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Review

***Prof. Dale McGowan To Speak
at This Month's Chapter Meeting***

***"A Humanist's Satirical Swan Song"
Thursday, December 15***

In a long and varied career as a college professor, writer, composer and critical-thinking activist, Dale McGowan has been called "a voice of reason in an age of nonsense," "genuinely brilliant" and "that damned idiot." Dale is a true believer in the ability of fiction to open channels of understanding and friendship between us and the thickheaded morons all around us. He is the author of the satirical freethought novel *Calling Bernadette's Bluff*, which reviewers have called "an undoubted triumph of academic satire," "bold and original" and "wicked funny."



Dale teaches a course in writing and critical thinking as well as several courses in music at the Catholic College of Saint Catherine, where he is in his 15th and ("thank the Lord our God and the Righteous Communion of Saints") FINAL year.

It was on his recent sabbatical to England, "when I was frankly supposed to be doing other things," that Dale instead completed *Good Thunder*, the sequel to *Bernadette's Bluff*. Dale will give a synopsis of *Good Thunder* and read selected excerpts of the text.

Help Us by Checking Your Renewal Date!

The end of the year is the membership expiration date for nearly half of our members! Please check the expiration date, by your name on the back page of this newsletter. By mailing in your renewal now, you will save us time and mailing costs. Thank you!

December 15, 2005

**Monthly
Chapter Meeting
at
First Unitarian Society
900 Mount Curve Avenue
Minneapolis**

**Social time: 6:30 p.m.
Program: 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.**

A Question and Answer
period follows the program

HUMANISM:

A better life for all through education, democracy, free speech, reason and science, without reliance on arbitrary dogmas, revelations and faith.



Guest Editorial

Paul Heffron

The Leadership Question: A Response

Nathan Curland in the last newsletter reported that our organization is faced with a looming leadership problem. We will need a new program chairperson and a new treasurer. We will need a new president and other new officers and board members in the coming new term. The problem is we don't seem to have people willing to fill these positions.

Nathan also mentioned that there are various groups, with a new one currently being formed by one of our new members. There are discussion groups, happy hour groups, a toastmaster group, a music group, the Camp Quest group, critical-thinking groups, a cable TV crew, highway cleanup crew and so on. These groups are almost all independent of our organization and generally don't build up our organization. If ours were the only local humanist or freethought organization and these groups were all subgroups of Humanists of Minnesota, we'd probably be well supplied with members and leaders. The picnics, parties and other meetings would all be Humanists of Minnesota events attended by members of our sub-groups and other members. Furthermore, if

there were no First Unitarian Society, a large humanist institution of long standing in our midst, we'd probably be even larger, with many more sub-groups, programs and leaders. So, we have a peculiar situation, an organization apart from most of the subgroups and dwarfed by the Unitarian humanist congregation.

Furthermore, we have picnics and a winter party jointly with Minnesota Atheists, and it seems those functions are almost as separate as the subgroups are. The same is true for the Humanist Center speaker series at FUS that we co-sponsor. A number of our members belong to both our humanist and atheist organizations. Minnesota Atheists has developed more as an organization, and some of the dual members have become more active in that organization while also being active in one or more of the independent groups.

This peculiar situation has to some extent stunted our growth, stymied the emergence of new leaders, and left us wondering about our purpose and place as an organization. It's remarkable that we've done pretty well in spite of this. We've had some good leaders who have worked hard, we have regular speaker meetings and banquets and a very good newsletter. We do a lot of cooperating and supporting within our larger freethought community. I think our situation is not due to failure but mainly the result of people making decisions of how they want to associate within the spectrum of local

(Editorial, Continued on page 7)

