



The Idaho Humanist

The Humanists of Idaho is a chapter of the American Humanist Association and the Council for Secular Humanism. We are a nonprofit corporation organized to promote ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism in the state of Idaho through public awareness, education and community involvement.

July 2008

<http://Idaho.humanists.net>

Idaho@humanists.net

President's Message:

Church-State Separation – Getting Better, or Worse?

Here in Boise, we have recently witnessed Bryan Fischer and Brandi Swindell, leaders of the Keep the Commandments Coalition, noisily pay off their \$10,000 debt to the City of Boise. They had been ordered to pay legal costs incurred by the city to fight their attempt to force the city to replace the Ten Commandments monument the city had removed from Julia Davis Park and placed in a church yard. The order to pay came in 2004, but had gone unheeded.

The city recently used some rather strong-arm tactics to force payment, after letting it go unpaid for four years. Bryan and Brandi went public with their plea for the debt to be forgiven, but got nowhere with the city, the editors neither of the Idaho Statesman, nor with the vast majority of letters to the editor. They did, however, get enough private donations from KCC supporters to pay the bill, and held a press conference to get attention doing it.

My own feeling is that in the city of Boise, we are in pretty good shape with the Mayor and City Council looking out to make sure the city government does not favor one religion over another, or religion over irreligion. I'm not aware of them promoting irreligion, apart from resisting efforts to make it promote some religion.

In other cities in Idaho, however, we are not so lucky.

One example is Nampa, where Mayor Tom Dale, a conservative Christian, deliberately packed that city's library board to remove from open shelves some books dealing with sex.

Pocatello also has a display of the Ten Commandments at the Bannock County Courthouse. It remains because it is accompanied by a statement on religious liberty by Thomas Jefferson, as well as another plaque explaining the situation. Hmm...

In various other states, there are efforts afoot to have state governments fund faith-based groups that proselytize while delivering social services, and to include Biblical Creation, or some form of Intelligent Design dogma, in science curricula.

It could happen here! So we all need to remain vigilant, and be ready to speak up to protect secular government.

National Night Out – Tuesday, August 5, 2008

If you feel sad that "We don't know our neighbors any more," then mark your calendar for Tuesday, August 5. That's "National Night Out," in which neighbors are encouraged to have a cookout or other activity in their front yard, driveway, stairway, or whatever. Start around 5 or 6 or 7 p.m. and just hang out with your neighbors and get to know each other a little bit. Check with your neighborhood association or renter's group to see if they have plans in place already.

This event is primarily promoted as a crime and drug prevention event sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch (NATW), and is supported by local police departments.

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights, and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that all values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological and ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
Official publication of the
American Humanist
Association

Humanists of Idaho Monthly Meetings

From 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM we are now the Humanist Supper Club. We invite everyone to arrive whenever they can for dinner and join the group for informal discussion and socializing. At 7:30 we will start our program.

4th Monday of the month
The Flicks in Boise
646 Fulton, at 6th and Myrtle
6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club
7:30 PM Program

July Meeting, Monday, July 28th

Idaho Equality Committee Presentation

Our guest speaker will be Rachel Greer from the IEC. “In order to communicate, break isolation and mobilize voters in our community, the Idaho Equality Committee (IEC) is formed as a statewide effort to network individuals and organizations using grassroots power to ensure LGBTQIA people are afforded dignity, respect, and full equality and protection under the law.”

Humanists of Idaho Meeting Schedule

- August 25 – Presentation by the American Cancer Society. Arranged by Kate Jensen
- September 22– Book Discussion - “The Great Turning” Arranged by Paul Rolig:
Paul will have books available for sale at the July and August meetings
- October 27– Presentation by Planned Parenthood Arranged by Jan Rowe
- November 24 – Open
- December – No meeting; Winter Solstice party.
- January 26– Open
- February 23 – Special Charles Darwin 200th Birthday. In planning

BUUF Discussion Group – Sunday, August 10th

Second Sunday of the Month at 11:15 AM

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200 Garrett, Garden City

3-4 grade room in the north wing

Everyone is welcome whether you consider yourself a UU or not. The August meeting will be Fate and Luck and we will look at games that are based on chance. In September the group will be planning the next year’s program and is looking for ideas and volunteers.

