

secular idaho

Humanists of Idaho, Idaho Atheists, Huumanists, BSU Secular Student Alliance, West Valley Meetup, various Rationalists, West Valley Meetup, Cosmos Coffee Club, Non Theists, Idaho Falls Group, Twin Falls HS Freethinkers, CSI Secularists Praxis Lodge

Values and Community for Life here on Earth

June 2012

www.secularidaho.org

Chameleons or behind a Mask? Jeanette Ross

Polls of public attitudes toward atheists provide plenty of fuel for the media and discomfort for those who feel the heat. Are rational thinkers reduced to hiding their true nature and beliefs?

This month's news will consider this question from several perspectives. First, the state of discomfort. Frankly, it's nearly universal. Go ahead, tell me who feels good about the big picture— state of the economy, Supreme Court decisions, legislation and legislators, western Europe's descent from model of cooperation to threat to world stability. I could go on.

Karen Armstrong reminds us that this modern world has us all facing uncertainties. Mistakes of the past, even solutions in the past, don't help much. Neurological research suggests that our rational brains are mainly at work creating excuses for what we (irrationally) do.

Inside I'll look inside the cultural tinderbox and pull out some of the kindling. But first, encouragement. The best strategy for success works irrespective of ideology or lack of it. Those who succeed in the work world share an ability to self-monitor and adjust their behavior according to cues picked up from others. They are social chameleons who address the concerns of supervisors and work-mates, who 'match the hatch' in dress and demeanor yet don't see this as pandering to others. They don't feel or hide disdain. They solicit feedback while working toward their own goals. They care about others, look for common interests and needs without sacrificing their own purpose. Pianist Boyd Lee Dunlop, whose first album was released when he was 85 years old, had two dominant qualities, according to friends: fearlessness and openness.

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Secular Idaho is committed to free thought in Idaho. Electronic copies of monthly news is available, no charge, by contacting Paul Rolig, roligpd@spro.net

Potluck June 16, 12- 4 2824 Grandee street, Boise

Join us for our annual Secular Idaho potluck. Bring a side dish or dessert and a beverage to share. Pulled pork for sandwiches provided by Humanists of Idaho. Bring a chair if you can. Grandee is one block east of north Cole, starting at Northview.

Idaho Atheists will have their annual highway cleanup on Sunday, June 17th.

We'll meet at 10am at the Stinker station on State Street and Horseshoe Bend Road.

Bring gloves and a water bottle and a fierce desire to make the world a more beautiful place!



Humanists of Idaho chapter of the American Humanist Association and Council for Secular Humanism is a nonprofit corporation promoting ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism through public awareness, education and community involvement.

Monthly meetings usually 4th Mondays, Jan-Nov, upper level of Flicks, 646 Fulton, 6th and Myrtle, Boise
Social time/eat at 6:30pm; Business 7pm; program starts 7:30pm. **NEXT MEETING is Monday June 25, 2012**

The Warning from Oswald Spengler Jeanette Ross

Born in 1880, Spengler was a self-educated historian, which brought alarm and disdain from scholars but doesn't bother anyone else. This is because events eerily mirror his predictions.

From one of the German provinces, Spengler observed German obsession with industrialization and spoke of a 'restless striving' that can be found as part of great cultures of the past. Greece and Rome and Egypt and Persia each had their spring, their age of energy and aggression when they dominated more grandfatherly cultures and so pronounced themselves invincible. Those who succeed develop specialties—farmers with contracts, generals with soldiers, scholars with students, businessmen with minions, governors with charisma, priests with acolytes and believers. Still, there is room for the ambitious to strive, expand, ship off sons to work the edges of the territory. In its summer, each culture is full of success, apparent power.

Then comes the autumn, time of critics and authorities, of defining one's own people by how they differ from their inferiors. The energy that unites is put to building walls. Religious belief that supports group identity in a young nation becomes an institution. Art formalizes, as do corporate and government structures and art becomes nostalgic, more craft, bereft of meaning. Fashion wins over art, the rich rule, and universal amnesia replaces previous faith in the evidence of history (once used as evidence of one's country's elevated fate). Fashion rules over creativity; entertainment is sport, without inherent or symbolic meaning.

In the early 1920's Spengler said democracy is a glaze over the way those with power gain money and money purchases public approval. Democracy's gains come when the bourgeoisie count on their numbers to get influence. The 'free' press only reinforces opinions, repeating 'catch-words. Wealth concentrates.

A civilization grows from the ground up, like a plant, he said, and depends on those who think of themselves as part of 'we.' Those who consider themselves rational may ignore what motivates, feeds those who see their feet sunk in the culture's dirt.

