



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



April 2010

<http://humanistsocietyofnm.org/> [fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com](mailto:fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com)

## Quotes of the Month

Never let your sense of morals get in the way of doing what's right.

Isaac Asimov

Loyalty to a petrified opinion never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul.

Mark Twain

## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

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**Saturday, April 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Informal Meeting**

*General Discussion*

Visitors please contact Fred March at 505-323-6784  
for details or questions.

Refreshments: Jack & Helen Fuller

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School NE

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**Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Topical Discussion**

Open Discussion

Special Collections Library, 423 Central Ave. NE

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**Saturday, April 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Speaker Meeting**

*The Near-Successful Coup: Radicalized  
Christianity's War to Make Our Democracy  
Their Theocracy*

Lee Delaney

Humanist Minute: Ron Herman

Refreshments: Bill & Shirley Little

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Standford NE

## HSNM Family Co-op

### Alternative Children's Sunday School

Call 505-292-4375 for meeting times

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## Santa Fe Humanists

**Saturday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10:30am**

*Metaphysics*

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

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

**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.

**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*

*Secretary: Open*

*Ron Herman: Director of Classes*

*Randall Wall: Newsletter Editor*

*Janet Johnson: Book Club*

*Ted Cloak: Community Liaison*

*Phil Smith: Webmaster*

*Membership Director: Open*

*Social Coordinator: Open*

*Publicity Director: Open*

*Family Co-op: Open*

Subscription to HSNM Newsletter, published  
monthly, accompanies AHA/HSNM  
membership or can be obtained by  
nonmembers for \$15 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.

**IN MEMORIAM: HARRY WILLSON**

Contributed by Ron Herman

Harry Willson - parent, husband, former Presbyterian minister, author, philosopher, peace and environmental activist, and Humanist - died on Tuesday, March 9, 2010 at the age of 77. He had been hospitalized for several months following cancer surgery. During his last week, he "let go" and courageously took that great, last, "lonesome journey" toward death.

Harry was founder of Amador Publishers with his wife, Adela. He was a prolific writer and his published works include these titles:

*A World for the Meek, A Fantasy Novel, 1987*

*Souls and Cells Remembered, A Love Story, 1987*

*This'll Kill Ya, and Other Dangerous Stories, 1991*

*Duke City Tales, Stories from Albuquerque, 1986*

*Vermin and Other Survival Stories, Humanity as an Endangered Species, 1996*

*Christmas Blues, Behind the Holiday Mask, an Anthology, 1995 (with other authors)*

*Freedom From God, Restoring the Sense of Wonder, 2001, and his latest*

*Myth and Mortality, Testing the Stories, 2007*

He also wrote a couple of theater plays and a monthly "rant" for the Amador Publishers website and the HSNM newsletter — totaling more than 150 essays over the years.

Harry had a B.A. in chemistry and math, summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, from Pennsylvania's Lafayette University, and he had a Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary. At the conclusion of his seminary studies, he questioned his own beliefs and the sincerity of his oath to the Church, but completed that obligation in hopes of bringing comfort and understanding as a minister. Harry wrote in *Freedom from God* "I joined in the pretense, willingly and eagerly at first, and then with more and more difficulty." Harry brought his family to New Mexico in 1958, when he accepted a position as a Christian missionary to New Mexico. He served as bi-lingual pastor in Bernalillo, Alameda, and Placitas for eight years.

In 1965 Harry answered the call from Dr. Martin Luther King for clergy to go to Selma, Alabama to assist in voter registration and demonstrations against police brutality. He also worked for King in Atlanta during the summer of 1967, advocating against the Vietnam War, the year before King was killed. Between those years, Harry left the Presbyterian Church "in sorrow and anger." The "last straw" for him was the clergy's failure to take a stand against that war. His goal his whole life had been to "discover God's will and do it," but he found that he was "making it up as he went." He came to believe that truth must be followed, wherever it leads, although it can still be denied when found. Harry joined the "God is Dead" movement, believing not that God had died, but that It never really existed. It was just made up. He became a member of "God Anonymous," like AA, and 30 years later found the titled for his book on this de-conversion as "Freedom from God."

After quitting the clergy, Harry taught the Bible as history and other subjects for ten years at the Albuquerque Academy and at Sandia Preparatory School. Harry married Adela Amador in 1970. In 1976 Harry retired from teaching to devote himself to his writing and other projects, including caning chairs. He also assisted Adela in her drapery business as bookkeeper and installer. In 1986 Harry and Adela formed Amador Publishers, and they printed works by several noted local authors, in addition to their own books.

Harry's writings are hard to classify according to genre, and they attracted a diverse audience. Readers frequently claimed that his words had changed their lives. He had a sense for the importance of the inner self, the curious, the sensual, and the mythic. Harry's ability to put big, difficult subjects into personal terms with plain-spoken clarity, wry humor, and abiding love led some to label his writing "folksy" and "homespun." But that belies his impressive academic credentials and professional accomplishments, not to mention some heroic life experiences - "walking the talk" of a dedicated activist for peace, social equality, skepticism, and environmental protection. Harry was opposed to radioactive dumping in New Mexico and published an anti-nuclear manifesto in support of activist Dr. Charles Hyder.

