



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



June 2007

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

## President's Message

Phil Smith has hit a home run with his redesign and enhancement of our HSNM website. Here is what the folks at the AHA HQ in Washington had to say about it:

*"Fred Edwards, Communications Director at the AHA, passed on the news of your re-worked website to me. I just wanted to tell you that I think the site looks great. As you may know, having a quality looking website is very important to make sure that people surfing the site give the website and the issues contained within some weight in their minds. Your website goes above and beyond this requirement. I also think the information contained in the website is great. In fact, I would like to use your site (with your permission only, of course) as a model site for AHA groups with outdated or no websites. If you need any documents or information from the AHA to add to your website, please feel free to contact me anytime. I look forward to keeping in touch, and congrats on the great new site!"*

*Michael Friedman  
AHA Grassroots Coordinator*

So please spend some time on our lovely new site with its terrific new graphics. It has a couple of surprises, like access to Phil's own website with his fascinating works of art. Then there is a link to Amador Books with access to Harry Wilson's collection of humanist books. All members who have written books are welcomed to list them on our website. Just contact Phil with the information.

## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

**Saturday, June 9, 2007**

### Informal Meeting

*General Discussion*

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

**Saturday, June 16, 2007**

### Topical Discussion

*The Contemporary Political Spectrum: Pros and Cons*

Note: No Food or Drink

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

**Saturday, June 23, 2007**

### *History and Current Activities of the Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice*

Maria Santelli

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

### HSNM Book Club

**Sunday, June 24th**

*Myth and Mortality* by Harry Willson  
Title Wave Books, 1408 Eubank, 2-4PM

### Santa Fe Humanists

**Saturday, June 2, 10:30 am**

*Global Marshall Plan*

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

**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.

Also, I want to thank all who came to our sunset picnic at my home on Saturday. We had a terrific turnout, and the conversation flowed freely along with the wine. I learned that Leland likes to drink Fat Tire, and fortunately I had some on hand.

My next message will be about the Portland Conference at the end of May. Several of us Albuquerque humanists will be attending.

*Fred March*

## **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*

*Director of Classes: 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.

## **School Lesson Plans**

Following our first Pilot Class with five students, who were personally invited, the Teacher Committee reviewed the purpose and format of these classes in more detail. We decided to focus the content more on historical time lines and stories about milestone events and leading figures. We also would like to use teaching methods that have more variety in terms of visual and auditory presentation. After discussions with Phil Smith we decided to contract with him to do a second Pilot Class incorporating these methods. Phil has an MS degree in Space Studies and a BS in Political Science.

Though our Humanist school may ultimately include courses on a variety of topics, our immediate concern is to remediate the understanding of science and religion in the general population. We will offer an exploration of the histories of these two fundamental and often misunderstood aspects of human development in a way that a wide cross-section of the Albuquerque community can appreciate. This approach opens the opportunity to interest a huge number of people, particularly those with no strong religious affiliation, which is estimated to be 160,000 in the Albuquerque area. Our near-term goal is to enroll 1% of that number in one year, once we have the lesson plans written and our teachers prepared.

Our second pilot class will likely be held at the end of June, since the Teacher Committee will be taking time out to attend the AHA Conference "Blazing a Humanist Trail" in Portland starting June 7. Our school program will be well represented by Phil, Fred March, Carolyn Kaye, Kristin Cram, and myself. We look forward to sharing our experiences with the membership at future meetings.

Ron Herman  
Director of Classes

### **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.)

## To My Readers

I ranted some while ago almost ten years ago, on 11/97, about "The Second Language," when my granddaughter Erin went to Guadalajara and stayed long enough to become bi-lingual. Some Know-Nothings pretend that a second language is a hindrance, but Erin and I know better. I learned it fifty years ago, when I spent a year in Madrid.

Now here comes a would-be presidential candidate, name of Gingrich, declaring that Spanish should not be taught in schools because "it is the language of the ghetto." Seems he never heard of Lope de Vega, or Miguel de Cervantes, or Jorge Luis Borges, or Octavio Paz, or Ortega y Gasset, or Miguel de Unamuno.

We wondered what was the Spanish word for "ghetto." We thought of *barrio*, but looked in the Spanish-English lexicon for a translation. Yes, *barrio*, with a qualifying description of poverty and discrimination. Then we looked in the Spanish-Spanish dictionary. There it was, with some history, harking back to the origin of the word in medieval Venice -- and then it plunked down a new word for me, which I find quite shocking -- *judería*. A *carnecería* is where they have meat. A *librería* is where they have books. A *judería* is where they have Jews.

So Gingrich is not only stupid, about the value of a second language; he is in error! Hebrew, or Yiddish, is the language of the ghetto.

It troubled me all day, and late in the evening I was reminiscing about fifty years ago and the process of learning Spanish. I reached back and picked up TOMO DOS [volume two] of ENSAYOS [essays], by Miguel de Unamuno, one of my heroes and mentors from way back then. I opened the tiny 1200-page book -- thin onion-skin pages, like a Bible -- opened it at random, the way some superstitious people do with the Bible. It opened to "A Mis Lectores" -- and I was blown away reading those eight pages. I'm not sure I had ever read that essay before, but I needed to read it now. Unamuno writes the way I want to and try to write. He is very self-conscious about it. I took the time last week to translate all eight pages, and I herewith share some of it with you. [The most difficult word to translate is *simpático* -- "pleasant, nice, like able, congenial." I don't like the word "nice" in English, as it is most commonly used. So here I use mostly "likable." "Nice" would be meant satirically, if I used it.]