Joseph Campbell, H P Lovecraft, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Henry Kissinger were all influenced by Spengler. He was grandfather to all filmic, literary dystopias. To zombies, villains, kings and presidents and cowboys destined to conquer and then watch as a new gang full of beans hits town, shooting in all directions.

There's a warning here for us. A-theist says what we are not. Free-thinkers aren't as free as they like. Still unanswered: who are we? What will we struggle towards? From whence comes our faith in sister/brother humans?

HoI President's Message

Humanists of Idaho held its board elections during May, with results becoming official on Tuesday, 29 May, 2012. Elections are held in May of every even numbered year, with officers serving two year terms. I will be continuing as president for another term, and Paul Rolig will continue as our treasurer. Jan Rowe is new to the secretary position. Jan will also continue as our charitable coordinator, and I will continue as webmaster. Unfortunately, there was no candidate for the Vice President position, so that post is currently vacant. Anyone interested in this position should contact me directly at CelebrantVan@aol.com.

At our June Meeting, Humanists of Idaho will host a speaker from Alternatives To Violence Project. It should be both interesting and informative. The meeting is Monday, June 25th, with program scheduled to start at 7:30 PM. Hope to see you all there.

D G Van Curen

Secular Idaho News is published monthly by HOI. Individual yearly membership (\$25) and family memberships (\$45) include SI News, paper or electronic copies. Contact Paul Rolig roligpd@spro.net Newsletter subscriptions \$15/year by post. humanistsofidoaho.org PO Box 44913

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Meet An Atheist and socialize 2nd Tuesdays, this month again at The Reef. Details page 4

Idaho Society of Reason

For meeting place and time, ask Lew Payne or see <http://meetup.com/nontheist/events>

Meet-Up for Boise Atheist, Non-Theists

Sunday noons, Flying M Coffee Garage, **Nampa** 1314 2nd street south, upstairs in the conference area.
Contact Art Rigsby arigsby@yahoo.com

A Humanist Group in Idaho Falls organized by Doug Gerstner meets at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Contact Doug at gerstner_doug@yahoo.com

Canyon County West Valley Freethinkers, Nampa meet regularly. Contact Dan & Charlene
wvfreethinkers@gmail.com

COSMOS COFFEE CLUB

Talk varies — Astrophysics to Zoology and more. Meet 6:30pm 1st & 3rd Mondays at Papa Joe's (handicap accessible).
<http://www.meetup.com/CosmosCoffeeClub>

College of Southern Idaho Secular group meets first Tuesday each month, 6pm in the Fine Arts Recital Hall (room 119). See Facebook "Secular Student Alliance at CSI"

An SSA chapter recently formed at Twin Falls high school (TFHS Freethinkers). They have a Facebook page ("TFHS Freethinkers") and meet Mondays 3:15pm."

Both groups like to share speakers; Van did this, recommends it. Contact Brent Jensen (bjensen@csi.edu or 208-420-7066).

Meet-ups: in the Modern tradition *Jeanette Ross*

Romans started it, the awareness of oneself and one's friends as being of the mode, of the modern style. With it, in other words. Now.

They weren't the first. The middle period of Egypt included new wealth and influence among what we would call the middle class, the bourgeoisie, those who live inside (or behind) walls, protected by money and influence. We know the dreams of Egypt's merchant class, when it appeared, because they had themselves buried in tombs, very like the kings of earlier times, and had their dreams of their afterlife painted on the walls. Craftsmen painted long, protective prayers on their caskets. They expected to eat, live and lord it over others in the afterworld. No mention of harp-playing.

Anyway, that changed in western Europe, mid 19th century. Karl Marx sourly observed that the 'job creators' exploited without respecting the workers they needed. Workers, he pointed out, have to look after themselves. Then artists found a way to sell their work and cut loose from the control of the nobility, who weren't the only ones who wanted to decorate their walls. Artists no longer depended on painting glorious ancestors and shifted attention to people in fields, in dance halls, in markets, at their leisure on a Sunday afternoon. Their portraits of field workers after church (in Russia) and country cottages (England) gave workers a new view of themselves. In the US, several artists painted city streets and their denizens, earning the nickname of Ashcan school.

A Modernist Tradition in the West

Modernist writers and artists tended to be freethinkers and free agents. This was true of visual artists of the Northwest like Mark Tobey and Morris Graves. This also characterized our influential writers.

Edward Dorn. Ed came with his family to Washington State in the 1940's. His early work at physical labor gave a gritty reality to his writing. He published poetry (including two volumes, *Gunslinger I and II*), short stories and started literary magazines. He researched the Cathars, Christian heretics obliterated by Catholic authorities.