Humanists of Minnesota Officers

President - Ron Scribner, (952) 884-5755, rgscribner@earthlink.net
Vice President - Scott Lohman, (612) 521-4766, scottl2605@aol.com
Treasurer - Hiero Russell, (651) 646-3937, hioror@attglobal.net
Secretary - Arthur Schunk, (952) 941-2996
Members of the board of directors -
 Nathan Curland: (952) 928-4933, natcurland@prodigy.net
 Matt Stark: (612) 377-2211, starkpark@msn.com
 Dorothy French: (763) 561-6452, frenc099@umn.edu
 David Perry: (612) 721-8604, dperry3128@earthlink.net
 Bill Ronan: bill@mnhypnosis.com
 Gwen Scribner: (952) 884-5755

Humanists of Minnesota is a non-profit educational corporation and has been granted a 501(c)(3) tax exemption as an educational, scientific and charitable organization. Donations to Humanists of Minnesota are tax deductible. HoM is a chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA) and an affiliate of the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies of the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH). Address inquiries to the Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997, or call (651) 335-3800. E-mail us at president@humanistviews.org or visit our web site: www.humanistviews.org.

Announcements

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Happy Hour, Ol' Mexico Restaurant, 1754 Lexington Ave., Roseville (just north of Larpenteur). Tables on terrace level. 1st, 3rd & 5th Mondays: Richard Dick Memorial Happy Hours; call Paul Craven, (763) 788-8918. 2nd & 4th Mondays: Call George Kane, (651) 488-8225.

1st and 3rd Mondays, 6:00 p.m., Freethought Toastmasters Club, Muffuletta Cafe, 2260 Como Ave., St Paul. Call George Kane, (651) 488-8225.

2nd Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-noon, Critical Thinking Club St. Paul, Kelly Inn, Hwy I-94. Contact Lee Salisbury, leesal@comcast.net.

2nd and 4th Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Dinner Social, Davanni's, 66th St. & Penn Ave. S., Richfield. Call Bob/Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

3rd Wednesday, 11:30 a.m., Freethought Lunch, Fridley New China Buffet, 85th and University NE. Call Bill Volna, (612) 781-4273.

3rd Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-noon, West Metro Critical Thinking Club, Community Room, Byerly's Ridgedale, 13081 Ridgedale Dr., Minnetonka. Contact Dale McGowan (763) 536-3976 or think@dalemcgowan.com (\$7 brunch, \$4 speaker only).

4th Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-noon, Critical Thinking Club Bloomington, Holiday Inn, 1201 West 94th Street (35W & 94th Street). Contact Stu Tanquist stu@expresslearning.com (\$2 charge if not having brunch).

4th Sunday, Breakfast Social, 8:30-11:00 a.m., Fridley Old Country Buffet. Call Fern Wodtke or Brett Welch, (651) 784-2307.

4th Tuesday, 5:30 p.m., Dinner Dialog Discussion Group, Pippins Restaurant, Snelling at County Road C2, Roseville. Before attending call Bob Korn, (651) 490-1973.

OTHER EVENTS

2nd Thursday, 7:00 p.m., Board of Directors meeting at home of Ron Scribner. Open to all members.

3rd Thursday, Chapter Meeting.

"Humanist Perspectives," a weekly program produced by the Council for Secular Humanism, airs at **8:30 p.m. Wednesdays** on MTN Channel 16.



Dinner Dialogue discusses "The Other Bible"

The Dinner Dialog group met on Tuesday December 22 to discuss "The Other Bible" based on materials provided in advance by Marie Castle. It turns out there were many religious writing from both the Hebrew and Christian traditions that were not included in the Bible. This included a creation story in which Yahweh was just one of several sons of the most high god El, the story of Adam's first wife Lilith, and stories of Jesus' childhood where he upset his father by putting curses on people he disagreed with. We all had a good time participating in this lively and informative discussion.

