Informal Meeting

General Discussion

This Meeting is for Members Only or Special
Invitation Only – For invitation please call Fred
March - 323-6784

Refreshments: Barbara White

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Saturday, December 20th

Topical Discussion

*Is Conservatism Compatible with
Humanism?*

Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE

Saturday, December 20th

5:30pm

Winter Party

Please call Marilyn Brownstein for RSVP and food
coordination at 293-0556 or email to
msbrownstein18@yahoo.com

Please bring Roadrunner Food Bank Donation
Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

Humanism 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.

Johnson, Ted Cloak and Jerry Wesner retain their positions. We continue to have vacancies for Membership Recruitment, Publicity, Social Events, and Library Meetings. Call me if interested.

Harry Wilson and Ed Root, former VP and Treasurer have performed splendidly. We were fortunate for their

selfless service to the HSNM. I will miss them on the Board, but am delighted that they will continue to serve as active members.

I start my second term as HSNM President genuinely grateful for the opportunity to preside over our wonderful Board and membership. The HSNM continues to fulfill my need for intelligent progressive programming, lively conversation and genuine friendship.

Our priorities include maintaining the quality of our four monthly events (Summit Meeting, Library Meeting, Lecture, Book Club) along with the website Phil Smith manages from Boulder. The Board continues to be concerned with building membership. We encourage all of our members to extend a friendly hand to all new persons who turn up at our events, and to actively invite anyone you know who might enjoy our events and people. Your Board voted to offer full HSNM/AHA membership to our guest lecturers as a way to encourage them to return and bring others.

Ron Herman, who invests lots of his precious time directing education programs and raising funds, will continue to help us publicize our events in the local media as best he can. We remain desperate for a publicity manager who will actively get our events announced every month in every free venue, along with some strategically placed paid ads. Finally we will try find some ways to bring the parents of our children's program together with other members.

Our Winter party will be at the Summit on Saturday December 20 starting at 5:30 PM. Marilyn Brownstein has consented to keep track of who is coming and what food and drink they will bring, so please contact her at 293-0556 or smbrownstein18@yahoo.com as soon as you know you will come.

Fred March

The Life-Style Problem

Decades ago the following accusation was hurled at me: "Harry, you have left off preachin' and gone to meddlin'!" My sermons were questioning the ethics, yes, the "Christian ethics," of families who made their living inventing and constructing weapons of mass destruction.

[It is very strange how those words -- "weapons of mass destruction" -- have become a phrase to be applied

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

Frederic March: President

Bill Little: Vice President/Programs

Jerry Wesner: Past President

John Waldrop: Treasurer

Carolyn Kaye: Secretary

Ron Herman: Director of Classes

Jeff Cornelius: Family Co-op

Randall Wall: Newsletter Editor

Janet Johnson: Book Club

Ted Cloak: Community Liaison

Phil Smith: Webmaster

Membership Director: Open

Social Coordinator: Open

Publicity Director: Open

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

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

to others, who shouldn't be allowed to have any, while our stockpiling of them and on-going upgrading of them and use of them is passed over as acceptable and even admirable.]

[It is also very strange that a person who dropped bombs on little children from thirty thousand feet in the air can then be regarded almost universally as a great hero.]

Anyway, I'm going to risk it again -- meddling, that is. Here goes: The greatest problem facing the world is the American life-style. There you go again, Harry. Meddling. Butting into other people's business. The root of the American imperial scourge on Planet Earth is not the Pentagon, or "energy" or Christian fundamentalism -- it is the American life-style. We Americans, almost all of us, use up too much, vastly too much, of the world's stuff, including energy.

There are exceptions. I know a couple of them: Don Schrader and Chuck Hoskins, right here in Albuquerque. Neither of them has a car, or a computer. They have very modest living quarters, and make very slight use of electricity.

I study the litter on the sidewalk where I walk every morning. The passers-by, who have left that litter, are not affluent. What they leave for others to pick up reveals the problem -- fast-food wrappers, styrofoam, plastics of all kinds, glass bottles whole or shattered, aluminum cans. Even the non-affluent are displaying a grossly wasteful life-style, which is the underlying environmental and imperial problem. The United States of America has to conquer someone in order to get the oil with which to make all that plastic, which ends up as litter. The litter itself indicates that we have and use too much stuff.

Getting littering stopped won't be easy -- the totalitarian Chinese government can't stop it at their Great Wall. And recycling doesn't really get at what will finally have to be changed. Americans will finally have to begin to use up less stuff, including energy. That will mean a changed life-style. For a while there it appeared that the price of gasoline was going to help, by forcing Americans to drive less, but it now appears that we're adapting, and traffic is as bad as ever.

My wife and I never adapted Don Schrader's life-style. We have a modest little car. We have a computer. Since small publishers can't sell books in bookstores, we have to depend on the Internet. [Find us at www.amadorbooks.com] But it's very modest, believe me, and it has us wondering, "How can our life-style be down-sized much more that it already has been?" We're working on it.

A glance higher up on the social scale makes the problem much more obvious. Here's a lady who

received a new wardrobe worth more that what many fellow citizens have spent for a house. It amounts to ten times what many spend for a car. Even though she says that she's not accepting the wardrobe, now that we have taken note, it is too late. The problem has been exposed, one more time.