While he taught at Idaho State University, 1961-1965, he became friends with Shoshoni and Bannock people of Fort Hall and collaborated, with photographer Leroy Lucas, on a book, *The Shoshoneans*, that captures the lives of native people in Idaho and Nevada. Controversial for its time, the book is now a sought-after classic.

Dorn's writing is unsentimental. He observes details, he reflects of the impossibilities of the lives of the disenfranchised. His photographer was subjected to surveillance from small town constabulary, because he was black and had expensive cameras. Dorn adds it up, the railroad workers living on cheap booze and shreds of hope, the native woman working, hauling her children's laundry to a Laundromat before, late at night, studying for her next exam. Novelist Stephen King is one of many who admire Dorn's uncompromisingly honest writing.



Idaho Atheists Incorporated

Community, Education, Ethics, Tradition
dedicated to the needs of Atheists

Idaho Atheists, Inc. PO Box 204
Boise, ID 83701

Mailbag@IdahoAtheists.org

Susan Harrington:

Meet-an-Atheist will meet June 12 7:30pm, probably on the balcony of the Reef (6th & Main, Boise).

Our Facebook Page is a forum for ideas, opinions, photos, etc. Sign up: www.facebook.com/groups/108886952508179/:

Join Secular Idaho and other freethinkers at the June 16 picnic (front page for details).

Then be ready for the annual highway cleanup, June 17. Get details from facebook.

We intend to be part of Boise's July 4 Liberty Day parade, starting 11am, downtown. **This year's theme: "Celebrate the Constitution: Securing Liberty for 225 years." What could be more fitting than a celebration of the First Amendment?**

We hope to have a new banner by then.

Idaho Society of Reason leads protest...

The National Day of Wishful Thinking by Mike Lee

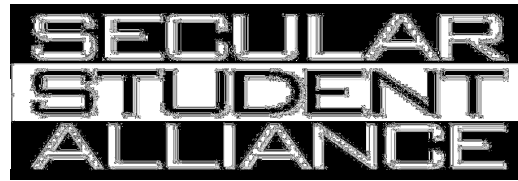
The religious right is at it again. No longer content with praying inside their tax-exempt buildings, christians again want to evoke a "National Day of Prayer" that brings church service to a state capitol building near you. (If you haven't heard of it, the National Day of Prayer is an "annual day of observance" as defined by Congress in 1952.) Where were you on May 3 when the 60th anniversary of this blurring of church and state occurred throughout the nation - including right here in Boise? If you were one of the five atheists with me, you were making as big of a scene as legally possible at the state capitol.

Let's be clear on something - if the religious want to reserve the state capitol steps, invite all theologies to preach, worship and pray...that's perfectly fine with me. But when they involve elected officials who are introduced by their political titles (Ron Crane - our state treasurer was the MC of the Boise National Day of Prayer) that's where I start having a problem. If an elected official wants to attend the event during his lunch break in a non-political capacity, that's fine. But when President Bush hosts the national day of prayer at the White House for eight consecutive years....someone's got to say something. (In fact the Freedom from Religious Foundation tried to overturn this "annual day of observance" and recently lost.)

The festivities that took place locally included a reading of the entire New Testament on the state capitol steps. This marathon reading of the bible took the christians all night and led into the actual National Day of Prayer the next morning. (I should also mention that these christians were supplied power for their reading lights all night long that extended directly from the state capitol. Now that's our tax dollars at work !!!)

I arrived to see that due to a little bit of rain, the entire ceremony had been moved INSIDE the state capitol building. I of course wouldn't let this stop me. After all, where is my right to peacefully protest if the event on public property has been moved inside? For the record, the National Day of Prayer ceremony is simply one communion wafer away from actually being a legitimate church service. Worship music with nauseating lyrics about jesus loving/rescuing/saving/dying was blended with prayers for our politicians to protect Israel. Of course, the most noticeable thing about this National Day of Prayer was that everyone participating was white and strictly protestant christian (baptist, evangelical.) There were no other christian groups represented like the jehovah's witnesses, 7th day adventists or even mormons. (We live in Idaho people, how can you have a national day of prayer and exclude mormons !!!) If this was truly a "national" Day of Prayer - where were the muslims, the hindus or the buddahists? *Continued on page 5*

Boise State



We are a home for secular students. We educate ourselves, encourage critical thought, practice open, rational, scientific examinations of the universe and our place in it. We believe ethics and morality can be based on humanistic and rational values. We present a positive view of atheism, agnosticism, rationalism, secularism, humanism, skepticism and non-religious worldviews. We establish relationships with organizations sharing our ideas and goals. We offer debates, educational workshops, speakers, movies, a book club, open discussion, and social gatherings.