Bob Korn

"Humanist Views," the TV interview program produced by Humanists of Minnesota, could be showing on your local cable channel! "Humanist Views" is currently showing in:

Minneapolis Channel 16 8:00 p.m. Mondays

Arden Hills	}	Channel 14
Falcon Heights		7:00 p.m. Sundays
Lauderdale		3:00 a.m. Mondays
Little Canada		11:00 a.m. Mondays
Mounds View		
New Brighton		
North Oaks		

St Louis Park Channel 15 WThF 12:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 4:00 p.m.

If you would like to help distribute "Humanist Views" to your local public access cable channel, contact Ron Scribner.



Web Resources for Humanists

By Scott Lohman

The Internet is a great resource for us humanists: not only are there great humanist and freethinking sites, but you can do research on all sorts of religious organizations by simply reading from their websites. As we move forward to update our own site, it's always good to know what one's enemies are up to. So here is a list of sites that you can use to check on things. Keep in mind this is just a starting point. The neat thing about the web is that if you find a site you like, they will have links to other sites that can be as equally informative and enlightening. Although there is always the converse of trying to figure out someone's tastes by their links—so HTTP to your metaphorical heart's content. Remember, information can be a powerful weapon.

Humanist/Freethinker sites:

- The Internet Infidels: www.infidels.com (also known as the Secular Web). It is the granddaddy of free-thinking websites with a deep library of online editions of the works of Robert Ingersoll, Charles Darwin, David Hume and more classical freethinkers. There are also transcripts to evolution/creation debates, religious vs. freethinker debates; articles on many different freethinking and religious figures, plus recommended books and movies.
- American Humanist Association: www.americanhumanist.org. The AHA site. You can also find selected articles from the Humanist magazine online here.
- Council for Secular Humanism: www.secularhumanism.org. The CSH site. There are links here to Free Inquiry and the Skeptical Inquirer.
- Americans United: www.au.org. The site for Americans United for Separation of Church and State. You can find copies of their monthly publication Church and State here.
- CASH: www.cashumn.org. The site for Campus Atheists and Secular Humanists, University of Minnesota.
- Secular Coalition for America: www.secular.org. The site for a new lobbying group for secularism that is endorsed by the AHA.

Religious Right sites:

- Focus on the Family: www.family.org. The site for James Dobson's organization.
- Family Research Council: www.frc.org. The site for this powerful Washington lobby organization founded by James Dobson.
- Discovery Institute: www.discovery.org. The site for the home of Intelligent Design.
- Chuck Colson: www.pfm.org. The former Watergate-conspirator-turned-evangelist's site. You can find his daily "Breakpoint" commentaries here.
- D. James Kennedy: www.coralridge.org. The site for D. James Kennedy's ministry. You can find a link here to his Center for Reclaiming America as well.
- American Family Association: www.afa.org. The site for Donald Wildmon's group.

Science/Evolution sites:

- Talkorigins: www.talkorigins.org. The site for science-based information on the origins debate. Check out their monthly collection of emails for both humor and horror.
- National Committee for Science Education: www.ncse.org. The site for a pro-science group that has been helping schools and other groups fight the ID folks.
- Panda's Thumb: www.pandasthumb.org. A site run by a group of biologists keeping track of current issues in the ongoing debate about creationism.

(Web, Continued on page 5)

(Web, Continued from page 4)

General Research sites:

- Center for Media and Democracy: www.prwatch.com. This is the site for the authors of the books “Toxic Sludge is Good For You,” “Mad Cow USA” and other books on what bad PR is doing to the U.S. They have a side site called Sourcewatch. You can check to see if a “grassroots” organization is actually the creation of some industry.

Blogs (short for weblogs, or personal websites that people do about any subject under the sun):

- Pharyngula: www.pharyngula.com. The site of Dr. Paul Myers, a U of M Morris professor of biology who is also a member of The Panda’s Thumb. Myers blogs about biology, squids and politics.
- The Raving Atheist: www.ravingatheist.com. A look at religion and politics.