In 2006 author/artist Zelda Gatuskin joined Harry and Adela as co-owner and managing editor of Amador Publishers, and she is now the sole owner of that press. Zelda is committed to perpetuating the mission that Harry and Adela set forth, preserving the company as an independent, humanist press. Besides including new authors, she will continue to publish Harry's works, for he left behind an extensive collection of unpublished

essays and fiction.

Harry and Adela joined the Humanist Society of New Mexico in 2002, and Harry served as Vice-President and Program Chairman for two years. We all will miss Harry's contributions to our discussions and his loving, courageous leadership. Adela is currently recovering from a fall, but welcomes visitors. The families ask that donations to HSNM be made in Harry's honor.

## **Hate Cancels Prom; Where is the Love?**

By Todd Steifel

For HumanistNetworkNew.org, March 17, 2010

"Jesus is love."

I have heard that phrase many times in my life. But it is despicable that so many of Jesus' followers stand for hate rather than love.

Take the current case of Itawamba Agricultural High School in Fulton, Mississippi. 18-year-old student Constance McMillen wanted to attend prom with her girlfriend and to wear a tuxedo. When she was told that she would not be allowed to go to the prom unless she wore a dress and brought an opposite-sex date, she got the American Civil Liberties Union involved to fight the discriminatory policy.

The reaction of the Itawamba County School District showed anything but love and tolerance: they canceled the prom and made all students suffer because they hold onto an ancient hate taught by the Bible. The school district said they made the decision because of "distractions to the educational process caused by recent events" (an ironic excuse, given the massive distraction of the media circus their cancellation caused). However, their job as government representatives was to provide equal protection to all. Instead, they favored their religious beliefs to the detriment of those they were supposed to care for. They should be held accountable for this.

The ACLU has filed a suit against the school district requesting that the prom be reinstated, the opposite-sex rule be removed and that any student be allowed to wear a tux. It is uncertain what the results of the case will be, but an emergency motion is to be filed to obtain a decision in time to restore the prom.

In the meantime, the school district is encouraging "private citizens" to throw a prom for the students--apparently intending for this prom to be straight-only,

held privately so that there would be no legal recourse to stop the event. However, their hate-filled ignorance led them to completely underestimate responses motivated by love.

Many offers have now been made by private groups to host a prom. And, counter to the aims of the Itawamba school board, the offers are for proms that are inclusive of straight and gay students. One of those offers has been made by the American Humanist Association. My wife and I offered to donate \$20,000 to help the AHA plan and fund a fantastic prom for all students, as we believe that the students should not be punished for the bigotry of their leaders.

I am a Secular Humanist; my wife, Diana, is a Christian. We both agree that the values of love, tolerance and equality should trump the fundamentalist teachings of hate, discrimination and prejudice. We both long for the day that a majority of theists and nontheists join forces to oppose fundamentalism and put reason-based ethics above scripture and dogma. We hope our offer for the prom is another step in the right direction.

In Itawamba County, as in much of the world, the fundamentalists still hold a great deal of power. But it is very encouraging to see the near-universal condemnation of their actions in this prom fiasco. Perhaps this is a sign the tide is turning. Diana and I are both optimistic that time and a lot of teamwork between the faithful and the secular can lead to a society that stands more for love than for hate. This is a noble quest, and one the world cannot afford to fail.

## Letter to the Editor

Jerry Gilbert's article, "Egalitarianism, Hierarchies and Human Societies" and recent conversations I've had on the subject draw me to point out that even the fiercest advocate of democracy probably will acknowledge the necessity for a centralized command hierarchy composed of people trained for rapid response to large scale emergencies. In the U.S. The established way of providing for that need is to maintain highly trained bureaucracies (the large begin the armed forces) under democratic oversight. The hypothesis about the inherent destructiveness of hierarchy in human society predicts that without both highly competent personnel and the transparency required for democratic oversight, hierarchies rapidly degenerate into dominating exploiters of the population they were intended to service. Internally, when a hierarchy doesn't enforce a strict meritocracy it disintegrates into vicious infighting, a scramble for power in which secrecy, dishonesty and unholy alliances are the rules of operation.

If agencies meant to deal with emergencies are themselves a danger to society our greatest efforts need to be focused on developing and using foresight, preparing for potentially catastrophic events in ways that minimize the need for emergency action. Earthquake and hurricane zones should have structures resistant to damage from the natural forces. Flood damages can be greatly reduced by awareness of where it is safe to build and by numerous flood prevention and control measures. It is probably too late to prevent some catastrophies resulting from climate disruption but it is never too late to do something to reduce the magnitude of the changes. War is a disaster entirely created by humans so better understanding of human behavior might lead to complete elimination of that plague on humanity.

Dale L. Berry

### **Friendly Philosophers**

**Monday, April 5<sup>th</sup>**

Open Forum

Bring a Your Own Topic for General Discussion

**Monday, April 19<sup>th</sup>**

*Change Your Mind, Change Your Life*

Lee Delaney

Copper Canyon Restaurant, 5455 Gibson (opposite Lovelace Hospital) in conference dining room.

Dinner at 5:30; talk follows.

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### **The Atheists and Freethinkers of New Mexico**

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

**Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 9am**

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, 202 Harvard SE

**Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>**

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

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### **New Mexicans for Science and Reason**

**Wednesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

*Hockey Stick Politics: Climate Gate or Clusterpuck?*

Mark Boslough

UNM Law Building

1117 Stanford NE, Room 2402