



# Humanist Society of New Mexico



September 2007

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

## President's Message

The Publicity Committee held its first meeting with Salem Smith as our new Chairperson. Attending were Phil Smith, the outgoing chair who is moving to Colorado, Ron Herman and daughter Kristin, Randall Wall, Caroline Kaye and me.

We came up with several categories of activities that need to be planned and implemented: PROCESS, MESSAGE, ACTIVITIES, RESOURCES and MEMBERSHIP. We talked about challenges in each category and about approaches we could take that would make our publicity efforts successful.

We came up with several ideas about how to define our MESSAGE, how to create new ACTIVITIES that would attract potential new members with young families, and how to make sure that our messages reach the kind of people we want for MEMBERSHIP. We identified a number of free publicity RESOURCES and potential targets likely to attract humanists.

At our next meeting we will seek volunteers willing to provide leadership in each category. All interested members are welcomed to call me if they would like to consider joining the Committee. Our next meeting will be at my home Monday, August 27 at 7:30 PM.

*Fred March*



### HSNM Book Club

"Myth and Mortality" by Harry Willson  
Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2:00-4:00pm  
Title Wave Books  
1408 Eubank NE

## Upcoming HSNM Meetings

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

**Saturday, September 8, 2007**

**Informal Meeting**

*General Discussion*

Refreshments: Leland Franks

Summit Apartments, 3901 Indian School, NE

**Saturday, September 15, 2007**

**Topical Discussion**

*To be Determined*

Note: No Food or Drink

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

**Saturday, September 22, 2007**

***Eye Witness Perspectives on  
Israel/Palestine***

Katherine Hughes Fraitekh

Refreshments: Ted Cloak

UNM Law School, Room 2406, 1117 Stanford NE

**Santa Fe Humanists**

**Saturday, September 1, 10:30am**

*Federal Revenues, Use and Abuse*

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.

## Panel Reviews AHA Conference

At the July 28 Formal Meeting of HSNM several of us who attended the AHA Annual Conference, "Blazing a

### **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: Salem Smith*

*Director of Classes: Ron Herman*

*Social Activities:xxxxxxxxxxx*

*Newsletter Editor: Randall Wall*

*Website: Phil Smith*

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.

Humanist Trail," in Portland, OR, presented our impressions and highlights of the sessions. Those on the presentation panel were Carolyn Kaye, Salem Smith, Kristin Cram, and me. Six other New Mexicans attended the conference, including Fred March, who was out of town for the presentation, Tom Lockwood, who was absent due to illness, Jonathan Cram, Margaret Nahas, and Kathy and Art Eaton from Silver City. The Conference started June 7<sup>th</sup> with the meeting of the national Board of Directors and various training sessions. The next three days included concurrent speaker sessions, lunch and banquet speakers and awards, ending Sunday afternoon with tours of the Portland area.

Our general impression was that the AHA staff and Board of Directors are well-qualified, highly motivated, and well organized. Any donations that we might make over and above our dues are well-deserved. They presented a five-year strategic plan for doubling membership and income through increased public awareness (Humanist identity), strengthening the organization, and developing supporting scholarship and research. You can request a copy of the plan online, or Fred or I can give you a paper copy.

Our panelists reviewed the highlights of the conference, which included talks by various award winners. The Harvard Chaplaincy, now under Greg Epstein, received the Chapter of the Year Award. Welton C. Gaddy, a Baptist minister and head of the Interfaith Alliance, received the Religious Liberty Award. The Life-time Achievement award went to Paul Kurtz, long-time leader of the Council for Secular Humanism. The recognition of these leaders indicated a strong effort by AHA to broaden collaboration in meeting its goals.

We particularly appreciated talks at the conference by Russ Genet (astronomer), Michael Newdow (legal activist), Lyle Simpson (foundation president), and Rob Boston (Americans United for the Separation of Church and State). Several Humanist groups sponsored a Humanist Vision contest, and the three winners were presented at the conference. We showed their short videos at the panel presentation. (Those can be viewed online at the AHA website - [www.americanhumanist.org/video/](http://www.americanhumanist.org/video/).) The awards

banquets also honored several prominent authors and a Phoenix cartoonist, Steve Benson. The last banquet concluded with a short dramatization of Robert Ingersoll's life and views by two actors from a Texas chapter. Other sessions of the conference described the activism by the Secular Student Alliance and the Secular Coalition of America, which was very encouraging, and a children's boarding school program by Humanists in India, which was very inspiring. We all enjoyed meeting other Humanist members and leaders.

The 2008 conference will be an international congress in Washington, DC, starting June 4, and publicized as "E Pluribus Unum, Reclaiming Humanist Values."

*Ron Herman*

## **A New Slant on Racism**

Words are slippery things, and a body has to stay alert these days. The acting president, and his father before him, play games with the concept of racism. Let's clarify the matter.

Bush I replaced Thurgood Marshall on the U.S. Supreme Court with a black man named Clarence Thomas. Many thought Thomas was poorly qualified at best. Others thought he was blatantly unqualified, and it has been proven so since. He seldom writes an opinion. He votes the way Judge Antonin Scalia votes, without bothering to give reasons. There must have been hundreds, thousands even, of black lawyers in this country who would have made better justices of the Supreme Court. But – those of us who would have preferred a little competence have been called "racists," and told to shut up.