The Humanist Perspective on Channel 11

Tuesdays at 6:00 PM

“The Humanist Perspective” now airs each Tuesday from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and then repeats at 8:00-8:30 Wednesday morning on Boise’s local cable access television station, TVTV Channel 11 on CableOne. The Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) produces a weekly half-hour television program exploring issues of interest from a humanist point of view.

Getting a Piece of the Action (It's in Column 3)

By Anonymous

A funny thing happened at the June 23 HOI meeting downtown at the Flicks. Remember, we had allowed Wally Keltner to “volunteer” to be our Program Chairman back at the May meeting.

Well, Wally showed up at the June meeting with a draft schedule of our next year of meetings. It looked innocuous enough – just a blank table with a dozen lines – one for each of the coming months’ meetings. But then Wally explained the table. Column 1 is the list of months, beginning with June. Column 2 lists the topic and presenter or leader. Column 3, however, is the HOI group member responsible for obtaining the presenter or planning and managing the activity for the meeting each month.

Wally wants us to entertain and enrich ourselves rather than just passively show up at our monthly meeting and be entertained and enriched by someone else. This sure looked like a lot of work and made my brain hurt. Wally shared with us some lame and some not-so-lame sample meeting topics and activities. And then things started to become clear. If one or two of us signed up to be responsible for a meeting or two during the year, things could get interesting. The meeting topics will become much more varied and we’ll each get to bask in the limelight of our own accomplishments. Maybe our enhanced meeting topics will cause the room at the Flicks to overflow with added attendance. Then we’d have to meet at a larger place to eat, socialize and be entertained. What an opportunity!

First, Doug Van Curen volunteered for July. He’s committed to bring in Rachel Greer to talk about the Idaho Equality Committee. Wally did a little word dance, made some thinly veiled coercing remarks. Then things started to roll – Kate Jensen, Paul Rolig, and Jan Rowe threw their hats in the ring. Rather than try to reproduce the budding schedule here, Doug Van Curen volunteered to reproduce it elsewhere on the Yahoo! site. It will probably show up in the newsletter, too.

There are a couple of less firm commitments to add. Wally Keltner and Jeanette Ross will check the Universalist Church activities and the associated Silver Sage breakfast meetings for possible presenters. Mary D. Gutierrez is checking on a possibility as well.

Wally also tossed out the idea for a super meeting in February for Charles Darwin’s 200th birthday. That’s discussed elsewhere here and on the Yahoo! site, too.

Charles Darwin will be 200 years Old in February 2009

By Wally Keltner

How time flies – next February will mark the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin’s birth. As our Program Chairman, I want us to have a really special meeting or other activity to celebrate our appreciation and gratitude for the life of one of the greatest minds in human history. We will discuss ideas for Darwin’s Birthday at the July HOI meeting on July 28 at 6:30 PM at the Flicks loft.

We tossed around a number of ideas for Darwin’s Birthday at the June meeting. Here are some of them to serve as food for thought:

- Obtain a knowledgeable speaker from a local university, museum or perhaps the zoo.
- Check with the Flicks – do they have plans for a Darwin movie that we could attend?
- Could we plan a separate event from the meeting – visit a museum, for instance?
- Have a helium balloon launch of small dino toys and pamphlets for folks downwind of our meeting.

The ideas are endless – just think inside and outside of the box. Generate your own ideas and bring them to the July 28th meeting. We’ll cull the ideas down to one or two. Then we’ll solicit volunteers to “make it happen” and all sit back and anticipate a very special February Darwin meeting.

If you have questions, please direct them to me at 286-0764 or wallykeltner@msn.com or contact Doug Van Curen or Paul Rolig using the information on the HOI newsletter.