Periodic resources:

- Mother Jones magazine: www.motherjones.com. In its December 2005 issue, there are several good articles on the religious right, including a graphic portrait of the various groups and their satellites, an article by Susan Jacoby and an article on Salem Broadcasting, which owns three radio stations here in the Twin Cities, including KKMS 980 and WWTC 1280.

Most of these sites are ones I check often; most are updated regularly. This is a very, very short list of what can be found on the web. Start with one, read a bit, follow a link and lose yourself out on the web; you’ll find more out there than you expected. ■



Metro Critical Thinking Clubs Offer Challenging Discussions

- *St. Paul Club: December 11, Lee Salisbury, “Jesus of Nazareth: Does the Historical Evidence Confirm or Deny the Biblical Account?”*
- *West Metro: December 17, Laurie Karnes, “Using Chakras as a Critical Thinking Tool”*
- *Bloomington: Contact Stu Tanquist*

See Page 3 for contacts and venues. (RSVP requested)

“Prophets never say anything new. We always already know: Treat other people kindly because kindness matters even when it is not returned. Courage matters even if you lose. Don’t dwell on the pleasure of things that you feel it is the wrong thing to do. Try to live your days as if you were grateful for them. Love your neighbor and keep your definition of ‘neighbor’ broad.”

*John Barnes
Author*



To Our Members and Friends

HoM NEEDS YOU!

Due to the needs of my family and my age I am resigning as Program Chair effective next May. This will result in a critical need for someone to step up to take my place. The position does not require a lot of time, but, since I also serve as treasurer, it's all become a bit too much.

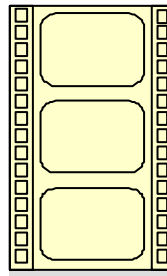
The job actually consists of two distinct activities and could be divided between two people to make it even easier. The first is arranging the programs for our chapter meetings. This begins with getting information from the Board on what they would like for programs for the coming season, which runs from September to May. In the past this has consisted of eight programs with speakers and one for feedback from members. I have a list of 10 or 12 speakers and topics ready for the Board's approval by April or May (you need some extras to allow for unavailables). This gives me the summer to start working on getting speakers lined up. Over the years of doing this I have developed a long list of past or potential speakers and this will be available to the next Program Chair. By May I expect to have a list of speakers and topics approved by the Board, making the incoming Chair's job that much easier.

The second part of the job is purchasing refreshments for the chapter meetings, bringing them and setting them up. This could easily be done by a second person and needs no further explanation.

HoM also owns a public address system for use at our chapter meetings. However, this has not been needed since we have been meeting at the First Unitarian Society as they have their own. This is a suitcase-sized unit incorporating the amplifier and speakers. There is also a microphone and stand with associated cables.

As I said, these positions are not time-consuming. They require some telephoning; a computer would be a convenience but is not necessary. Won't you help keep our chapter meetings running? Contact any of our officers or Board members if you are willing to volunteer.

Hiero Russell, your Program Chair



Movie Review:

"The God Who Wasn't There"

Reviewed by Scott Lohman

There is a great resource for us humanists out there, one that is entertaining, informative and thought-provoking. "The God Who Wasn't There" is a personal documentary by a former fundamentalist Christian, Brian Flemming. Flemming uses public-domain films, graphics and interviews to look at Christianity. He takes the Jesus-is-a-myth stance based on Earl Doherty's "The Jesus Puzzle" approach. Flemming uses public-domain films about Jesus to tell both the common Christian version of the story as well as using the images to show how Christians have manipulated history.

Flemming also interviews both Christians and atheists to supplement the information being presented. He interviews Robert Price, Richard Carrier and the late Alan Dundes about Jesus and his lack of historical placement. He also interviews the head of his Christian school to try and get the "other" side. The film is presented documentary style but is more of a memoir and a personal investigation into the origins of Jesus. The DVD also includes a commentary track by both Earl Doherty and Richard Dawkins.