I spent the summer of 1967 in Atlanta – that was the "long hot summer" of race riots all over the country. I was working for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC] and Martin Luther King. I became closely involved, enough so that from time to time I caught myself thinking like a black person. Late one night, walking alone on Auburn Avenue, I saw a stranger coming toward me. "Any danger here?" I wondered. "Oh, no. Thank Goodness, he's a brother." The person coming toward me was a black man. Later I wondered what he was thinking, since I couldn't change the color of my skin.

While in Atlanta that summer I learned that there were scoundrels among the blacks. I became part of the group, enough so that I could spot them and deal with them as such, even though they were black and I was white. I was overcoming the racist assumption that all persons of one color, whichever, are all alike, good or bad. So, I feel qualified to state that Clarence Thomas,

black as he is, does not make a good Supreme Court Justice, and to further state that such an observation is not racist.

A couple of decades later, the acting president appointed Alberto Gonzales to be U.S. Attorney General. It is now plain to see that he is incompetent and not very smart, on a par with the moron who appointed him. He supports the acting president on all issues, not the sovereign people, nor the Constitution. But people concerned about Gonzales' competence hesitate to say or do much, for fear of being called racist. Some Chicanos, who should know better, continue to support him simply because he is a Chicano.

Well, I know Chicanos. I've been married to one for almost forty years – a very special and unusual one to be sure – but I've been part of this huge extended family for a long time, and I worked for years with an entire village of Chicanos. So I know them. They come in all kinds, all sizes. And I know a dumb one when I see one. Gonzales is a dumb one, and should not be attorney general.

OR – he is loyal to the acting president to the point of stupidity, oblivious to how his behavior looks to any and all others, and perhaps hiding something that would seriously damage the acting president. But if that's so, it still amounts to incompetence and perjury. Gonzales needs to go, and those of us who think so and say so are not racists.

Some people think he can't be gotten rid of because Congress will refuse to confirm any replacement the acting president could propose. There are rumors that the acting president will let him go during the Senate's pending recess, and thus his replacement won't require Senate confirmation. Some of us are willing to risk that.

And if the Senate suddenly gets fussy about its constitutional obligations, like confirmation, let them not recess. Keep a skeleton force of ten or so in town all month, rotate the obligation to stick around – use your imaginations! And don't let the cry of "racism" deter you.

*Harry Willson*

See the library of Harry's old rants at [www.amadorbooks.com](http://www.amadorbooks.com)

## **A Letter to Nancy Pelosi**

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

So disappointed and disgusted was I by your decision of several weeks ago. What were your words? Regarding our present brave and decent leaders in America's White

House - "Impeachment is off the table." Off the table?!

With all due respect to the government office you hold, what right did you (or do you) have to ignore the earsplitting, loud demand of American voters which, in our last congressional election, caused Democrats to gain majority in our Congress?

As you know, and as many an American citizen who votes knows, Richard Cheney, George Bush, Jr., and Donald Rumsfeld are nothing short of war criminals. They all deliberately, knowingly lied to all Americans in regard to the(ir) reasons for pitching American lives and money into this poisonous Iraq War, causing the death of so many young Americans, the useless maiming of others, to say little enough of lost or ruined Iraqi lives, lost dollars sorely needed toward rebuilding America's infrastructure, a taxpayer-funded healthcare system for all American citizens, and a sound widely-reaching secondary travel system, an upgraded and more extensive Amtrak, I would think.

These subjects have so many facets, most of which you are privy to – while I am not. With this in mind, still I say you were derelict in your office when you declared impeachment "off the table." If this present White House top officers' actions regarding today's American involvement(s) in Iraq hold no impeachable offenses, what on Earth would – in your estimation?

Also, more to the point, why in the world do you think so many American voters gave the Congressional majority to the Democrats? We want a very-soon end to this Iraq War, and we want impeachment of the two remaining American White House war criminals still in power. We want it on historical record as a warning to other would-be dictators and corporate fondlers who aspire to these top White House offices. We want accountability and a discernible improvement in Washington, D.C. policy-making. So far, many of us have not seen either.

I, for one, am most disheartened at my status of Democratic voter, and I may not continue as such.

And, regarding the permanent bases the United States has built, and is building, in Iraq and it environs, how ever will we get out of there? The answer: We won't and we (the U.S. Government, and it military, its oil-related corporations) don't intend to. If this is the answer, then the Congressional Democrats are not listening to, nor are they honoring, their voting constituents. Is there still much difference between the Republican and the Democratic parties? This House and Senate were elected to show us that there is – and to act upon those differences.

While my concerns here are pointedly focused on impeachment of present White House incumbents, with acknowledgment that Donald Rumsfeld cleverly slithered away before Congressional focus would have turned to the subject of impeachment, let us not forget Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, who, by his critical position in our American system of justice, has himself been harmful by showing more loyalty to his friend, President George Bush, Jr., than to our American Constitution.

With Respect to the Office you hold,  
Marjorie C. Burt

## Santa Fe Humanists Contact Information

If any HSNM members are asked by persons interested in the Santa Fe Humanists, the proper person to refer them is Bill Weihofen at (505) 988-1343. It is no longer appropriate to refer inquires to Peter Schanck or Karen Ushman. Thank you.



### Friendly Philosophers

Tuesday, September 4, 2007

Note change in date

Open Forum

*Bring Your Own Topic for a General Discussion*

Monday, September 17, 2007

*War of the Weasels: Mathematical Algorithms and Evolution*

Dave Thomas

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