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 president Levi Claussen, 636-634-6189

secretary Christen Sapas

advisor: Robin W Allen, school of social work

Mike Lee, continued from page 4 Our small group of protestors was asked to leave the state capitol due to our signs (evidently not allowed inside.) We left peacefully and continued our protest at the bottom of the capitol steps - under the eye of state police, about 6 security guards and local media. We watched children bussed out of the Day of Prayer to private christian schools - and hoped our presence would sow seeds of rationality in developing minds.

Is protesting the national day of prayer necessary? Only if you value protecting church and state boundaries. When organizations like the National Day of Prayer attempt to move us collectively towards a theocracy, secularists have an obligation to take a stand.. And we can agree that the state capitol building is not the place for a "members only" event.

I got involved with the Idaho Atheists in the fall of 2010 and always felt comfortable gathering support for our activities. Whether we were protesting the National Day of Prayer in 2011, or marching in the 4th of July Parade - I've enjoyed the activism. Idaho Atheists do more than protest and make a big scene. In the last year we've volunteered several times as a group at the Women's and Children's center as well as continuing to clean our adopted stretch of highway off of State street, which the group has done for 14 years.)

Know what you don't like J ROSS

The people of the Arabian peninsula, west Asia and north Africa were living in isolated groups, each with their world of benevolent spirits and demons when Mohammad, a trader, realized that he had been given a new message, one combining and adding to the beliefs of the Jews and Christians. His message of mercy for believers who accept an all-powerful god satisfied the harsh sense of justice of the Arab people at the same time that it offered hope for a better afterlife for those who are faithful. As with Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet did not write the words attributed to him. Both sacred texts contain words recalled years after the death of the messengers.

I see many parallels with the stories and style of the Bible. Faith and trust in the supreme deity comes first. Purity of thought and action, prayer are essential. As in the book of Leviticus, some admonitions require complete obedience while others allow for personal choice and acting according to one's conscience.

Sharia law is based on the sayings of Mohammad as recorded in the Qur'an and also the Sunnah, which is based on what the Prophet himself modeled. Sharia law only applies to Muslims, those who accept the authority of the Qur'an, and only applies to areas of family and religious observance. Those countries that have developed legal systems in response to Western influence often use the English system of law in the same way that we in the United States separate church and state.

Sharia coexists with a secular legal system in Turkey, Mali, Kazakhstan and Malaysia. Even when Islam is the official religion, citizens may practice another religion (as long as they don't try to convert anyone.) Sharia and civil law also coexist in Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Sudan and Morocco.

Local customs and culture inevitably exert a strong influence on how Sharia is applied. Sharia law is entirely administered by local priests or imams. They reflect their culture and community, including local as well as personal understandings of what the Qur'an requires. And communities have their own traditions. In Egypt, Christians are allowed to practice their faith but have little influence on policy and are seldom found working in positions of responsibility. Pakistan incorporates but doesn't control regions that are nominally Muslim but have lives that have changed very little for generations.



May 20 Humanists met as usual at Boise Unitarian Universalist fellowship library. We will meet again June 17, 11:15am, same place and time.

At our May 20 humanist's meeting, two regular attendees shared life experiences reflected their humanist perspectives. Gene Barrett first worked as a telegraph dispatcher for the railroad. He left that to farm, but an accident changed this. He has a blood condition that makes bleeding dangerous, and so he went back to school, with help of government support for veterans. He took a master's degree in Spanish at Fort Haines.

A fellow veteran encouraged him to relocate and teach in Idaho, and that's where he has stayed. He and Carol came in 1964, to find many offers. He taught biology and Spanish. As their three children grew older, Gene organized three week summer tours of Mexico with his students. He and Carol shared memories of the tours and their consequences. One boy, a 'genius' if not a great fit in high school came back from his tour so enthusiastic that he continued to learn about Mexico, returned there, married a Mexican girl and went on to teach in Guadalajara.

Gene taught for 29 years. Oh, he was also a bike racer. After raising her family, Carol taught water aerobics for the YMCA. She won a memorable weekend in Sun Valley for the two of them when she was named employee of the year.

Sages Sailing into Summer Tom von Alten

Growing up is all about setting a good example. Jim and Marcia Lyons did it, and are prepared to share what they found about people, history, culture, and why cruising doesn't have to be politically incorrect. (Bingo, eight meals a day, and chaise-lounging; what's not to like?) Join the BUUF Sages on Thursday, June 14, 9:30 am at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way), to share inspiration and a no-host breakfast.