It is a nicely done film that brings out information that many Christian sects have been repressing or at least downplaying for years. I highly recommend this DVD. Besides, it is quite fun even though there aren't any spacecraft in it. ■

"I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live by the light that I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right, stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong."

Abraham Lincoln

(Editorial, Continued from page 2)

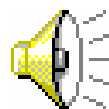
groups and organizations. I think we should accept that and take it from there.

Because of our peculiar situation and our concentration on providing speaker meetings, many of us don't know many other members very well. Providing speakers has been a valuable service to members of our organization and to our larger freethought community, but various people come to these meetings when the speaker interests them and the interaction with others is limited.

I see our primary purpose as getting to know each other as humanists and freethinkers. Any other purpose follows from that. When we know each other better, we can better decide what we'd like to do together. Our peculiar situation and our program focus on speakers have limited our personal associations. Newcomers don't easily get connected and those who don't attend speaker meetings are generally not very involved in our organization. What I value most are the associations and friendships I've made with other humanists and freethinkers. What I regret most is not knowing more of you better and not seeing some of you for long periods of time.

I think we need to come up with a new kind of meeting where we learn from each other as a group instead of listening to a speaker as an audience. I think we need to break bread together and talk about what's on our minds and what's going on in our lives and what's happening to our country and so on. This may mean that Humanists of Minnesota would become a group or a few small groups in addition to the many groups already formed. As an organization maybe we'd have only a president, a treasurer and a newsletter editor. We'd do things only when individuals volunteered to take charge of a single function—a picnic, a party, a protest, whatever—for our organization or jointly with other organizations. We'd have to figure out how to make do with our bylaws until we could change them. We do have money. Maybe we could pay a student intern to handle many of the organizational duties. Maybe not, but I think we need to think outside the box.

(Paul Heffron is one of the founders of Humanists of Minnesota. He has served as officer, board member and newsletter editor.)



Members Get-Together

Are you ready to get involved?

*Save the Date!
Sunday, January 22, 2006*

If you have been following the editorials in the last couple of issues of Humanist News & Views, you know that there has been much discussion about the future of Humanists of Minnesota.

There will be an informal meeting of concerned members at 3:00 p.m. Sunday, January 22, at the home of Nathan Curland, 4707 Cedarwood Road, St. Louis Park.

If you want Humanism to have a strong future in Minnesota, come to this special meeting. We need you!

For more information, call Nathan at (952) 928-4933. Refreshments provided.

HUMANIST NEWS AND VIEWS

Editor, Nathan Curland

Editorial Committee - Hiero Russell, Bob Korn, Arthur Schunk, Suzanne Perry

Chief Photographer - Vern Young

Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: natcurland@prodigy.net with the word "newsletter" in the subject line, or to P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. (E-mail submissions are preferred.) All submissions must include the writer's full name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address. All submissions become the property of this newsletter and cannot be returned. Submission deadline is the 22nd of the prior month.

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PO Box 582997
Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997
Phone (651) 335-3800

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December 2005



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Your membership is vital to the growth of Humanism and the Humanist community. Married couples or domestic partners will be considered as one membership, if you so indicate. Our membership categories are:

- (B) Budget, \$20.00
- (R) Regular, \$35.00
- (S) Sustaining, \$50.00
- (P) Patron, \$100.00 or more
- (G) Gift Newsletter, \$20.00 (not counted as membership)
- (T) Trial subscription for 3 months, just ask

*Full time students at an accredited institution can receive a complimentary subscription

Visit our website at:
www.humanistviews.org

For national or international membership write to:

American Humanist Association
1777 T Street NW
Washington, DC 20009-7125
www.humanist.net

Council for Secular Humanism
PO Box 664
Amherst, NY 14226
www.secularhumanism.org

Please check the appropriate box, complete the information and mail with your check to Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997.

Name: _____

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Phone number: _____

e-mail: _____

I would like my newsletter sent via email () (in color!)

Second Member at same address: _____