### To My Readers

*Yes, I know very well that I am not likeable to all those who read me; perhaps I'm not to others, also. What are we to do? As long as they read me... Because,*

*yes, indeed, I prefer to be not likeable to them and they go on reading me, to being likeable and they quit reading me. Likability often costs both authority and respect. I confess to you that I don't consider it a desirable thing to become a likeable writer. It is perhaps the beginning of discredit, of deep discredit, no matter how gilded or covered up it appears.*

*Yes, I know that I am not likeable, that perhaps I have come to be unpleasant to many who read me, and in spite of that unpleasantness, or rather because of it, they continue to read me.*

*Not long ago a friend and fellow-Basque wrote to me, telling me that even though he often doesn't share my opinions, he reads me because I stir up ideas that require response. And I consider myself quite satisfied with that, to provoke ideas in those who read me, even though these ideas are contrary to those that I expound and defend.*

*But there are many, very many, readers who do not like it that I oblige them to think and who only look for someone who will tell them what they already know, what they have thought already. In order to become a likeable writer one only has to flatter and corroborate the preconceptions of the readers, to nail down in them the common notions that they carry stuck in their minds. That's how to make yourself likable and it's also how they tire of you soon, and say, "Oh, yes, a likeable writer, very comprehensive," and they quit reading you.*

*Most persons -- I have said it many times, and since I am a boring writer -- another quality that makes me not likeable -- I have to repeat it even many more times -- Most persons read in order not to inform themselves. Just as it sounds -- in order not to be informed. The honorable Joe Blow takes the newspaper or the magazine at breakfast, and reads, like someone hears a waltz playing, in order to kill time. It bothers him if the words excite him; it bothers him if they contradict him; but it bothers him even more if they tell him something he has never thought of.*

*There is a spiritual pain analogous to physical pain; there is a spiritual pain when something tears at the fabric of the soul. Because just as the body has its fabrics of cells and fibers, likewise the soul has its fabrics of impressions, memories, sensations, ideas. The rupture of an association of spiritual cells is like the rupture of an association of bodily cells, and it can produce anything from a slight botheration to an extremely sharp pain.*

*Many times it has been said, and it's a thing observed by everybody, that the pain caused by the death of a beloved person, with whom we have lived, increases gradually in the first days and then begins to diminish. This pain follows a course which we could*

mark by a curve of rapid rise and slow descent. The first effect is one of stupor, and at time, if our beloved suffered much in order to die, we feel even relief seeing that person at rest at last. The greatest pain comes upon finding empty the place formerly occupied, at table, or perhaps in bed, or at our side.

The greatest pain is when we sense the lack, when we sense the emptiness left in our existence, when we sense the rupture of our associations of ideas and feelings. The image of that beloved person was intimately woven into the spiritual fabric of our life, and death could not rip it out of us without destroying that fabric.

We all know that if one spends many years far from his parents, without seeing them or living with them, the pain which the notice of death causes is not, by a long shot, a lacerating pain. The truth is news of death is not the experience of death. The son, an excellent son otherwise, accustomed himself to another life, created another spiritual fabric. The proverb says it well: "Eyes don't see; heart doesn't feel."

These very reflections will seem to many, I suspect, unlikable, hard, tasteless, unfeeling. But I believe they are based on truth...

Every rupture of associations of ideas and feelings causes us upset, all the way from the pain of the death of a parent, or a husband or wife, of a brother, of a son, to the botheration, the irritation cause by him who breaks up a thing we've become used to. I am one of those writers who propose to break those associations -- and for that reason they call us paradoxical -- we cause trouble and make ourselves unlikable. It is our destiny.

And they say we cause trouble, not so much by what we say as by the way we say it. Yes, it is because, instead of cutting those associations cleanly, with scalpel, chloroforming the patient in advance, or hypnotizing him, we do it with hard jerks and when he is wide awake. It's a question of method and it's a question of temperament. Chloroform, as much in the clinic as in literature, has its drawbacks, and there are occasions when the patient needs to feel the pain...

And then there's another thing that makes me unlikable, I know it. It is my lack of impersonality, my inability to make this what they call an objective task, the business of putting my self, more or less, into all my writings, this that they call my egotism. And, what shall we do? I admire those who know how to remove themselves from themselves -- I admire them, but I don't imitate them and I don't want to imitate them...

Yes, yes, it is very fine that business of making a discrete use of bits of knowledge, as it is very fine to make discrete use of wealth. But the fact is the neither

knowledge nor wealth constitutes our very selves, but is rather something stuck on, which comes and goes, something which can be taken or left. But I cannot make a discrete use of my very self. If they take from me a peseta or a duro I can adjust, but it will be hard for me to adjust if they take away an arm, or worse, a piece of my soul. I can give a peseta or a duro discretely, but an arm, or a piece of my soul -- I can't rip them off and give them away, except passionately, that is, indiscretely. And I don't give ideas, I don't give information -- I give pieces of my soul...

Harry Willson

Editor's Note: If you would like to read more of Harry's "Rants", you can find them at [www.amadorbooks.com](http://www.amadorbooks.com).

### 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

### Friendly Philosophers

**Monday, June 4, 2007**

Open Forum

*Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion*

**Monday, June 18, 2007**

*How Does Science Work? A Brief History of the Philosophy of Science*

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