“Have a Nice Doomsday” by Nicholas Guyatt

A Book Report by Wally Keltner, June 19, 2008

I read Guyatt’s “Doomsday” out of a mixture of curiosity and fascination. I am always interested in the Christian Fundamentalist mindset, especially about Armageddon and the last days. Guyette’s book delivered a lot of information with his fast-paced, reader-friendly text. The 300 pages were gone in a couple or three sittings. I believe his style is supported by his self-confidence in his own belief system, and his ability to be benign and neutral during the interviews he conducted when researching the book.

Guyatt presents a view of the apocalyptic believer/activist that helps the reader understand the desire of 50 million or so Americans for an end to it all. First, for the Fundamentalist Christian, every word of the Bible must be proven true, and this Guyatt describes as a “millstone” that must be carried by each and every such believer. If this is not so, then the Bible is suspect and the fundamentalist house of cards comes tumbling to terra firma. And so, bebies of otherwise intelligent, logical people devote their every waking moment to “proving” and touting the nearness of the rapture, the great tribulation, and the second coming.

There is a second reason for the apocalyptic movement. These people are waiting for the time when the meek shall inherit the earth, and they have defined themselves as the heirs. All the unbelievers and deviants “get theirs” for doubting those who have decoded the great mysteries of Revelations and a myriad of other biblical passages. So there is an angle of sacred, celestial revenge.

An obvious dichotomy of these advocates is their burning desire for their immediate, rightful heritage and reward, while simultaneously delving into politics to create a permanent Christian theocracy here in the United States. One would think that if the world was so limited in its existence, then there is no need for long term planning and strategic efforts. But the dichotomy continues – the apocalyptic activist interprets world events in Biblical terms to demonstrate the imminence of Armageddon, while quoting the words of Christ telling the disciples that no man knows the time of his return.

Much, but not all of this political delving is through the Republican party – call to mind the recent embarrassing moment when John McCain had to throw the Right Reverend John Hagee on the ash heap of unwelcome endorsers, joining Barack Obama’s Rev. Wright. It is a bit chilling to read Guyatta’s text describing the minions of the end times roaming the corridors of our capital and having access to and invitations from our most senior leaders. There does seem to be a bit of reluctance on the part most solons to climb aboard the rapture express. Yet the contacts and meetings occur. I truly hope that our society can elect leaders secular to the degree that a member of the Executive Branch can never hasten history along with a nuclear nudge or another ill-conceived Mid-East war.

Guyatt takes the reader through a series of probing interviews with most of the leaders of the flock that believe with every fiber of their being that the end times will occur within our lifetimes. Truly, this dedicated group is one hundred percent confident, despite the dozens (hundreds? – thousands?) of failures and fiascos of their predecessors during the past millennia. These modern Christian apocalyptic activists have the same unflinching mindset that characterizes their Moslem counterparts, and absolutely nothing will deter them from their courses. They pursue their objectives with large sums of money using the media, publishing best seller books, making movies, and even video games. They control some of the mega-churches in our Bible Belt regions and use these for their launch pads. They gain access to our elected leaders and successfully sell themselves to Fox News as “Middle East” subject matter experts.

I strongly recommend this fine book to those curious about this strange sub-cult of Christian fundamentalism. You will be better informed and better equipped to parry the arguments of the “end of days” crowd. Naturally, it’s available through your friendly neighborhood branch of the Ada County family of libraries.

A Tribute to George Carlin

GUEST COLUMN By WARREN ALLEN SMITH *For HumanistNetworkNews.org*, July 2, 2008

On June 22, 2008, comedian George Carlin died of heart failure at St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica, Calif. Carlin, 71, had a history of heart problems.

In a 2001 interview with Stephen Sherrill, he was asked how he would like to go. "I'd like to explode spontaneously in someone's living room. That, to me, is the way to go out." Anybody's in particular?, Sherrill asked. "Just a friend," Carlin replied, "so they can be there to describe it to the press."

For "telling it like it is about religion," Carlin was the first recipient of the Freedom From Religion Foundation's "The Emperor Has No Clothes Award." Shortly before his death, he had been named the recipient of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor and was to have received the award at the Kennedy Center in November.