On June 28, we'll share a *potpourri* of each other's "Car Stories" for a trip down Memory Lane. Your first flivver, your favorite, a crash, a romance, Route 66, who knows? Newcomers are welcome, with or without stories. Contact Tom (at 378-1217 or tva@fortboise.org) for more information or to be added to our reminder list.

Paul Taylor also spoke about his life and where it has led him. He never had a philosophy behind a life of creative production. One idea led to a trial, intense effort, and then another possibility.

Paul was part of the innovative West Coast art scene, although he would not describe it that way. He attended the San Francisco Art Institute, threw pots, then continued making pots, their size limited by his small kiln. What to do with them? Experiments in music, theater, visual arts and cultural interests were all around him. Paul made his pots the base of drums. He experimented with resonators, with adding wood, and this led him to creating sets of drums with varying modulations. He learned parquetry and the drums became genuine objects of wonder. Some were sold to friends, to musicians by word of mouth, and through craft fairs; one was featured in the country's premiere crafts magazine. "I made good money for an artist, seeing old friends." Of the multitudinous forms of expression he says, "It's been a big variety. Once I designed a fabric, had it made up into something for my wife.."

Paul has supported himself with whatever job leaves time and energy to tinker and experiment. These days he's following another bend in the road. He became fascinated by mathematical theory while taking courses on his own. He referred back to his experiences with parquetry and wondered how he could apply that to the Fibonacci series. He's been turning polyhedrons into 'honeycomb' sculptures that fit together no matter how he arranges them. Now he's forming octo- and tetrahedrons as his basic form for many multiples.

We saw an example in an enormous, elegant assemblage on display in Elizabeth Greene's office... an uncountable number of identical polyhedra all connected and then balanced on a single point. Paul gave us a small window into his experimental life. He tested one idea with sugar cubes but learned they aren't exactly cubes. We tried to picture how he learned this.

June 2012

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Humanist Perspective 6:30pm Tuesdays, 8:30 am Thursdays, 8:30am Sundays

What's all that about Post Modernism, and why do Josh McDowell & friends hate it so? Jeanette wonders..

I've seen them sift into our library sales. Their lurid covers and titles express alarm, but their condition does not. Most books by Josh McDowell and his partners sit flushed and unread when they reach us. I brought one home so I could read and report. One, decrying 'tolerance,' can best be understood from the perspective of a founder of post modernism, Roland Barthes. Barthes pioneered 'reading' cultural objects for their actual function rather than the purpose purported by users or instigators. In his essays, collected as Mythologies in the mid 1950's, Barthes described professional wrestling for its meta-story, as a morality play where good wins over evil, giving audiences a chance to participate in a pseudo-epic struggle. He saw one of the great film stars of his time, Charlie Chaplin, as the mystified victim of the rich, always hungry yet undefeated. He hilariously described the gestures of political candidates, their Stephen Colbert-like gestures, gazing upward as if into the face of an approving god.

Barthes led artists to consider the role of art and architecture as spectacle, meant to impress audiences stunned to silence in spaces like museums. After Barthes, the collecting behavior of the super rich became an inside joke rather than expression of good taste. In fact, the idea of good taste no longer has any meaning. As they say, taste is all in your mouth. Art can serve as propaganda, as the US government promoted abstract expressionism to separate itself from Soviet realism. Art on t shirts can denote and connote— in one demonstration in Asia a vendor sold t shirts with a target (ripped off to resemble the US corporate chain) printed on front. The ways pop art can lead and follow are discussed in a recent history of comics, the DC Vault. Consider the possibilities of combining market research with film, live theater and graphic novels all together in the Time Warner combine. What can we learn by studying, say, the fascination with zombies among children of privilege? What do they tell us about a child's need to take control of their destiny? Leaders of conservative faith fear democracy let loose, turned into metaphors, handed to graphic artists. Frightened parents put their children in uniforms and oblige them to recite patriotic verse. Tolerance of diversity is very, very dangerous, they say. Yes, it is. Yet children yearn to bust out of boxes.

July 16: potluck with everyone July 17: Highway Clean-up with Atheists. See inside. Also, check the website of the Humanists of Idaho or the Idaho Atheist website for details.

Humanists of Idaho
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Atheist Viewpoint on TVCTV Cable Channel 11 Thursdays at 6:00 PM

The show is co-hosted by David Silverman and Dennis Horvitz, and the show concentrates on current events from an atheist point of view. Most of our shows are serious in nature, and sometimes we have guest speakers, including authors and public figures.

Dissecting a Bible

A Critical Analysis of the Holy Scriptures

By D G Van Curen, Celebrant HSCCC

To purchase a copy contact the author

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