All the talk of hundreds of billions of dollars for this or that is lost on most people -- except for a dull awareness that it is much too much. It keeps things in perspective, maybe, to remember how the vast majority of our fellow humans live, in Haiti, in Mali, in Bangladesh, in Bolivia, in Nicaragua, in our own inner cities. Our life-style affects them all, and in the long run will have to change.

Sorry to meddle so.

Harry Willson

The Sacred

Breathes there a people with soul so dead who never among themselves have said, "This is sacred?" We don't need the words "God" or "sacred" to recognize something universally human in the perception. Cultures may radically differ in how they conceive of "This" but when I stand on a mountain top or on a cliff overlooking the ocean or look up at the starry sky on a clear winter night I am awe-struck with wonder at the vastness and grandeur of what I see. The ego shrinks toward a vanishing point and even our species seems reduced in importance. Perhaps an ego seeking a larger home than a human body hears a brilliant lightning flash say, "I AM" instead of just "kerblam."

Job, treated unjustly by his "friends," finally faces the overwhelmingly rich complexity of the natural world and says, "I had heard of you with my ears; but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I will be at peace, comforted that I am dust." (from Stephen Mitchell) Elijah, fleeing to a mountain cave to save his skin, does not find his God in a howling wind, an earthquake or a raging fire. But in the silence that follows he gets the message, "Go back down, you have work to do." That may be the message for those who have been terrified into hiding by the raving lunatics who have occupied the White House for almost eight years.

Dale L. Berry

A "Christmyth Card" to Humanists

At this time of year the pervasive atmosphere of Christmas can be depressing for those of us who see the flaws and fraud of religion and the excesses of the commercialism of the season. There is some evidence that Jesus of Nazareth did exist, and he may have been a good man. He apparently inspired the down-trodden of

his day to find some inner peace without the particular need to improve their plight. Humanists, however, understand that

a) he was just one of many proclaimed messiahs of the time,

b) his words were written down in languages other than his own by authors who had not heard them personally, and they were written many years after they were spoken,

c) even those words were embellished and altered by hundreds of scribes and religious committees and rulers with various political agendas and plenty of superstition, which was salted with beliefs and practices from previous religions,

d) his crucifixion is certainly a dramatic symbol of church/state oppression that we must resist even today.

This Jesus was elevated to the status of the Son of the one true God based on ancient fears that required obsessive-compulsive demonstrations of homage to mythical beings. For us, this practice reduces human beings to the status of children before an all-powerful parent, insulting our human mental acumen and our respect for ourselves and for one another. These supreme beings with all their contradictory and nonsensical admonitions for compliance were created by fearful men (sometimes women, but usually men) ignorant of science and hungry for power.

The tradition of giving gifts at this time (in the northern hemisphere) is surely rooted in the bounty of a good fall harvest and the winning of friends and lovers to share the cold winter months. The lights and glitter are an effort to announce our good fortune or to lighten our burdens when shortages and disease ravage our families, as they did so severely in past human history, and still do in some places. These practices can still be enjoyed without a religious purpose. I still delight in erecting a small artificial tree (a great pagan tradition, of course) and adding lights, which together symbolize the power of nature and the beauty of the night sky. Under the tree I place empty boxes labeled with gifts I would like the world to receive - like humanism, enlightened education, non-violence, clean air and water, etc.

Marketers have used the religious practices of the season as an excuse to lavishly display their wares, to encourage us to buy even what no one really needs, and to spend our savings and even go into debt doing so. If you enjoy this cycle of buying and paying, then certainly indulge yourself and your loved ones. However, if you know that your time with them could be short and it is your best gift to them, you can give that in most cases for free. Tell them your stories and listen to theirs. Share good food, music, games, and sports with them. Enjoy a break from school or work. If you don't participate in

the religious services and choose to limit or eliminate your giving, know that there are other people who support those choices.

Some religious people who follow "New-age" teachings celebrate the Winter Solstice, although it merely marks a time when the Earth passes a point in its orbit around the Sun that causes our days to lengthen. Axis tilt, not Jesus, is the "reason for the season." It has traditionally been marked as a sign that the gods will cause another Spring and Summer to occur to keep us warm and grow our crops another year. Of course, at that very moment people in the southern hemisphere start to see a shortening of their days and the decline of those solar benefits. We now know that the fear that the Sun might fail to again brighten the northern lands, leaving them in endless winter, is unreasonable, based on science. Yet, recognizing that our lives mirror the changes of the seasons is insightful and comforting and inspires awe for our existence and the cosmos in which we live.

Ron Herman

Friendly Philosophers

Monday, December 1st

Open Forum

Bring a Your Own Topic for General Discussion

Monday, December 15th

Walking the Tao: A Search for Understanding – A Discussion of Taoist Philosophy

Paul Deal

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>

Sunday, December 7th, 9am

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

Tuesday, December 16th

Social Meeting at 6:30pm at Mimi's Cafe, 4316 The 25 Way, Near Jefferson and I-25

New Mexicans for Science and Reason

Wednesday, December 3rd, 7pm

Civilian Nuclear Power

Marshall Berman

UNM Law Building

1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402