"In his lengthy career as a comedian, writer, and actor, George Carlin has not only made us laugh, but he makes us think," said Stephen A. Schwarzman, the Kennedy Center chairman. "His influence on the next generation of comics has been far-reaching."

Although raised in the Roman Catholic faith, Carlin often denounced the idea of God, most notably with his "Invisible Man in the Sky" and "There Is No God" routines. In mockery, he invented the parody religion "Frisbeetarianism" for a newspaper contest. He defined it as the belief that when a person dies "his soul gets flung onto a roof, and just stays there," unable to be retrieved.

He joked that he worshiped the Sun, because he could actually see it, but he prayed to Joe Pesci (a good friend of his in real life) because "he's a good actor," and "looks like a guy who can get things done!"

Carlin's "Two Commandments," a revised "pocket-sized" list of the Ten Commandments in his HBO special "Complaints and Grievances," ended with the additional commandment of "Thou shalt keep thy religion to thyself."

Carlin, born in Manhattan to an Irish-Catholic family, was a comedian who appeared on numerous major television shows and was in many movies. In 1972 he received a Grammy award for best FM/AM comedy recording. Many still remember his statement, revolutionary at the time: "Yeah, there are 400,000 words in the English language, and there are seven of them that you can't say on television."

He spoke to *The New York Times*, about attending Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx: "They gave me the tools to reject my faith. They taught me to question and think for myself and to believe in my instincts to such an extent that I just said, 'This is a wonderful fairy tale they have going here, but it's not for me.' "

The author of *Sometimes A Little Brain Damage Can Help*, he was often critical in his humor of the devoutly religious. "Religion is just mind control," he lamented. In a 1995 appearance on Tom Snyder's CBS talk program, Carlin defended his non-belief in a "man in the sky" who tells you "where you shouldn't put your hands."

In one of his acts, Carlin said, "One of the things humans did wrong was to believe in this guy God, to believe that there's really a man in the sky who cares about any of this, and who directs our feelings or thoughts or has a report card or a scorecard on our behavior. This is really a crippling belief. And what religions do is to use it to control people and scare them."

The New York Times obituary failed to mention Carlin's atheism. Wikipedia lists Carlin only as one in the category of "Former Roman Catholics."

Not everyone appreciated Carlin. In a letter to the *New York Daily News* (June 29, 2008) a week following his death, Rosemary Montana wrote, "Goodbye, George Carlin. Hope you have a pleasant time meeting up with God, in whom you never believed. We Catholics all remember your insults. How are you doing?"

Philosophedia includes more about Carlin, along with such other non-believer comedians as W. C. Fields, Bill Maher, and Rosie O'Donnell. All have been amused that there is not one iota of humor in the Holy Bible, unless, like *New Yorker* author Emily Hahn, you consider the entire work a collection of funny stories.

Warren Allen Smith is the creator of Philosophedia.org and author of Celebrities in Hell and Who's Who in Hell. He is a frequent contributor to a variety of humanist and freethought publications.

Study Says One in Five Atheists Believe in God

STAFF REPORTS *HumanistNetworkNews.org* July 2, 2008

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life released a second report from its U.S. Religious Landscape Survey on June 23 concluding that Americans are highly religious and tolerant of other religions and that religion is politically relevant. While none of this is news, the study's findings about nonreligious Americans are.

Pew reported that 21 percent of atheists in their survey said they believed in God or a universal spirit, that six percent of them considered it a personal god, and that 40 percent of agnostics feel certain that God exists.

Conversely, among respondents who say they are affiliated with a religious tradition (Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, etc.), a surprising number said they actually do not believe in a god or universal spirit.

"When atheists are telling you they believe in God and Catholics are admitting they don't, that's evidence of the stigma our society puts on nontheists," said Lori Lipman Brown, director of the Secular Coalition for America. "Americans repeatedly tell pollsters that an atheist is the last person they'd want their children to marry, the last person they'd vote for as president. This prejudice also appears in the widespread impression that atheists lack ethics and values."

A *Newsweek* study published in an article titled "Is God Real?" on April 9, 2007, indicated that surveys putting the number of Americans without a god belief at anywhere between 21 to 63 million are probably low. Half of *Newsweek's* respondents last year reported personally knowing an atheist.

"Unless these small numbers of atheists have unusually vast social networks, those respondents tell us that nontheists make up a lot more than just eight or 12 percent of the U.S. population," said Brown. "It says a lot about the difficulty of coming out of the closet, whether it's to family, pollsters or fellow parishioners."

The Pew Center said that religion in America is politically relevant; however, says Brown, so is its absence. "When you look at the results, you see the secular vote is much larger and more up for grabs than other groups who receive an awful lot of attention from politicians and pollsters. And yet with both major parties pandering to religion, our constituency is feeling more and more like outcasts in our own democracy."

According to the Pew survey, there are more than twice as many atheists and agnostics (a combined 4.0 percent of all respondents) as there are Jews (1.7 percent), and about four times as many as there are Muslims (0.6 percent).

Atheists and agnostics also have higher ratios of independent voters than most other groups in the study. The overall percentage of voters with no religious affiliation, which includes atheists, agnostics, and secular and religious unaffiliateds too, is nearly equal (16.1) to the percentage who are mainline Protestant (18.1).



Humanist Network News is a weekly e-zine and monthly podcast of the [Institute for Humanist Studies](#). The Institute for Humanist Studies promotes humanism, a non-religious philosophy based on reason and compassion. IHS advances human rights, secular ethics and the separation of religion and government through advocacy, innovation and collaboration.

HOI members Rachel Balcerzau and Paul Verhage exchanged wedding vows on June 21st at the Langroise Foyer at the College of Idaho. Humanist celebrant Doug Van Curen officiated. After a road trip honeymoon they are moving to Kansas where Rachel will be attending law school and Paul will be pursuing a PhD in curriculum development.

HOI Membership

We have 42 full memberships and 3 newsletter subscribers.

To those of you who have received this newsletter complimentary, I hope you will decide to join our group. Please fill out the form below and send in the payment for the level of involvement you wish to the address below.

Nancy Rolig, Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Membership Administrator

Humanists of Idaho Board	Organization Information
President: Paul Rolig377-0535 or roligpd@spro.net Vice President: Doug Van Curen :.....376-5475 or saw2thking@aol.com Secretary: Nancy Rolig 377-0535 or nrolig@spro.net Treasurer: Jan Rowe376-5475 or janiejolee1@aol.com	Your support of this local chapter with your membership, donations and ideas is greatly appreciated. Mailing Address: Humanists of Idaho P.O. Box 44913 Boise, ID 83711-0913
Auxiliary Positions	Website: http://Idaho.humanists.net Yahoo Group: idaho-humanists@yahoogroups.com Email Address: Idaho@humanists.net
Webmaster/Yahoo Group Administrator :..... Van Van Curen 376-5475 OR saw2thking@aol.com Newsletter Editor/membership Administrator :.....Nancy Rolig 377-0535 or nrolig@spro.net 9877 W. Ripley St. Boise 83704 Charitable Giving Coordinator :Kari Rowe 353-4301 or justkari143@hotmail.com Program Manager :.....Wally Keltner 286-0764 or wallykeltner@msn.com Permanent Building Fund :Paul Rolig 9877 W. Ripley St., Boise 83704	

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- \$25 **Individual** annual membership and Newsletter subscription
- \$45 **Couple** annual membership and Newsletter subscription
- \$15 Newsletter subscription only
- \$___ donation to help promote public awareness of Humanism
- \$___ Humanists of Idaho Permanent Building Fund Donation

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Monday, July 28th - HOI June Meeting

6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club, 7:30 PM Planning Meeting

BUUF Senior Sages

2nd and 4th Thursdays of the Month, 9:30 AM at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way

Sunday, August 10th, 11:00 AM – BUUF Humanist Group

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200 Garrett, Garden City,